A Citizens Guide
To Transportation Decision-Making
in the Washington Metropolitan Region

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Open the morning paper. Turn on the radio or TV. You will almost always find stories about transportation.

One day, you hear that a big project—like the Metro Blue Line extension or the Woodrow Wilson Bridge replacement—is finally moving forward. The next day, you read that the the region is facing a tranportation funding crisis. Meanwhile, you listen to traffic reporters in the morning and the evening telling you how to avoid congestion traps, which seem to be slowing down your commute everywhere you turn.

And you may wonder: Who is in charge of making decisions about transportation in this region? How do all the projects in the different states and counties and cities get tied together? How can a citizen have an impact?

There are no easy answers. Dozens of decisions are made for every transportation project. These decisions, which are often made over a number of years, can move a project forward or hold it back. In the Washington region, the agencies that make those decisions are scattered across Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, the federal government, and numerous local jurisdictions and agencies.

In the middle of all of these decisions and key players stands the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board—the TPB—which is responsible, under federal mandate, for coordinating the planning and funding for the region's transportation system. Not an easy job, but an important one.

Understanding the transportation planning process is also not an easy job, but we hope this Citizens Guide can help. The TPB designed this booklet to help explain how and where transportation decisions are made in this region, and the role that the TPB plays in coordinating this process.

Contents

Some Basic Facts

The Region

Straddling the Potomac River, the Washington metropolitan region encompasses the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. The region's geographic area covers more than 3,000 square miles.

This metropolitan region is currently home to some 4.2 million people and 2.7 million jobs. By 2025, the regional population is expected to reach at least 5.5 million—an increase of 31 percent. The number of jobs over the next 25 years will increase 41 percent to 3.8 million.

The Transportation System

The region's current transportation network includes 14,100 lane miles of highways, more than 200 miles of carpool lanes, 103 miles of Metrorail and 162 additional miles of commuter rail. In addition to rail, we have an extensive bus network of local and commuter services. Three major airports—Reagan National, Dulles International and Baltimore/ Washington International (BWI)—serve the metropolitan area. The region has one of the most extensive bicycle/pedestrian trail systems in the country, stretching from the outer suburbs in places like Purcelville, Virginia, to the National Mall in the heart of Washington.

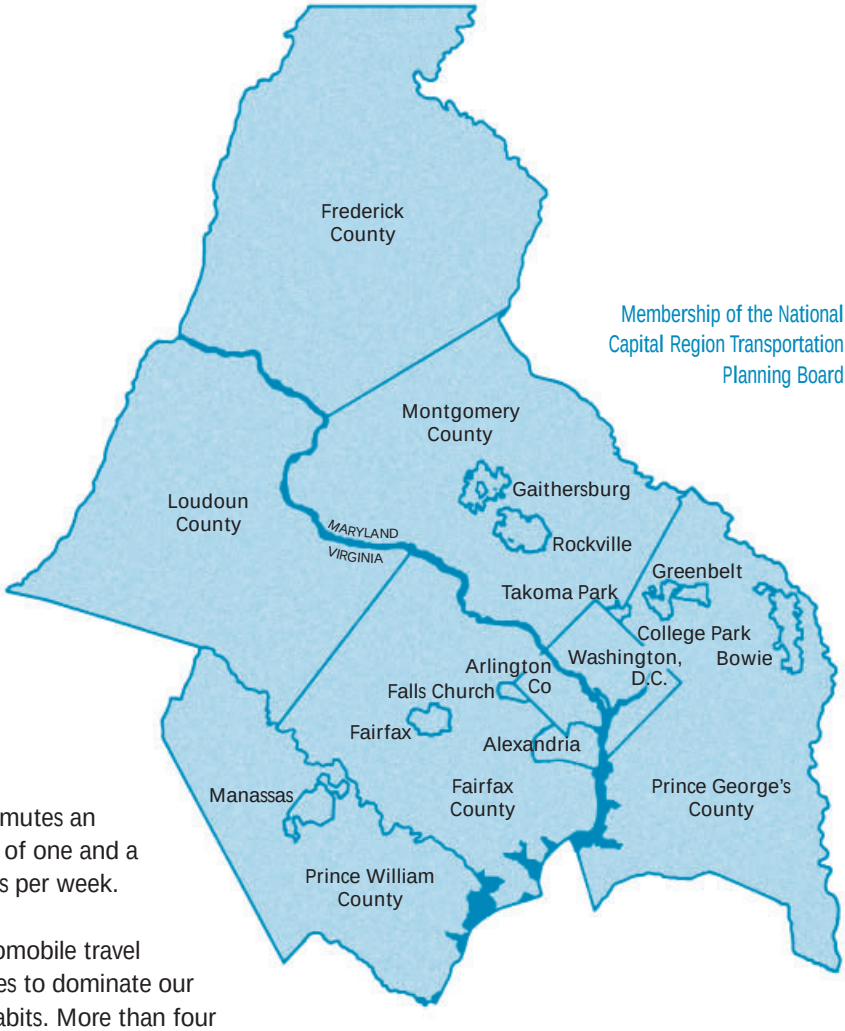
Travel Patterns

The urban core of Washington continues to be our economic center and a tourist magnet attracting visitors from across the globe. Twenty-five years from now the core will continue to have the greatest concentration of jobs in the region. But people increasingly are traveling from one suburb to another. Two out of three daily trips in 2025 are expected to be suburb-to-suburb travel. Most of the region's existing transportation arteries—including the Metro system—were built to serve travel between the suburbs and the center of Washington.

The region's extensive public transit system is well used. More than 40 percent of the region's work trips to the urban core are made by public transit. Eighteen percent of all daily work trips throughout the region are taken with transit. Nationwide, Metrorail ranks second to New York City's subway in the number of riders it serves. The Metrobus system ranks fifth nation-wide in ridership.

The Washington region is the carpool capital of the nation. According to the 1990 Census, almost 16 percent of commuters used carpools or vanpools to get to work.

People in the region are increasingly working at home or from satellite locations. Recent estimates indicate that 15 percent of the region's workforce



Membership of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

telecommutes an average of one and a half days per week.

But automobile travel continues to dominate our travel habits. More than four out of five daily trips in the region, including non-work travel, are made by car. Automobile ownership is high and continues to grow faster than the increase in households, jobs or licensed drivers. There is now approximately one vehicle for every licensed driver. Ninety percent of residents age 16 and above have drivers licenses.

One-fourth of trips in the region involves travel to and from jobs. These commuting trips are generally twice as long as non-work trips. They also tend to occur at the same time of day and tend to go to the same places. Therefore, work travel has a significant impact on congestion problems in the region.

But most daily travel is not related to work. Three-fourths of trips are not for commuting. When people are not commuting, they are traveling for a variety of reasons—like picking up kids at school, going to movies or shopping for groceries. The locations of these activities are often more spread out than job sites, and this dispersion affects the kind of transportation services and facilities we need.

Who are the Key Players?

Washington may be the power center of the world, but within the Washington region, power is very dispersed. No single government or agency can be said to "dominate" transportation decision-making. Federal, state and local governments, as well as other agencies, all have important functions and powers, but they are individually limited in what they can do. (Because decision-making powers are divided, the TPB, a regional transportation planning organization, was established for increased coordination. But more about that later…)

If you want to get a real understanding of regional transportation decision-making, you need to know about a number of agencies and elected bodies in different parts of the region. Here are some of the basics:

The State Departments of Transportation

State departments of transportation—known as DOTs—are largely responsible for building and maintaining the highway systems we rely upon. They also support and promote public transit, commuter rail, ridesharing, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

A state DOT, which typically employs thousands of people, is headed by a secretary of transportation who is appointed by the governor. Nationwide,

the DOTs are historically best known for the role they played in building the U.S. Interstate Highway System, which began in the 1950s and today is mostly completed. Although principally funded by the federal government, the Interstate system was planned and constructed by the state DOTs. In recent years, the DOTs have become more active in promoting modes of transportation that do not rely solely upon the automobile.

The state DOTs planned, constructed and maintain the Interstate Highway system.

In this region, the Maryland DOT, the Virginia DOT and the D.C. Division of Transportation are the largest recipients of funding raised through the federal Highway Trust Fund. In addition, the DOTs are the main recipients of state highway funds, which are approved annually by the state legislatures.

All DOTs are not alike, particularly in this region. For example, the **Virginia DOT (VDOT)** has unusually far-reaching authority over the state's public roads, bridges and tunnels. Covering 56,504 miles, VDOT has the third largest state-maintained highway system in the country. The VDOT system includes most local and county roads in the state (with some key exceptions).

Maryland's DOT (MDOT) has an unusual system of funding transportation. The state's Transportation Trust Fund is a unified pot of money that provides MDOT flexibility to fund priority projects across the state regardless of transportation mode—including roads, public transit, aviation and ports. Unlike Virginia, however, MDOT's authority is limited to primary and secondary roads. Most local roads are controlled and maintained by cities and counties.

