

Long-Range Plan Gets Full Approval

The Transportation Planning Board on December 17 performed what is probably its most defining task—the approval of a comprehensive update to the region’s Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP). The TPB also approved a six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for fiscal years 2004-2009.

As part of the approval process, the TPB demonstrated that these documents meet

federal requirements for air quality and financial constraint.

The new CLRP covers the years 2003-2030. Federal law requires the long-range plan to be comprehensively updated every three years, although it is typically amended every year.

See Plan Approved on page 2

Shapiro and Hanley Honored



Outgoing TPB Chair Peter Shapiro, left, and First Vice Chair Kate Hanley, center, were recognized at the TPB’s December 17 meeting for their years of service. Both Shapiro and Hanley are leaving the board. Pictured at right is 2003 Second Vice Chair Phil Mendelson who will continue as a TPB officer in 2004. At the December 17 meeting, the TPB elected Arlington County Councilmember Chris Zimmerman as 2004 chair. See page 5.

Traffic Signal Program Outpaces Expectations

Nearly 600 traffic signals have been retimed and coordinated in the past year as part of a regional program adopted by the Transportation Planning Board in July 2002.

“There’s some very good news here and we ought to take a minute to pause on a success story,” said David Snyder, Falls

Church councilmember, when he presented a progress report on the program at the TPB’s December 17 meeting.

The TPB adopted the traffic signal “optimization” program in 2002 as a Transportation Emissions Reduction Measure (TERM). The optimization program and other TERMS are



Traffic signal optimization is a cost-effective way to reduce congestion.

See Traffic Signals on page 7

Plan Approved *continued from page 1*

Prior to approving the CLRP and TIP, the board approved an air quality “conformity determination” showing that anticipated vehicle emissions will conform to air quality improvement goals contained in the region’s air quality improvement plan.

Plan approval delayed in November

The approval of the CLRP/TIP was delayed in November because key components of the regional air quality plan, which provide the basis for a conformity determination, were still under review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The air quality plan (commonly called the State Implementation Plan or SIP) was approved on August 13, 2003, by the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), an independent body, which, like the TPB, is staffed by the Council of Governments. The air quality plan was submitted to EPA for approval in September.

TPB staff performed an analysis in the fall of 2003 successfully showing that the draft CLRP and TIP would conform to the ceilings on vehicle emissions (the “mobile emissions budgets”) contained in the regional air quality plan. However, the board could not act in November to officially approve the conformity determination, along with the CLRP and the TIP, because the EPA had not yet approved the mobile emissions budgets.

As a backup measure, the board in November approved an Interim CLRP and TIP, which included only projects not subject to air quality conformity requirements.

On December 9, EPA issued an “adequacy finding” for the mobile emissions budgets,

which permitted the conformity determination to proceed at the TPB’s December meeting.

CLRP only includes funded projects

In addition to air quality conformity, the other major analysis associated with the CLRP is a long-range assessment of funding. Federal law requires the plan to only include projects for which funding is “reasonably expected to be available.” The “C” in CLRP refers to financial constraint. The plan may only include projects that the region can afford to build, maintain and operate. It is not a “wish list” or “needs list.”

The new CLRP update forecasts that \$93.3 billion in transportation funding will be available between 2004 and 2030—approximately \$3.59 billion per year. Public transit expenditures are projected to be \$56.4 billion, while highways would receive \$36.9 billion over the life of the plan.

The last CLRP update in 2000 forecast that \$3.07 billion per year would be available. The new estimates are in 2004 constant dollars, whereas the previous numbers were calculated in 2000 constant dollars.

The CLRP’s financial constraint requirement creates a prioritization process through which unfunded projects are left out of the CLRP or are simply included as “studies” that are not slated for development and construction. For example, the Corridor Cities Transitway in Montgomery County is included in the new CLRP update as a funded project whose first phase of construction will be completed by 2012. In contrast, the eastern portion of the Bi-County Transitway (formerly called the Purple Line) between Silver Spring and New Carrollton is included as a study with no engineering or construction identified in the CLRP.

