

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

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

March 19, 2008

TO: Transportation Planning Board

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

RE: Letters Sent/Received Since the February 20th TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the February 20th TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Agenda #5 of the March 19th TPB agenda.

Attachments



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DAVID S. EKERN, P.E.
COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

14685 Avion Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151
(703) 383-VDOT (8368)

March 10, 2008

National Capital Region
Transportation Improvement Program Amendment

The Honorable Phillip Mendelson
Chairman, National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.; Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4201

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

During the February 20, 2008 TPB meeting I was asked to provide additional information on one of the Virginia highway improvement projects approved for inclusion in the air quality conformity analyses. I was specifically asked about how the proposed auxiliary lanes project along I-66, in the vicinity of its interchange with I-495, would be coordinated with the proposed I-495 HOV/HOT lanes project and how it would be funded.

As noted during my response to this question during the February 20 meeting, the proposed auxiliary lanes along east and westbound I-66, between I-495 and Cedar Lane, are part of the overall improvements to the Capital Beltway (I-495) including improvements to the I-66 and I-495 interchange. The Final EIS for the Capital Beltway project proposed a suite of improvements which includes auxiliary lanes and the HOV/HOT lanes along I-495. Consistent with the requirements of the FEIS, both the HOV/HOT lanes and the auxiliary lanes has been proposed for inclusion in the regional air quality conformity analyses. While the overall plans to implement HOV/HOT lanes elements of the improvements have been finalized, detailed operational plans including the auxiliary lanes are not complete. Pending finalization of the operational plans for the project, VDOT has proposed a completion date of 2030 for the auxiliary lanes with funding reasonably expected to be available from the menu of funding options available to VDOT.

VDOT is currently engaged in more detailed operational analyses of the effects of the HOV/HOT lane construction, on I-495 and in particular at the I-66 interchange. The operational analyses will be the subject of public meetings and a design public hearing planned for spring of

this year. The HOV/HOT lanes project is anticipated to be complete by 2013. Should the ongoing operation analyses for the HOV/HOT lanes project determine that one or more of the auxiliary lanes will be needed to be implemented along with the HOV/HOT lanes projects, VDOT will consider advancing the construction date for the particular project elements from 2030 to an earlier date. The operational analyses and any potential follow up considerations of the auxiliary lanes project are anticipated to be complete by the end of this year.

Should you or members of the Board have any questions or comments on the matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 703-383-2461.

Sincerely,



Jo Anne Sorenson
Assistance District Administrator
Transportation Planning & Development
VDOT - Northern Virginia District

cc: Mr. Morteza Salehi, VDOT-NoVA
Mr. Robert McDonald, PE, VDOT- NoVA
Mr. Ronaldo Nicholson, PE, VDOT-NoVA
Mr. Roger Booth, VDOT-NoVA
Mr. William C. Cuttler, P.E, VDOT-NOVA



U. S. Department
of Transportation

Virginia Division
(804) 775-3320

400 N. 8th Street, Rm. 750
Richmond, VA 23219

**Federal Highway
Administration**

March 6, 2008

Marsha Fiol, Division Administrator
Transportation and Mobility Planning Division
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Ms. Fiol,

On Friday, February 29, 2008 the Virginia Supreme Court declared that the taxing ability granted to the regional transportation authorities in the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia regions of the Commonwealth of Virginia during the 2007 Virginia General Assembly is unconstitutional. The Virginia Division of the Federal Highway Administration wishes to clarify the impact that this ruling may have on the transportation plans and programs in these regions.

As you know, federal transportation planning regulations require that metropolitan transportation plans, metropolitan transportation improvement programs (TIPs), and the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) demonstrate fiscal constraint as to how projects therein will be implemented using funding sources that are reasonably expected to be available. The recent court ruling regarding the regional authorities established in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia calls into question the availability of future revenues from these entities that may have been used to fiscally constrain metropolitan transportation plans, TIPs, and subsequently, the STIP.

In cases in which the FHWA and the FTA have found a metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or the STIP to be fiscally constrained and a revenue source is subsequently removed or substantially reduced, the FHWA and the FTA will not withdraw the original determination of fiscal constraint on these planning documents. However, in such cases, federal action will not be taken on an updated or amended plan that does not reflect the changed revenue situation. Updates or amendments to a TIP, or the STIP would be acceptable as long as they do not include the removed or reduced sources of funding.

