

ITEM 11 - Information

June 19, 2013

Briefing on the Draft Outline of the TPB Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the draft outline of the RTPP and the next steps toward the proposed adoption of the plan in September.

Issues: None

Background: The TPB Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) is being developed to identify near and long term regional strategies that offer the greatest potential contributions toward addressing regional challenges.

DETAILED OUTLINE

**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD (TPB)
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES PLAN (RTPP)**

I. BACKGROUND

The opening chapter will provide concise background on the RTPP's purpose, origin and planning process.

A. Purpose

The text will explain that the purpose of the RTPP is to identify a set of regional strategies – near-term, ongoing and long-term – that offer the greatest potential for addressing regional challenges and that the public can support.

The baseline for the RTPP will be current and forecasted conditions as laid out in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

B. Origin

The text will provide narrative on the following:

- TPB's scenario planning activities that have looked at a variety of land-use and transportation alternatives.
- The encouragement of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee to develop a plan that identifies priorities beyond the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan.
- The event in May 2010 called "The Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities" in which key TPB stakeholders gathered to discuss how the TPB's planning process might be enhanced to include the development of a priorities plan.
- The RTPP Scope, which was developed by the Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force and approved by the TPB in July 2011.

C. Process

The text will provide narrative on the following:

- Initial focus on performance measurement. The RTPP planning process initially focused primarily on the use of performance measures to guide the selection of priorities, but following a series of stakeholder sessions early in 2012, staff determined that such a technically-oriented approach did not resonate with the public.
- In June of 2012, staff convened a large focus group with more than 40 paid participants, which was facilitated by the public engagement organization AmericaSpeaks. At this session, participants were presented with a draft "strawman" document containing narrative descriptions of regional goals (derived from the 1998 TPB Vision), unmet challenges, and strategies to address those challenges.

- Based upon feedback from the June 2 session, staff refined its approach to the RTPP, which was reflected in the Interim Report on the RTPP that staff presented the TPB in July 2012.
- In the spring of 2013, TPB staff conducted an online survey on regional transportation priorities to gain input for the RTPP. A firm specializing in web-based public participation, MetroQuest, was engaged to develop the survey, which is intended to be visually engaging and educational. The survey was taken by a controlled sample of 600+ residents who were randomly selected to reflect the entire TPB region. Participants who completed the survey received a \$25 gift card.
- In July, the TPB will receive and review a draft of the RTPP. A public comment period will be conducted between July 17 and August 16. Staff will also conduct additional public engagement activities with COG/TPB citizen committees, community groups, and advocacy organizations.
- The Final Draft is scheduled for approval at the TPB meeting on September.

II. GOALS AND CHALLENGES

The text will reiterate the regional goals that were based upon the TPB Vision and reaffirmed through this planning process. The text will also identify key challenges that highlight respects in which the region's goals are not being met.

Goal 1: Provide a comprehensive range of transportation options

Having more transportation options to choose from makes it easier for people to find the travel mode that works best for them in meeting their daily needs. Examples of different transportation options include congestion-free driving options, carpooling/vanpooling, transit, bicycling, and walking.

Challenges:

- *Roadway Congestion:* The region's roadways are among the most congested in the nation, making it harder for people and goods to get where they need to go.
- *Transit Crowding:* The Metrorail system currently experiences crowding during peak hours and lacks the capacity to support future population and employment growth.
- *Inadequate Bus Service:* Existing bus service is too limited in its coverage, frequency, and reliability, making transit a less viable option, especially for people with disabilities and limited incomes.
- *Insufficient Walking & Biking Opportunities:* Too few people have access to safe walking and bicycling facilities or live in areas where walking and bicycling are practical options for reaching nearby destinations.

Goal 2: Promote a strong regional economy including a healthy regional core and dynamic Activity Centers.

Major housing and job centers are where much of the region's economic activity takes place. Strengthening these areas and connecting them with good transportation options bolsters the region's economy and provides numerous transportation benefits.

Challenges:

- **Development around Metrorail:** Too many Metrorail stations, especially on the eastern side of the region, are surrounded by undeveloped or underdeveloped land, limiting the number of people who can live or work close to transit.
- **Housing and Job Location:** Most housing, especially affordable housing, and many of the region's jobs are located in areas where transit, bicycling, and walking are not safe and viable options.

Goal 3: Ensure adequate maintenance, preservation, and safety of the existing system

Keeping the region's transportation system in a state of good repair is crucial to ensuring reliability and safety. Maintaining existing infrastructure when it's needed rather than putting it off can also result in significant long-term savings.