TPB also looking at unfunded needs

In October, the TPB launched an additional financial analysis that will look at short-term transportation shortfalls—needs that were left out of the CLRP precisely because they are not funded. This new six-year study was authorized because a number of TPB members believed the CLRP’s long-term focus on funded projects, which is the federal requirement, could create the false impression that the region’s

This newsletter is produced by John Swanson
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4239
202-962-3295; jswanson@mwcog.org
Click on “TPB News” at www.mwcog.org/transportation

transportation needs are being met.

“They [some TPB members] believe the CLRP financial analysis didn’t give enough emphasis to short-run problems, including the need for a substantial ‘ramp-up’ in rehab funding for WMATA [the Metro system] in the next couple of years,” said Ron Kirby, Director of COG’s Department of Transportation Planning. Officials who run Metro have warned they need an additional \$1.5 billion before 2010 to maintain existing infrastructure, improve system security and purchase new cars and equipment to meet growing demand.

The short-term analysis of pressing unfunded needs is scheduled to be completed this January so that it might be available to state legislatures and the U.S. Congress when those bodies consider funding for the Washington region.

Projects discussed during 2003

Given the region’s continuing financial shortfall for transportation, the 2003 CLRP update includes relatively few new projects. “I guess the obvious comment is that there’s very little that’s been changed,” said Ron Kirby when he presented the draft list of projects to the TPB in April.

Nevertheless, over the course of the year, the TPB did engage in lively discussions about a number of projects, both large and small, that were proposed for inclusion or amendment in the CLRP. In some cases, projects were added or changed during the year in the then-current CLRP and TIP; these changes were reflected in the new 2003 CLRP update and the FY 2004-09 TIP approved in December.

• **Intercounty Connector.** The ICC, the “number-one transportation priority” of Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich, has been included in the CLRP and TIP for study and “hardship and protective” right of way acquisition. The project under study would link I-270 near Gaithersburg with U.S. 1 or I-95 in Prince George’s County. At the request of MDOT, the TPB acted in October to amend the then-current FY 2003-08 TIP to include the ICC study and right of way acquisition. The amendment was approved in a rollcall vote of 11-7.

The ICC has been the subject of vigorous debate for nearly 50 years. Supporters say that the project, which was first planned in the 1950s as part of an outer beltway, is vital to serve development that has already occurred. Opponents say the project’s high pricetag (currently estimated at \$1.7 billion)

Committee Chairs Honored



Peter Shapiro, 2003 TPB chair, presented plaques to outgoing committee chairs at the TPB meeting on December 17. In the top picture is Lora Byala, 2003 chair of the TPB Technical Committee. Pictured below is Karren Pope-Onwukwe, 2003 chair of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee.

would inevitably mean that other important projects in the region would be put on hold. Opponents also said the project would have unacceptable environmental impacts and would exacerbate inefficient land use patterns.

• **Anacostia Light Rail.** The CLRP and TIP include, as a new project, a demonstration light rail line in the District of Columbia that will run 2.7 miles on unused CSX track between Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and the entrance to Bolling Air Force Base. Construction of the project is scheduled to begin in 2004, with service starting in 2005.

• **University of Maryland Connector.** A study of this project was included in the CLRP and TIP despite amendments proposed at the November and December TPB meetings to keep it out. The study will examine a possible road

Plan Approved *continued on page 4*

Plan Approved *continued from page 3*

linking the University of Maryland campus with the interchange of the Beltway and I-95. Opponents, including the City of College Park and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, said a road would be destructive to local communities and that funding would be better spent on improvements to Route 1. Supporters said that a study would provide information needed to make decisions. The amendment in November to delete the study was defeated, 9-8. A similar amendment in December was defeated 11-7.

