

ITEM 11 - Action

July 21, 2010

Approval of Next Steps for the “Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities”

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on and approve the recommended next steps for follow-up to the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities, as described in the enclosed memorandum.

Issues: None

Background: At the June 16 meeting, the Board was briefed on the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities held on May 26 and on a summary of the comments and discussion among the participants. The TPB Technical Committee and TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) also reviewed and discussed this summary.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby, Director, Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Follow-up to the “Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities”

DATE: July 15, 2010

At its meeting on June 16, 2010, the TPB directed staff to develop recommendations for follow-up to the “Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities,” an event that was held on May 26 in response to the CAC request that the TPB develop a regional priorities plan. This memorandum lays out a six-month action plan for follow-up.

Background

On May 26, 2010, the TPB hosted an interactive event called the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities, which featured interactive discussion of regional transportation challenges, opportunities, and possibilities for enhancing the process of setting and implementing regional priorities. The invitation-based event included members of the TPB, Technical Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee. The impetus for the event was a request by the CAC for the TPB to consider the idea of developing a “Regional Priorities Plan” that would serve as a financially-unconstrained regional vision for transportation investment.

The event began with four context-setting presentations made by TPB Chairman Dave Snyder; Vice Chair Todd Turner; Ron Kirby, Director, Department of Transportation Planning; and Maureen Budetti, CAC Chair. The event then transitioned to a series of concurrent interactive conversations designed to address the question: *What would a regional transportation priorities plan mean?*

Following the Conversation, TPB staff wrote a report on the event, which included a summary of the interactive table discussions. This report included five “Potential Next Steps” that were based upon common suggestions made by participants at the Conversation:

1. Form a task force to determine if a regional transportation priorities plan is feasible.
2. Develop an inventory of unfunded transportation priority projects.
3. Investigate what other MPOs are doing.

4. Take steps to increase public information about TPB procedures and goals.
5. Continue the conversation [about the regional transportation planning process].

The CAC on June 10 unanimously voted to endorse the above-mentioned five “Potential Next Steps” in the TPB staff report on the Conversation. The CAC also voted to request that the TPB take action to proceed with next steps at the earliest opportunity, preferably in July.

On June 16, TPB staff presented the report on the Conversation to the TPB. In a discussion following the presentation, TPB members expressed their appreciation for the efforts that went into the Conversation, noting that the event facilitated a useful exchange of ideas. Several TPB members suggested that the five “potential next steps” from the report should be further explored. In closing the discussion, TPB Chairman David Snyder asked staff to return to the TPB in July with recommendations for follow-up action.

Responding to the Five Potential Next Steps

In response to the five potential next steps listed above, staff recommends the following actions over the next six months:

1. *Form a task force to determine if a regional transportation priorities plan is feasible.*

On June 23, 2010, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program. COG is planning to lead a consortium of government entities and non-profit partners, including the TPB as the MPO for the National Capital Region, in preparing an application to HUD under this program. Funding from this HUD program will support the development and implementation of Regional Priority Plans for Sustainable Development that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure development. The maximum funding amount for the Washington region is \$5 million over a performance period of 36 months. Applicants will be required to provide 20 percent of the requested funding amount in “leveraged resources “ in cash or in-kind contributions. Applications are due on August 23.

TPB staff will be participating in the development of the grant application for this new HUD program. Since this work effort is related to the setting of regional transportation priorities, it is recommended that plans for follow-up action on the formation of a task force be deferred until the grant application to HUD is fully developed and submitted on August 23. The various options for forming this task force can then be discussed in the context of the institutional arrangements and work activities anticipated under the proposed HUD grant.

2. *Develop an inventory of unfunded transportation priority projects*

Staff will develop an inventory of priority projects that are included in regional, state and local plans in our region, such as Northern Virginia’s TransAction 2030, the priority letters

that Maryland's counties annually submit to MDOT, and studies in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan.

The inventory will be designed to provide information on the universe of projects under consideration throughout the region. It will include a list of projects and short descriptions, as well as a map. The inventory will be limited to projects that are 1) regionally significant, and 2) included in plans or documents that have been officially approved by TPB members.

Deadlines:

- October – Staff presents a draft inventory to the TPB Technical Committee and the CAC and the TPB

3. *Investigate what other MPOs are doing*

TPB staff will investigate the financially unconstrained planning activities of other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), especially those that are multi-state such as Kansas City, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Cincinnati. This research will include information on the methodologies for developing unconstrained long-range plans or other methods of evaluating project submissions against regional goals. The research will also examine how public involvement activities have been incorporated, how long these planning processes have lasted, and how unconstrained long-range transportation plans have been used. The research will be summarized in a short report that will focus on issues and opportunities that were discussed at the Conversation.

Deadlines:

- October – Staff presents a draft report to the TPB Technical Committee, the CAC and the TPB.

4. *Increase public information about the Washington region's current regional planning process*

TPB staff will develop public education activities and tools designed to better inform citizens about how this region's process currently operates. At a minimum, the new public involvement materials will include a new brochure, website improvements and newly scheduled sessions of the Community Leadership Institute. In addition, staff will develop a new evaluation of how the 2010 CLRP performs in meeting the region's goals.

These materials will provide information on case studies and process related to the development of the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), illustrating the wide variety of ways by which projects are initiated, funded and implemented. This information will be designed to explain and illustrate: 1) the regional influences on project selection, including regional policy goals and federal planning requirements, especially financial constraint; and 2) the roles and responsibilities of the TPB's members, and the various opportunities at the state and local levels for public involvement.

These public information materials will attempt to clarify the extent to which planning in our region provides public involvement opportunities, as well as the manner in which decision makers consider regional goals in developing inputs for the CLRP and TIP. These public education materials will simplify the information on the regional process as it is described in the TPB's Citizens Guide, and will also provide case study examples that illustrate the level of regional collaboration and coordination that currently exists in the region.

TPB staff will also consider methods for establishing a clearinghouse function on the COG/TPB website that would provide interested citizens with links to up-to-date information on important planning activities that are currently underway at the local and state levels throughout the region.

Deadlines:

- October – Staff provides a report describing proposed improvements in TPB public information.
- November – Staff will present an evaluation of how the 2010 CLRP performs in meeting the region's goals.

5. *Continue the conversation*

A follow-up event will be scheduled for November that will again bring together key internal stakeholders to discuss further action. The same groups will be invited to this event as were invited to the Conversation on May 26. The event will take place at COG.

Deadlines:

- November – TPB will reconvene an event designed as follow up to the Conversation.

TPB Action in July

At the TPB meeting on July 21, the Board will be asked to approve the activities described above as follow-up to the Conversation.