TPB news

A Publication of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

VOLUME XVI, ISSUE 9 APRIL 2009

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST:

TPB Meeting. April 15:

- **Approval of Amendments to the TIP to include projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**
- **Approval of the 2009 Regional Bike to Work Day Proclamation**

More information may be found at: www.mwcog.org/transportation

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF *TPB news*:

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

STREET SMART SPRING CAMPAIGN BEGINS

On Wednesday, March 25, area leaders gathered to promote the *Street Smart* Campaign – a program designed to educate the public, drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists about safely sharing the roads.

Penelope Gross, Chairman of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Board of Directors and Vice Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors delivered opening remarks at the campaign launch. "Pedestrian fatalities account for one-quarter of all traffic deaths in the metropolitan Washington region," Gross said. "That startling figure illustrates why education efforts, such as *Street Smart*, are so important."

The *Street Smart* effort, in concert with other safety measures, has shown strong indications of making the region's streets safer. The District of Columbia, the region's most pedestrian/cycling-centric jurisdiction, experienced a 46 percent drop in pedestrian- and bicycle-related fatalities in 2008 from the prior year (2008: 14 pedestrians and one cyclist; 2007: 25 pedestrians and three cyclists). On average,

(Continued on page 2)

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT: REGIONAL SIGNAL TIMING

Many regional commuters sit in stop-and-go traffic every day, often at the mercy of traffic signals. Traffic signal timing, also referred to as signal optimization, received attention at the TPB meeting on March 18, 2009. The timing of traffic signals along a corridor is an oft lamented traffic woe of the region's commuters.

Signal optimization is a traffic engineering technique whereby traffic signals (often groups of signals in corridors and/or isolated systems) are re-timed to manage

(Continued on page 5)

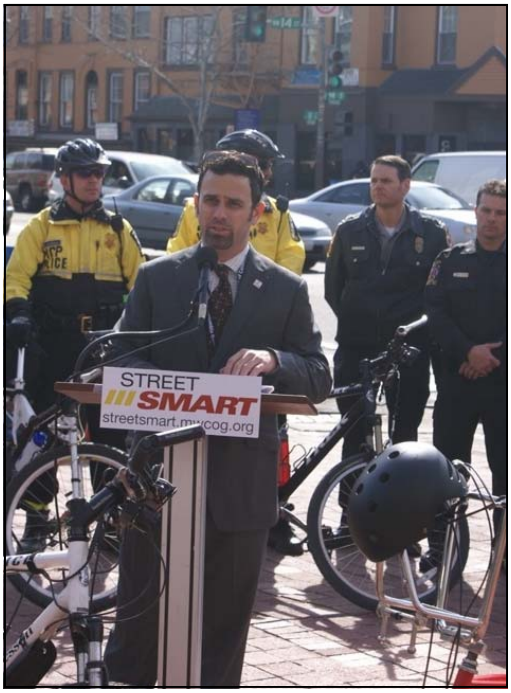
Source: John Deamond

Commuters stop for a red light on Rockville Pike.

2009 STREET SMART CAMPAIGN

(Continued from page 1)

pedestrians account for 30 percent of the District's traffic fatalities, according to the District Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Police Department.



***Gabe Klein, Director of the District Department of Transportation and TPB member, participated in the launch of the 2009* Street Smart *Spring Campaign. For more information on* Street Smart, *visit* www.mwcog.org/streetsmart.

Street Smart is an annual public education, awareness and behavioral change campaign in the Washington, DC, suburban Maryland and northern Virginia area. Since its inception in 2002, the campaign has used advertising, public awareness efforts, and additional law enforcement to respond to the challenges of pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

The *Street Smart* program emphasizes education of motorists and pedestrians through mass media. It is meant to complement, not replace, the efforts of state and local governments and agencies to build safer streets and sidewalks, enforce laws, and train better drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. New to the campaign this year is a heightened focus on cyclist safety, complementing the overall education and enforcement effort.

Pedestrians and bicyclists account for 25 percent of those killed on the Washington region's roads – approximately 89 deaths every year. Pedestrian fatalities outnumber homicides in many of the participating jurisdictions. Research shows the responsibility for pedestrian incidents is shared between drivers and pedestrians. The region also sees approximately 3,000 pedestrian injuries each year; and approximately 92 percent of pedestrians involved in local crashes with motor vehicles sustained one or more injuries.

The goals of the campaign are to change motorist and pedestrian behavior, and reduce pedestrian and bicyclist deaths and injuries, by:

- Increasing awareness of the consequences of pedestrian and bicycle crashes.
- Recommending actions to reduce risks, such as:
  - Use Crosswalks
  - Obey Signals
  - Look Left-Right-Left
  - Slow Down
  - Stop for Pedestrians
- Increasing awareness of law enforcement action against unsafe and illegal behavior.

The *Street Smart* effort focuses on "three E's:" education, enforcement and evaluation.