Federal actions include planning and conformity findings on plans and programs and approval of amendments to the STIP. If a plan, TIP or STIP lists revenues from these authorities as funding sources for projects therein, federal action will not be taken on these documents or projects therein until an alternative funding source is identified or the project is removed from the plan or program. Until federal action is deemed necessary on these documents, the fiscal constraint determination previously made is still considered valid.

An amendment is a revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP that involves a major change to a project included in a metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP, including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). An amendment requires public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination.

In summary, any amendments to the plans or programs must reflect the current revenue situation in order to meet Federal fiscal constraint requirements.

FHWA is committed to working cooperatively with the state and the MPOs to implement the statewide and metropolitan planning processes in Virginia. If you have additional questions please contact Kenneth Myers of my staff at (804) 775-3353.

Sincerely,



fa Roberto Fonseca-Martinez
Division Administrator

CC: Ms. Diane Mitchell, VDOT Programming Division
Mr. Dennis Heuer, VDOT Hampton Roads District
Mr. Morteza Salehi, VDOT Northern Virginia District
Mr. Author Collins, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Mr. Ronald Kirby, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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

March 7, 2008

Ms. Jo Anne Sorenson
Assistant District Engineer
Virginia Department of Transportation
14685 Avion Parkway
Chantilly, VA 20151

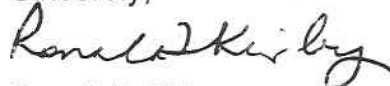
Subject: State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Procedures:
Memorandum of Agreement Between the Virginia Department of
Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Rail and Public
Transportation (DRPT), the FHWA Virginia Division Office and the FTA
Region III Office

Dear Ms. Sorenson:

In response to your request for review and endorsement of the enclosed STIP Procedures Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the development of the Northern Virginia portion of the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), this letter documents that the National Capital Region Transportation Board (TPB) is in agreement with the STIP Procedures MOA. The MOU procedures for the TIP are consistent with the procedures the TPB adopted on January 16, 2008 for revisions to the Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) and TIP. The TPB notes that the process for grouping projects in the TIP as described in the MOA provides an opportunity to reduce paperwork associated with programming minor projects.

Please contact me if you need further assistance or have any questions.

Sincerely,



Ronald F. Kirby
Director, Department of
Transportation Planning

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

MULTIMODAL PLANNING OFFICE

February 29, 2008

Mr. John Swanson
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Suite 300
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

RE: FY-2008 Multimodal Planning Grant Program

Dear Mr. Swanson:

Thank you for submitting an application for a Multimodal Planning Grant for FY-2008. As I am sure Mr. Pegram indicated to you, the response that we received for the Multimodal Planning Grant Program far exceeded our expectations.

In spite of the importance of the project you proposed, I am sorry to inform you that your application was not selected. However, I hope you are able to pursue the proposed project through another mechanism.

Thank you for interest in the Multimodal Planning Grant program and I encourage you to pursue a grant in the next fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Mary Lynn Tischer, PhD
Director
Commonwealth's Multimodal Transportation Planning Office



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

February 25, 2008

Phil Mendelson, Chair
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290

Dear Mr. Mendelson / *Phil*

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Street Smart program. Montgomery County champions reducing pedestrian collisions and providing safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians.

I will have to make tough decisions in developing the FY09 Operating Budget. As County Executive, I must balance the needs of our residents for public safety with other essential services, such as education, affordable housing, libraries, transportation, health and human services, and cultural and arts funding. Funding the Street Smart program, which is included in my Pedestrian Safety initiative, remains a top priority. I will transmit my FY09 Operating Budget to the County Council on March 17, 2008.

If you have questions regarding the budget process, please contact Alexandra Shabelski, Office of Management and Budget, at Alexandra.Shabelski@montgomerycountymd.gov or at 240-777-2785.

Again, thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

IL:jas

cc: Arthur Holmes, Director, Department of Public Works and Transportation



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

REGION III
Delaware, District of
Columbia, Maryland,
Pennsylvania, Virginia,
West Virginia

1760 Market Street
Suite 500
Philadelphia, PA 19103-4124
215-656-7100
215-656-7260 (fax)

Mr. Ronald F. Kirby
Director, Department of Transportation Planning
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4239

MAR 4 2008

Re: Program Management Plan for
FTA JARC and New Freedom Programs

Dear Mr. Kirby:

I am writing to inform you that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has received and reviewed the referenced Program Management Plan, dated November 1, 2007. We find it acceptable for use by the Transportation Planning Board of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to manage the Job Access Reverse Commute and the New Freedom programs.