• **Western Transportation Corridor.** The TPB unanimously voted in November to delete this study from the CLRP because the Commonwealth Transportation Board had defunded it. The study, which is part of a long history of proposals to build circumferential roads outside the Capital Beltway, was launched in 2002 by VDOT as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It would have looked at a 50-mile corridor in an arc starting at I-95 in Stafford County, going through Prince William and into Loudoun County, and ending at Route 7 on the Potomac River.

• **Bi-County Transitway (Purple Line) and Corridor Cities Transitway.** The new CLRP includes the eastern portion of the Bi-County Transitway, between Silver Spring and New Carrollton, only as a study. In contrast, the Corridor Cities Transitway, which would run roughly along the I-270 corridor in Montgomery County, is included as a project for construction. TPB Chairman Peter Shapiro expressed concern in May that the Bi-County Transitway, which would serve the most transit-dependent portions of Montgomery and Prince George's counties, was being "put on the back burner." (Since the late 1990s, the CLRP has included the western portion of the Bi-County Transitway between Bethesda and Silver Spring for construction, but the project has not moved to construction because of disagreement about its final alignment.)

• **U.S. 50 in Loudoun County.** In May, the TPB voted, 19-4, to remove a widening project for U.S. 50 in Loudoun County from the draft list of projects for the 2003 CLRP. VDOT had requested that the project be slated for construction in 2025. It would have widened

U.S. 50 from two to four lanes along a 10-mile stretch from west of Middleburg east to Route 616 (Goshen Road). The widening was removed from the Loudoun County comprehensive plan in 2002.

• **Rail to Dulles.** The TPB amended the CLRP in January 2003 to revise the cost estimate for rail to Dulles Airport and into Loudoun County. The pricetag for the project rose from \$2.034 billion to \$3.144 billion. The revised estimate, which was carried forward into the 2003 CLRP update, is based on the state and local government decision to proceed with a full Metrorail alternative for the project. The Metrorail extension is scheduled for completion in 2015. Transit to Dulles has been in the CLRP since 1999.

A number of other new projects, such as the K Street Busway in D.C. or the Dulles Greenway widening in Virginia, were included in the 2003 CLRP update but were not discussed in detail by the TPB during the year.

For information about the CLRP projects, the air quality conformity determination and the CLRP financial analysis, see www.mwco.org/transportation. ■

TPB Alphabet Soup

CAC	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
CLRP	-	Constrained Long-Range Plan
COG	-	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
DDOT	-	District Department of Transportation
EPA	-	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	-	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	-	Federal Transit Administration
MWAQC	-	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
MDOT	-	Maryland Department of Transportation
SIP	-	State Implementation Plan for air quality
TERMs	-	Transportation Emission Reduction Measures
TIP	-	Transportation Improvement Program
TPB	-	Transportation Planning Board
UPWP	-	Unified Planning Work Program
VDOT	-	Virginia Department of Transportation
WMATA	-	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Zimmerman Elected 2004 TPB Chair

Christopher Zimmerman was elected 2004 chair of the Transportation Planning Board on December 17.

For the position of first vice chair, the TPB elected Phil Mendelson of the D.C. Council. Michael Knapp, Montgomery County Councilmember, was elected second vice chair. According to the TPB bylaws, the three TPB officers are from Virginia, the District of Columbia and Maryland. The chairmanship rotates every year between these three jurisdictions.

Chris Zimmerman was first elected to the Arlington County Board in 1996 and re-elected in 1998 and 2002. He served as chair in 1998 and 2002.

On the county board, Mr. Zimmerman has been an advocate of the County's legacy of transit-oriented development and managed growth. He has emphasized traffic calming and neighborhood conservation, public schools and programs for youth, economic development and community policing.

Mr. Zimmerman serves as one of Virginia's two members on the Board of Directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). He served as WMATA chair in 2002. He is also on the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, and is active with the Virginia Railway Express and the American Public Transit Association. He has been a member of the TPB since 1998.