Education targets pedestrians and drivers, and uses recurring waves of radio, newspaper, bus advertising, internet ads, hand-outs and posters to get the message out. Advertising conveys simple messages such as "Stop for Pedestrians" and "Cross Streets Carefully", while media events help publicize enforcement. A strong focus of the campaign is to reach the area's Hispanic residents through Spanish-language brochures and advertising outreach.

Enforcement provides an incentive for residents to heed the campaign messages, and a focus for media attention. A region-wide enforcement initiative is supporting the mass media and public awareness campaign.

Evaluation is vital to understanding the awareness level for the message and the future direction of the campaign.

The *Street Smart* campaign was initiated by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee of the Transportation Planning Board in 2002. The Spring 2009 advertising campaign will run from March 23 to April 19. ✦

ITEMS IN BRIEF

I-66 Spot Improvements Back in Conformity Testing

On March 18, members of the TPB voted to amend the action taken at their February 18 meeting by reinstating the I-66 Spot Improvements project in the region's air quality conformity analysis for the annual update of the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

The amended resolution was taken up at the request of TPB member and Fairfax County Supervisor Catherine Hudgins. The resolution placed a condition on moving forward with two of the three spot improvements that required the Virginia Department of Transportation to complete multimodal analyses of the corridor. Rather than simply a reversal of its previous action – which would have placed no conditions on proceeding with the spot improvements – Hudgins suggested that the amended action represents a compromise. "Some will say that this is a victory for I-66 widening advocates, others will say that this is a victory for advocates of the multimodal study," Hudgins said. "I think this is a victory for the entire community."

At its February 18 meeting, the TPB voted to remove the I-66 spot improvements project inside the Capital Beltway from the region's annual transportation plan update until the completion of a previously requested multi-modal study.

Federal Stimulus Funding Update

The recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides substantial amounts of funding allocated by formula to state departments of transportation and regional transit agencies. The Act also provides $1.5 billion in discretionary transportation grant funding for multimodal transportation uses, including roads, bridges, transit, and freight, and is intended to fund transportation projects with national or regional significance. This component of the legislation provides the region with an opportunity to plan and seek funding for a project, or set of projects, that are truly regional in scope and impact.

Recognizing this opportunity, the TPB Scenario Study Task Force has charged TPB staff to work with various TPB technical committees to create a regional package of bus and roadway improvements based on current initiatives aimed at expanding high quality bus transit. This package of projects could serve as the first phase of an extensive regional BRT network running mostly on a network of variably priced highway lanes, as proposed under the TPB CLRP Aspirations scenario. TPB staff will continue to work with the Scenario Study Task Force to refine this project concept so that it will address regional transportation concerns and also compete well in a national pool of applicants for the discretionary grant funding. ✦

UPCOMING APRIL AGENDA ITEMS

The TPB's April 15 agenda is expected to include the following items:

- Approval of Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 TIP to include additional projects funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- Approval of the Regional Bike to Work Day 2009 Proclamation.
- Briefing on Additional Findings from the 2007/2008 Regional Household Travel Survey.
- Update on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) Program.
- Briefing on the 2008 Composition of the Vehicle Fleet in the Washington Region.
- Briefing on the Regional "Street Smart" Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Education Campaign.
- Briefing on Draft Round 7.2 Cooperative Forecasts of Population, Households, and Employment.

Information and materials for the monthly TPB meeting are posted on the TPB website one week prior to the meeting: www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb. ✦

HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY

The TPB has continued to receive monthly briefings on the results from the 2007/2008 Regional Household Travel Survey. The most recent briefing at the March TPB meeting indicated that transit use is increasing in the region.

TPB staff reported a change in commuting mode share, meaning that commuters are shifting the mode of transportation they use to get to work. Transit use has increased by 2.5 percent since 1994 and the use of the single-occupant vehicle increased by one percent. The combination of these two trends resulted in a 3.5 percent decrease in carpooling. Some factors influencing this shift include the Metrorail extensions completed since 1994, increased local bus service, the existence of smart benefits and Metrochek, and the flexibility of work hours. Additionally, on an average weekday about five percent of the region's workforce is working from home rather than commuting to the office.

Regional household travel surveys are periodically conducted by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), such as the TPB, to obtain detailed information about socio-economic characteristics and travel behaviors. The information collected in these surveys is used to develop and calibrate regional travel demand forecasting models. These models are used to forecast future travel demands based on projected household and employment growth and regional transportation system changes. The last large scale regional household survey of this type for the Washington region was conducted in 1994.

Between January 2007 and March 2008, the TPB surveyed 11,000 households in the Washington region and adjacent areas to gather updated information on area-wide travel patterns. This data will help guide future transportation planning as the area continues to grow, and assist state and local governments in deciding which transportation improvements will benefit their citizens the most. The Washington region is among the fastest growing areas in the country.

