



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

Item #7

MEMORANDUM

February 18, 2015

To: Transportation Planning Board

From: Kanathur Srikanth
Director, Department of Transportation Planning

Re: Summary of comments received and proposed responses on the Project Submissions for Inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the 2015 CLRP and FY 2015-2020 TIP

Background

At the January 21, 2015 meeting the Board was briefed on the draft project submissions for the 2015 Update to the CLRP and the FY 2015-2020 TIP. The project submissions were released for a 30-day public comment and interagency review period at the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee meeting on January 15. This comment period closed on February 14.

Comments submitted by individuals, organizations and businesses have been posted on the TPB's website at www.mwcog.org/transportation/public/comments.asp. This memorandum provides a summary of the comments received and responses provided by TPB staff in consultation with the implementing agencies. A compilation of the comments received is provided in a separate memorandum.

The Board will be briefed on the comments received and responses provided, and asked to approve the project submissions for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis for the 2015 CLRP and FY 2015-2020 TIP.

Comments and Responses

Comments were received on the following topics:

- A) Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects in the District and Region-wide,
- B) Multimodal Aspects of Both of the I-66 Projects,
- C) Tolling Policies of Both I-66 Projects,
- D) Widening of I-66 Inside the Beltway, and
- E) Environmental Mitigation and Congestion Management Documentation for I-66 Inside the Beltway,
- F) Detrimental Effects of Widenings in the I-66 Projects.

A) Bicycle & Pedestrian Projects in the District and Region-wide

1. **Comment:** DDOT should coordinate with appropriate federal agencies while studying the Dedicated Bike Lanes projects.

Response: The proposed bicycle lane project is part of the DDOT's overall Bicycle network plan developed in consultation with stakeholders. DDOT will comply with all requirements to coordinate with the appropriate federal agencies as part of project design and implementation.

2. **Comment:** Given the significant projected increase in non-motorized travel, the TPB should encourage its members to increase investments in bicycling and pedestrian facilities, particularly around transit stations, and funding for Complete Streets projects.

Response: The TPB continues to encourage member jurisdictions to invest in bicycle and pedestrian projects through the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, and the Complete Streets policy. Starting next year, the FY 2017-2022 TIP will track projects that support local jurisdictions' Complete Streets policies.

B) Multimodal Aspects of Both of the I-66 Projects

1. **Comment:** The cost and schedule for the multimodal improvements for the I-66 Inside and Outside the Beltway projects is unclear. VDOT should promptly develop a detailed funding and implementation schedule for the transit and bicycle/ pedestrian improvements associated with the I-66 projects. The TPB should hold VDOT accountable for these and other transportation demand management improvements.

Response: The CLRP forms for both projects have been updated to provide more information regarding multi-modal services and improvements. VDOT and DRPT are currently working with stakeholders to further develop the transit and TDM elements for the projects. This work will serve as the basis for more detailed cost estimates and implementation schedules. The TPB's annual CLRP and TIP update process provides an opportunity for programming agencies to update project information, including costs and implementation schedules, as project development and implementation proceeds.

2. **Comment:** Median space should be preserved for westward extension of Metrorail.

Response: VDOT and DRPT are currently examining two alternatives, one of which preserves the median for future Metrorail extension. Irrespective of the median space, VDOT and DRPT are working to develop the current multi-modal improvements to I-66 so as to not preclude future extension of the Metrorail system in the I-66 corridor.

3. **Comment:** VDOT should conduct rigorous analyses and effective public outreach to demonstrate the wisdom of the proposed HOV-2 to HOT-3 conversion. Additionally the new HOT hours should at least equal the current eight daily hours of HOV restrictions on I-66 outside the Beltway

Response: VDOT will work closely with Arlington County, Fairfax County, the City of Falls Church, transit providers, and other stakeholders to implement a comprehensive outreach program. The outreach program will provide the opportunity for direct engagement with various groups along the corridor, including the local political leadership, transit service providers, various other interest groups, and business and community leaders. There will also be opportunities for the public to learn more about the Project, as well as provide comments, both through the CLRP process and the NEPA process.

The dynamic tolling is proposed to occur in both directions of I-66 during the peak periods only. The peak period hours will be determined in the environmental study analysis.

4. **Comment:** Potential impacts to existing adjacent bicycle and pedestrian facilities as a result of the widening component of the I-66 inside the Beltway project should be fully addressed.

Response: VDOT and DRPT will work with project stakeholders to select and implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements identified in the Multi-modal Study. VDOT and DRPT will seek to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts to existing bike and pedestrian facilities. This will be addressed in the Environmental Study.

5. **Comment:** The Project must include a robust and detailed plan for funding, operating and maintaining high-quality transit both on I-66 and in east-west roads in the corridor such as Routes 50 and 29. Details regarding planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements should also be developed.

Response: The Project is multimodal in nature and the revised CLRP forms provide additional details on transit and TDM elements. A project funding plan is under development that will include all elements of the multimodal project. Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the corridor are currently being developed in cooperation with localities, and will be consistent with VDOT's Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations.

C) Tolling Policies of Both I-66 Projects

1. **Comment:** Concerns about the proposed tolling associated with the Express Lanes component of the Project and the conversion to HOT-3 on I 66 Outside the Beltway. Concerns also regarding the ability of the planned improvements to address future transportation needs and the provision of mass transit and the appropriateness of "slugging."

Response: The needs of the corridor were studied as part of the Tier I environmental study, and the proposed package of improvements represents those components that are best suited to address the identified needs in the near-term. The Commonwealth's I-66 Corridor Improvements Project outside the beltway includes new high-frequency bus service with more predictable travel times and new or expanded commuter park and ride lots in the corridor. For additional details regarding the planned multimodal improvements, please refer to the latest CLRP submission.