Deborah Burns (202-219-3565) and Brian Glenn (202-219-3562) of the FTA Washington, DC Metropolitan Office are available to answer any questions you and your staff may have about these two programs.

Sincerely,

Letitia A. Thompson
Regional Administrator





Jack B. Johnson
County Executive

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT



Department of Public Works and Transportation
Office of the Director



February 29, 2008

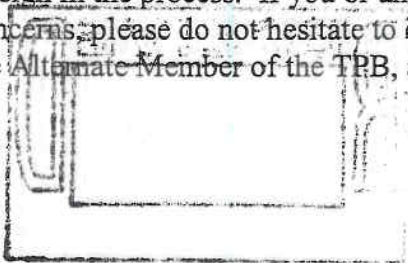
Mr. Ronnie Gathers, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
6600 Kenilworth Avenue
Riverdale, Maryland 20737

Dear Mr. Gathers:

This is in response to your February 11, 2008, letter requesting support in seeking Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) funding in the amount of \$490,000 to construct the Henson Creek Trail Extension Phase I. I am pleased to provide my full support as Prince George's County's Representative to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Transportation Policy Board (TPB) for this request. As expressed in the most recent Priority letter, which was signed by the County Executive and the Chair of the County Council on June 16, 2007, this vital trail linkage is Prince George's County's top Park/Trail Priority.

As noted in your letter, this paved asphalt trail from Temple Hills Road to Branch Avenue (MD 5) on M-NCPPC owned property will connect to the existing Henson Creek Trail currently ending at Temple Hills Road. The enhanced trail will provide a much needed hiker/biker linkage in Prince George's County and will serve as Phase I to connect future projects to the Branch Avenue Metro Station and the Suitland Parkway Trail. It should be added that the Henson Creek Trail is part of the Metropolitan Washington Regional Trail Network as it is identified in the MWCOC report, "Priorities 2000: Metropolitan Washington Greenways and Priorities 2000: Metropolitan Washington Circulation Systems," as a Local Priority Project.

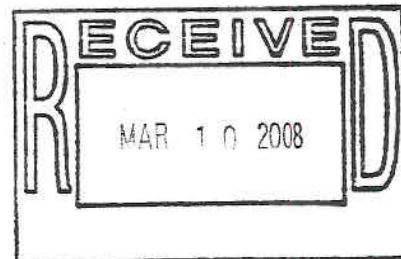
Again, I am pleased to provide my support and emphatically endorse the Henson Creek Trail project. And, I applaud your commitment to this project in identifying the required 50% match in the M-NCPPC Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as well as for being in Preliminary Design in the process. If you or anyone else involved in this process have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Special Assistant, Victor Weissberg, who is the Alternate Member of the TPB, at 301.883.5600.



Sincerely,

Haitham A. Hijazi, Ph.D., P.E.
Director

cc: Ronald Kirby, Director, Department of Transportation Planning, MWCOG
Fern V. Piret, Ph.D. Planning Director, M-NCPPC
Eileen Nivera, Planner-Coordinator, Department of Parks and Recreation,
M-NCPPC
Paivi Spoon, Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Office of
the Prince George's County Executive
Victor Weissberg, Special Assistant to the Director, DPW&T
Eric Foster, Supervisor, Transportation Planning, M-NCPPC
Fred Shaffer, Senior Planner, Transportation Planning Section, M-NCPPC
Raja Veeramachaneni, Director of Planning and Preliminary Engineering, SHA
Shiva Shrestha, Regional Planner, SHA
Mary Keller, Enhancement Program Liaison, SHA



Roland Tibbetts
19375 Cypress Ridge Ter. #401
Lansdowne, VA 20176

February 26, 2008

Ronald F. Kirby, Director
Department of Transportation Planning
Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol St. NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Kirby:

I am writing to you about yesterday's article on the front page of the Washington Post on "Hot Lane Planners for the Capitol Beltway." I have lived in Chevy Chase, McLean, Reston, 24 years in Great Falls, and now retired in Loudoun County and watched it grow rapidly for 50 years since 1958. In 1968-1969 I was president of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce.

During the 1960's the Chamber was involved with the coming of the Beltway, Metro and Dulles Airport. Fairfax County government was properly planning ahead for an Outer Beltway that would include a bridge just above Great Falls. They recognized the benefits of long range property rights for a planned route for the Outer Beltway that ran through Great Falls, including the first hole of the River Bend Country Club golf course where I was a member. Club members recognized need and readily approved minor changes in the course.