The District of Columbia is not a state, but in many ways it acts like one. Similarly, the **District Division of Transportation (DDOT)** is not officially a state DOT, but it performs many of the same functions. For example, DDOT has responsibility for the federal interstate highways that lie within the District's boundaries. The U.S. Department of Transportation recognizes DDOT as a state DOT. At the same time, DDOT acts as a department of city government that is responsible for local streets and roads.

Public Transit

Metro is one of the few public services in the Washington region that operates on a regional basis across state lines. The public transit agency that runs the Metro bus and rail systems is called the **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)**.

WMATA was created in 1967 by a compact among the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland to plan, finance, construct and operate a comprehensive mass transit system for the metropolitan area. The authority began building its rail system in 1969, acquired the four area bus systems in 1973 and began operating the first phase of Metrorail in 1976. The board of directors that governs WMATA includes elected and appointed officials from throughout the service area.

Metro is a regional transit system run by WMATA.

The Metrorail system radiates out from the downtown core of Washington. Metrobuses operate on regional routes, as well as feeding into Metrorail stations, creating a comprehensive mass transit network covering 1,500 square miles. In addition to the District of Columbia, the

Metro system includes Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church. Loudoun County is also a member of the WMATA compact, although Metro service is not currently operated within the county.

The Metro system is funded through a variety of sources including state and local government payments. The system receives federal funds directly through formula grants, through indirect state payments, and through special programs designed for new construction projects (for example, the federal New Starts program), preservation or other specially designated purposes. Farebox and other revenues from the system, such as advertising, are expected to provide roughly half of the funds needed for Metro's operations over the next 25 years. WMATA is the largest transit property in the United States without a dedicated source of funding.

Many jurisdictions fund their own local bus services in addition to the Metrobus system. These include Montgomery County's Ride-On, the Fairfax County Connector, Prince George's The Bus, Arlington Transit (ART), Alexandria's DASH and the City of Fairfax CUE systems. Loudoun County offers its own commuter bus service. Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park operate commuter buses through the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). The Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA), a division of MDOT, runs commuter bus service and commuter trains (the MARC service). Commuter trains in Virginia are operated through Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

Local Governments

A county in Maryland is not the same as a county in Virginia. Local governments in the region operate according to different rules in different places. But all local governments are essential players in regional transportation. Here are some of the key roles they play:

First, local jurisdictions have primary responsibility for zoning and comprehensive land use planning. Zoning codes divide localities into zones and stipulate the ways in which property may be used in those zones—such as industrial, retail, high-density residential or low-density residential. Zoning can also control the specifications of development, dealing with height, size, setbacks and other matters. In addition to zoning, local governments have other tools to affect land use. For example, they sometimes offer incentives to developers to construct buildings in certain places or follow particular standards.

Powers over land use lie (mostly) with local governments.

Of course, the density of development and the types of new construction have a direct impact on the transportation facilities needed by an area. Local comprehensive plans, which show existing and planned or projected land uses, usually include a component (an "element") that identifies transportation facilities that will be needed. Local governments use these comprehensive plans to promote transportation projects at the state level that will be consistent with local policies and needs.

The state legislatures have delegated more extensive land use powers to local governments in Maryland than in Virginia. Virginia is one of several states that operates under the so-called Dillon's

Transportation Responsibilities: Some Key Differences Within the Region			
	Who maintains freeways and primary roads?	Who maintains secondary roads?	For what transportation purposes are local and county taxes/fees used?
Suburban Maryland	MDOT, through the State Highway Administration, maintains freeways and primary roads.*	Counties and cities are responsible for most secondary roads. However, SHA maintains many secondary roads that are part of the state's system (e.g., minor arterials, and major collectors).	Locally generated transportation funds are used primarily for local roads and local transit. Excise taxes in some counties can be used for improvements to either primary or secondary roadways. (Unlike Virginia, the state provides the majority of Maryland's funding for WMATA.)
Northern Virginia	VDOT maintains freeways (such as I-95 and the Dulles Toll Road) and primary roads (route numbers of 600 or less) in the counties, including Arlington. Cities and towns with a population greater than 3,500 maintain primary routes, with some exceptions.*	In the counties, VDOT maintains secondary roads (route numbers greater than 600) except in Arlington County. In cities and towns, and in Arlington County, the local jurisdiction maintains secondary roads partly using funds allocated by the state.	Locally generated transportation funds are mainly used to support WMATA and other transit services. Arlington County and the cities also provide some funding for their streets and roads.
District of Columbia	DDOT maintains freeways and primary roads.*	DDOT is responsible for most roads. A limited number of roads in D.C. are maintained by the National Park Service.	Locally generated revenue is largely used to fund WMATA, but also for the city's streets and roads. WMATA operates D.C. bus routes on behalf of D.C.

*The National Park Service also maintains a number of facilities throughout the region.

Rule, a legal interpretation from the 19th century stipulating that local governments only possess those powers that the state explicitly delegates to them. The powers delegated to counties and cities in Virginia include zoning, comprehensive planning and other land use powers, but the state's historic focus on protecting private property rights has restricted the application of these powers. In contrast, Maryland's county-based "general" (comprehensive) plans contain a greater level of specificity that developers, the state and other agencies are obliged to respect.

Second, local and county jurisdictions in Maryland, and cities in Virginia (including Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas

and Manassas Park), have control over local roads, streets and transit systems. (Virginia's counties are a major exception, as noted below.) When a pothole needs to be fixed on a neighborhood street, that is usually the responsibility of these jurisdictions.

In most counties in Virginia, the state DOT is responsible for the construction and maintenance of most public streets and roads. In Northern Virginia, however, the state has granted one county, Arlington County, control over the majority of its streets and roads.

Third, local and county governments provide significant funding for transportation —approximately 13 percent of all regional transportation funds, according to a 1999 TPB study. This money comes from property and income taxes, and in some cases, sales taxes. In Northern Virginia, these local funds are mainly used to support transit services, including Metro, and for local streets and roads in the cities and in Arlington County. In Maryland, local transportation dollars are used to fund secondary road systems and local transit. In the District of Columbia, local taxes are largely used to support the Metro transit system, but also provide support for city roads.

Legislatures, the Governors and the D.C. Mayor

Who's got the money? That is often the key question in understanding transportation decision-making. Part of the answer is found in Richmond and Annapolis where the state legislatures annually decide how much funding they will allocate to the Washington metropolitan region.

The biggest chunk of transportation funding for the Washington region—69 percent—comes from state and federal sources. The allocation of these funds is part of the state budgeting process in the state legislature. At the beginning of every annual legislative session, the governors of Maryland and Virginia submit proposed capital improvement budgets for transportation to their state legislatures. (See pages 23-26 for descriptions of the processes in the different states.) These budgets may include state tax revenue, other revenue sources, including funds obtained through the sale of bonds, and federal funds that have been apportioned to the states through formula allocations.

The power of the purse lies with the states.

Using the governor's budget as a starting point, each state legislature (called the General Assembly in Maryland and Virginia) enacts a spending bill for transportation. Some transportation funding is allocated according to predetermined formulas. In other cases, projects are funded on an individual basis. As part of this process, legislators can promote funding for projects in their districts.

In the District of Columbia, which functions a lot like a state, the mayor submits a budget to the D.C. Council

that includes transportation funding. The Council, in turn, approves a spending bill. But unlike the states, the District of Columbia must submit its budget to the U.S. Congress for approval.

The Federal Government

Since the near-completion of the Interstate Highway System, the federal government's role in transportation has been diminished. However, federal regulations continue to exert a powerful influence over the transportation systems that are planned and built. And federal money remains essential.

Federal Highway Trust Fund dollars are apportioned annually on a formula basis for both highways and transit to every state including Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. In addition, congressional spending legislation ("appropriations") often includes specially designated funds—often called "earmarks" or "demonstration projects"—for specific projects sponsored by local congressional delegations. Even the President sometimes gets involved by promoting funding for special projects or programs in the region.

The federal government still has a lot of influence over transportation, especially in this region.

Federal laws and regulations ensure that national standards are applied in planning and constructing surface transportation projects. (See the box for more information on federal transportation laws.) These regulations are primarily administered by two federal agencies, the **Federal Highway Administration** and the **Federal Transit Administration**, both of which are housed at the **U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT)**. In large part, federal requirements drive the work of the region's Transportation Planning Board—as you will see in the next section.

Key Federal Laws Affecting Transportation Planning

INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT (ISTEA) – 1991

Commonly called "Ice Tea," this law made broad changes in the way transportation decisions are made, emphasizing balance of transportation modes, strengthening public involvement and giving more power to metropolitan planning organizations like the TPB. Much of the program structure of ISTEA was carried forward in successor legislation, TEA-21.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (TEA-21) – 1998

TEA-21 retained and expanded most of the programs of ISTEA, in addition to greatly increasing overall funding for transportation. TEA-21 will expire in 2003.

CLEAN AIR ACT AMENDMENTS (CAAA) – 1990

According to this legislation, the projects in metropolitan transportation plans and programs must collectively conform to air quality improvement goals.

Because D.C. is not part of any state, the federal government maintains a unique level of control over the District's government, including its transportation decision-making. Under the Home Rule system of government adopted in 1973, Congress reviews all legislation passed by the D.C. Council before it can become law, and retains authority over the District's budget, including transportation funding.

