



MEMORANDUM

TO: Technical Committee
FROM: Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff Director
SUBJECT: Subcommittee Recommendations for the TPB Endorsed Initiatives
DATE: November 2, 2018

This memo summarizes staff and TPB subcommittee activities to advance efforts to implement projects, programs, and policies that promote the aspirational initiatives endorsed by the TPB as part of Visualize 2045. The memo identifies each initiative and summarizes the recommendations from the various subcommittees for the advancement of the initiatives. On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the following recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In December of 2017 and January of 2018, the TPB endorsed a set of seven aspirational initiatives to improve our regional transportation system. These initiatives were the outcome of a two-year effort by the TPB's Long-Range Plan Task Force, which undertook a methodical evaluation of what projects, programs, and policies the region could pursue to substantively improve the unsatisfactory performance outcomes that were forecast during the development of the 2016 Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

With its endorsement of the aspirational initiatives, the board issued a call to action for its member jurisdictions and agencies to commit to fully explore the concepts contained in the initiatives and to take action to implement projects, programs, and policies to fully realize potential improvements in the transportation system's performance. Chairman Allen advised staff to work with the appropriate subject-matter experts to identify specific implementation actions that TPB members could take—individually and collectively—to make such projects, programs, and policies part of the financially constrained element of future updates of the TPB's long-range plan.

SUBJECT-MATTER EXPERT AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of this year, staff have engaged subcommittees at the TPB and COG in discussions about how the TPB's aspirational initiatives can be effectively pursued and implemented. In many cases, staff surveyed subject-matter experts on the subcommittees to get initial suggestions for moving forward. These ideas were then explored during subcommittee meetings.

In discussing options and developing recommendations for implementation, the subcommittees generally sought to specify key challenges embedded in the initiatives that need to be overcome. In some cases, the recommendations represent specific products or regional planning activities that should be pursued at the local, state, or federal levels. In other cases, the recommendations suggest broader regional objectives or tasks that must be tackled at TPB level.

In general, the subcommittees' recommendations should be considered a starting point for determining an action plan for promoting implementation of the initiatives.

The recommendations for each initiative are summarized below.

BRING JOBS AND HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER

This initiative would optimize the balance of jobs and housing region-wide and provide additional housing in the region to match employment projections. The initiative specifically: seeks to provide more housing within the region for regional workers to meet demand for future job growth; focuses future household growth within a jurisdiction in Regional Activity Centers and/or in areas with high-capacity transit; and seeks to achieve better balanced distribution of future growth in jobs in housing between the eastern and western portions of the region.

TPB staff requested COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) to examine and advise the TPB on how the region can best advance the components of this initiative. Similarly, at its September 12, 2018 meeting, the COG Board of Directors, which provides oversight to the PDTAC, directed the PDTAC to work jointly with the Housing Directors Committee to assess the region's ability to accommodate the estimated need for slightly more than 100,000 housing units beyond those currently anticipated in the Round 9.1 Cooperative Forecasts.

In response to this direction, the PDTAC, in conjunction with the Housing Directors, is developing a workplan to address the region's housing needs. This workplan will include activities such as:

- Synthesizing local housing and land use plans and housing targets;
- Determining how much housing is already approved but not built in the region;
- Reviewing local comprehensive plans and zoning to evaluate whether sufficient development capacity exists;
- Quantifying additional growth likely to occur in Activity Centers and High Capacity Transit areas; and
- Considering whether any revisions to the Cooperative Forecasts are merited.

These activities will be carried out over several months and the TPB will be briefed throughout 2019.

EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) AND TRANSITWAYS

This initiative was the subject of extensive discussions at Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee meetings. The initiative has a focus of expanding BRT, transitway, and streetcar systems throughout the region, implementing routes that are in jurisdictions' plans but not yet in the TPB's long-range plan. This initiative would also improve pedestrian access to transit stations and increase the amount of jobs and housing around the transit stations.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative.

Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend that the region work together on:

- **Density standards for BRT service.** The region should identify a set of preferred density measures related to transit service, ridership, and land use in the region as a standard for BRT systems.

This recommendation would aid in mapping out potential BRT corridors and would also enable the ability to measure the progress being made towards the development and implementation of BRT on these corridors, as well as other bus transit improvements such as transit signal priority or rush-hour bus lanes.

MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL

This initiative focuses on actions that would move more people and enhance the customer experience on Metrorail. This initiative calls for running eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines at all times; adding a second Rosslyn station; and adding a new rail line across the Potomac River connecting the District and Virginia through Georgetown to Union Station towards the Waterfront. It also would improve bicycle and pedestrian access to rail stations. These actions will increase ridership.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative.

Of the actions that the region could take, members recommended, as the preferred action, that the region work together to:

- **Eliminate the transfer cost** between Metrorail and the region's bus services.

This recommendation would encourage more people to use Metrorail by lowering total transit fare costs for riders using both Metrorail and bus services. Currently, transfers between most buses are free within two hours, but transfers between Metrorail and bus services are not. Transfers to and from rail only provide a fare discount of \$0.50. Reducing the transfer cost to zero would attract more people to use buses to get to and from Metrorail, which would make the region's transit system more attractive by treating transit as a single mode and would not penalize transit users that need to use buses to get to Metrorail.

The members recommended an alternative action that would:

- **Cap total fares charged for transit trips per day.** This recommendation would be adopted by every jurisdiction that operates bus service, as well as by WMATA.

Putting a cap on total fares for a day would make additional transit use more attractive for transit-choice or transit-lifestyle riders and reduce costs for transit-reliant riders or those who have to make several connections, sometimes across multiple services, to get to their destinations.

PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR COMMUTING

The purpose of this initiative is to develop and examine new policies that would reduce single occupant vehicular trips, increase teleworking regionwide, increase the number of employees receiving transit and carpool subsidies, and reduce parking incentives in regional Activity Centers.

The TPB's Commuter Connections Subcommittee has subject-matter experts representing state, regional, local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and other commuter assistance entities together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative.

Of the various actions that the region could take, the following represents the proactive programmatic and policy-oriented recommendations:

- **Leverage technology to enhance TDM programs.** Technological advancements are creating new ways to influence behavior change. Enhancing existing apps (e.g. CarpoolNow, incenTrip) and programs (e.g. Flextime Rewards) with gamification modules that consider behavioral economics concepts may further encourage mode shift while also generating valuable data.
- **Collaborate with WMATA to promote SmartBenefits.** The SmartBenefits program provides employers the opportunity to pay employees tax free for all or part of their transit commute expense or let their employees set aside their own funds pre-tax. Reducing transit commute cost is a proven strategy to increase transit usage. The region should implement a campaign to enroll more employers in the program by providing incentives, including limited and tiered financial incentive designed to offset SmartBenefits' start-up costs; offering training and outreach efforts to help reduce perceived administrative burden. Such a campaign now would be taking advantage of WMATA's investment of over \$1.5M to upgrade and simplify its on-line SmartBenefits portal.
- **Flextime & telework resources for mid-size employers.** Telework continues to grow in popularity, particularly among large employers, but logistical and perception barriers remain, especially among small and mid-sized employers. The region should develop policy templates for small and mid-size employers to adopt and implement these trip reduction strategies at their work places.
- **Regional commuter tax benefits.** Policies such as the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit and Telework VA! Tax credit exist to incentivize employers to offer commuter benefits. Standardizing the types of alternative commute programs eligible for tax benefits and making it applicable throughout the region would encourage employer participation. Such a regional policy would ease implementation efforts due to collaborative education and marketing efforts.
- **Develop a regional framework for parking cashout policy.** Offering employees who receive free parking cash value of the parking to use transit has been found to be effective in increasing transit usage. A 2016 FHWA research project found that Washington D.C. employers who offer a cash-out policy in addition to pre-tax transit options can reduce VMT by 11%. The region should pilot test this program with customized cash-out policies to fit the various needs of diverse worksites in the region. The result of the pilot program can be used to inform the development and implementation of the program regionwide.

- **Price parking appropriately.** Advocate for codification of “fair-value commuting” within local codes, which would mean higher parking costs at activity centers and especially those that are served by transit and/or HOV lanes. Pricing parking spaces – perhaps in a dynamic fashion – is expected to deter single occupant trips and promote ridesharing or transit usage. Ongoing marketing and outreach activities of Commuter Connections could market free or reduced-cost carpool parking spots and other non-SOV alternatives.

EXPAND EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK

The TPB has endorsed a network of express travel lanes in the region, with specific characteristics that would help move more people and reduce congestion. The specific characteristics of such a network include: the use of dynamic tolls to maintain desired travel speeds; making the lanes free to carpoolers and transit vehicles; and implementation of new express bus services connecting Activity Centers.

