National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

April 12, 2012

TO: Transportation Planning Board

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

RE: Letters Sent/Received Since the March 21st TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the March 21st TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Agenda #5 of the April 18th TPB agenda.

Attachments

JIM WEBB
VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-4024

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4605

March 30, 2012

Mr. Robert Letteney
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Letteney:

I am writing to express my support for an application submitted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) IV Discretionary Grant program.

Representatives from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments have indicated to my office that resources provided through the TIGER IV program would be used to enhance pedestrian access to Metrorail and regional mass transit stations. It is my understanding that COG's proposal is part of a comprehensive approach to helping alleviate congestion on some of Virginia's major commuter arteries. Further, enhancing pedestrian access to public transit could improve quality of life for Virginians by providing diversified transportation solutions as well as encouraging continued economic growth.

It appears that the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is well-positioned to meet the goals of the TIGER IV Discretionary Grant program and, to that end, I ask that you give this application every fair and favorable consideration in keeping with all federal laws and guidelines governing this program. I further ask that you keep me informed of the status of this proposal by contacting Mr. Martin Mash in my Roanoke office at 3140 Chaparral Drive, Building C, Suite 101, Roanoke, Virginia 24018. Mr. Mash may also be reached via telephone at (540) 772-4236.

Sincerely,

Jim Webb
United States Senator

JW:mm

Spring 2012 *Street Smart* Media Report Preview

On Wednesday, March 28, 2012, the regional *Street Smart* campaign kicked off with area leaders gathering at a busy intersection in Prince George's County, MD to call attention for the need of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians to be mindful of each other when sharing the road.

Chairman Todd Turner of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board reported the latest pedestrian and bicyclist fatality data for the metropolitan Washington region and emphasized the need to remain vigilant in light of progress made over the past year. Chiefs Mark Magaw and Marc S. Bashoor of the Prince George's County Police and Fire/EMS Departments respectively were on hand to stress the heightened enforcement for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike that will be taking place over the spring and summer months. Additional remarks were made by medics Stephanie Buffum and Amy Gunn of the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department who both vividly shared personal experiences of being first-responders to the scene of a vehicle versus pedestrian collision.

The speakers' presentation was followed by an hour of live enforcement at the intersection of Silver Hill Road and Marlboro Pike in which Prince George's County police officers issued warnings and citations to drivers and pedestrians who were not adhering to traffic safety laws.

Coverage highlights included:

- Reaching **more than 2 million people** across the region, specifically:
  - **12** print and online articles reaching at least **1,758,161 readers**
    - Including four online stories and one print story from *The Washington Post*
    - Including one online and one print story from *The Washington Examiner*
  - **Nine** television stories reaching at least **198,415 viewers**
  - Radio coverage on ***WTOP*** reaching at least **45,000 listeners**

A full media report on the Spring 2012 campaign will be released soon. We appreciate the opportunity to continue working with the *Street Smart team* on this valuable public safety program. Please contact Emily Howard or John Undeland with any questions at 202-289-2001.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Eric Randall
Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Summary of Transit Experience and Studies for the American Legion Bridge (I-495)

DATE: April 11, 2012

Background

In response to comments at the March 21, 2012 meeting of the Transportation Planning Board, this memo summarizes available information on experience and studies that have included consideration of transit services across the American Legion Memorial Bridge (I-495). As noted at the TPB meeting, transit services across this heavily used and congested bridge could connect the major activity centers along the Montgomery County/I-270 corridor and the Fairfax County/Tysons Corner/Dulles Toll Road corridor. In addition, with the forthcoming opening of the Metrorail Silver Line to Tysons Corner, it would be possible to connect two branches of the Metrorail network.

