
**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

September 22, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT

Charles Allen, TPB Chair – DC Council
Ella Hanson – DC Council
Brook Pinto – DC Council
Thomas Malone – DC Council
Kristin Calkins – DC Office of Planning
Mark Rawlings - DDOT
Anna Chamberlin – DDOT
Reuben Collins - Charles County
Jason Groth – Charles County
Denise Mitchell – College Park
Jan Gardner – Frederick County
Mark Mishler – Frederick County
Kelly Russell – City of Frederick
Neil Harris – Gaithersburg
Emmett V. Jordan – Greenbelt
Michael R. Leszcz – Laurel
Gary Erenrich – Montgomery County Executive
Evan Glass – Montgomery County Legislative
Terry Bellamy – Prince George’s County Executive
Victor Weissberg – Prince George’s County Executive
Deni Taveras – Prince George’s County Legislative
Bridget Donnell Newton – Rockville
Kacy Kostiuk – Takoma Park
R. Earl Lewis, Jr. – MDOT
Canek Aguirre – Alexandria
Christian Dorsey – Arlington County
Dan Malouff – Arlington County
Walter Acorn – Fairfax County
James Walkinshaw – Fairfax County
David Snyder – Falls Church
Adam Shellenberger – Fauquier County
Robert Brown – Loudoun County
Kristen Umstattd – Loudoun County
Pamela Sebesky – Manassas
Jeannette Rishell – Manassas Park
Ann B. Wheeler – Prince William County
Victor Angry – Prince William County
David Reid – Virginia House
David Marsden – Virginia Senate
John Lynch – VDOT
Norman Whitaker - VDOT
Maria Sinner – VDOT
Rob Cary - VDOT

Mark Phillips - WMATA
Julie Koster -NCPC
Dan Koenig - FTA

MWCOG STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Kanti Srikanth
Chuck Bean
Lyn Erickson
Mark Moran
Tim Canan
Andrew Meese
Nick Ramfos
Paul DesJardin
Tom Gates
Stacy Cook
Leo Pineda
Sergio Ritacco
Bryan Hayes
Andrew Austin
John Swanson
Dusan Vuksan
Deborah Etheridge
Nicole McCall
Jen Desimone
Jon Schermann
Christopher Laskowski – DC Council
Kari Snyder – MDOT
Regina Moore - VDOT

Materials referenced in the minutes, and a recording of the September TPB meeting, can be found here:
mwcog.org/events/2021/09/22/transportation-planning-board-tpb/

1. VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES, MEMBER ROLL CALL, AND VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

Chair Allen called the meeting to order and reminded the board that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast. He said the process for asking questions and voting would be the same as previous meetings. After each item, members would be asked to comment or vote by jurisdiction.

Ms. Erickson conducted a roll call. Members that were present are listed on the first pages of the minutes.

Ms. Erickson said that eight comments were received for the September TPB meeting, including one letter, six emails, and one phone call. She referred to the memo with a summary of the comments, with the full comments attached. She said that seven of the comments were in reference to the Maryland I-495/I-270 HOT lanes project. The letter was sent by the Coalition for Smarter Growth stating that the region must significantly reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled and proposed two suggestions for how to do that.

2. APPROVAL OF THE JULY 21, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Allen made a motion to approve the minutes from the July TPB meeting.

Ms. Sebesky seconded the motion.

The board approved the minutes for the July 21, 2021 TPB meeting.

3. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair Allen referred to the Technical Committee Report that was included with meeting materials and said that to save time the board would forego the full briefing.

Ms. Kostiuk asked if the report on vehicle characteristics showed any significant increase in electric vehicles.

Mr. Groth said that while there was an increase in electric vehicles, as a share of the all vehicle purchases, electric vehicles are of marginal proportion. He encouraged her to reach out to TPB staff for more detail.

4. COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair Allen referred to the Community Advisory Committee report that was included with meeting materials and said that to save time the board would forego a full briefing.

There were no questions about the CAC report.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Srikanth referred to the Director's Report that was included with the meeting materials. To save time he said he would not review all of the items in that report. He said that the Steering Committee approved a joint letter by the TPB, MWAQC, and CEEPC endorsing the current federal administration's proposal to strengthen the greenhouse gas emissions standards for passenger cars and light-duty trucks for model years all the way through 2026. He said that the change to emissions standards is important for reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.

Mr. Srikanth highlighted three other items. First, he said that staff will share results from the Voices of the Region public outreach about the Aspirational Initiatives at a future meeting. Second, the theme of CEEPC's meeting earlier in the day, was electric vehicles with a panel discussion on electrifying transit vehicles. Finally, he referenced a letter from a number of transit agencies and governments in the Washington region to the congressional delegation making the case that more resources are needed to convert transit fleets to electric vehicles.

6. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Allen welcomed members back from the summer break and said he hoped that members had taken some time off to rest and recoup from the busy year. He noted that the past three to four months had been particularly busy and active TPB meetings. He said that the board wrestled with some big issues and continued to work together, thinking about our region. He said he appreciated all the hard work that has gone into that and the respectful collegial work even when we have pushed and pulled on each other. He thanked staff for their work helping to navigate throughout the last few months. He concluded by noting his wishes for a very interesting, yet perhaps less hectic, remainder of 2021 as we continue to work our way forward.

ACTION ITEMS

7. REGIONAL CAR FREE DAY 2021 PROCLAMATION

Mr. Ramfos provided background on Car Free Day. He said that it started in Europe in the 1990s and that the region has been celebrating Car Free Day since 2007. The presentation on this item includes more detail about Car Free Day, jurisdiction and corporate partners, planned events, and promotional efforts. He encouraged board members and the public to register to participate at carfreemetrodc.org.

Mr. Ramfos asked the board to approve the Regional Car Free Day proclamation.

Board members said that Prince George's County, Rockville, and Takoma Park have already passed Car Free Day resolutions.

Chair Allen made a motion to proclaim September 22, 2021 as Car Free Day in the Washington Region.

Ms. Russell seconded the motion.

Chair Allen read the proclamation, which encouraged citizens to take that pledge to be car-free or car-lite at carfreemetrodc.org, and encouraged TPB members' jurisdictions to adopt similar proclamations.

The chair signed the proclamation.

8. TRANSIT WITHIN REACH

Ms. McCall introduced Transit Within Reach as the newest TPB technical assistance program. She said that the program will help people walk and bike to and from bus stops, train stations, and other transit opportunities. She said that in the future more houses and jobs will be located near transit stations. She said that in many places there is missing or unsafe infrastructure that makes it difficult to access transit by walking or on bike. She said that the board identified walk and bike access to transit as a regional priority. She said the Transit Within Reach program provides technical assistance to jurisdictions to help them move high-impact projects that improve walk or bike access to transit into preliminary design or engineering.

Ms. McCall said that the solicitation was open from May to July. Six applications were submitted. She said that program priorities are to improve bike-ped access to high-capacity transit, including Metrorail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcar, and bus rapid transit. She said the program focuses on high-priority locations and seeks to improve access for low-income communities and communities of color. She described the selection panel and the process for selecting projects.

Ms. McCall said that three applications were recommended for technical assistance. The projects are located in the City of Manassas, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County. More detail on the projects can be found in the materials for this item.

Ms. Umstatt asked if the project in Montgomery County increases parking opportunities at the MARC station.

Ms. McCall said that this project focused on developing a shared-use path to make it easier to access the station. She does not recall any mention of increased parking in the application,

Ms. Umstatt asked if the shared-use path will allow people to park on residential streets or in office parking lots and use the path to get to the station.

Ms. McCall said that as the application was submitted, it focused primarily on connecting folks from nearby commercial and residential areas to the station.

Mr. Glass asked if there is a component of the technical assistance for the Montgomery County project to develop public education and signage.

Ms. McCall said the program focuses on preliminary design and engineering.

Chair Allen made a motion to approve Transit Within Reach technical assistance projects.

Ms. Sebesky seconded the motion.

The board approved the motion.

INFORMATION ITEMS

9. COG BOARD RETREAT

Mr. Srikanth said that one of the TPB planning priorities is to increase transit ridership as a means of reducing congestion, improving mobility, and reducing per capita VMT. To further this priority, the TPB had done work to identify locations where high-capacity transit stations (HCTs) are located or planned to be operating by 2030. He said that the TPB has also worked to identify Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) in the region. These are census tracts where there is a higher than average concentration of low-income and racial and ethnic minorities. He said that at their July board retreat, the COG board discussed High-Capacity Transit Station areas and Equity Emphasis Areas and now plan to adopt these as priority planning constructs for the region.

Mr. Bean referred to his presentation and thanked the TPB members that also serve on the COG board. He said that, as background to the current work, in 2019 the COG board had set housing targets for the region that were informed by TPB's Aspirational Initiative of bringing jobs and housing closer together. He added that in 2020, the COG board set regional climate goals for 2030. He said details on these targets, goals, and priorities can be found in the materials for this item.

Mr. Bean said that he would speak to the idea of optimizing the land use around High Capacity Transit stations and elevating Equity Emphasis Areas as we do this and other planning in the region. Speaking about the benefits of transit-oriented communities, he said that HCTs only take up 10 percent of the region's land mass, but 55 percent of new jobs, and 42 percent of new housing, will be in HCT areas. He said the COG board wants to optimize use in these areas, so that there is a variety of commercial use, housing types, and opportunities for people to live with mixed incomes.

