

RESPONSES TO THE AFA COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT 2016 FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (CLRP) AMENDMENT

11/16/2016

The responses below are to the CLRP-specific AFA comments on the 2016 CLRP amendment that were part of the memo to the TPB with all public comments. All the AFA comments were attached to this memorandum and presented to the TPB on November 16, 2016. The memorandum can be found here (Item 7)

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2016/11/16/tpb-meeting/>

AFA Comment: The AFA expressed concern about the additional burdens that high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes may place on low-income populations and questioned if low-income populations can fully participate in the benefits of these new facilities, including purchasing a transponder and pre-paying tolls with a credit card. The AFA applauds the plans to include significant additional bus service in these corridors, but recommends that the transit service be fully implemented and improved as necessary.

Response from VDOT: *While we understand that the questions from the AFA focus on potential effects to low income drivers, the benefits of the Express lanes and the proposed additional capacity in the I-66 and the I-395 corridors have been demonstrated to apply to both the regular (free) lanes and the Express lanes, allowing these corridors to move more people and improving travel times on all lanes. There are choices, both tolled and free. Express lanes add new driving room for vehicles. In other words, drivers who choose to pay to drive in the tolled lanes reduce the number of vehicles wanting to travel in the free general purpose lanes. This means vehicles in both tolled and un-tolled lanes travel at better speeds.*

Express Lanes also provide room for bus transit, providing for reliable, quicker trips on transit. The Transportation Management Plan for the I-66 Corridor projects, which will be implemented during the construction phase, provides 50% fare subsidies to encourage transit use and to mitigate additional costs of riding bus transit, and waiving the initial cost of transponders for qualifying low income commuters who wish to use the tolled lanes. There will also be additional incentives for vanpool formation in the I-66 Corridor.

Transit services that are being provided as part of the I-66 and I-395 projects will meet ADA accessibility requirements. Adding new transit services means new transit services for people with disabilities will be available.

AFA Comment: The AFA recommends that the CLRP include full funding for Metro’s core capacity needs, including 8-car trains and supports a sustainable funding source for Metro. The AFA is concerned about Metrorail remaining both affordable and available to residents and low-income workers, and specifically expressed concerns about proposals for reducing Metro service and impact on those who are transit-dependent. The AFA supports the development of a multi-state agreement for a stable source of funding for Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess.

Response from TPB Staff: The COG Board of Directors created a Technical Panel charged with analyzing operating and capital funding needs and assessing revenue options to meet these needs, among other things. The interim report from the Technical Panel will be shared with the AFA committee as well as the final report expected in Spring 2017. The interim report can be found here: <https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2016/10/26/cog-technical-panel-interim-report-on-metro/>

At the December 15 AFA meeting, Metro staff will be asked to present the proposals for Metrorail service changes related to maintenance needs, and service and fare changes proposed for the FY2018 Metro budget. This will give the AFA committee a chance to ask questions about the proposals and learn about the public comment process that Metro has in place.

AFA Comment: The AFA expressed concern that the region is not only divided by race and income, but also by access to jobs, as shown in the “access to jobs by auto” measure in the performance analysis of the CLRP. The AFA supports actions to address the East-West divide, such as an increase in all modes of transportation to connect the eastern part of the region to the job-rich eastern portion.

Response from TPB Staff: Both future transportation and land use patterns contribute to the changes in “access to jobs” forecast for 2040. The transportation impacts of an East-West divide will be considered by the TPB’s Long-Range Task Force, as will Environmental Justice. The Phase 1 Report from the Long-Range Task Force summarizes the results from an “All-Build” and “No-Build” scenario and can be found here: <https://www.mwcog.org/file.aspx?&A=jd2BnA1IRCi3ldOSOUvXPZsrY1lgJIRIARzktKGiwSo%3d> The scenario analysis found that “access to jobs by auto” would be much worse in 2040 without the CLRP, and that under the “All-Build” scenario, “access to jobs by auto” would include significant gains in job accessibility for both the eastern and western portions of the region due to significant increases in roadway capacity. The “All-Build” scenario is financially beyond reach, so the next phase of the Long-Range Plan Task Force’s work is to focus on the development of a smaller set of unfunded projects with the greatest potential to improve mobility, accessibility and equity. The AFA will be briefed on the work of the Long-Range Plan Task Force at key stages in the process.

AFA Comment: The AFA discussed the Crystal City Transitway project and was concerned that funding for BRT is being prioritized over pedestrian infrastructure investments in an area already well-served by transit.

Response from Arlington County: *Arlington's FY 2017-2026 Capital Improvement Plan contains \$87 million in funding for a program of Crystal City, Pentagon City, and Potomac Yard street projects. This program will transform streets from auto-centric to multimodal complete streets with improved pedestrian facilities, bicycle lanes, on-street parking, improved street lights, traffic signals, the transitway, and Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant facilities. Additionally, the primary purpose of the transitway is to provide a quick and reliable surface transit option that brings more of Crystal City and Potomac Yard within walking distance of high-quality transit service. The transitway is a key component in Arlington County's adopted land and transportation plans for the Crystal City and Potomac Yard area.*

AFA Comment: The AFA noted that people who have hearing, visual and mobility limitations are concerned about their safety when crossing a street with a bike lane part of the DC Dedicated Bicycle Network; people with sensory or physical impairments may not be able to see or hear the bikes, or move quickly enough to get out of the way of a bike.

Response from DDOT: *Minimizing the risk to pedestrians, especially pedestrians with mobility or sensory disabilities, is an important part of DDOT design work for all types of travel facilities, including bike lanes. For protected bike lanes of the kind being considered under the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lanes study, designers will be considering and including elements to make crossings safer and more predictable. Protected bike lane design is a new and evolving field, and lessons-learned from prior projects help to ensure that facilities are continually improving. DDOT also has and will continue to fund a variety of safe-riding education and promotion programs to encourage safe riding behaviors, particularly around pedestrians.*