Other Public Sector Players

In addition to the agencies and jurisdictions mentioned earlier, a number of other organizations get involved in transportation decision making.

- **Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)**
  The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority plans and manages all the facilities at the Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport. The authority's oversight includes ground access to the airports.

- **National Park Service (NPS)**
  A number of roads and other facilities in the Washington metropolitan region are owned and managed by the National Park Service, including the George Washington Memorial Parkway, parts of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, the Suitland Parkway and Memorial Bridge. These facilities are financed through the Federal Lands Highways Program, which receives direct funding from Congress.

- **National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)**
  NCPC is a federal agency providing overall planning guidance for federal lands and buildings, and related transportation issues, throughout the national capital region.

- **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission (WMATC)**
  Although its name may be confusing, the WMATC regulates *privately* provided transportation. It has jurisdiction over interstate taxicabs, commercial bus and coach operations, and airport ground transportation.

- **Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT)**
  The VDRPT, an agency under the Virginia Secretary of Transportation (as is VDOT), provides technical and financial assistance to Virginia's public transit, ridesharing and railroad operations.

- **Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTP)**
  The 17-member CTB guides the work of VDOT much like a board of directors. The Virginia Secretary of Transportation serves as chairman. Among other things the CTB is responsible for developing the six-year Transportation Development Plan. See page 24 for more details.

- **Transportation Coordinating Council of Northern Virginia (TCC)**
  The Transportation Coordinating Council of Northern Virginia (TCC) is an advisory group of locally elected officials serving as a Northern Virginia caucus that recommends regional transportation priorities and funding allocations. The TCC was established by executive order of the governor. It has 27 members from 13 Northern Virginia jurisdictions, and 10 additional members from the Virginia General Assembly. The Northern Virginia representative to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) is the TCC Chairman. For more about the TCC and project selection, see page 22.

- **Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)**
  The NVTC coordinates public transit policies within Northern Virginia and appoints Virginia's representatives to the WMATA board. NVTC serves Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax,

and Falls Church. The NVTC is also a co-owner of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) along with the PRTC (described below). VRE operates commuter trains from Fredericksburg and Manassas into the District of Columbia.

- **Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)**
  PRTC operates local transit in Prince William and Stafford counties, and in the cities of Fredericksburg, Manassas and Manassas Park. PRTC is a co-owner of the VRE along with NVTC.

- **Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)**
  MTA is the public transportation arm of MDOT. Among other things, MTA operates and maintains the Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) service that runs trains from the District of Columbia through Montgomery and Frederick counties, to the city of Frederick and also into West Virginia. Another MARC line runs from D.C. to Baltimore. MTA also operates commuter buses in the Washington region and provides funding and support to WMATA.

- **Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA)**
  The SHA is MDOT's highway division. It is primarily responsible for planning, designing, building and maintaining Maryland's Interstate and state roads.

- **Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA)**
  The MAA, another MDOT division, owns and operates the Baltimore/Washington International (BWI) Airport, which serves as one of the region's three major airports.

- **Washington Suburban Transit Commission (WSTC)**
  WSTC plans and assists in financing the WMATA regional transit system for Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

- **Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)**
  M-NCPPC is a bi-county agency responsible under state legislation for General Plan development for Prince George's and Montgomery counties, in addition to overseeing a bi-county park system. M-NCPPC essentially serves as an umbrella organization over the two counties' planning boards and their planning departments.

Interest Groups

Interest groups are active in promoting their agendas at many different levels of transportation decision-making. Some groups are formed to support or oppose individual projects. For example, during the planning and development of I-66 in Northern Virginia in the 1960s and 70s, citizens organized themselves into opposing groups to fight the project or to support it.

Other groups are formed to support particular transportation modes, including bicycling, transit and roads. Still other groups are concerned with transportation issues that relate to broader values. Business groups, for example, support increased overall funding for transportation to spur economic development. Environmental groups want transportation options that will reduce reliance on automobile travel. The list of interest groups active in regional transportation decision-making is long and always changing.

What is the Transportation Planning Board?

TPB Members

City of Alexandria
Arlington County
City of Bowie
City of College Park
District of Columbia
City of Fairfax
Fairfax County
City of Falls Church
Frederick County
City of Gaithersburg
City of Greenbelt
Loudoun County
City of Manassas
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Prince William County
City of Rockville
City of Takoma Park
Maryland House of Delegates
Maryland Senate
Virginia House of Delegates
Virginia Senate
District Division of Transportation
Maryland DOT
Virginia DOT
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Ex-Officio Members

Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
National Capital Planning Commission
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority
National Park Service
Private Providers Task Force

The **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**—the **TPB** for short —is the organization that brings key decision-makers together to coordinate planning and funding for the region's transportation system.

How was the TPB created?

The TPB was created in1965 by the region's local and state governments to respond to federal highway legislation in 1962 that required the establishment of a "continuing, comprehensive and coordinated" transportation planning process in every urbanized area in the United States. Federal highway and transit legislation required the establishment of planning bodies, which later became known as **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)**, when it became clear that the construction of major transportation projects through and around urban areas needed to be coordinated with local and state jurisdictions.

The TPB is today one of the 341 MPOs across America. According to federal law, an MPO must be designated in every urbanized area with a population over 50,000. The TPB is designated as this region's MPO by the governors of Virginia and Maryland and the mayor of Washington based upon an agreement among the local governments.

What is the TPB's relationship with COG?

The TPB became associated with the **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)** in 1966. COG was established in 1957 by local cities and counties to deal with regional concerns including growth, housing, environment, public health and safety—as well as transportation. Although the TPB is an independent body, its staff is provided by COG's Department of Transportation Planning.

What geographic area does the TPB's planning process cover?

TThe TPB's planning area covers the District of Columbia and surrounding jurisdictions. In Maryland these jurisdictions include Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County, plus the cities of Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville, and Takoma Park. In Virginia, the planning area includes Alexandria, Arlington County, the City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Manassas, and Prince William County.

Who are the TPB's members?

The TPB's membership is comprised of the key transportation decision-makers in the metropolitan Washington region. The board includes local officials—mayors, city council members, county board members and others—as well as representatives from the state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the state legislatures. The TPB also includes non-voting representatives from key federal agencies, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and the TPB's Private Providers Task Force.

Management and Operations

In recent years, the TPB has championed improvements in the ways transportation is managed and operated. Such improvements often use computer and communications technologies to squeeze more efficiency out of the transportation infrastructure that already exists. These measures include better traveler information systems, seamless transit payment systems, and improvements in emergency response coordination. The terrorist attacks of September 11 put transportation management and operations enhancements for emergency preparedness on the "front burner."

What are the TPB's major roles?

The TPB does not exercise direct control over funding and does not implement projects, but it does perform a range of activities that promote an integrated approach to transportation development. The requirements of federal law compel the key transportation players in the region to work through the TPB process.

The TPB exercises its basic role as a coordinating agency in several ways:

1. The TPB ensures compliance with federal laws and requirements. Federal requirements inject consistency and coordination into regional transportation decision-making. The federally mandated metropolitan planning process requires all MPOs across the country to produce two basic documents—a long-range plan, which in the Washington region is called the **Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP),** and a **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, which lists projects and programs that will be funded in the next six years. Since 2000, the CLRP has used a planning horizon of 25 years. In order to receive federal funding, transportation projects must be included in the CLRP and the TIP.

Federal law also requires the TPB to show that the region will have adequate funds to build the projects listed in these two main planning documents. The funding for the CLRP and TIP must be "reasonably expected to be available," according to federal transportation law enacted in 1991. This financial constraint is intended to make sure the different partners in the region's transportation system are realistically planning for the future.

Commuter Connections

The TPB is not only involved in long-term planning. The Commuter Connections programs, which are administered through the TPB, provide services that are designed to reduce congestion and improve air quality in the short-term. These programs include:

- Ridematching services;
- The "Guaranteed Ride Home" program;
- Promotion of telecommuting, including telework resource centers ;
- Assistance to employers in setting up commuter efficiency programs.

In addition, the TPB must make sure that the projects in its CLRP and the TIP, taken collectively, contribute to air quality improvement goals for the region. This is a requirement of the federal Clean Air Act. The TPB must also comply with federal laws, regulations and policies stipulating that regional transportation plans must not disproportionately affect low-income or minority communities in an adverse way.

2. The TPB provides a regional transportation policy framework and a forum for coordination. While federal law and regulations drive much of the region's regular transportation planning activities, the TPB has also developed a policy framework—known as the Vision—that is intended to guide the region's transportation investments in the new century.

Approved in 1998, the Vision is a long-range document laying out key goals and strategies that will help the region to develop the transportation system it needs to sustain economic development, environ-

mental quality and a high quality of life. The agencies that implement transportation projects—the states, the District of Columbia, the regional transit authority and others—must show that the goals of their projects are consistent with the Vision.

3. The TPB provides technical resources for decision-making. Finally, the TPB is a technical resource. The TPB staff is continually working in close coordination with the staffs from the local and state jurisdictions and WMATA, as well as with outside consultants, to produce numerous studies and analyses. This technical information is essential for the decisions made by the TPB itself and for the decisions of the jurisdictions comprising the region.

