

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 TDD: (202) 962-3213

Meeting Notes

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Friday, March 16, 2012
TIME: 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
PLACE: COG, First Floor, Meeting Room 3
CHAIR: Tim Davis, City of Frederick

Attendees:

Tad Borkowski, Fairfax County DOT
James Cheeks, DDOT
Cina Dabestani, VDOT
Tim Davis, City of Frederick
Patrick Foster, Prince George's DPWT (called in)
Christine Green, Safe Routes to School National Partnership
Marcela Martinez, WRAP
Michael Pack, UMD
Jean Yves Point-du-Jour, Maryland SHA
Richard Retting, Sam Schwartz Engineering
Christina Sinz, Maryland Highway Safety Office (called in)

COG Staff:

Michael Farrell
Ron Kirby
Andrew Meese
Huijing Qiang

Actions:

1. Welcome & Introductions

a. Announcement of Transportation Safety Subcommittee Chairmanship of Tim Davis

Mr. Meese announced Tim Davis's chairmanship of the Transportation Safety Subcommittee. Mr. Davis comes from the City of Frederick and serves as the first chair of the Transportation Safety Subcommittee. Mr. Davis expressed his excitement for his new role as the chair and thanked everyone for their support.

2. Jurisdictional Roundtable

Mr. Davis welcomed participants and began introductions. Participants introduced themselves and started the jurisdictional roundtable.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is sponsoring projects of police enforcement on nighttime seatbelt usage in Maryland and several cities in Maryland have already received funding for that. There are also studies in Maryland evaluating the relationship between the actual rate of seatbelt usage and the media campaigns of public awareness of seatbelt usage.

Mr. Point-du-Jour reported that they had started to use approaches and techniques from the Highway Safety Manual to quantify safety improvements of all safety-related projects in SHA.

Ms. Martinez reported that Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) will start a program called "SoberRide" at 6 pm tomorrow. WRAP's SoberRide, called one of the nation's most successful free cab ride programs for would-be impaired drivers, has helped ensure greater Washington, DC residents have a safe way home on high-risk holidays. Since 1993, WRAP has provided over 55,479 safe rides home. Currently, SoberRide operates during the December/January holiday season, St. Patrick's Day, Independence Day and Halloween.

Mr. Cheeks briefed on updates from DDOT. They are currently reestablishing several safety initiatives involving drunk driving and police department coordination. They are also working on producing various new reports from traffic safety data as well as a new roadway safety audit program. Mr. Cheeks noted that safety has become the highest priority on all DDOT's projects.

Mr. Borkowski briefed on updates from Fairfax County. Fairfax County is teaming up with VDOT to improve safety at high frequency crash locations. They are using a GIS layer of high frequency crash locations from VDOT as the study base and conducting field visits to those hot spots.

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Ms. Green briefed on updates from the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. Launched in August 2005, the Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a fast-growing network of hundreds of organizations, government agencies and professional groups working to set goals, share best practices, leverage infrastructure and program funding and advance policy change to help agencies that implement Safe Routes to School programs. The Safe Routes to School National Partnership's mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

Mr. Dabestani noted that they are trying to look at safety issues from the planning aspect in VDOT.

Mr. Foster briefed on updates from the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation. They had received an award from the State on Safe Routes to School in Prince George's County. As a result, they are going to implement a number of projects on infrastructure improvement, mainly pedestrian sidewalks, in school areas in the County.

3. Regional Safety Data Scoping Study from University of Maryland CATT Lab

Mr. Pack made the presentation and ran demos on regional safety data scoping study. The study includes a thorough comparison analysis of Virginia, Maryland, and District of Columbia Police Accident Databases to determine the level of effort in creating a regional data visualization and analysis tool. It describes the existing data analysis tool that was created for the State of Maryland, as well as options, risks, and a budget for creating regional analysis capabilities.

A web-based crash analysis, visualization and mining tool for the Maryland State Highway Administration's Office of Traffic and Safety (OOTS) for use by state, regional, and local transportation engineers and analysts is nearly complete. The tool was developed by staff from the Center for Advanced Transportation Technology Laboratory. The web-based application allows users to dynamically interact with, visualize and query data from the Maryland Automated Accident Reporting System (MAARS) that is managed by the Maryland State Highway Administration. This will help engineers identify locations in need of safety and/or operational improvements.

The current EVC tool is very much tied to the MAARS database schema structure. All the filtering options and columns displayed in the UI come directly from the MAARS database. Trying to fold the VA and DC data into the current EVC application would require significant UI reworking in addition to back-end changes, and navigating through all of these changes are estimated to be more work than what is worth. Similarly, the EVC tool as it exists is not capable of handling the large amount of data that would result from combining the three agency data sources and doing region-wide queries for the date ranges that they've typically seen Maryland users interested in. Mr. Pack noted that they recommended creating a new, similarly functioning tool that builds off of the ideas and UI of the EVC application, but uses a more solid foundation, building off of lessons learned from design mistakes within

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EVC. Mr. Pack also explained the assumptions and potential risks associated with this project, which are mainly about data accessibility and application accessibility. One of the assumptions is that MWCOCG will need to establish an “administrator” for the tool. This person will be responsible for creating accounts for individuals who need access to the tool. The three agencies will need to agree on who should have access to the tool, for what period of time, and for what geographic region. While all three States may be providing data to the tool, it may be desirable to only give complete regional access to certain individuals. This will be a MWCOCG and agency decision.

It is estimated that political challenges, coordination with agency users, and other meetings will likely cause delays within the project. Because of these challenges, the development team envisions a solid year would be needed to deliver a working product to the users. Mr. Pack also noted that the anticipated funds needed to fully integrate three state-wide data sources and develop regional querying, reporting, and visualization capabilities is \$195,000.

