

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
February 15, 2006**

Members and Alternates Present

Hilda Barg, Prince William County
Nat Bottigheimer, WMATA
Rick Canizales, Prince William County
Robert Dorsey, City of Rockville
Lyn Erickson, MDOT
Andrew M. Fellows, City of College Park
Ludwig P. Gaines, City of Alexandria
Charles Graves, III, D.C. Office of Planning
Jason Groth, Charles County
Catherine Hudgins, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Michael Knapp, Montgomery County Council
Deborah Lipman, WMATA
D. Michael Lyles, City of Bowie
Phil Mendelson, D.C. Council
David Moss, Montgomery County
Kathy Porter, City of Takoma Park
Michelle Pourciau, DDOT
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
JoAnne Sorenson, VDOT
Kanti Srikanth, VDOT
Mick Staton, Loudoun County
Patrice Winter, City of Fairfax
Christopher Zimmerman, Arlington County Board

MWCOG Staff and Others Present

Ron Kirby	COG/DTP
Michael Clifford	COG/DTP
Gerald Miller	COG/DTP
Bob Griffiths	COG/DTP
Jim Hogan	COG/DTP
Wendy Klancher	COG/DTP
Debbie Leigh	COG/DTP
Deborah Etheridge	COG/DTP
Andrew Meese	COG/DTP
Daivamani Sivasailam	COG/DTP
William Bacon	COG/DTP
Dusan Vuksan	COG/DTP
Ross Edgar	COG/DTP
Towanna Hinton	COG/DTP
John Swanson	COG/DTP
Greg Goodwin	COG/HSPPS
Robert Young	COG/HSPPS
Jeff King	COG/DEP
Steve Kania	COG/OPA
Faramarz Mokhtari	Prince George's-M-NCPPC
Alex Verzosa	City of Fairfax
Bob Chase	Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance
Harry Sanders	Action Committee for Transit
Regina Lee	TAG/Independence NOW
Bobby Coward	DC Adapt
Gloria Swieringa	Prince George's County ACORN
Deborah Burns	Federal Transit Administration
Jim Maslanka	Alexandria
Bob Grow	Greater Washington Board of Trade
Mike Lake	Fairfax County Dept. of Transportation
Bill Orleans	PG Act
Ryan Bowers	Skycomp, Inc.
Greg Jordan	Skycomp, Inc.
Jeff Price	Arlington DOT
Daniel Goodman	LandDesign, Inc.
Harriet Dietz	Land Design
Lisa Farbstein	WMATA
Betsie Massie	PRTC
Kael Anderson	NCPC

1. Public Comment

Regina Lee, representing the Transportation Action Group of Independence Now, described service problems she has experienced as a rider of MetroAccess. She said the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has not been responsive to users' complaints. As a member of the task force that developed the report scheduled to be discussed under Agenda Item 7, she said she strongly supports the recommendation that a MetroAccess Users Group be established at WMATA. Copies of her remarks were distributed for the record.

Harry Sanders, Action Committee for Transit, expressed concern about the paucity of significant changes proposed for this year's update to the Constrained Long-Range Plan. He said the TPB should adopt the recommendations made by the Citizens Advisory Committee, which is listed in the presentation under Item 11, including the recommendation that the DOTs and WMATA should be asked to explain how the project submissions for the Constrained Long Range Plan are selected, and why some projects, such as the Purple Line, never seem to move forward.

Bobby Coward, Executive Director of Direct Action, said that access for taxicabs should be a priority. He said legislation should be established in the District of Columbia to ensure taxi service can accommodate people with disabilities. Regarding paratransit, Mr. Coward said he was offended by comments made by WMATA staff that he was lying about his problems with MetroAccess. He said an independent contractor should monitor MetroAccess' performance records.

Gloria Swieringa described service problems she has experienced as a rider of MetroAccess. She said that Metro Access needs to learn to include riders in their planning. She said the system's performance has gotten worse since the new contractor assumed control over MetroAccess.

Chairman Knapp thanked the MetroAccess riders for their comments.

Bob Chase, Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, said that gridlock on the region's highway and public transit networks is a direct result of the policy gridlock that exists at the regional and state levels. Copies of his remarks were distributed for the record. He pointed out that this may be the only Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the nation that is bisected by a major river that does not test or study building new river crossings.

2. Approval of the Minutes for the Meeting of January 18, 2006

A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and was passed unanimously.

3. Report of the Technical Committee

Referring to the mailout report, Mr. Canizales said the Technical Committee met on February 3

and reviewed the following items for the TPB agenda:

- Regarding Agenda Item 7, staff briefed the committee on the report on improving demand responsive services for people with disabilities in the Washington region.
- Regarding Agenda Item 9, staff briefed the committee on recurring freeway congestion observed in aerial surveys in the spring of 2005.
- Regarding Agenda Item 10, staff briefed the committee on the submissions for the 2006 CLRP. Mr. Canizales commented that staff is recommending the public comment period on the submissions be extended to April.
- Regarding Agenda Item 12, the staff briefed the committee on the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The TPB is set to approve this draft at next month's meeting.