Transit Experience

1. Metrobus: Montgomery-Tysons Beltway Express

A previous transit service across the Legion Bridge connecting the two corridors was terminated due to low ridership. The Metrobus 14 service consisted of two bus lines connecting key points along each corridor. In Maryland, service was provided from/to Gaithersburg (Lake Forest Mall) via Montgomery Mall, and from/to Bethesda and Medical Center/NIH. In Virginia, all service terminated at the Tysons-Westpark Transit Station. Service operated during the peak hours only, with frequency averaging 30 minutes, but every 20 minutes at the peak of the peak, in both directions.

Metrobus 14 service began in 1998. While Metrobus was given permission to operate along the shoulders on the Maryland portion of the Beltway to circumvent congestion, in practice the benefits were modest. Virginia did not allow shoulder operation for safety reasons. In addition, a major primary cause of congestion for traffic headed to Tysons Corner during this time frame was the I-495 (outer loop) access to the Dulles Toll Road (VA-267), which the bus could not avoid. (This ramp was subsequently widened from one lane to two lanes in August 2005). Ridership on the Metrobus 14 did not meet expectations, and by May 2002 was averaging only six persons per trip (with a farebox recovery ratio of 10%), or approximately 400 persons per day. The service was discontinued on December 26, 2003.

In addition to providing little or no travel time benefit, there were secondary causes for the poor ridership on the Metrobus 14 service. The Tysons-Westpark terminal was some distance from ultimate traveler destinations in Tysons Corner, with limited onward transit service either circulating within the area or continuing onwards to Herndon and Reston. The urban environment lacked walkability for continuing on foot. Meanwhile, most office and retail destinations also provided free or low-cost parking. At the Maryland termini, connections to transit were either few (at Lake Forest Mall) or slow (to Bethesda and Medical Center). With the Metrobus 14 service offering at best very limited travel time benefits or travel cost savings, auto use remained the overwhelming choice.

2. Current Vanpool Service

Aside from fixed route transit service, local jurisdictions and MWCOG's Commuter Connections work together to assist over 20,000 commuters around the region in making use of ride-matching services, both carpooling and vanpool arrangements. These ride-matching services are typically more financially and operationally efficient for transportation between dispersed origins and destinations. While most carpool arrangements are informal, Commuter Connections does have some data available on vanpools supported through formal ride-matching efforts. The data indicate 16 vanpools would likely make use of the Legion Bridge on a daily basis, which would provide capacity for 110 to 240 travelers (220-480 round trip). Thirteen of these 16 travel from Virginia into Maryland, on what is usually considered the reverse commute, and chiefly originate in Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties. Other vanpools not registered with Commuter Connection may use the bridge as well.

Studies

1. License Plate Survey of Morning Commuter Traffic Crossing the American Legion Bridge

In 2003, the consulting firm VHB conducted a camera survey of license plates for morning peak traffic on the American Legion Bridge for VDOT. The purpose of this effort was to better understand origin and destination patterns for Virginia and Maryland residents using the bridge, as well as gain some insight on commuter destinations along employment corridors.

The study found that of Virginia residents originating from the Dulles Corridor, 23 percent of those traveling across the Legion Bridge exited north onto I-270. This movement accounted for only 5.4 percent of total observed Virginia to Maryland commuters. Of the Maryland residents originating along the I-270 corridor, 19 percent exited onto the Dulles Toll Road. This movement accounted for only 8.0 percent of overall Maryland to Virginia commuters. Most commuters had trips outside these corridors. For example, the largest O-D pair for Virginia to Maryland commuters was from Annandale to Bethesda, while almost half of Maryland to Virginia commuters exited the Beltway heading inwards, with the most common exit being south on the George Washington Parkway.

Overall, the study concluded that origins and destinations for Legion Bridge commuters were widely distributed, challenging the effectiveness of dedicated transit service connecting just a few locations.