For more information about the 2007/2008 Household Travel Survey, please visit www.mwcog.org/hts. ✦

TPB News, 777 North Capitol St, NE, Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290
202-962-3237; scrawford@mwcog.org
"TPB News" at www.mwcog.org/transportation

OTHER MARCH AGENDA ITEMS

In addition to the items covered in this newsletter, the TPB's March 18 agenda included the following items:

- Approval of Amendments to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Approval of FY 2009 UPWP Carryover Funding to FY 2010.
- Approval of the FY 2010 UPWP.
- Approval of the FY 2010 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP).
- Approval of Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include Projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
- Update on the Scenario Study Task Force and the Development of a Regional BRT Project

Information and materials for the monthly TPB meeting are posted on the TPB website one week prior to the meeting: www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb. ✦

TRAFFIC SIGNAL OPTIMIZATION

(Continued from page 1)

delay for vehicles on the roadway system while ensuring vehicle and pedestrian safety. Engineers use a combination of traffic volume counts, in-car and in-field travel time observations, control center observations, and computer analysis to determine signal timings given the complex interactions of traffic flows.

"Optimized" does not mean "without delay". The motorist may still experience significant delays even after signal or corridor optimization, if, for example:

- There are high traffic volumes / left and right turns / high cross-traffic volumes;
- The motorist is traveling in the opposite direction of predominant flow; and
- The safety of and sufficient crossing time for pedestrians necessitate extra time.

It is overall system delay, not necessarily the delay experienced by a given individual motorist, which is minimized in optimization.

The process of signal optimization is a complex engineering exercise. Once the signal, corridor, or area to be optimized has been identified, engineers generally go through the following steps:

1. "Before" field observations are taken by technicians, including travel time runs, current signal timings, and traffic volumes (including cross traffic and left and right turns).
2. Data is entered for a computer analysis with specialized software, outputting suggested timings and estimated benefits.
3. Engineers interpret and adjust the computer results, and fine-tune and implement the new set of timings. Professional judgment based on experience is used in adjusting signal timings, as well as the computer output.
4. "After" field observations are undertaken for the retimed signals, with readjustments if necessary.
5. Over time, engineers undertake ongoing observations spot-checking for problems and investigating timings in response to public inquiries or complaints.

An engineering rule-of-thumb recommends that signals be reanalyzed for optimization about once every three years on average, more often for coordinated signals and less often for more isolated signals. Regular observations in the field or from control centers can help determine whether a re-optimization is needed.

TPB staff conducted a survey of member state and local agencies in February and March 2009 to obtain feedback on optimization. The results indicated that 80 percent of the signals were either computer optimized (56 percent) or spot-checked (24 percent) by signals officials in the 2006 to 2008 time frame. A relatively small proportion of the region's signals, about 18 percent, were not checked in the 2006 to 2008 period.

David Snyder, TPB Representative from the City of Falls Church, noted the impact of signal timing can have as a method of congestion relief. After the TPB received the report on regional signal optimization, he commented that signal optimization "is important to relieve unnecessary congestion, unnecessary stress on drivers, and unnecessary environmental damage due to idling vehicles." However, he said he was surprised to hear that 80 percent of the region's signals are considered to be optimally functioning. He urged the TPB to continue monitoring the region's signal optimization process.

There is ongoing awareness and commitment to safe and effective signals operations among the transportation agencies of the region, and continuing interagency coordination through the TPB Traffic Signals Subcommittee and other forums. There are significant benefits to be gained from providing sufficient resources to ensure good traffic signal operations. ✦

Bids and Solicitations

For current COG solicitations available for bid/proposals, please visit "Doing Business with COG:" www.mwcog.org/doingbusiness/cogbid/ ✦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 N. Capitol St., N.E. (Enter from 1st St., N.E.).

April 2009

3 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)

3 TPB Steering Committee (noon)

9 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)

14 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)

15 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10 am)

15 Transportation Planning Board (noon)

21 Travel Management Subcommittee (9:30 am)

21 Employer Outreach Committee (10 am)

23 TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (2 pm)

28 Regional Bus Subcommittee (noon)

Dates and times subject to change. Please visit our website at www.mwcog.org/transportation for up-to-date information.

May 2009

1 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)

1 TPB Steering Committee (noon)

12 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)

13 Bike to Work Day Steering Committee (10 am)

13 Car Free Day Steering Committee (11:30 am)

14 Freight Subcommittee (1 pm)

14 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)

19 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)

19 Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)

20 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10 am)

20 Transportation Planning Board (noon)

22 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)

26 Travel Management Subcommittee (9:30 am)

26 20th Annual Public Transit Forum (11 am)

27 Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force (noon)

28 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)

June 2009

5 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)

5 TPB Steering Committee (noon)

9 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)

11 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)

16 Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee (10 am)

16 Regional TDM Marketing Group (noon)

17 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10 am)

17 Transportation Planning Board (noon)

23 Travel Management Subcommittee (9:30 am)

23 Regional Bus Subcommittee (noon)

This document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Sarah Crawford at scrawford@mwcog.org, (202) 962-3237 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Allow seven working days for preparation of material.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290

FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. Postage Paid
Washington, D.C.
Permit #9770