Mr. Canizales said the committee also discussed items not on the TPB agenda, including the following:

- The committee was briefed on the work activities to produce an emissions inventory for the new 8-hour standard for the State Implementation Plan (SIP). He said the committee concurred with staff that a seasonal factor rather than a monthly factor should be used to develop the SIP.
- The committee was briefed by Cambridge Systematics on the financial analysis for the 2006 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).
- The committee was briefed on arterial highway system performance in the metropolitan Washington area.

Mr. Fellows asked why the committee recommended the use of a seasonal rather than a monthly emissions factor.

Mr. Kirby said that based on sensitivity analyses, it was determined that the results are essentially identical for the seasonal and monthly factors.

4. Report of the Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Tydings introduced himself as the new chairman for the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Referring to the handout report, Mr. Tydings said the CAC discussed the following issues in its meeting on February 9:

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- Orientation presentation for new members on the TPB process.
 - Discussion of the new CLRP project submissions. The committee noted that the project information on the submissions was confusing. A member also questioned whether projects under Virginia's Public/Private Transportation Act (PPTA) were following federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.
 - Discussion of the CAC's agenda for 2006. Mr. Tydings said he would like the committee to focus this year on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study and the CLRP. Committee members responded that they hoped the committee would not exclusively focus on these interests.

Ms. Sorenson said she wanted to assure the CAC that the PPTA projects in Virginia will fully comply with NEPA.

Chairman Tydings said he appreciated the committee's interest in improving the TPB's public involvement efforts. He noted that these issues would be further discussed under Item 11.

Referring to a handout memorandum, Vice Chairman Hudgins moved the appointment of Alexandra Simpson to fill the remaining vacancy for the 2006 CAC. The motion was seconded and was approved unanimously.

5. Report of the Steering Committee

Mr. Kirby said the Steering Committee did not take any actions at its February meeting.

In the Letters Sent/Received packet, Mr. Kirby called attention to an announcement on the Potomac Watershed Trash Summit. He noted that a TPB member had asked that a future agenda item include a discussion as to whether there were transportation linkages to this issue.

Mr. Kirby also noted that there was a memorandum from Michael Farrell on the Street Smart Pedestrian Bicycle Safety Campaign addressing the issue the board raised about the number of kickoff events. He said the major event is scheduled for Alexandria on March 21 and a wrap-up event would occur on April 25 at the Fairfax Inova Hospital. He said that staff was very interested in doing other locally sponsored events in the District and Maryland and would welcome suggestions.

Mr. Kirby called attention to a memorandum from Michael Clifford on the draft scope of work for the CLRP air quality conformity assessment. He said that staff was recommending that the public comment period on this scope should be extended to April 10, consistent with the public comment

period on the project submissions.

Mr. Kirby noted that the “Additional Letters Sent/Received” packet included a letter from WMATA indicating they had received the TPB’s letter regarding pedestrian/bicycle access planning. The packet also included a memorandum from Andrew Meese of the TPB staff providing an update on the CapCom regional transportation coordination program.

6. Chairman’s Remarks

Chairman Knapp noted that it would be important to have a full discussion on Items 7 and 9 on the agenda. He said that since the locations of freeway congestion have been identified, it is important to look for solutions such as those suggested in the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study that tie transportation land use together.

7. Briefing on the Report: “Improving Demand Responsive Services for People With Disabilities in the Washington Region” And Transmittal of the Report to WMATA

Chairman Knapp thanked Ms. Porter for her leadership in developing this report.

Introducing this item, Ms. Porter thanked the task force that oversaw the study. She also thanked WMATA staff for their participation. She said the study originated with a recommendation made by the Access for All Advisory Committee in its 2004 annual report. She said the purpose of the study was to review innovative practices and recommend improvements to the MetroAccess program. It includes both long- and short-term recommendations. She said that as a result of the involvement of a number of groups in the study she believes the recommendations have a solid foundation of support from a wide variety of stakeholders in this process.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Klancher, the report co-author, briefed the Board on the study. She said the report contained 15 recommendations. She described five priority recommendations that addressed the following issues:

- Poor communication with customers;
- Late pick-ups and excessively long travel times;
- No same-day service;
- Lack of wheelchair-accessible cabs; and
- Inadequate handling of customer complaints.

Ms. Porter thanked Ms. Klancher for her presentation. She made a motion to approve TPB Resolution R12-2006 asking the Board to transmit the report to WMATA. She amended the resolution to add a recommendation that WMATA be asked to report to the TPB on the study’s recommended independent review, which will be completed in January 2007, and that WMATA

be asked to report about what it is doing to deal with the short-term problems. She suggested that report to TPB might be made within 30 to 90 days.

The motion was seconded.

Vice Chairman Pourciau said the lack of accessible taxis in the District is an issue that has not been addressed at all. She said she would like to participate in an effort to see how improvements might be made in that area.

Ms. Klancher said that one possible avenue for followup would be to use a new SAFETEA-LU funding program called the "New Freedom Initiative" to do an accessible taxicab program. She said this would be discussed in the human services transportation kick-off meeting in April. She said she hoped DDOT staff could attend.