Mr. Zimmerman was formerly Chief Economist and Committee Director for



Chris Zimmerman, incoming TPB chairman, moderated a public meeting titled "Columbia Pike Revitalization: Can It Be a Model for the Region?" on December 3. The event was hosted by the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee. Mr. Zimmerman has been a leader on Columbia Pike revitalization efforts.

Federal Budget and Taxation at the National Conference of State Legislatures, where he worked from 1987-1998. He holds a masters in economics from the University of Maryland and a bachelors degree from American University. A resident of Arlington since 1979, Mr. Zimmerman lives with his wife and three children in the Douglas Park neighborhood.

First Vice Chair **Phil Mendelson** has been an at-large member of the D.C. Council and a member of the TPB since 1998. As a council member, he has been active in a wide variety of issues, including redistricting, tax reform, crime and the environment. Mr. Mendelson is a familiar face at the Council of Governments, having served as TPB chair in 2002 and chair of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee in 2001 and 2003.

Second Vice Chair **Michael Knapp** was elected to the Montgomery County Council in 2002 to represent upcounty and western areas of the county. For five years in the early 1990s, he served on the staff of Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico, focusing on biotechnology including the Human Genome Project. More recently he has held positions in several biotechnology companies. ■

Other December Agenda Items

Other items on the TPB's December agenda included:

- **Review of study results of near-term regional transportation funding needs, funding availability, and project/program priorities.** This study is scheduled to be completed in January so that it might be available to state legislatures and the U.S. Congress.

- **Report on recent coordination planning activities for regional transportation evacuation/protective actions.** Falls Church Councilmember David Snyder briefed the TPB on recent emergency preparedness planning activities. Additional briefings will be provided to the TPB this winter. ■

'Access for All' Focuses on Transit for People With Disabilities

The TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee is commending a new "mainstreaming" initiative by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to get more people with disabilities to use fixed-route Metro buses and trains.

But while recognizing the importance of encouraging fixed route use, the Access for All committee also highlighted the continuing importance of "demand responsive" transportation services for people with disabilities. WMATA provides such curb-to-curb services in vans and taxis through the MetroAccess paratransit program. The Access for All committee asked WMATA to conduct a study of potential improvements to MetroAccess.

The committee's recommendations on the WMATA mainstreaming initiative were presented at the TPB's meeting on December 17 by committee member John Hudson who serves as Director of Disability Services, Planning and Development for Fairfax County.

The TPB will be asked to approve the Access for All recommendations at its next meeting on January 21.

Transit options

In his presentation, Mr. Hudson explained that people with disabilities have two transit options: **fixed route** service and **demand responsive** service. Fixed route services include Metro's bus and rail systems, and transit services operated by counties or cities, such as the Fairfax Connector system.

Demand responsive service, commonly called paratransit, provides curb-to-curb transportation in vans and taxicabs. Such service is provided by WMATA's MetroAccess program, and also by city and county systems, such as the Arlington Star program. In recent years, media reports have highlighted the rising costs of paratransit services and concerns about its reliability.

WMATA developed a report earlier this year called "Mainstreaming Individuals With

Disabilities Onto MetroBus and MetroRail." Metro's desire to increase fixed route usage is based largely on the transit system's need to reduce costs, including MetroAccess.

The WMATA mainstreaming report recommended an outreach initiative called "Metro is Accessible" which is designed to educate people with disabilities about Metro's accessibility features and to encourage greater use of the system.

Committee recommendations

Responding to the WMATA mainstreaming report, the Access for All recommendations focused on three key points:

- **Coordinate with other systems.**

Mainstreaming efforts at Metro should be coordinated with county and city transit systems throughout the region.

- **Improve reliability.** The committee supports recommendations in the WMATA mainstreaming report to increase the reliability of train and bus systems. These specific recommendations include:

- Ensure that elevators and escalators work routinely;
- Increase lighting and signage;
- Improve accessibility to bus stops;
- Ensure that bus drivers call out stops and have working wheelchair lifts;
- Improve transit information.

In addition to helping people with disabilities, these improvements are important for people with limited English skills, those traveling with small children, bicyclists and the general public.