2. West Side Mobility Study (I-270 and Legion Bridge)

The West Side Mobility Study final report was published in July 2009. Conducted by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), with support from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the study area covered the 14 miles from the northern terminus of the Virginia Express Lanes Project (i.e., the HOT lanes on the Capital Beltway) north across the American Legion Bridge, along the west side of the Capital Beltway in Maryland, along the I-270 West Spur, along I-270, to the I-370

Interchange south of Gaithersburg. The focus was on alternatives for managed lanes to increase capacity, both medium-term and long-term. The managed lane system would consist of one or two managed lanes in each direction and would connect the Virginia Express Lanes with managed lane options for I-270. The study considered widening for one lane per direction on the American Legion Bridge and in Maryland, though the widening is constrained by the limited right-of-way and proximity to sensitive environmental features and adjacent residences and is costly (approaching $2 billion for a full rebuilding and widening of the bridge and Beltway).

The study did not consider transit services; however implementation of a managed lane option would offer travel time savings and reliability across the Legion Bridge that could make bus transit an attractive mode.

3. CLRP Streamlined Aspirations Scenario

The TPB's CLRP Streamlined Aspirations Scenario models the implementation of a regional express bus network, operating on managed lanes and connecting dense activity centers. Broad brush financial estimates for the streamlined scenario modeled in 2011 forecast that the overall construction and operation of a managed lane and express bus network could be financially self-supporting. The scenario includes an express bus route connecting the I-270 corridor to Tysons Corner, operating on the managed lanes network, with a modeled configuration of four general lanes and two managed lanes (4 GPL + 2 ML) for the Legion Bridge. The model used in the analysis did not have a transit assignment component, so the projected ridership on this one route cannot be assessed. The planned update of the CLRP Streamlined Aspirations in the fall of 2012 using the Version 2.3 model will provide segment level information on transit ridership across the Legion Bridge.

4. WMATA Regional Transit System Plan (RTSP)

As part of its ongoing RTSP study, WMATA has modeled rail services that would cross the Potomac on or near the Legion Bridge. One model of a Beltway Metrorail line would have stations in Tysons Corner and on Lewinsville Road, and then cross the river to stop at River Road, Montgomery Mall, and White Flint. Modeled ridership forecasts for 2040 on the segment of the rail loop across the Potomac were modest, predicting less than 2,000 riders in the peak period (1,200 from Maryland to Virginia and 600 in the reverse direction) and roughly 21,000 throughout the day, of which half would be new transit trips.

WMATA also modeled an extensive surface transit network, including the Montgomery BRT system and a similar proposal for Virginia, as well as expanded commuter rail service; however no segment was included across the Legion Bridge. Phase II of the RTSP study, currently underway, will include an enhanced regional commuter bus network with service across the American Legion Bridge, connecting Tysons Corner and Montgomery Mall.

Conclusions and Ongoing Studies

To be effective, fixed-route transit services crossing the Legion Bridge and connecting the Montgomery County/I-270 corridor and Fairfax County/Tysons Corner/Dulles Toll Road corridors would need to offer travel time benefits and/or travel cost savings to travelers. In regard to travel time benefits, a managed lane on the Capital Beltway could provide travel time and reliability savings relative to driving in the regular lanes. At both ends, significantly improved circulation for buses would be necessary, including dedicated ramps and lanes, transit signal priority, and rapid connections

to the Metrorail stations. In regard to travel cost savings, the provision of free or low-cost parking generally leads to uncompetitive bus services; the best opportunity for bus services is in the context of an overall automobile travel demand management arrangement for an activity center like Tysons Corner. Currently, vanpool services offer cost-effective and flexible travel options across the Legion Bridge.

Ongoing regional studies will provide further analysis of transit services across the American Legion Bridge. The planned update of the CLRP Streamlined Aspirations Scenario using the Version 2.3 regional transportation model (to take place in the fall of 2012 under the FY 2013 UPWP) and the forthcoming WMATA RTSP Phase II analysis will provide forecasts of potential ridership on bus transit links across the Legion Bridge in 2040. These forecasts will provide guidance for assessing the need and scope for any subsequent studies of high-quality transit across the bridge.