Challenges:

- **Metrorail Repair Needs:** Deferred Metrorail maintenance over the years has led to unreliability, delays, and safety concerns today, as well as higher maintenance costs.
- **Roadway Repair Needs:** Aging bridges and roads are deteriorating and in need of major rehabilitation to ensure safe and reliable travel for cars, trucks, and buses.

Goal 4: Maximize operational effectiveness and safety of the transportation system

Maximizing system effectiveness means utilizing available technologies, techniques, and programs to get the most out of the existing system. Rapid growth and limited financial resources make it especially important to maximize system efficiency.

Challenges:

- **Incidents:** Major accidents and weather disruptions on roadways and transit systems cause severe delays and inconvenience.
- **Pedestrian & Bicyclist Safety:** The number of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities each year is holding steady even as the number of vehicle fatalities is declining.

Goal 5: Enhance environmental quality, and protect natural and cultural resources

An effective transportation system needs to balance the mobility needs of a growing region with the potentially harmful effects that travel by car and other modes may have on the environment and the health of our residents.

Challenges:

- **Environmental Quality:** Increasing amounts of vehicle travel resulting from population and job growth could threaten the quality of our region's air and water.

- *Open Space Development:* Wildlife habitat, farmland, and other open spaces are threatened by construction of new transportation facilities and land development.

Goal 6: Support international and inter-regional travel and commerce

The region strives to be among the most accessible in the nation for international and inter-regional passenger and goods movement. Providing strong passenger and freight connections by air, highway, rail, and sea can bring economic benefits to our region.

Challenges:

- *Bottlenecks:* Bottlenecks on the highway and rail systems cause delays in inter-regional travel for both freight and passengers, hurting the region’s economic competitiveness.
- *Travel Time Reliability:* Travel times to and from the region’s airports are becoming less reliable for people and goods movement.

III. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS REGIONAL CHALLENGES

The text will explain that the TPB is supporting a limited number of strategies that are organized in three categories: near-term, ongoing and long-term. Introductory text will explain that the selection of this package of strategies is grounded in a number of key factors related to addressing regional challenges, including measurable benefits, cost effectiveness, public support, and consistency with local and regional policies.

The text will provide evidence and examples from the following sources to “make the case” for each strategy:

- measurable benefits from local experiences or modeled examples;
- compelling demonstration of cost effectiveness (through benefit/cost examples of forecasted or real-world examples or case studies);
- public support (largely drawing from the RTPP online survey);
- Support of the region’s leadership (e.g., recent implementation of projects demonstrating the strategy; prevalence of the strategy in the adopted policies and plans of the region’s jurisdictions);
- TPB/COG policies, past planning activities and programs that provide evidence of regional impact and support.

A. Near-Term Strategies

Intro text will make the case that small-scale, near-term improvements can make a big difference. The TPB has identified the priority strategies below as potentially cost-effective measures that should be implemented within the next five years.

1. *Improve Access to Transit*

Make it easier and safer to get to bus stops and rail stations, particularly for walkers, cyclists and people with disabilities. Near-term access improvements include building bus shelters, sidewalks,

crosswalks and trails. These types of improvements are some of the most effective methods for increasing transit use throughout the region.

2. *Alleviate Bottlenecks*

Prioritize modest roadway improvements that can provide targeted relief for drivers throughout the region. Measures might include extra turn lanes, longer highway on- and off-ramps, upgrading traffic signals, or new or wider roads. Such common-sense solutions will alleviate bottlenecks, reduce congestion, and increase travel time reliability.

3. *Promote Commute Alternatives*

Promote a range of commuting alternatives for people seeking to reduce their dependence on driving, including ways to increase incentives for commuters to use transit, carpool, vanpool, telework, bicycle, or walk to work, and marketing programs to incentivize employers to encourage commuting alternatives. These types of measures can reduce rush-hour congestion, make a demonstrable impact on emissions and make more efficient use of the existing system.

4. *Pedestrian Amenities*

Prioritize small-scale improvements that will encourage walking as a means of transportation in all corners of the region, for all types of trips, for all ages and groups. Projects might include sidewalks, crosswalks, and crossing signals. In addition to increasing the prevalence of walking, pedestrian amenities will increase safety, make activity centers more vibrant, and promote public health.

5. *Bicycle Amenities*

Make bicycling a safer and more viable option for more people. That means investing in more bike lanes and bike paths, expanding bike-sharing systems like Capital Bikeshare, and providing more bicycle parking. These kinds of improvements will enhance bicyclist safety, provide more bicycling opportunities, and reduce vehicle-related pollutants.