Mr. Bean said that the COG board and the TPB approved equity resolutions in 2020. He said that COG and the TPB are going to weave an equity perspective into all their plans and programs. He said that this starts with taking a deep dive into the region's geography to understand how the region can link opportunity areas with areas of need. He said that of the 1,200 census tracts in the region, 350 are considered EEAs, and that 30 percent of the region's population lives in those 350 areas.

He noted that building transit oriented communities around the HCT stations with increased housing units and with 75% of the housing being affordable to low and middle income population would help the region achieve its housing goals, greenhouse gas reducing goals, transportation goals and address equity. He said that Housing, Climate Change, Equity and HCT stations formed the "fab four" of a unified planning construct. Mr. Bean said that the COG board is voting on an HCT resolution and an EEA resolution in October.

Chair Allen thanked Mr. Bean for his work and noted the fab four construct that ties several of the region's goals together. He recalled how the TPB had spent a lot of time working on aspirational goals and really trying to lay out a strong vision and that is great to see those pieces then get reflected in a larger plan for implementation. He said that the distinction between COG and the TPB and the nexus of them coming together is not always clear to the public. He asked if the TPB should consider endorsing the COG resolutions as a means of bringing further alignment in the work of the two board in a formal way.

Mr. Bean said that the most straightforward option is to have the TPB endorse the COG resolutions.

Mr. Dorsey echoed the unified planning approach that Mr. Bean had described. He said that the Unified Planning framework could guide us on how we take our great work and actually have follow-through as the outcome. He said that it is helpful to have a clear, tangible way of delivering outcomes in an effective way. He said it is important to recognize that looking at these approaches in isolation, while having merit, it is much better to look at them from an integrated perspective. He said that he would be happy to assist crafting a TPB response to the October COG board vote before the October TPB meeting.

Ms. Wheeler said that there are not many HCT stations in Prince William County. She said the county is studying how to make new development more accessible to transit stations. She cited the recent approval of housing units near GMU campus which is about three miles from a VRE station. She also noted similar opportunities around large commuter parking lots which support the ridesharing as another way to reduce single occupant vehicles.

Mr. Snyder said that there are a few major projects for bus-rapid transit projects being planned in northern Virginia that were not mentioned that have equity and transportation benefits. He said that in addition to the benefits of this unified planning approach Mr. Bean described there is the aspect of significant cost-effectiveness of such projects. He said if a jurisdiction can spend money that achieves equity, climate and other objectives, then the government is using taxpayer money well.

Mr. Bean said that there is positive peer pressure that jurisdictions in the region can employ to help reach these goals.

Mr. Collins said he is interested in an actual resolution that can be incorporated into Charles County's future policy initiatives that are consistent with EEAs.

Mr. Bean said that peer learning is the fastest way to achieve the goals of the resolutions. He said that staff may be able to provide some technical assistance.

Ms. Newton said that a recent groundbreaking in Rockville supports these resolutions. She said this project took ten years of planning to get to this point.

10. TPB CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION STUDY

Mr. Moran said during a 2020 discussion about the region's ability to attain COG's 2030 and 2050 greenhouse gas reduction goals, the TPB asked staff two questions. First, what level of VMT would be needed to attain goals. Second, what percent of the region's motor vehicle fleet should be converted to clean energy to attain these goals. He said that in response to these questions, TPB staff initiated the Climate Change Mitigation Study (CCMS). He said that Phase 1 of the study was a review of the past work conducted by the TPB and that the board was presented the results of Phase 1 at the May TPB meeting. He said that Phase 2 of the work is a scenario analysis and began in spring. He said this analysis began with a literature review of strategies and assumptions to reduce GHG and that this was presented to the board in July. He said that the study had analyzed a few high-level scenarios that answer the two questions the board had asked and that draft findings of this analysis will be presented today. He said the study is also proposing to examine ten additional scenarios which would be described today.

He said that given the limited time to complete the study, staff was most interested in board input on any adjustments to the strategies contained within the ten scenarios and that staff does not anticipate being able to add additional scenarios. He noted that these scenarios generally focus on broad policies and investments, and do not include analysis of individual transportation projects. He said that final report will be presented to the TPB in December.

Mr. Grant referenced the materials for this item and said that he would cover the scenarios quickly. He said that the intent of the literature review was to help understand what is currently happening in the region, and what other cities, states, and countries across the world are doing in terms of transportation greenhouse gas reductions. He said the purpose of this was to provide a basis to identify the strategies that would be considered in the scenario analysis. He noted that the study focused only on on-road transportation sources and the strategies that could achieve 50 and 8 percent GHG reducing goals. He said that three major pathways to reduce GHG had been identified. He described these as: vehicle travel activity; energy efficiency; and the carbon intensity of fuel. He said that the strategies to reduce greenhouse gases focus on these components: mode shift and travel behavior strategies; transportation system management and operation strategies; and changes in vehicle technologies and fuels.