Technical information and analysis are prepared on a variety of topics, most of which fit into a few broad categories. Travel monitoring activities gather information on current travel patterns and conditions. For example, data is collected on transportation facilities throughout the region to assess the performance of highway and transit facilities. Congestion levels are calculated based upon measures of the average number of cars per lane-mile of highway. Personal travel patterns are also surveyed to determine how people are traveling, for what purpose and how far.

Travel forecasting develops predictions about future travel conditions. The TPB staff develops these forecasts using computer programs ("models") whose inputs include assumptions about the future, including projected population and job growth, data about planned or potential improvements in the transportation system, and assumptions about future travel demand. The model's outputs produce travel forecasts that inform a variety of decisions, such as helping to determine how various transportation investments will affect mobility in the region.

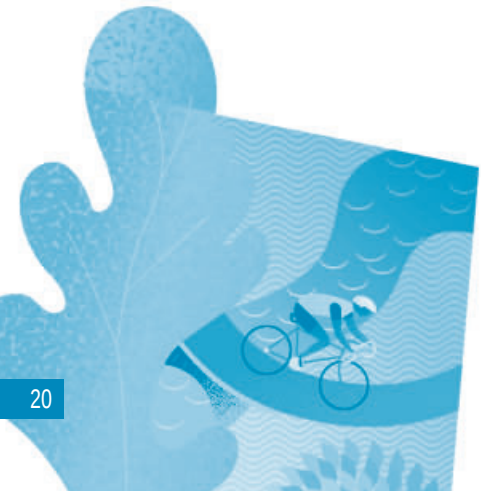
Information about current and future travel conditions is used for a number of purposes—especially for the regional air quality analysis required by the federal Clean Air Act of 1990, as amended. Technical data produced by the TPB staff are also used by other jurisdictions and agencies. The states, the District of Columbia and WMATA (the regional transit authority) use TPB data on a regular basis to plan and operate their services and facilities.

How Are Projects Developed?

Let's take a step back and ask how transportation improvements are selected and developed before they are submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the region's 25-year Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The TPB's regional policies and the federal requirements under which the TPB operates exert an influence on the types of projects that are developed and submitted by the states. However, project development typically occurs at the state and local levels.

The District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia each controls its own funding stream and each has its own system for moving projects forward. Within each state, projects may be pursued for a variety of reasons and may have several different sponsors.



Project development can be an unpredictable process. Projects sometimes get put on a fast track when elected officials or a group of citizens take a special interest in them. Others move forward when they are selected as preferred alternatives in studies of needs. In other cases, transportation improvements might be listed for years in local comprehensive plans or state plans before any action is taken to get them funded. Some proposed major projects are delayed or dropped because funding is unavailable or because other, preferred-alternative projects emerge. In other cases, projects are stalled because they are controversial.

Here are some of the ways that projects are identified, planned and programmed:

Project Identification

Needs are identified through a variety of mechanisms throughout the region and solutions are promoted by a number of different players. Here are some basic ways in which projects originate:

Local Government Plans

Transportation projects are sometimes first identified through local planning, which is performed by county or municipal governments. Local comprehensive plans usually include a transportation element (see page 10) identifying specific projects that a local government has determined will be needed over the period of the plan—usually 20-25 years.

The states generally participate in local planning. For example, when a local government in Virginia develops an "official map" for implementing its comprehensive plan, it must consult with the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board regarding streets under VDOT's jurisdiction. In Maryland, all transportation projects that receive funding through the MDOT must also be included in the local comprehensive plan.

Project Identification at the State Level

The state DOTs each have methods for identifying projects needed to maintain the integrity of the transportation system, enhance safety or improve mobility. Highest priority is usually given to projects that address maintenance needs or structural deficiencies. Project recommendations are often based upon the state's regular analysis of pavements, bridges, congestion levels or safety issues. The states propose other projects that are system "enhancements" including trails or landscaping, or projects to serve air quality improvement goals, such as park-and-ride lots or ridesharing programs. In other cases, the states recommend "new capacity"—such as additional or widened roads, or transit extensions—although these projects have become less frequent as the region's transportation system matures.

Regional Transit Plans and Studies

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) regularly assesses the needs of the Metro system, and recommends projects for funding and implementation. Like the state DOTs, WMATA places a priority on system preservation, including replacement of rail cars and buses, escalator repair and track maintenance. WMATA also studies and recommends system enhancements, such as bus service improvements. The Maryland Transit Administration, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and local transit agencies also perform their own studies, in addition to working with WMATA.

WMATA's 25-year Transit Service Expansion Plan, which the WMATA board approved in 1999, proposes an ambitious long-term program of projects, including new rail lines and expanded bus service. Because WMATA does not have a funding source that it alone controls, the recommendations of the Expansion Plan are intended to guide the decisions made by WMATA's funding partners—the states, local governments and the federal government. In addition, WMATA's Infrastructure Renewal Program, which addresses maintenance and rehabilitation needs over the next 25 years, and System Access and Capacity Program, which addresses needed improvements to the access and capacity of the system, provide inputs into the CLRP.

What About Small or Minor Projects?

So-called minor improvement projects—like side streets, sidewalks and bus stops—can have a major impact on people's lives. These types of projects do not typically have to go through the official state and regional planning and programming processes.

If you want to push for a small transportation improvement in your community, you should get in touch with a local member of your city or county council, or join forces with a neighborhood organization that is also interested in the project. You might also want to directly contact the departments of transportation or public works in your city or county to find out who would have responsibility for the project and how it might be implemented. A listing of these departments is provided on pages 42-43 of this guide.

Corridor and Sub-Area Studies

Major projects are derived from studies that look at a variety of transportation alternatives for particular "transportation corridors" or specific areas of the region. State agencies generally perform these studies, in cooperation with the TPB and in accordance with federal procedures. Corridors recently under study include the I-66 Corridor in Virginia, the I-270 Corridor in Maryland and the Capital Beltway.

Federal regulations require corridor or sub-area studies to be performed when major metropolitan highway or transit investments are being considered. In particular, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a type of corridor study known as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before certain types of major projects may be constructed.

Corridor and sub-area studies typically examine the costs and benefits of various alternatives, and how effectively the different options would "get the job done." They also measure other social, economic or environmental impacts. Federal law requires adequate public involvement opportunities.

The TPB is required to approve major studies, including funding for studies, in the CLRP and the TIP. The implementing agencies typically report to the TPB at three points in the study process:
1) the statement of purpose and need;
2) the narrowing of alternatives to those retained for detailed study;
and 3) the selection of the preferred alternative.

Just because a preferred alternative is selected, however, does not mean it is ready to be implemented. Projects that go into the TIP and CLRP must be funded. The ways in which projects get selected for funding often involve policy and budget decisions—usually at the state level.

Long-Range Planning at the State Level

Each state has a long-range planning process that brings together project recommendations from local governments, the state DOTs, WMATA and other sources.

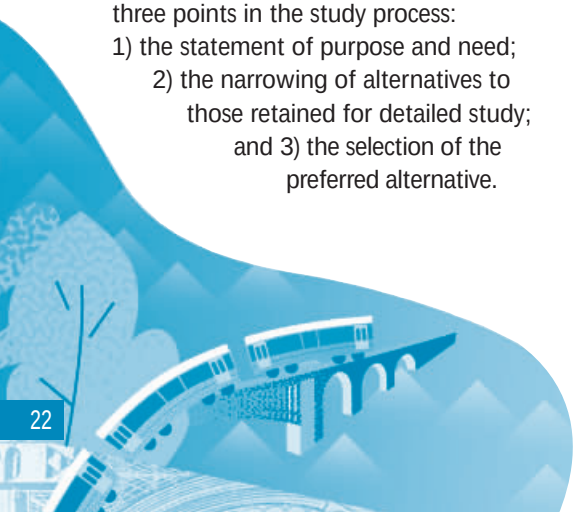
Unlike the TPB's financially Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), the state and WMATA long-range plans are not required to be limited by available funding. And a project does not have to appear in a state long-range plan in order to receive funding. However, the priorities established in these state plans often form the basis for the projects submitted by the states for inclusion in the region's CLRP.

Virginia

The Transportation Coordinating Council (TCC) of Northern Virginia develops long-term project recommendations.

The TCC is an advisory group of locally elected officials that makes recommendations to the state on transportation projects for Northern Virginia. The TCC is chaired by the Northern Virginia member of the Commonwealth Transportation Board and is staffed by the Virginia DOT.

In 1999, the TCC approved the Northern Virginia 2020 Transportation Plan, which contains a list of long-term project needs that were developed using the TPB's Vision as a guiding framework. The Commonwealth of Virginia used the priorities identified in the 2020 Plan as the



Manassas 234 Bypass — Developing a Project

Facing growing congestion on Route 234, community leaders in Prince William County started pushing more than thirty years ago for a bypass around the central business district of Manassas. The bypass originally appeared in the county's comprehensive plan in 1978. A corridor study, initiated in 1987 by VDOT, looked at widening Route 234 between I-95 and I-66, which included the portion of the road through Manassas. During that study, county and city officials and state legislators persuasively argued that a new bypass needed to be constructed between I-66 and the southern city limits of Manassas, in addition to widening existing Route 234 south of the city. In 1988, the bypass was included in the first subregional transportation plan for Northern Virginia (conducted before the TCC existed).

