

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202

Item 8

MEMORANDUM

February 17, 2009

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby
Director of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Review of Comments Received and Recommended Responses on Project Submissions for Inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP

Background

At the January 28, 2009 meeting, the Board was briefed on the project submissions for the draft 2009 Financially Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and the FY 2010-2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which were released for public comment and agency review at the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on January 15, 2009. This public comment period closed on February 14, 2009.

Public comments submitted by individuals, organizations, and businesses were posted as they were received on the TPB web site at <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/public/comments.asp>. This memorandum provides recommended responses to comments received through the close of the public comment period on February 14, 2009.

The Board will be briefed on the comments received and recommended responses at the February 18, 2009 meeting.

Comments and Responses

The three comments received through the close of the public comment period and recommended responses are as follows:

1. Comment
Disapproval is expressed of the expansion of route I-66 in Arlington County.
Response: On January 28, 2008, the TPB responded to similar comments on the inclusion of the I-66 Spot Improvements Project in the 2007 CLRP. The response stated that VDOT had conducted public hearings on this project and the TPB had received and considered these comments and believed that on balance the project is beneficial and

should move forward.

2. Comment

The K Street Busway project in the District of Columbia should not be postponed again, and that the delay is justifiable only if the funding is committed to make the transit way streetcar-ready when built.

Response:

DDOT has provided the following response: “K Street provides an important transportation linkage for those that live, work, and play in the District of Columbia. As mentioned in your comments, earlier feasibility studies have resulted in a busway concept that is generally agreed upon by stakeholders in the corridor. However, additional design/engineering of the entire right-of-way is needed before construction can begin.”

3. Comment:

The construction of the Columbia Pike Streetcar Project in Arlington and Fairfax Counties should be removed from the CLRP and TIP because funding is not clearly identified as required by federal regulations.

Response:

Arlington County staff has provided the following response: “Arlington and Fairfax County have adopted the Columbia Pike Streetcar project as a priority for funding. Arlington County’s adopted CIP only goes out to 2010, and provides funding to complete the environmental planning and preliminary engineering for the project. Absent any other sources of funding, the County would fund the Columbia Pike Streetcar from bond funds supported by the local Transportation Infrastructure Fund (local Commercial Real Estate Tax) and the existing state transit capital formula reimbursement program. Should the County Board’s priorities change in the future, the corresponding changes to the TIP and CLRP will be made.”

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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Submitted By: An Individual

Name: Tyler Wean

Agency / Organization:

Location: Arlington, VA

Subject: I-66 Expansion

Position: Comment on other regional transportation issue.

Comments:

I want to express my disapproval of the expansion of route I-66 in Arlington County. Thank you.



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Submitted By: An Individual
Name: Thomas Taylor
Agency / Organization:
Location: Washington, DC
Subject: K Street Busway

Position: Comment on other regional transportation issue.

Comments:

The development of K Street, NW, DC, mass transit lanes should not be again postponed. The absolute need for the project has been well documented and the plans vetted. The delay is justifiable only if the funding is committed to make the transit way streetcar-ready when built.



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1030 S Barton St Unit 274
Arlington VA 22204-4859
February 14, 2009

The Honorable Charles Jenkins, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4239

Re: 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP Project Submissions

Dear Chairman Jenkins:

Construction of the Columbia Pike Streetcar Project in Arlington and Fairfax Counties should be removed from the TPB's financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) because this project lacks clearly identified funding, and federal law requires the TPB to certify that all projects included in its CLRP have clearly identified funding.

A year ago, Arlington County first proposed adding the Columbia Pike Streetcar Project to the CLRP with tax revenue raised by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority; however, in February 2008, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that revenue source unconstitutional.

Since then, the Virginia General Assembly has failed to pass legislation to replace the invalidated funds, Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board has cut \$2 billion in projects from its Six-Year Improvement Program, and Arlington voters have not approved any County bond referendum for this project. In addition, the Virginia General Assembly is capping Arlington's new transportation tax surcharge on commercial properties at the current rate of \$0.125 per \$100 valuation, and none of that revenue is currently allocated for construction of the Columbia Pike Streetcar. Thus, Arlington County currently lacks an identified source of revenue to construct the Columbia Pike Streetcar Project until well beyond its proposed project completion date of 2016.

I have asked several TPB and Arlington County staff members to identify what state or local funds would provide at least \$138 million to construct the Streetcar Project, but I've only received the unsatisfactory response that the County will advocate for this funding in the future. Until the required funds are clearly identified, this project should not be included in the CLRP.

Omitting the Streetcar Project from the CLRP should not delay its construction or affect the Air Quality Conformity Determination for the 2009 CLRP and FY2010-2015 TIP. The necessary preliminary engineering and fiscal and environmental analyses for the Streetcar Project have not even begun, so construction is unlikely to start until 2014 at the

earliest if construction funds were available today, and this project should be ineligible for funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Moreover, the Columbia Pike Streetcar would not be a true transportation improvement. It would merely squander upwards of \$138 million to replace 8 or 9 existing Metrobuses with the same number of equally slow trolley cars, and the greater passenger capacity of the streetcars, if and when needed, could be readily obtained for less than \$10 million by replacing the aging standard Metrobuses with new articulated Metrobuses during normal bus fleet turnover.

In conclusion, construction of the Columbia Pike Streetcar Project should be removed from the CLRP and TIP at this time, and this project should not be listed in the CLRP until a dedicated funding source is clearly identified.

Sincerely,

Allen Muchnick

Allen Muchnick