The constrained element of Visualize 2045 doubles the lane miles of managed lanes that are planned to be built and operated in the region. While the projects in the plan have not come out of a unified multi-jurisdictional plan for managed lanes, the proposed projects are gradually forming a loosely defined network of lanes.

Staff notes that the network of express lanes in the constrained element of Visualize 2045 can be more fully defined to ensure better connectivity among the region’s major Activity Centers and transit hubs. Additionally, staff notes that the current tolling policies of these planned express lanes are not fully consistent with the TPB’s aspirational initiative and that express bus services on these express lanes are sparse.

Staff recommends TPB continue to call on its member jurisdictions and agencies to:

- **Expand the network:** Develop express lane projects that are designed to provide logical extensions of existing lanes while connecting major Activity Centers;
- **Ensure express bus service on express lanes:** Design and operate express bus services on the express lanes that provides an attractive and affordable alternative mode of travel; and
- **Establish a uniform tolling policy:** Work together to adopt a uniform regional tolling policy that would encourage ridesharing and provide funding for transit and travel demand management programs in the corridor.

IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

The goal of this initiative is to increase non-motorized access to high capacity transit stations through improved first- and last-mile connections on foot or by bike.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. In addition, the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee also discussed functionality improvements to transit stations, particularly for bus access and reliability.

Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend:

- **Identify specific stations that are priority locations for access improvements:** Develop a limited list of transit station areas that are regionally prioritized for pedestrian/ bicycle investments. These prioritized locations will be places where critical gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure currently exist and where demand is great for walking and biking to transit. Improvements in these areas will also improve safety in and around the stations, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Expanding the TPB's Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) Program,** which currently provides technical assistance to TPB members for short-term planning activities for the development of communities that are multi-modal and mixed-use. Members believe that the TLC program has been highly cost-effective.
- **Prioritize the efficiency of stations for all modes:** Prioritize physical and operational improvements to the transportation efficiency of high capacity transit stations for all modes, including traffic signal timing, turn lanes, crosswalk locations, and transit priority on roadways surrounding transit stations, to improve safety for non-motorized users and improve the reliability of buses

COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL

The purpose of this initiative is to complete a network of bicycle/pedestrian trails encircling the region's core. This endorsed initiative was originally conceived of as a "bicycle beltway" and the TPB had directed staff to work with local jurisdictions to identify the basic alignment for this facility.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee notes that the National Park Service (NPS) worked with the TPB Subcommittee to adopt the National Capital Trail (NCT) into its Trail Master Plan. With some of the missing segments of the NCT located within National Park property, this action by the NPS is a significant step towards completing the trail.

One of the basic recommendations related to this initiative is for all appropriate regional jurisdictions and agencies to:

- **Integrate the missing segments** of the National Capital Trail into other highway, transit and other infrastructure projects so that the trail can be completed.

The Subcommittee also noted that, thanks to numerous projects that have been built or funded in recent years, the National Capital Trail is well on its way to completion. Therefore, the Subcommittee also recommends that the TPB:

- **Expand the National Capital Trail** to the entire TPB region (National Capital Regional Trail), thereby extending the trail to all TPB member jurisdictions.

On the last point, there has been great interest among the region's jurisdictions, agencies, and advocacy entities to build on the National Capital Trail that had been developed and adopted by the NPS. The Capital Trails Coalition was established through a public-private partnership to work on this idea. The Subcommittee worked with the coalition to develop a framework through which trails from other jurisdictions that are not included in the NCT would be strategically incorporated to form a true regional trail system. This work activity is not complete and is in need of a regional sponsor to take on responsibility for finalization. Once complete, this National Capital Regional Trail could represent the region's prioritized trail network to be considered for local, regional, and state level funding.

FUTURE ACTIONS

On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the above recommendations. The work session will include an open panel discussion. Following the work session, TPB members at the monthly board will be encouraged to provide additional feedback and comments on the proposed recommendations. The TPB could consider formally accepting the recommendations as part of an action plan to help implement its aspirational initiatives and realize the potential improvement in the performance of the region's transportation system. Such a formal acceptance could be in the form a TPB resolution adopted at its December meeting. The TPB could also advise staff to periodically report on the progress being made towards the implementation of the adopted recommendations.