In 1990, the Manassas Bypass project was included (for preliminary engineering) in the state's six-year primary road plan (precursor to the Virginia Transportation Development Plan), which was approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board based upon appropriations approved by the General Assembly. In 1991, it became part of the TPB's 20-year regional long-range plan (the precursor to the CLRP) and 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In 1994, the project received funding for final design and right-of-way purchase. Estimated at approximately $150 million, the project's construction began in 1995 and was substantially completed by 2001.

basis for its long-term project submissions for the TPB's CLRP.

Maryland

The Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), which is developed by the state DOT, includes a series of long-range improvements.

The Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) is a statewide policy document with a horizon of 20 years that includes a number of specific long-range improvement projects. The plan forms the basis for many projects submitted by the state for inclusion in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan. The MTP was last updated in 1999.

District of Columbia

The District of Columbia's long-range transportation plan includes several specific project recommendations, especially for transit.

Approved in 1997, the District of Columbia's first strategic transportation plan is called A Transportation Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan for the Nation's Capital. The plan has a horizon year of 2020. Because the District is a mature urban area that is largely built-out, the plan does not focus on new highway capacity, but it does include several significant long-term transit projects. The D.C. Division of Transportation developed the plan.

Short-Range (Six-Year) Programs at the State Level

Each state also has its own procedure for developing transportation programs—lists of projects that it intends to fund in the next six years. Short-range programming in all the states involves the collaborative development of project lists and the legislative approval of transportation budgets.

At the conclusion of the budgeting and programming process in each state, the projects are submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is described on pages 32-33. The annual process is ongoing; just as the old programming cycle is ending, the new cycle is getting started.

Here's how project programming generally works in the different states:

Virginia

- **The General Assembly approves funding for transportation in a two-year Appropriation Act.**
  Every two years, the Virginia General Assembly approves the two-year (biennial) Appropriation Act, which contains all statewide funding, including transportation spending. The revenues in the act are largely based upon estimates provided in the governor's Budget Bill. The estimates for transportation revenues are prepared by the Department of Motor Vehicles, which is responsible for fuel taxes, and by VDOT.

  The Appropriation Act generally allocates funding for broad transportation categories, not for individual projects, although the General Assembly sometimes earmarks funding for projects. After the first year of the biennial budget cycle is completed, the General Assembly has an opportunity to amend the budget.

- **The Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board annually approves the Transportation Development Plan, which is a six-year program of projects.**
  Every year, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, which guides the work of the Virginia DOT much like a board of directors, develops the Virginia Transportation Development Plan. This plan, formerly called the Six-Year Improvement Program, contains projects to be funded over the next six years. Funding for the Transportation Development Plan is based upon the two-year Appropriation Act approved by the General Assembly and anticipated revenues for the remaining years of the plan.

  In developing the six-year Transportation Development Plan, the Board considers recommendations by VDOT staff and needs identified by local governments. The plan includes money for planning and engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction. The Plan must include, of course, all projects earmarked by the General Assembly.

- **The six-year Transportation Development Plan is submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).**
  Every year, the Northern Virginia projects from the Transportation Development Plan are submitted for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which must be approved by the TPB. These projects must also be included in the Washington region's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). (See the next chapter for more information on the CLRP and the TIP.)

Maryland

Like Virginia, projects in the state of Maryland get programmed through a coordinated process that includes the General Assembly and the DOT.

- **During the Secretary's "Annual Tour," Maryland DOT officials get feedback about their six-year Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) from county and local officials, and from the public.**
  Each fall, the Maryland DOT goes on the road to get feedback on its proposed six-year program of transportation projects. During this process, which is commonly called the Annual Tour, MDOT officials visit each county and present the draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The draft CTP is prepared by DOT staff based upon needs they have identified during

Largo Metrorail Extension — Developing a Project

Although Metrorail's adopted regional system from 1968 did not include a Blue Line extension to Largo, the efforts of citizens, local leaders and state officials succeeded in making it happen. As early as 1973, the project was included in the Prince George's Master Plan. The 1990 statewide Commuter Assistance Study, conducted by MDOT, made transit development in the corridor a state priority and a 1992 MDOT Alternatives Analysis recommended a Metro rail extension to Largo. The project was included in state's long-range plan, the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), in 1992. It subsequently was included in the region's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in 1994.

In the latter 1990s, MDOT and WMATA performed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which included extensive public involvement and ultimately recommended an alignment for construction. In the fall of 1999, funding for construction was included in MDOT's draft Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP), which was presented to county officials during MDOT's Annual Tour (see page 24). With strong local support, Governor Parris Glendenning asked for general fund appropriations for the project in his 2000 funding request to the General Assembly, which he received. The project's estimated cost of $434 million was guaranteed through a funding agreement between the federal and state governments in 2000, when it proceeded to construction. Based on this funding agreement, the federal government is paying 60 percent of the project cost, with the state funding 40 percent. The Federal Transit Administration provided guidance throughout the planning process to help ensure the project's success.

the previous year. After considering the input received from local and country officials during the Annual Tour, the CTP is revised and submitted first to the Governor and then to the General Assembly.

- **The Maryland General Assembly approves the six-year program.** MDOT annually submits the State Report on Transportation to the Maryland General Assembly. This report, consisting of the long-range MTP and the CTP (both described above), forms the basis for the governor's annual transportation funding request, which the General Assembly must approve. Maryland law does not permit the General Assembly to add projects to the governor's funding request, although the legislature may delete projects or funding.

- **The six-year Consolidated Transportation Program is submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Every year, all the projects in Maryland's Consolidated Transportation Program that are in the Washington region are submitted for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which must be approved by the TPB. These projects must also be included in the Washington region's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). (See the next chapter for more information on the CLRP and the TIP.)

District of Columbia

Like the processes at the state level, project programming in D.C. also involves the legislative approval of a transportation budget and the development of a program of projects by the District's version of a DOT—the Division of Transportation (DDOT). But in D.C., the U.S. Congress also gets directly involved.

Metropolitan Branch Trail — Developing a Project

The idea for a trail along the Red Line from Union Station to Takoma Park dates back to 1988. After touring the corridor, a group of citizens formed the Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail. In 1991, the D.C. Council passed a resolution officially endorsing the trail. A 1996 study, conducted by the District, verified the feasibility of the trail, which was incorporated into the District's long-range plan (Transportation Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan) in 1997. The federal transportation authorization (TEA-21) of 1998 included $8.5 million in special funding for the trail. Subsequently, the District placed the project in its annual capital budget and the regional TIP and CLRP, along with another $8 million in federal and local money. The TPB's report "Priorities 2000: Metropolitan Washington Greenways" identified the project as a regional priority.

Today, a portion of the funding is being used to design and construct the trail around the New York Avenue Metro station, as well as to acquire the necessary land near the station. In addition to the monthly Coalition meetings, advocates and District staff meet occasionally with Area Neighborhood Commissions and other stakeholders to address issues and generate support for the project. When completed, the trail will provide recreation, transportation and economic development options for an underserved section of the city.

- **The D.C. Council approves the annual Capital Improvement Program budget for transportation.** Every year, the mayor submits the draft Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to the D.C. Council for approval. The CIP is a six-year program that includes all capital expenditures for the city, including transportation projects. The D.C. Council, acting as a state legislature, holds hearings on the draft CIP, which it can amend. The Council must approve the CIP.

- **The U.S. Congress must approve the D.C. budget.** The District presents the budget from the CIP to Congress for approval every summer. After a review process, Congress approves the budget as part of the federal appropriations process.

- **D.C.'s six-year transportation program is submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Using the CIP as a basis for development, the District develops a six-year list of projects that is submitted for inclusion in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which must be approved by the TPB. The projects are also included in the region's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). (See the next chapter for more information on the CLRP and the TIP.)

Other Short-Term (6-Year) Programming Processes

- **WMATA's Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**
  WMATA's CIP is a six-year program that includes all funding for capital projects to rehabilitate the bus and rail system, address ridership and capacity need, and expand the system. This CIP is developed with the input of WMATA's member jurisdictions. Projects programmed by the transit authority use funding from the federal government, and from state and local jurisdictions. WMATA's CIP includes three major programs: the Infrastructure Renewal Program (IRP), the System Access/ Capacity Program (SAP), and the System Expansion Program (SEP).

Every year, WMATA's chief executive officer submits a proposed CIP to the WMATA Board Budget Committee. A series of briefings to this committee leads up a jurisdictional review and comment period. The proposed program may be revised by the committee, and then is reviewed and approved by the WMATA Board of Directors. Every year the projects in this CIP are then submitted for inclusion in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), which are approved by the TPB. (See next chapter for more information on the CLRP and TIP).