In response to a question as if this tool can handle regions in Virginia other than Northern Virginia, Mr. Pack responded that the tool can handle the whole State as long as they all use the same data format. In response to the question of what the differences between this tool and FARS are, Mr. Pack noted that this tool contains all kinds of safety data while FARS only has a subset of all safety data, which is only fatality information. The committee also discussed if COG needs or has to be the gatekeeper of this tool. Mr. Meese noted that this topic is going to be an ongoing discussion due to the fact that COG does not have the needed resources to develop this tool and that it is going to be a collective decision from the partner agencies. Mr. Dabestani noted that under current conditions it will be hard for VDOT to fund this project since VDOT already has its own safety data analysis system. The future outlook might be to keep coordinating the two systems and make sure they are ready to be merged once decision makers decide to do so. In response to a question from Mr. Davis of how COG would use this regional tool, Mr. Meese responded that COG is obligated to develop and maintain the safety element of the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan by Federal laws and regulations and that by having this regional tool it will enhance the current analysis approaches and level of detail of the safety element.

In the end, the committee agreed to keep the dialogue open.

4. The Regional Transportation Safety Picture: 2010 Update

Mr. Qiang presented the regional transportation safety picture at the meeting. The regional transportation safety picture is used to identify what the general safety problems are in this region and how to develop emphasis areas and countermeasures based on safety data compilation and analysis. Mr. Qiang showed a list of common emphasis areas in this region and noted that some emphasis areas were not from the States and were added by COG/TPB staff based on regional safety data analysis. Total traffic fatalities as well as specific breakdowns by county and emphasis area were also shown and discussed. It shows that traffic deaths are declining in the Washington region, as they are nationally. Emphasis areas of run off the road, speeding, impaired driving, and intersection collisions are implicated in

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the most deaths. In this region, speeding, impaired driving, intersection, and pedestrian/bicyclist fatalities actually increased in 2010. Run off the road and occupant protection show strong and consistent improvement.

Total traffic injuries and crashes as well as specific breakdowns by county and emphasis areas were also shown and discussed. It is concluded that injuries and injuries per 100,000 population declined steadily through 2008. The Washington region has a lot of crashes at signalized intersections or involving young drivers. In order to get full picture of transportation safety, fatality, injury and crash data are all needed. However, injury and crash data analysis was not complete due to missing data from the States. COG/TPB staff will continue to work with State people to get the needed data.

Some participants suggested comparing the safety picture with those of other regions. COG/TPB staff will start identifying other comparable regions as well as comparing the safety data. In response to a question from Mr. Davis as why some cities in Maryland were not included in the study, Mr. Qiang responded that COG/TPB staff got data from State agencies and Maryland Highway Safety Office did not further break down their data by city level. The committee agreed to have COG/TPB staff explore how to get city level safety data in Maryland.

Due to the strong interest and high priority of transportation safety, some participants suggested having COG preparing workshops or trainings on how to apply funds from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), a Federal-aid program from the Federal Highway Administration. COG/TPB staff agreed to take the responsibility and will notify stakeholders once such opportunities become available.

5. MWCOG and National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Safety-Related Activities

a. Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Campaign

Mr. Farrell briefed the committee on the Street Smart campaign. The Street Smart campaign is a regional pedestrian and bicyclist safety campaign which focuses on education through mass media. It consists of concentrated waves of radio, transit, cable, and internet advertising designed to change driver, pedestrian, and cyclist behavior and is supported by concurrent law enforcement. The program has been up since fall 2002 and is funded by Federal funds administered by the States, WMATA, and TPB member governments, with a total annual budget of \$634,000. Mr. Farrell stated that the spring 2012 press event was going to take place on March 28 at 11:30 am in District Heights, Maryland which would be followed by live enforcement. The URL for the campaign is <http://www.beststreetsmart.net/>.

b. Transportation Safety Element of the Constrained Long-Range Plan

The transportation safety element of the CLRP is a Federal requirement and a regional look at transportation safety. It incorporates common emphasis areas in the State Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSP). It is usually updated in tandem with the State SHSP updates.

c. Transportation Safety Data for the Regional Priorities Plan

Mr. Kirby briefed the committee on safety data for the Regional Priorities Plan. Back in May 2010, there was a conversation on setting regional transportation priorities, in response to a request by the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). In July 2010, TPB formed a task force, which held four meetings to determine scope and process for developing a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP), the schedule and scope of which was approved in July 2011. Mr. Kirby also reviewed the schedule, activities, international scans and associated Federal government's focus on performance measurement. One of the goals related to safety is to ensure adequate maintenance, preservation, and safety of the existing system. He stated that one of the performance measures is the number of transportation injuries and fatalities in all modes, the corresponding regional challenge of which is to maintain progress on reducing the number of motorized traffic and transit injuries and fatalities and to reduce bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

Mr. Meese noted that there would be a special work session on safety for the Transportation Planning Board in the future.

d. Transportation Safety Section of the Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Meese briefed on the safety section of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Under this work task, TPB will provide opportunities for consideration, coordination, and collaboration planning for safety aspects of the region's transportation systems. Safety planning will be in coordination with the State Strategic Highway Safety Plan efforts of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as other state, regional, and local efforts. Coordination will be maintained with the regional Street Smart pedestrian and bicycle safety outreach campaign. Major topics include support of the transportation safety subcommittee; safety data compilation and analysis; coordination on metropolitan transportation planning aspects of state, regional, and local safety efforts, and with transportation safety stakeholders; coordination with other TPB committees on the integration of safety considerations; maintenance of the safety element of region's long-range transportation plan. The annual budget of this work program is \$125,000.

6. Other Business

a. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in June.