- **Study MetroAccess.** The committee asked for a study of Metro's paratransit service, similar to



The Access for All Advisory Committee is asking WMATA to conduct a study of potential improvements to the MetroAccess paratransit service.

the mainstreaming study in cost and scope. Mr. Hudson reminded the TPB that MetroAccess remains the only option for a significant number of people with disabilities. As the population increases and ages, demand for MetroAccess service will increase just as rail and bus ridership will increase. Recognizing that MetroAccess is costly, the committee asked that potential cost efficiencies be thoroughly investigated.

The Access for All Advisory Committee was formed two years ago to look at regional transportation issues of concern to low-income and minority communities, and to people with disabilities.

For more information on the Access for All recommendations, go to www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb and see Item 14 for December 17 under "Past Meeting Documents." ■

Upcoming TPB Agenda

The TPB's January agenda will include:

- **Approval** of appointments to the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee for 2004
- **Approval** of draft Solicitation Document for 2004. The Solicitation Document lays out the official process for submitting projects for the CLRP and TIP.
- **Approval** of letter to WMATA transmitting the TPB Access for All Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding transit services for people with disabilities. See article on page 6 for details.
- **Review** of study results of near-term regional transportation funding needs, funding availability, and project/program priorities. See description on page 2.
- **Report** on the regional pedestrian/bicycle safety education campaign.
- **Report** on "ozone transport" in the Washington region. "Ozone transport" is the term used for ozone pollution that is carried by the wind for considerable distances from one region of the country to another.
- **Review** of outline and preliminary budget for 2005 Unified Planning Work Program, the TPB's work program. ■

Traffic Signals *continued from page 1*

implemented to help the region meet air quality improvement goals required under the federal Clean Air Act.

In addition to cutting emissions, signal optimization has been touted as a cost-effective way to reduce congestion. More regularized traffic flow also improves safety for drivers and pedestrians, and improves accessibility to bus stops and Metro stations.

The TPB in 2002 adopted a goal of optimizing 856 signals by 2005. That goal is likely to be exceeded, based on the fast pace of implementation.

The progress report to the TPB described efforts in each state. Out of 1390 total signals that were counted in June 2002, the **District of Columbia** had optimized approximately 400 signals by September of this year. D.C plans to optimize all its signals by the end of 2004.

"Being a driver and pedestrian in D.C. quite a lot, I know that those signals are already making a difference and have added greatly to pedestrian safety," said Mr. Snyder.

The **Maryland** Department of Transportation has optimized all signals in the Washington region under its control. MDOT is now working with the counties to optimize their signals. In suburban Maryland, 1509 total signals were known to exist as of June 2002.

According to current estimates, about 75 percent of Northern **Virginia's** 1641 traffic signals (the number from June 2002) have been optimized. The signals under VDOT's control were all optimized prior to 2002. After the 272 local jurisdiction signals have been adjusted by 2005, 92 percent of the traffic signals in Northern Virginia will have been optimized.

"Hopefully this program can be a harbinger of things to come and a model that we can use in the future as we address our regional transportation problems in a cost-effective way," said Mr. Snyder at the end of his presentation to the TPB.

For more information on the traffic signal optimization progress report, go to www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb and see Item 13 from the December 17 meeting under "Past Meeting Documents." ■

Calendar of Events

Dates and times subject to change. All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 N. Capitol St., NE (Enter from 1st Street).

January 2004

- January 7 — Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- January 9 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- January 9 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- January 13 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- January 15 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- January 16 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- January 20 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- January 20 — Commuter Operations Subcommittee (noon)
- January 20 — Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- January 20 — Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (2 pm)
- January 21 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- January 22 — Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- January 23 — Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9 am)

February 2004

- February 3 — Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- February 6 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- February 6 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- February 10 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- February 12 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- February 13 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- February 17 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- February 17 — Commuter Connections Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Evaluation Group (noon)
- February 18 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4239

FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. Postage Paid
Washington, D.C.
Permit #9770