- **Other project programming**
  Other agencies, such as the National Park Service, and some counties, cities and towns develop projects using federal funds outside the state or WMATA programming processes. These projects also must be submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional TIP and CLRP.

The TPB: Tying the Projects Together

The TPB is the place where all approved projects are tied together into a regional plan and short-term program. All projects that receive federal funding must be included in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

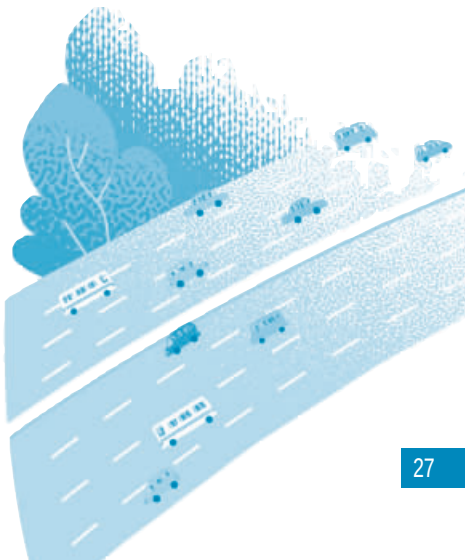
This process is described in the next chapter.

A Few Words About Building Or Implementing Projects

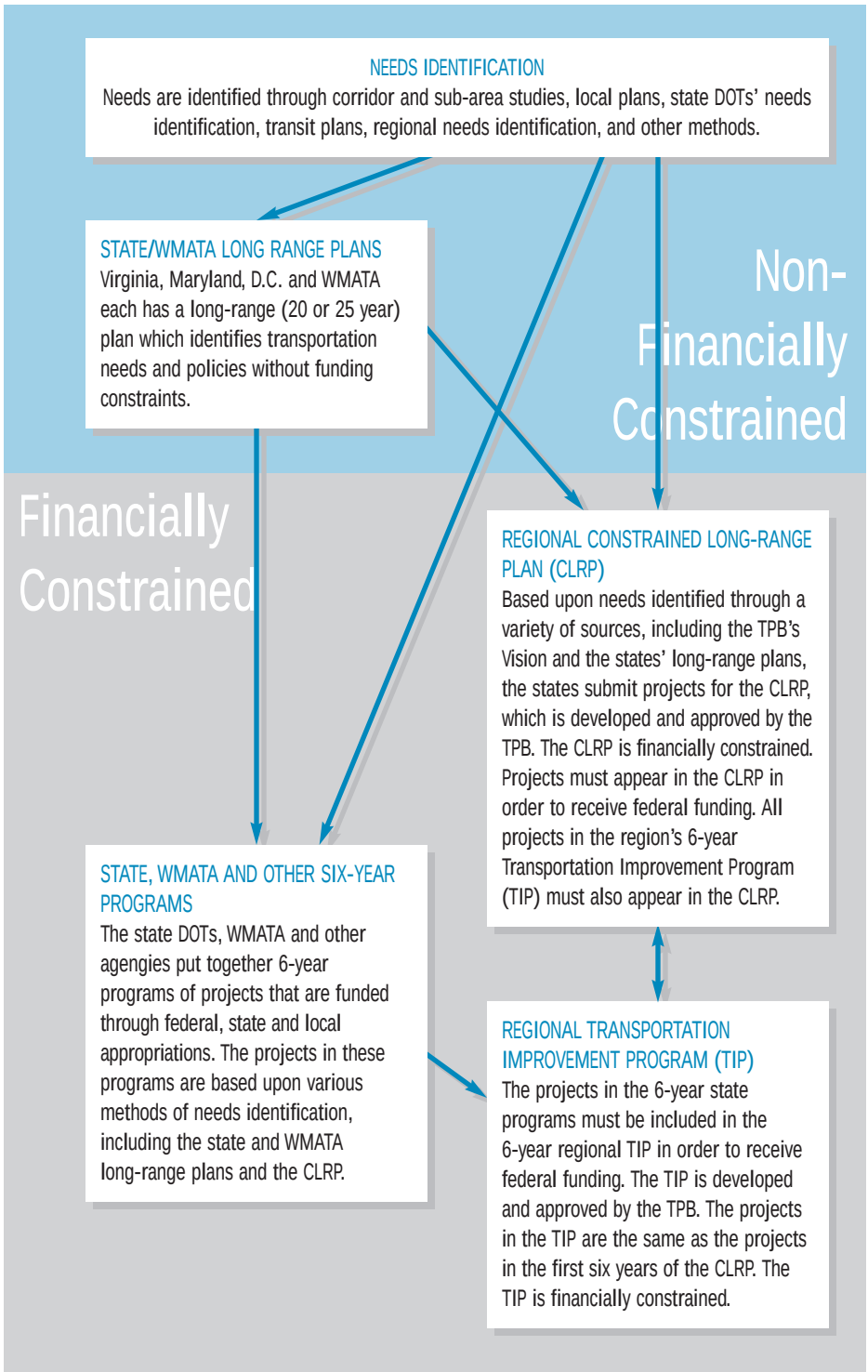
Of course, the story does not end here. In order to build or implement a project, its sponsors must take a number of further steps, which can last a number of years. Major capital improvements often require an additional development and evaluation phase, which might include review of alternatives, and analysis of travel demand, environmental impacts and costs. Public meetings focusing on alternatives might also be held during this period.

If a major project gets past this stage, it will move on to final project planning, including preliminary engineering, further environmental study and the selection of a design alternative. A public hearing usually is held during this stage of planning.

Once an alternative is selected, the project enters design engineering, which includes development of construction plans, environmental re-evaluation and permit applications. The project implementers also must purchase right-of-way. Finally, when the project is ready to be built or implemented, a project contract is awarded and it proceeds to construction.



Stages in Project Identification, Planning and Programming



How Does the TPB Planning Process Work?

Although the TPB's transportation planning process is an ongoing cycle, a few documents are key to understanding how it works. These essential components include the TPB Vision, the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The TPB Vision Policy Goals

1. The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone in the region.
2. The Washington metropolitan region will develop, implement, and maintain an interconnected transportation system that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region, including a healthy regional core and dynamic regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing, services and recreation in a walkable environment.
3. The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will give priority to management, performance, maintenance, and safety of all modes and facilities..
4. The Washington metropolitan region will use the best available technology to maximize system effectiveness.
5. The Washington metropolitan region will plan and develop a transportation system that enhances and protects the region's natural environmental quality, cultural and historic resources, and communities.
6. The Washington metropolitan region will achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning.
7. The Washington metropolitan region will achieve enhanced funding mechanisms for regional and local transportation system priorities that cannot be implemented with current and forecasted federal, state,and local funding.
8. The Washington metropolitan region will support options for international and inter-regional travel and commerce.

The Vision is the basic policy document for the TPB

The Vision

The Vision is a short, but influential, policy document that lays out eight broad goals to guide the region's transportation investments into the 21st century. The Vision was unanimously approved in October 1998 by the Transportation Planning Board after an extensive public outreach effort that lasted three years.

A host of objectives and strategies are included in the Vision to show how its eight primary goals can be reached. For example, Goal 4 in the Vision calls for the use of technology to maximize the effectiveness of the transportation system. A strategy in the Vision, which supports this goal, calls for a unified, technology-based method of payment—something like a "smart card"—for all transit, public parking and toll roads in the region. For a complete copy of the Vision, go to the TPB website at **www.mwcog.org/trans.html**.

The Vision is not a plan with maps or lists of specific projects. It is fundamentally a framework to guide decision making. The various jurisdictions in the region are expected to pursue policies and projects that contribute to specific elements of the Vision. The goals, objectives and strategies in the Vision should be used to buttress arguments for or against new policies and projects.

Amid the diverse needs and opinions in the region, the Vision emphasizes the commonality of our values. It is a symbol of regional consensus. Although the TPB does not directly select projects in most cases, the power of consensus reflected in the Vision can affect the kinds of projects that the states and other jurisdictions choose to pursue. And ultimately, the TPB has to approve those projects through the CLRP and the TIP.

The CLRP is a transportation blueprint for the next 25 years

The Constrained Long-Range Plan—The CLRP

The financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) is a comprehensive plan of transportation projects and a system-wide collection of strategies that the TPB realistically anticipates can be implemented over the next 25 years. Federal law requires the TPB and other MPOs around the country to update their long-range plans every three years. In practice, the TPB has typically amended the CLRP every year, along with developing a new TIP. A new air quality conformity determination (described on pages 31-32) must be made when the CLRP and TIP are amended unless only conformity-exempt projects are added.

What are we constraining?

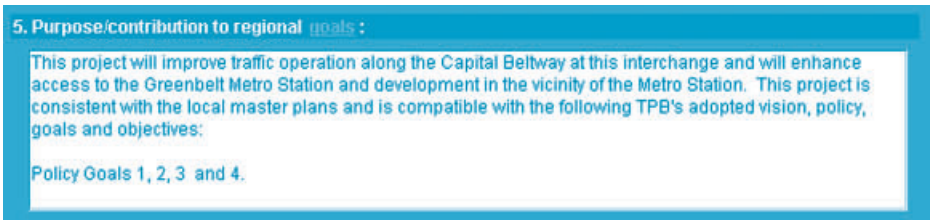
QUESTION: The "C" in CLRP stands for "constrained." But just what does that mean?