However, a few real estate members of the Chamber said that there was no chance that the Outer Beltway would be built. The real estate firms in our area and across the river in Maryland were planning to go to their state governments and defeat it. They also said that they would oppose moving it out further, such as extending 4-lane Baron Cameron Avenue, or the planned Route 28 in Richmond and Annapolis. Real estate members said that the land near the Potomac both above and below the Beltway bridges was too valuable for residential purposes and that they could defeat any major highway or bridge with the help of the upscale people that lived there such as those in Great Falls. Maryland was also opposed because it would take air traffic away from BWI Airport.

I have always hoped that Northern Virginia would protect land rights early for an Outer Beltway and a western by-pass of urban Northern Virginia before the mostly farm land was sold for residential and commercial purposes. Tragically, it hasn't happened for the last 40 years. Relatively few people have succeeded in preventing any Outer Beltway or major north-south highway, no less a bridge across the Potomac for 40 miles both north and south of the American Legion and Wilson Bridges. The many thousands of trucks and autos daily of through traffic from New England, New York, Philadelphia and all northeast states to states in the southeast would have to use the ever widening and costly. The same was true of heavy south to north traffic, of course. There was obvious need for a western by-pass for years before Loudoun became too developed. It seems that no political body was willing to do what they knew needed to be done year after year for the entire period.

The 9/11 problem in 2001 and its continued risk ought to have been a decisive wake-up call. What if a simple Oklahoma City type truck bomb or other explosives were to blow up the American Legion Bridge, the Wilson Bridge, no less strike DC itself? It is difficult to believe that with no outer bridges after the

Beltway we would continue to avoid this need and continue to widen the Beltway and now build another new bridge. For cost and security reasons alone, common sense says that we need an Outer beltway or by-pass and as soon as possible. But as many also said about the first World Trade Center bombing in the 1990's, they will be back and they were in spades. Is a nuke possible in DC? Unfortunately, it is.

Here are some thoughts from one who has watched and experienced the traffic for most of these years. It was clear to most everyone that DC was going to become a very large metro area. Why wasn't action taken and fought for by governments and related bodies? Why is it still being avoided like the national debt for future generations when the problem will be much worse?

A current remaining option would appear to be Route 15. Here is a long term resident's suggestion. Route 15 is an excellent 4-6 lane highway both north and south of Loudoun County. A relatively short new 4-6 lane highway bypassing Leesburg to the west and west of the current Route 15 to connect directly with the current intersection of Route 15, 17, and 29 in Warrenton would connect an otherwise excellent north-south major highway.

It would complete an all 4-6 lane Route 15 that connects with I-78 and I-81 at Harrisburg. To the south Route 15 connects to 4-6 lane Route 29 and 17 that connect to I-85 that goes to Raleigh-Durham and on to Atlanta, I-95 south and I-64 east and west. Such a north-south route would take considerable traffic away from I-95 and the Beltway. It is only this 20 mile stretch from Point-of-Rocks to Warrenton, most of it over undeveloped land.

There is also a long Range need for a bridge halfway between but still about 20 miles from both the American Legion Bridge and Pont-of-Rocks. I know how extending Route 28 north or possibly Fairfax County Parkway into Maryland is considered impossible. However, when one considers the long term needs with more than a million residents and jobs on each side of the river. There is a real need for such a bridge, including for possible security needs, access to both Dulles and BWI airports, to thousands of businesses and jobs, NIH, Johns Hopkins Hospital, the Dulles Air and Space Museum, NASA, Baltimore and on north, etc. I have needed them all. Are we to ignore these needs again when they would take enough traffic away from I-495 to solve the problem and time hopefully for Metro to be extended?

Please don't underestimate the security problem in case of a disaster. I was driving east from on Route 7 to Reston mid morning on September 11, 2001. The west-bound traffic was mostly stopped but some crawling the whole way in all 3-4 lanes. It hardly moved during the entire 15 miles or so. Many were also blocking the shoulder lane to prevent its use by hundreds of drivers so even the emergency lane was blocked. It was to be blocked this most of the way out from Washington past Leesburg as government mostly closed down and sent people home while others were trying to get to assigned locations. Suppose there had been a large immediate need for assistance, to get out of outside of the city, or to other areas with a single major bridge for 40 miles to the west, or the crisis if the Legion Bridge was out, not for a day both for maybe a year to rebuild.

I suggest that there is a great need for both bridges and the by-pass, a considerably greater need than widening the Beltway again and a new American Legion Bridge. The same funds can do far more to solve these important problems farther out they go. I hope that once again our political representatives will not duck this critical short and long term need.

Roland T. Tappin