

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Transportation Planning Board  
**From:** Ronald F. Kirby, Director Department of Transportation Planning  
**Re:** Concept for a Grant Proposal to the TCSP Program  
**Date:** May 18, 2011

### **Background on TCSP**

The Federal Highway Administration has issued a notice that \$61 million is available for grants through the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) Program, with a maximum federal share of 80 percent. Grant applications are due June 3, 2011.

The TCSP Program was set up to assist communities in planning and implementing strategies that improve the efficiency of the transportation system, reduce environmental impacts of transportation, reduce the need for costly future infrastructure investments, ensure sufficient access to jobs, services and centers of trade, and examine development patterns and identify strategies to encourage private sector development patterns that achieve these goals.

### **Overview of Proposal Concept**

Scenario planning over the last decade has emphasized the value of promoting development closer to transit station areas, locating jobs and housing closer together, and improving multimodal transportation options. But planners have found that local, often small-scale, actions are necessary to make these principles truly come to life. The TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program was established to help jurisdictions plan small improvements – such as pedestrian facilities or multimodal concepts for intersections or streets – to make activity centers function more effectively as vibrant, mixed-use places. Many of the planning efforts completed under the TLC Program suggest capital improvements that can further the ability of all modes to coexist in a dense area which includes both jobs and housing.

TPB staff proposes to seek TCSP funding to promote employment and housing development close to rail stations in targeted growth areas by identifying small-scale multimodal transportation improvements which will improve walk or bike access to and from the stations. For each location, a “complete streets” approach will be used to identify an integrated package of improvements. As a starting point, the project will use data collected through WMATA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements Study. The final product of the TCSP project will be a database identifying transportation capital projects that could be quickly implemented should capital funding become available. The total project cost would be \$200,000.

The TPB's application for TCSP funding will focus on rail station areas as critical regional assets. Such locations might include suburban activity centers with considerable employment but limited housing opportunities, or potential job and housing centers that are not currently designated as activity centers. The proposal will explain that the TPB's scenario analysis has demonstrated that the region can reap significant regional benefits by increasing job and household growth near Metro and other rail stations. Specifically, demand pressures on the transportation system could be moderated by increasing rail ridership in reverse-commute directions that are currently operating with plenty of available capacity, or by selling the same seat twice in a peak commute direction (where one group of commuters alights at a mixed-use suburban

location and another group boards). More broadly, promoting development near rail station areas would reduce distances between housing and employment, which would positively affect VMT and congestion.

Looking beyond transportation measures, a more balanced allocation of job and household growth will benefit the entire region in numerous other ways – for example, by promoting economic development in all jurisdictions, inner and outer, east and west. The application will reference the recent Brookings study “Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America,” which measured the effectiveness of transit in helping workers reach jobs within their regions.

### **Work Scope Elements**

The project will include the following components:

1. **Conduct employment and household analysis for targeted growth areas** – For each *targeted growth area* (rail station areas in regional activity centers as well as those not currently in designated activity centers), the project will conduct an analysis of employment and housing opportunities. The data will provide a breakdown of the varying skill levels of jobs in each location and household income levels of workers who can fill jobs in targeted growth areas.
2. **Identify rail capacity** – For each targeted growth area, the project will identify where there is capacity on trains during commute times. The regional analysis will review projected rail capacity figures and indicate where capacity exists on the region’s rail systems, including off-peak reverse commute opportunities and opportunities to “sell the same seat twice” in the peak.
3. **Identify 20-25 most promising locations** – Drawing from the large list (more than 50) of targeted growth areas, the study will identify centers that present the greatest opportunities to take advantage of rail capacity. The identification of these locations will be based upon: 1) the regional technical analysis conducted under steps 1 & 2 above, and 2) input from the TPB’s members.
4. **Identify “complete streets” accessibility opportunities in most promising locations** – For each location, the project will identify challenges that commuters face in walking or bicycling from rail stations to their jobs or from their homes to rail stations, and opportunities for improvement. Building upon data from WMATA’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements Study, the project will examine area plans and development proposals for each location to understand how local jurisdictions are planning to address these challenges. The project will also identify regional success stories in creating public-private partnerships to implement accessibility improvements.
5. **Develop a regional database** – The final database will comprise a list of small, capital projects that will improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation within rail-based mixed-use centers throughout the region. Among other things, this database will provide a resource for future federal grant applications.

### **Summary**

There is \$61 million in TCSP funding available for FY 2011, with a maximum federal share of 80 percent. TPB staff is proposing to submit a grant application for \$200,000 to develop a regional database of small-scale, multimodal transportation projects, such as pedestrian/bicycle or other circulation improvements, around rail stations with transit capacity. Such projects will be designed to support the development of employment centers and housing for all income levels in locations already well-served by transit. This strategy is grounded in TPB scenario study efforts, the *TPB Vision* and *Region Forward* goals, as well as building on TPB planning principles implemented through the TLC Program.