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February 12, 2004

Mr. Neal Fitzpatrick  
Audubon Naturalist Society of the  
Central Atlantic States

Mr. Lee Epstein  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Mr. Michael Replogle  
Environmental Defense

Dear Messrs. Fitzpatrick, Epstein, and Replogle:

In your letter of January 28, 2004 to the Chairman of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the Honorable Christopher Zimmerman, you refer to a January 16, 2004 telephone conversation which I had with your legal counsel, Mr. Langley R. Shook. You state that I informed your legal counsel that with respect to "the TPB's latest improved version of the Version 2.1 travel model" that you "had all the data and set-ups necessary to properly and fully utilize the model." Please be advised that my statement to your legal counsel was in reference to the adopted Version 2.1C model used for the conformity analysis approved by the TPB on December 17, 2003, and not the improvements to the Version 2.1C model which are currently under development. As indicated in the attached correspondence, full model set-ups for and data inputs to the adopted Version 2.1C model have been transmitted to your consultant, Mr. Norm Marshall, as I reported to your legal counsel. (I have not yet received a response from Mr. Marshall to my letter of October 29, 2003 offering to provide the final Round 6.3 socio-economic forecasts which he requested in his letter of October 10, 2003.) No data or model set-ups have yet been documented or made available on the improvements to the Version 2.1C travel model currently under development.

You also state in your January 28, 2004 letter that the December 12, 2003 memorandum, "Maryland Inter County Connector (ICC) Corridor Base Year 2000 Validation Using Version 2.1C Travel Demand Model" which was included as Appendix B of a TPB report of December 24, 2003 "documented that an improved Version 2.1C model was completed last summer by COG staff." In fact, this December 12, 2003 memorandum was adapted from a project documentation memo prepared for, and approved by, the ICC Travel Demand Task Force in August 2003. The

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memorandum reports on detailed validation procedures applied to the Version 2.1C travel demand model in preparation for its use in the ICC Corridor study; documents the status of model validation activities as of August 2003; and notes that "some additional changes to the model are still possible, pending review by the project team." Section 1.A of the TPB report of December 24, 2003 references Appendix B to the report as an example of the kind of model refinements that can be made for other areas of the region and incorporated into improved versions of the regional model. Element 1.A 1 of the proposed TPB work program for the remainder of FY2004 through FY2008 presented as the TPB Travel Forecasting subcommittee meeting of January 23, 2004 states that the TPB staff intends to "focus on implementing network coding refinements, such as those considered in the ICC study area, to other areas in the regional network system."

As you note in your January 28, 2004 letter, since August 2003 "improvements have continued to be made, especially with respect to the ICC study area and alternative alignments." I reported at the January 23, 2004 meeting of the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee that work on these improvements has continued, with the goal of releasing the model improvements and results at the time that such results are presented for public review at the ICC public meetings, currently scheduled for late spring or early summer of 2004.

More recently, however, on February 11, 2004 the Maryland Department of Transportation submitted to the TPB two build corridors for the ICC, each with managed lanes and express bus service, to be included in the conformity analysis for the 2004 amendments to the Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) and the FY2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In order to include this project in the conformity analysis, TPB staff will be implementing improvements to the Version 2.1C model which address key features and impacts of the project. Accordingly, TPB staff plans to release for review and comment an initial Version 2.1D model which incorporates all of the improvements made to date to the adopted Version 2.1C model, as well as some additional improvements resulting from the first phase report of the TRB Review Committee. This release will occur at the March 19, 2004 meeting of the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee. On that date a complete set of documentation will be available to all interested parties, along with full model set-ups, data inputs, and validation results.

Toward the end of your letter of January 20, 2004 you state that following the release by TPB staff of model set-ups on earlier validation work leading up to the currently adopted Version 2.1C model, "the resulting independent oversight led to the identification of a number of substantive errors, some of which were subsequently acknowledged by TPB staff and corrected in model Version 2.1C. Other issues continue to be discussed as concerns of the National Academy of Sciences/TRB model review panel." TPB staff is not aware of any "substantive errors" that were identified in

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the course of this previous "independent oversight" activity, all of which was documented in a detailed comment and response format and made available to agencies and stakeholders involved in the TPB modeling process. To the contrary, TPB staff was gratified that the TRB Review Committee concurred with TPB responses on key issues raised during this earlier "independent oversight" activity, including the fact that all network traffic is included in emissions calculations, and that using data from the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) rather than locally gathered data to develop or enhance a travel demand model is not to be recommended. Even with respect to the use of K-factors in the model, which the TRB Committee noted is "the subject of active, continuing debate among modeling professionals," the adopted Version 2.1C model subjected significantly fewer trip interchanges to such factors than an alternative model structure recommended by your consultant, Smart Mobility. Other issues raised by the TRB Committee are being addressed in ongoing TPB work program efforts to improve the Version 2.1C model, as described in the December 24, 2003 document presented at the January 23, 2004 meeting of the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee.

In closing, I wish to assure you that the TPB staff is committed to implementing all of the viable improvements identified for the Version 2.1C model as soon as practicable, and to making the results of this work available for review and comment by all interested parties in the TPB process in a timely and convenient manner. TPB staff looks forward to receiving your comments and those of other interested parties on the new Version 2.1D model, beginning with its release on March 19, 2004, and continuing as work proceeds on the refinement and use of the model over the coming months.

Sincerely,



Ronald F. Kirby  
Director, Department of  
Transportation Planning

cc: Langley R. Shook, Sidley, Austin Brown and Wood  
Nelson Castellanos, Federal Highway Administration  
Neil Pedersen, Maryland State Highway Administration