ANSWER: The CLRP is financially constrained. It only includes projects that the region can afford to build with existing revenues or with revenues that can be reasonably expected to be available.

Putting together the CLRP is a defining task for the TPB. It is the document that the TPB uses to meet a number of major federal requirements. The CLRP is also a primary vehicle for implementing the TPB Vision.

Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and WMATA submit lists of projects for the TPB to include in the draft CLRP. Federal requirements and TPB policies

Contributing to the Vision



Projects submitted for the CLRP must contribute to the goals and objectives of the TPB Vision. Shown here is part of an electronic submission form showing how an interchange improvement on I-495 near the Greenbelt Metro Station will contribute to Vision Goals Two and Three.

play a key role in influencing the types of projects that the states and D.C. choose to pursue.

In developing the CLRP, the TPB looks for consistency between the planned transportation system and the following objectives:

- **The projects in the CLRP should contribute to the regional goals and objectives laid out in the TPB Vision.** In submitting projects and strategies for the CLRP, the state DOTs and other implementing agencies should consider specific ways in which they are contributing to the TPB Vision. The project submissions must include a description of the ways in which particular goals of the Vision are being met. This incorporation of the Vision in long-range planning helps to make a tangible connection between policy and action. On a regional basis, it helps us to "put our money where our mouth is."

- **The CLRP must include only those projects the region can afford.** The "C" in CLRP refers to *financial constraint*. The plan may only include projects that the region can afford to build, operate and maintain. It is not a "wish list" or a "needs plan."

  This financial constraint was originally a requirement of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, a landmark federal law that gave new powers to all Metropolitan Planning

Air Quality Planning in The Washington Region

The Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) is the entity certified, under the federal Clean Air Act, to prepare an air quality plan for the Washington region. This air quality plan comprises the Washington region's portions of three federally required State Implementation Plans (SIPs) for the attainment of air quality standards for Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. MWAQC is certified by the mayor of Washington and the governors of Maryland and Virginia. It includes local elected officials, representatives of the state and D.C. air management and transportation agencies, state legislators and the chair of the TPB. Like the TPB, MWAQC is housed at the Council of Governments (COG), which provides its staff. The regional air quality plan includes an emissions ceiling ("an emissions budget") for mobile sources of emissions (vehicles), as well as emissions reduction requirements for other sources of air pollution, such as power plants. The TPB must show that the CLRP and TIP will conform to the mobile source emissions ceilings for specific milestone years established in the regional air quality plan.

Organizations across the country, including the TPB. Financial realism was an important means of empowering MPOs because it forced all the key players to make tough decisions as part of the regional long-range planning process.

- **The CLRP must conform to air quality improvement goals.** Like financial constraint, air quality conformity is a federal requirement. Once the CLRP is drafted, it is tested to ensure that the projects in the plan, when considered collectively, contribute to the air quality improvement goals embodied in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. A series of tests are performed with computer models that predict how much air pollution will be generated over the next 25 years by facilities in the plan, and how much the air will be improved by cleaner gasoline standards and many other factors.

  If the CLRP is found by the TPB to meet regional air quality goals, federal agencies certify that the plan is "in conformity." In other words, the TPB ensures that the CLRP "conforms" to air quality improvement goals.

  A conformity determination lasts three years—the life of the CLRP itself. If the TPB encounters difficulty in meeting conformity—or expects to— it may choose to adopt **Transportation Emission Reduction Measures (TERMs)**, such as ridesharing and telecommuting programs, improved transit and bicycling facilities, clean fuel vehicle programs or other possible actions.

- **The CLRP must not have disproportionately high and adverse effects on low-income, minority, and disabled populations.**

  According to Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as subsequent federal directives, federal programs may not discriminate against minority groups, low-income populations or disabled people. Because many transportation projects are federally funded, the TPB must ensure that the system in the CLRP does not have disproportionate and adverse impacts on these groups. These civil rights obligations are commonly called environmental justice requirements, although they apply to broad questions regarding the benefits and burdens of federal investments, not just environmental impacts.

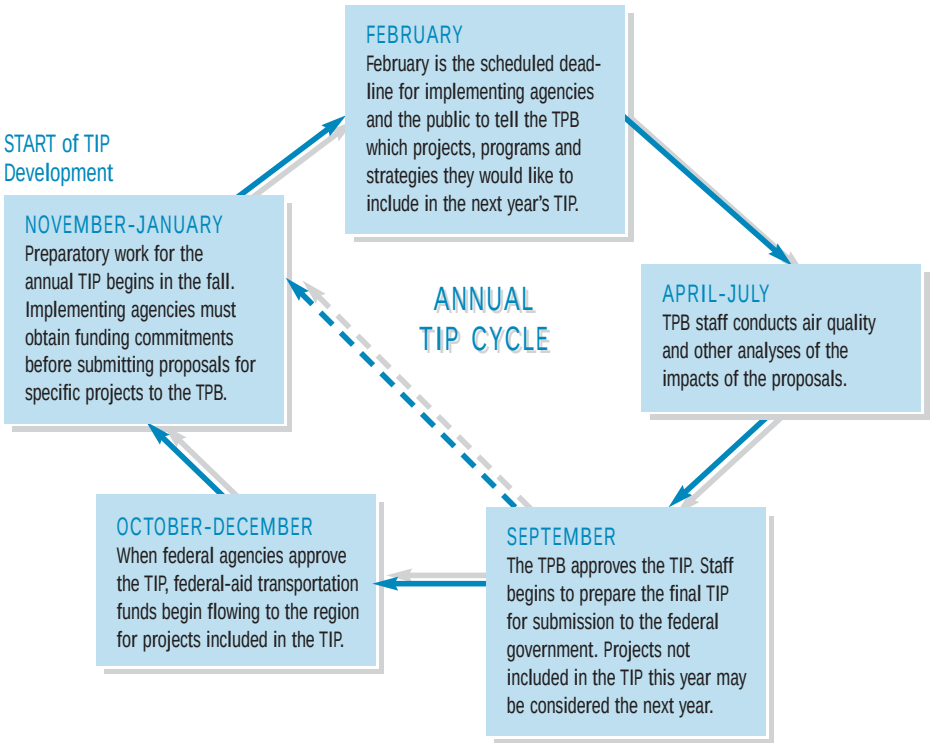
  The TPB addresses federal environmental justice concerns in a variety of ways. Technical studies are conducted to measure the ways in which the transportation system of the future will serve low-income and minority people compared with the region as a whole. The TPB also conducts public outreach activities that engage minority and low-income communities in an ongoing dialogue about the impacts of transportation investments. The TPB established its Access for All Advisory Committee to make sure these concerns are heard.

The TIP shows what will be funded and built over the next six years

The Transportation Improvement Program – TIP

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), provides detailed information showing which projects in the CLRP will be completed over the next six-year period. Like the CLRP, the TIP is subject to federal review and must meet air quality conformity requirements.

Many of the projects in the TIP are staged over several years. For example,



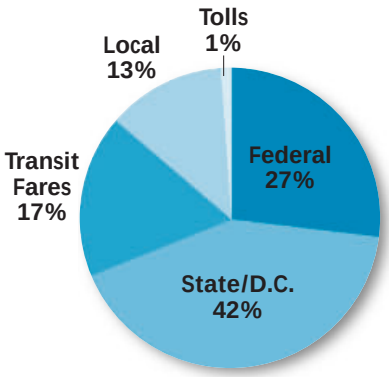
a highway improvement project typically consists of a planning and engineering phase, right-of-way acquisition, and construction. Each of these phases may last one or more years. While the entire project is described in the CLRP, in many instances only a portion of these activities is programmed in the six-year TIP.

The TIP is usually updated each year. Preparatory work on the TIP begins in the fall. Final approval is scheduled for the following September. Each TIP includes many projects committed from earlier years, as well as new projects. Due to the time required for TPB and staff review—which includes complex air quality testing—specific projects must generally be submitted by the state transportation agencies by February of each year, in order to be approved by the TPB in September and included in the federal funding cycles beginning in October. The implementing agencies, in turn, need time to prepare the groundwork and obtain funding commitments for the projects prior to their submission to the TPB. For these reasons it usually takes at least one year for a proposed project to reach approval for funding.

A Continuing, Cooperative Process

It would be a mistake to assume the work of the TPB can be boiled down to the production of a few documents. In fact, metropolitan transportation planning is a continuing and cooperative process. The TPB is a forum where leaders from both sides of the Potomac River regularly meet to discuss and coordinate transportation planning. This ongoing collaboration—on issues ranging from financial forecasting to emergency preparedness—is a hallmark of the TPB process.

Some Questions About Transportation Funding



CLRP Revenues
$76.8 billion over 25 years
(Constant Year 2000 Dollars)

Where does money for transportation come from?