With the Outside the Beltway improvements, users will have travel options, including general purpose lanes, managed express lanes, and high-frequency bus service, among others. The combined impact of these improvements is anticipated to improve travel times in the corridor, both in the general purpose lanes, as well as the express lanes. It is noted that the region's current Constrained Long Range Plan calls for all HOV lanes in Northern Virginia to be HOV-3+ by 2020.

VDOT and VDRPT encourages and facilitates carpooling in the region as a valuable mode of transportation by constructing and maintaining HOV/HOT lanes, park and ride lots, and promoting alternative modes via Commuter Connections and others. This project will provide time saving benefits to those who choose to carpool, as well as facilitate the formation of both formal and informal carpools at new and improved park and ride lots.

2. **Comment:** Express bus service is critical to the success of the I-66 Outside the Beltway project. Any contract for private operation of toll facilities on I-66 outside the Beltway should include concessions to fund rapid bus service and other transit options in the corridor.

Response: For I-66 outside the Beltway, VDOT and DRPT are working together to finalize a comprehensive list of bus service enhancements that work in concert with Park-and-Ride lot improvements in the corridor. The details of these proposed improvements can be seen in the revised CLRP project description form. For I-66 inside the Beltway, toll revenues will be used in accordance with state and Federal law and will offset design, construction, operating and maintenance costs of the project. Revenues will also provide a funding source for multimodal improvements as identified in the CLRP project description form.

3. **Comment:** Tolling of Washington Dulles International Airport users on I-66 inside the beltway would create a significant disincentive for passengers to choose Dulles International.

Response: The project team will work collaboratively with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to explore potential solutions to address the concerns of the Authority and impacts to Washington Dulles Airport travelers.

4. **Comments:** The toll revenue must pay the capital and operating costs of the many recommended multimodal corridor improvements.

Response: Toll revenues will be used to offset design, construction, operating and maintenance costs of the project. Project revenues will also provide a funding source for multimodal improvements as identified in the revised CLRP project description form.

5. **Comment:** Similar HOT-3 projects should be considered on I-395 and the Dulles Airport Access Road.

Response: While the comment suggestions is outside of the scope of the projects proposed for inclusion in the 20125 CLRP update the suggestions will be shared with the state and local transportation agencies.

6. **Comment:** The I-66 Inside the Beltway project will adversely impact low-income residents without providing increased accessibility.

Response: The proposed project includes ridesharing, transit and improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities to enhance alternative modes of travel options in the I-66 corridor. Additionally this project builds on the Silver line Metrorail service and the accompanying changes to the bus services made by local jurisdictions and WMATA.

VDOT encourages and facilitates carpooling in the region as a valuable mode of transportation by constructing and maintaining HOV/HOT lanes, park and ride lots, and promoting alternative modes via Commuter Connections and others,

Benefits of the I-66 Corridor Improvements Project, Outside the Beltway and the I-66 Multimodal Improvement Project, Inside the Beltway will be applicable to all income levels or other demographic groupings. Drivers that choose to pay for the tolled services free more room on un-tolled roads, and the multi-modal nature of the projects adds travel alternatives for all user groups. Buses that use the tolled lanes will enjoy free-flow conditions due to the variable toll based on congestion.

The added capacity will also add space for high quality rapid bus service on the freeway. The projects will include significantly enhanced transit services, and the Outside the Beltway Corridor Improvement project includes new and expanded park and ride lots. Surveys conducted for current Congestion Pricing projects show that drivers of all income levels use priced express lanes. Although many low-income users don't choose to use the tolled highway every day, they support having the option.

D) Widening of I-66 Inside the Beltway

1. **Comment:** The widening of I-66 inside the Beltway should be expedited and not delayed until 2040.

Response: The environmental study will consider this widening with a horizon year of 2040, and will also test an interim year of 2025 for this improvement.

2. **Comment:** The widening of I-66 inside the Beltway should be detached from the larger project so that the Express Lanes component may move forward in the CLRP while the widening is further studied and compared against less costly alternatives.

Response: The proposed I-66 Multimodal Improvement Project, Inside the Beltway is based on the recommendations from the 2012 I-66 Multimodal Study Inside the Beltway, which included widening among the multimodal improvements for the corridor. The study also outlines a range of other non-roadway widening improvements. The revised CLRP form provides more information. VDOT and DRPT will work with stakeholders to further define the appropriate multimodal services.

3. **Comment:** The proposed NEPA study for I-66 Inside the Beltway should not include any un-built capacity as the CLRP baseline or “no-build” condition.

Response: The proposed project reflects added roadway capacity to be built by 2040 and only the 2040 baseline condition of the CLRP will reflect this additional capacity.

E) Environmental Mitigation and Congestion Management Documentation for I-66 Inside the Beltway

1. **Comment:** The I-66 project description forms lack the associated Congestion Management Documentation forms.

Response: As instructed in the Call for Projects document for the 2015 Update to the CLRP, Congestion Management documentation will be provided by the April 3, 2015 due date.

2. **Comment:** Environmental mitigation considerations for the I-66 Inside the Beltway project have not been identified.

Response: VDOT has revised the CLRP project description form to state, “The Environmental process has not been started yet. VDOT will assess the environmental impacts of the project as required by State and Federal law.”

F) Detrimental Effects of Widening in the I-66 Projects

1. **Comment:** The I-66 Outside the Beltway project will be detrimental to public lands and private homes in Dunn Loring Village.

Response: The NEPA environmental study will consider the right-of-way needs of the project alternatives and will assess any impacts on neighborhoods and mitigation measures needed. The design team is continuing to refine project plans with the goal of minimizing right-of-way impacts.