

## ITEM 7

# MEMORANDUM

May 21, 2003

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board

**FROM:** Ronald F. Kirby  
Director of Transportation Planning

**SUBJECT:** Response to Comments Received on Submissions for Inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2003 CLRP and FY 2004-2009 TIP

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At its April 16, 2003 meeting, the Board was briefed on the project submissions received from state, regional and local agencies for the 2003 CLRP and the FY 2004-2009 TIP. These submissions were released for public comment and inter-agency review at the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on April 10, 2003.

The public comment period on the submissions ended on May 16, 2003. After the mailout on May 15, the TPB received the attached seven written comments on various projects and fourteen E-mail comments on one project.

Key comments and recommended responses are summarized below:

### **Suburban Maryland**

1. Comment: Funding the transitway from Bethesda to Silver Spring (a portion of the inner Purple Line) is welcome, but only including the Silver Spring to New Carrollton portion of the line as a study is disappointing.

Response: The transitway from Bethesda to Silver Spring has been in shown for construction in the CLRP for several years. The Silver Spring to New Carrollton portion of the transitway has consensus and is being included for study in order to examine various alignments and station locations. The entire transitway is now called the "Bi-County Transitway" in the CLRP.

2. Comment: The study of the Silver Spring to New Carrollton portion of the Bi-County Transitway should be accelerated to 2005, and construction should take place at least at the same time or before the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) expected completion date of 2012. The proposed schedule for these projects reflects a bias towards the “favored quarter of growth” at the expense of communities in need of revitalization and traffic relief.

Response: The Maryland Transit Administration will revise the management of the study for the Bi-County Transitway with the goal of achieving consensus on a cost-effective project. The Corridor Cities Transitway is being included in the plan for construction as a “place holder,” with completion dates of 2012 (to Metropolitan Grove) and 2020 (to Comsat). The EIS process for the CCT is still underway and the alignment, completion date and other details could change.

3. Comment: While the potential need for the Greenbelt Metro Interchange at I-95/495 is recognized, the project should not be funded until development proposals are shown to be truly transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly.

Response: A project location/design hearing will be held in Fall 2003. The land use and development approvals are under the local jurisdiction and the project is consistent with the local master plan.

4. Comment: The conversion of MD 210 to an eight-lane highway should not occur because it would favor long-distance commuting from Charles County, increase sprawl, and further divide Prince George’s County communities on either side of the highway.

Response: In the mailout of May 15, the status for this project was corrected to show that the proposed two HOV lanes are removed. The six-lane highway will be shown in the CLRP for reconstruction with intersection improvements and enhanced bus service.

5. Comment: The intersection improvements on MD 210 should not be included because they would favor long-distance commuting from Charles County and increase sprawl development.

Response: The intersection improvements will relieve traffic congestion along this corridor. The project is consistent with the Prince George’s County Master Plan.

6. Comment: The Intercounty Connector (ICC) Study should not be revived.

Response: A comprehensive NEPA process study will be conducted to address the concerns and issues identified in previous studies, the last of which was not completed.

7. Comment: Frederick County requests that the intersection of MD 15 and MD 26 be improved with a ramp from west bound MD 26 to MD 15.

Response: This intersection improvement is included for construction by 2010.

8. Comment: Rail connection between Alexandria, Virginia and Branch Avenue on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge must be added to the CLRP.

Response: The design and configuration of the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge allow for the construction and operation of future rail service. HOV lanes on the bridges are shown in the CLRP as a place holder until a decision is made on a future rail service connection and on HOV lanes on the Beltway.

### **Northern Virginia**

9. Comment: The Tri-County Parkway should not be constructed for several reasons, including its adverse impact on Bull Run Regional Park and the region's environment.

Response: The route alignment and other details are under study. The parkway is shown in the CLRP for construction by 2020 as a place holder. This project was included in the 2020 Plan adopted by the local jurisdictions in Northern Virginia.

10. Comment: Including the Tri-County Parkway in the CLRP before the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) is complete, public hearing held, and a final decision made raises procedural questions. Including the project for construction indicates that authorities have prejudged the outcome of the EIS.

Response: Projects can be included in the CLRP for construction as "place holders." The degree of specificity required in the transportation plan and the specific travel network assumed for air quality conformity analysis do not preclude the consideration of alternatives in the EIS process or other project development studies. If the outcome of the EIS is different than assumed in the CLRP, the CLRP will be amended to reflect the change.

11. Comment: The completion date of 2010 for the study of the Potomac Yards

Metro Station should be accelerated to 2005.

Response: In the mailout of May 15, the study status for this project was incorrect. The Potomac Yards Metro Station is shown in the CLRP for construction and the completion date was changed from 2010 to 2015.

12. Comment: VA 28 and the Dulles Greenway should not be expanded because more lanes will increase sprawl pressures.

Response: These projects are designed to respond to traffic and development pressures that already exist in these highway corridors. The road expansions are intended to improve safety, mobility and accessibility. These projects have been examined and developed through the Northern Virginia 2020 Plan.

13. Comment: Loudoun County requests that the proposed improvement of US 50 from west of Middleburg east to Route 616 (to be completed by 2015) be removed from the CLRP.

Response: As detailed in the attached letter of May 16, 2003 from VDOT to the Loudoun County Administrator, the completion date for this project will be changed to 2025.

14. Comment: The TPB should request the appropriate authorities to fix the northbound and southbound merges into the George Washington Parkway from the 14th Bridge.

Response: In 2001, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Eastern Federal Lands Division, in cooperation with VDOT, DDOT, and the US Department of the Interior identified a number of projects, including ramp merger improvements, associated with the 14th Street Bridge to help reduce congestion and improve safety. These projects were included in the FY 2001-2006 TIP and several improvements have been completed.