6. *Alternative Fuel Vehicles*

Make refueling alternative fuel vehicles more convenient in order to encourage more consumers to purchase such vehicles. Investing in a system of refueling and recharging stations for vehicles that run on electricity, natural gas, or bio-fuels instead of petroleum-based fuels will result in reduced emissions of vehicle-related pollutants, improved environmental quality and fuel cost savings for drivers.

B. Ongoing Strategies

The text will note that the TPB has identified a number of ongoing priorities that deserve attention and investment over time. The price tag for some of these strategies is high, but costs will only get higher if these priorities are deferred.

1. *Metro Maintenance*

The Metrorail and Metrobus system must be kept safe and in working order. This means addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance, carrying out needed maintenance as it arises, and providing an ongoing and dependable source of revenue to pay for metro maintenance and rehabilitation. These actions will lead to increased safety, reliability, and comfort on bus and rail.

2. *Road & Bridge Maintenance*

Make travel by car, bus, or truck safe, reliable, and comfortable by ensuring that needed road and bridge maintenance projects are completed as a first priority for use of highway funding. Maintaining roads and bridges will lead to increased safety, reliability, and comfort for drivers.

3. *Bus Priority*

Make bus service more convenient, reliable, and efficient. This can be done by creating bus-only lanes and queue jumps that allow buses to proceed with little or no traffic delay, and installing pre-boarding payment systems to allow passengers to board buses faster. These measures would help buses keep to their schedules, improve bus service throughout the region, and reduce roadway congestion.

4. *Roadway Efficiency*

Provide small scale improvements to the roadway system that smooth traffic flow, minimize delays, and improve the efficiency of the existing road network. This includes coordinating traffic signals and construction schedules, providing drivers with real-time traffic information, and expanding “open-road” electronic toll payment systems. In addition to reducing congestion these actions would increase travel time reliability and ensure more efficient use of the transportation system.

5. *Accessible Transportation*

Improve access to the existing transit system and other transportation services for people with disabilities. This might include making changes to existing Metro stations and bus stops to make them more accessible, improving MetroAccess and other paratransit services, and providing

more wheelchair-accessible taxis region-wide. These efforts would create more and better travel options for those with disabilities.

6. Traffic Laws

Make the transportation system safer, and reduce the number of traffic-related injuries and fatalities by updating existing traffic laws to accommodate all road-users (including bicyclists and pedestrians). Local jurisdictions would increase enforcement of traffic laws and increase public information and outreach regarding these laws. Actions such as these will enhance bicyclist, pedestrian, and driver safety, and provide a safer environment that would encourage more bicycling and walking opportunities.

C. Long-Term Strategies

Grounded in the principles of the TPB Vision and Region Forward, the TPB's long-term priority strategies recognize current realities: transportation funding is tight and the region is continuing to grow. Therefore, we need to be smart about our transportation decision-making, beginning with the fact that we need to make better use of infrastructure that is already in place. That means we need to focus as much growth as possible in regional activity centers and make sure that existing connections among activity centers and within activity centers are maximized.

But we also need to be visionary. We need to expand the use of road pricing to manage demand for driving while raising much needed revenue. And we need to build an extensive system of high-quality bus services that can be as attractive as rail transit, but more extensive in coverage.

Building upon the previously listed near-term and ongoing strategies, the TPB's long-term priority strategies are designed to be an integrated, mutually supportive system. For example, toll roads that manage demand will provide free-flowing road capacity that is essential for bus rapid transit.

1. Strategy A: Express Toll Lanes with Rapid Bus Transit

Express toll lanes will give drivers throughout the region the option to avoid highway congestion. New rapid bus service on the toll lanes will provide high-capacity, congestion-free travel and bring transit service to new areas. Tolls will cover most of the cost of the new lanes and bus service.

2. Strategy B: Concentrated Growth with More Transit Capacity

More housing and jobs located near transit means more people can use the existing transit system and will have more opportunities to walk or bicycle to nearby destinations. Eight-car trains and station enhancements on Metrorail and more frequent bus service will accommodate increased ridership demand.

3. Strategy A + B: Combine Express Toll Lanes, Rapid Bus Transit, Concentrated Growth, and More Transit Capacity

Combining expanded road and transit options with concentrated development near transit will give more people greater access to a wider variety of travel options. This would provide greater overall benefit to the region, but at a significantly higher cost.

IV. Public Response to Web-based Survey

The text will describe the responses to the web-based survey of 600 residents of the region on:

1. Goals and challenges
2. Strategies
3. Additional questions

V. Recommendations

The recommendations section will synthesize the input on and analysis of the goals, challenges, and strategies, and identify regional priorities. These priorities will be based upon analysis described in Section III and survey results described in Section IV, as well as public comment received on the draft plan to be released in July 2013.