Most of the funds for transportation projects come from user fees—gas taxes and transit fares—paid by consumers, including both private individuals and commercial vehicle owners. Federal and state funds mostly come from gasoline and diesel taxes, with some additional vehicle fees (registration fees, excise taxes, etc.) at the state level. The best known user fee is the federal motor fuel tax, currently 18.3 cents per gallon of gasoline, which is used to fund both transit and highways. Transit fares, another significant type of user fee, are used to partly pay for transit operations.

Local government transportation funding come from property taxes and in some cases, sales taxes. Revenues are frequently collected at one level of government and transferred to another before being expended on transportation. Private sources of funding include payments or direct construction by real estate developers or other private interests.

Do we have enough money for our regional needs?

The region currently spends approximately $3 billion per year on transportation. Over the next 25 years, 80 percent of the transportation revenues from current sources will be needed just to operate and maintain the system that is already in place. That leaves very little for major

fix-ups or system expansions. In fact, we need an increase of more than 50 percent in current revenues to meet the transportation needs identified in 2000 by state and local governments, and by Metro.

Why is transportation funding so limited?

For a variety of reasons. First of all, federal revenues are unlikely to be available at the same levels as they were in the past. Federal and state fuel tax revenue have declined in real terms, both because cars have become more fuel efficient (and therefore generate less revenue for each mile driven) and because the gas tax rates have not kept pace with inflation. In addition, building new facilities is more expensive than it was in the past, largely because of a scarcity of land, the costs of meeting strict environmental requirements, and rising material and labor costs.

In part, today's funding challenge is the price of yesterday's successful construction programs. Our major facilities are aging and need upkeep. Older transit and highway systems cost more to maintain, just as older homes and cars do. Maintenance and enhancement of these regional systems is a continuing challenge.

Finally, unlike other metropolitan regions that have designated sales or gasoline taxes specifically for transportation, the Washington region is unusual in that it has no dedicated regional sources of funding for regional transportation improvements. WMATA is the only large transit agency in the country without a dedicated funding source. This lack of predictable funding makes the region reliant upon year-to-year decisions by Congress, the state governments, and local jurisdictions to provide for its transportation needs.

Some Non-Technical Answers To Technical Questions

How can the TPB predict travel patterns 25 years from now?

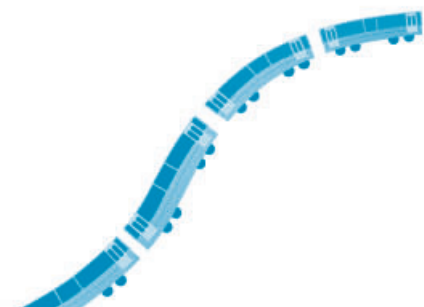
Using complex computer programs ("models"), the TPB staff estimates how the transportation system planned for the next 25 years will affect travel in the region. This process, which is called travel demand modeling, uses data inputs including forecasts of job and population growth, and engineering assumptions about the future ability of roads and transit to handle anticipated travel. For example, a model can estimate how much a newly widened highway will affect congestion levels—both on the affected corridor and throughout the region.

How can the TPB predict vehicle emissions levels 25 years from now?

Like travel demand, future emissions levels can be estimated using computer programs ("models"). Travel demand modeling (described above) is used to estimate travel patterns and congestion levels that will result from the 25-year transportation system laid out in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan. Using that data, an air quality model estimates the amount of emissions from motor vehicles, measured in tons per day, that will be produced by changes in travel. Air quality models incorporate a number of factors including the number and types of vehicles that will be on the road, the speeds at which they will travel, and the effects of technological improvements in vehicles and fuels.

How does COG forecast employment, population and households?

The Cooperative Forecasting Program at the Council of Governments (COG) enables local and regional planning to be coordinated by using common assumptions about future growth and development. The program combines regional data, which are based upon national economic trends and regional demographics, with local projections of population, households and employment. These local projections are based on data about real estate development, market conditions, adopted land-use plans and planned transportation improvements. The Cooperative Forecasting Program is used extensively by the TPB staff in modeling travel demand and emissions.



How Can a Citizen Get Involved?

The Washington region is facing serious transportation challenges that will affect us all in the near future. If current trends continue, congestion will get much worse. If we decide we want a better future, it is up to every citizen to become more informed in transportation issues—and take action.

There are many places and ways for citizens to become better informed and more involved, although it is often most effective to get involved early in the decision-making process. Here are some of the possibilities:

- Follow transportation issues in the media.
- Contact local, regional and state transportation planning agencies to ask for information about projects in which you are interested. Find out how citizens are involved in these projects. Have your name placed on mailing or e-mail lists for updates on projects in which you are interested.
- Attend public meetings on individual projects, which are often advertised in local papers or posted on the Internet by local or state agencies.
- Express your ideas about transportation improvements or suggest new projects to your local or state officials, either by putting them in writing or proposing them at meetings.
- Contact your neighborhood or civic association to see if its members are interested in a particular transportation issue and if they plan to take any action.
- Join an organized group that is promoting a specific transportation project or is advocating broad policy changes regarding transportation investments in your community or across the region.
- Participate in an ad hoc advisory group for a local or regional transportation study. Most of these studies have citizens groups that provide input on the work of the study. Contact your state (or D.C.) transportation agency. They are listed at the back of this guide.
- Present your ideas during the TPB public comment period at the beginning of each board meeting. TPB meetings begin at 12 noon on the third Wednesday of each month (except August). To participate, call (202) 962-3315. The TPB website is **www.mwcog.org/trans.**
- Make recommendations to the TPB. Letters to the TPB are made available to all TPB members and become part of the permanent record. You can send e-mail comments to the TPB at **cogdtp@mwcog.org.** Or you can phone the TPB public comment line at (202) 962-3262.

The TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

The **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)** is the main standing body for providing citizen input into the deliberations of the Transportation Planning Board. The CAC was originally established by the TPB in 1993, partly in response to the citizen involvement requirements of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. According to the TPB's 1999 public involvement policy, the CAC's mission statement calls upon the committee to promote public involvement in regional transportation planning and provide independent, region-oriented citizen advice to the TPB.

The CAC comprises 15 members, five each from Northern Virginia, suburban Maryland and the District of Columbia. Of these 15 members, six are elected by the previous year's CAC and nine are appointed by the TPB itself. The TPB chair appoints the chair of the CAC.

The CAC meets every month, six days before the TPB's monthly meeting, to review many of the same substantive issues that will be on the TPB agenda. The following Wednesday, at the TPB's monthly meeting, the chair of the CAC presents a 10-minute report.

Over the years, the CAC has focused on key regional transportation issues, such as the transportation funding shortfall or environmental concerns, and has offered comments to the TPB reflecting the diverse viewpoints represented on the committee. For example, in 2000, the CAC extensively examined the draft update to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and offered a number of recommendations, which included a request that the TPB perform a study of different transportation and land use scenarios. This suggestion was taken up by the TPB in November 2000 when it decided to launch the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.

The committee is required to hold six outreach meetings a year throughout the region—two each in D.C., Virginia and Maryland. These meetings take place in a variety of locations ranging from close-in neighborhoods like Anacostia to outer suburban communities like Manassas.

The 2002 members of the CAC are:

District of Columbia: Joseph Bishop, Diane Pecor (co-chair), Brenda Lee Richardson, Lee Schoenecker (co-chair), Merle Van Horne;

Maryland: Stephen Caflisch, James W. Clarke, Glen Harvie, Morris (Mike) Little, Karren Jo Pope Onwukwe;

Virginia: Bob Chase, Anne Haynes, Steve Merkli, Allen Muchnick, Stewart Schwartz.

For more information about the CAC, contact TPB staff at (202) 962-3295.

The TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

The **Access for All Advisory Committee** was formed in 2001 to provide advice to the TPB on how to involve the concerns of low-income and minorities communities and disabled persons in the regional transportation planning process. It includes more than 20 representatives of interest groups from throughout the region. A member of the TPB chairs the committee.

The committee's 2001 report focused on a number of short-term issues, including adequate funding for bus service and transit information in different languages. The committee intends to take up a number of longer-term issues in 2002.

If you are interested in the Access for All Advisory Committee, contact TPB staff at (202) 962-3394.

Contact Information

2002 TPB Members

For updated information, see the TPB Web site at www.mwcog.org.

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Listings reflect the membership of the TPB Technical Committee

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Transportation Alphabet Soup

See the indicated page numbers for more information

CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee	38
CLRP	Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan	30-32
COG	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	17
DDOT	District of Columbia Division of Transportation	9
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	22
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	13
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	13
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991	13
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation	9
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration	15
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization	16
MWAA	Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	14
MWAQC	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee	31
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act	22
NCPC	National Capital Planning Commission	14
NVTC	Northern Virginia Transportation Commission	14-15
PRTC	Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission	15
SHA	Maryland State Highway Administration	15
SIP	State Implementation Plan (air quality)	31
TCC	Transportation Coordinating Council of Northern Virginia	14
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century	13
TERMs	Transportation Emissions Reductions Measures	32
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program	32
TPB	National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board	16-19
US DOT	U.S. Department of Transportation	13
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation	9
VDRPT	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation	14
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority	9

Citizens Guide to
Transportation Decision-Making

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