Mr. Grant said that most previous studies show vehicle technology and fuel strategies having a large potential for greenhouse gas reductions and are often cited as very necessary components of any plans for greenhouse gas reduction and decarbonization. He said switching to a battery electric vehicle is estimated to reduce GHG emissions per vehicle by about 73 to 76 percent and that if the power grid was decarbonized then the vehicles could truly become zero emissions vehicles. He said that the primary constraints for achieving these reductions quickly is the rate of vehicle turnover, as most people hold on to their vehicles for many years, often eight to ten years or more. He said that mode shift and travel behavior strategies are also identified as important strategies and can have meaningful effects on greenhouse gas reduction, but on their own are not expected to achieve deep levels of greenhouse gas reductions. While individuals shifting from driving to walking or biking or other modes eliminates the emissions, at a regional scale most studies estimate reductions to be about 4 to 24 percent with the higher levels under more aggressive assumptions, often including significant policies related to road pricing and disincentives to driving.

Mr. Grant presented some initial findings from the scenario analysis. He said that to achieve the 2030 goal with VMT reduction alone, passenger vehicle travel would need to be reduced by about 57 percent from the 2018 level. He said the analysis shows it is not possible to meet the 2050 goal through VMT reduction alone. He said that a primary reason that this high level of VMT reduction is needed is that we're focusing on shifting passengers from driving on to transit, rideshare, walking, and other options and not the travel by trucks used for freight, commercial deliveries, even trash collection, as well as buses. He said that they generally don't see many opportunities to reduce vehicle travel from commercial vehicles and from bus services.

Mr. Grant said that similarly achieving the 2030 goal with vehicle technology alone, would require about 75 percent of the vehicles on the road to be electric vehicles by 2030. Under a scenario with a clean electric grid, a fully clean electric grid by 2035, still nearly half of the vehicles on the road would need to be electric vehicles to meet the goal. He said that the 2050 goal actually cannot be achieved through vehicle technology alone if we assume the current on-the-books pathway for carbon intensity for electricity. But under the case of a truly clean carbon grid it would be possible to achieve the goals through technology improvements alone with 80 percent of the vehicles on the road to be electric vehicles.

Mr. Grant said that based on the analysis it's extremely challenging to look solely at transportation and see the goals being met individually through VMT reduction alone or through technology change alone. He said therefore the study has developed ten scenarios that were built up, considering different strategies with VMT reduction and vehicle technology pathways and then a few scenarios that combine strategies from both VMT reduction and vehicle technology pathways. Based on the top-down analysis, he doesn't anticipate that any single pathway scenario can achieve the goals that are set out, but the combinations of strategies are what we're particularly interested in, and we see the layering of strategies resulting in a pathway towards the goals. He reviewed the ten scenarios and said that more detail on each of the ten scenarios and the strategies within them can be found in the materials for this item.

Chair Allen asked if the scenarios will break out data by jurisdiction.

Mr. Grant said that the analysis is regional in nature and will not break out by jurisdiction. He said one strategy about cordon pricing is focused on the District of Columbia.

Mr. Marsden mentioned the work of a company that wants to make every location in Virginia within 50 miles of a charging station for electric vehicles.

Ms. Rishell asked if the pricing scenario takes into consideration those that need to drive for work.

Mr. Grant said that this is an equity issue that they would want to highlight.

Mr. Lewis said that charging infrastructure is important. He added that it is critical that such infrastructure is accessible by people who live in urban areas, have lower incomes, or live in multi-family housing.

Chair Allen agreed about the importance of equity and charging infrastructure.

Mr. Phillips requested a top-down scenario analysis that factors in electric vehicle adoption rates from climate action plans.

Mr. Srikanth thanked members for submitting questions in the chat. He said staff is documenting them. He reminded the board that the analysis that will be presented to the board in December will not factor in feasibility.

Mr. Snyder asked about the timeline for the scenario analysis and also how the board could use the findings to take action.

Mr. Srikanth said that the findings of this study, due in December, will be reflected in the final Visualize 2045 updated plan document. He said as staff begins the next update to the plan the approach would be to look to each member jurisdiction's actions in terms of projects, programs and policies proposed to be included in the update and how those help implement the strategies this study finds are needed to achieve our GHG reduction goals. He said that he hopes the study findings will inform decision making at the local, state and sub regional levels.

11. ADJOURN

No other business was brought to the board. The meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.