Ms. Porter said they would appreciate having DDOT involved in those discussions. She said the lack of accessible taxicabs has been a big issue of concern for people with disabilities.

Vice Chairman Hudgins thanked Ms. Porter and the Task Force members for their input. She said it was a good example of a TPB and WMATA partnership. She said the mission of Metro was to provide quality transportation services to everyone without exceptions. She said she was interested in the comments of Ms. Klancher that there are low expectations for the service and those low expectations may create a situation in which the service quality cannot be measured. She also said that the report should go before the WMATA board. She said she believed the recommendation that a users group be established would be appropriate.

Mr. Dorsey thanked the Access for All Committee. He said he appreciated that the report did not simply make complaints, but also provided suggestions on improvements. However, he said he would like to get some input from the providers regarding incentives and why various efforts to improve the system have not worked.

Chairman Knapp asked Ms. Porter to clarify the motion she made.

Ms. Porter said her motion included a provision, which would be added to the draft resolution, asking that WMATA return to the TPB with a report on the independent assessment that is being recommended in the Access for All (AFA) report. She noted that the independent assessment would take place early next year, so the report to the TPB could take place after that. She also said her motion would ask WMATA staff to report to the TPB in a shorter time frame regarding some of the short-term recommendations in the AFA report.

Chairman Knapp asked Mr. Kirby if it would be possible to schedule an update from WMATA for the March meeting.

Ms. Porter reiterated that the AFA report recommended that an independent study be done in approximately one year and that WMATA come back to the TPB with the results of that assessment. She said the AFA report also recommended that the TPB, in its oversight capacity, receive a report on short-term issues that will be addressed during the transition period.

Vice Chairman Hudgins suggested it might be more useful to get a report on these short-term issues in two or three months instead of at the March meeting.

Ms. Porter said she would be guided by this suggestion.

Chairman Knapp asked Mr. Kirby to investigate scheduling the briefing for the April or May meeting.

Ms. Porter said that based on this discussion she would remove the added provision from the resolution with the consent of the person who seconded it.

The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Update on Activities to Identify Dedicated Funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Chairman Knapp said this discussion is a regular monthly agenda item. He noted that COG has been hosting a weekly conference call with stakeholders within the region to discuss efforts to identify funding for WMATA. He said that legislation has been introduced in all jurisdictions.

Mr. Zimmerman said a WMATA funding bill, sponsored by Senator Whipple, passed the Senate Finance Committee unanimously. However, he said the House of Delegates seemed unlikely to take meaningful action this year.

Mr. Mendelson said WMATA funding legislation was pending in the D.C. Council and a hearing has been held. He said he was unaware of any obstacles to the legislation.

Chairman Knapp said that three bills had been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly.

9. Briefing on 2005 Peak Period Freeway Congestion in the Washington region and Changes Since Earlier Surveys

Mr. Kirby presented a PowerPoint briefing, which was also distributed in hard copy to the Board. The presentation indicated that congestion has gotten worse over the past three years. Mr. Kirby highlighted the 10 worst bottlenecks in the region. He also noted the locations where congestion has actually lessened due to improvements in merge areas and ramps.

Mr. Zimmerman thanked Mr. Kirby for the thorough report. He expressed concern that the “level of service” (LOS) measurements used to express degrees of congestion were not adequate. Specifically, he said that the LOS scale does adequately measure the important variations existing within LOS F. He said there should be a way to better indicate the difference between “bad,” “really bad,” and “truly horrible.” He also noted that LOS D, which might be assumed to represent poor performance, might actually not be that bad.

Mr. Zimmerman said it was interesting in the presentation to see the example of the spot improvement at VA 267, which actually worked. He asked what is happening VA 267 westbound in the same period.

Mr. Kirby said it was his understanding that the traffic was accommodated adequately on VA 267. Once that bottleneck was removed, the traffic moved comfortably and did not slip to another bottleneck immediately. He said the main concern in terms of another bottleneck was south on the Beltway, where traffic, now freed up, headed south and then had difficulty getting off at Tysons Corner. He said that previously those backups were not as bad because they were backed up earlier.

Mr. Zimmerman said that his informal empiricism was consistent with Mr. Kirby’s comments, i.e., that VA 267 seemed able to handle the westbound flow. But he said a key point to remember was that improving flow at one bottleneck may actually create or exacerbate a bottleneck elsewhere.

Vice Chairman Pourciau asked for the status of the TPB’s analysis of arterial roads.

Mr. Kirby said that analysis would be brought to the Board within the next few months.

Chairman Knapp said he was concerned that the projects in the CLRP were not necessarily targeted to address the bottlenecks that were identified in this aerial survey. He said this was an important topic for a future meeting.

10. Briefing on Project Submissions for the 2006 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and FY2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Referring to the mailout material, Mr. Kirby said that the project information on the project submissions was incomplete. He said that staff recommended that the public comment period on the project submissions be extended until April. He said that staff would return to the TPB at the March meeting to provide complete descriptions of the projects so that the Board and the public will have an opportunity to understand fully what they are.

Mr. Kirby said that representatives from the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) would provide a briefing on DDOT’s submissions.

Vice Chairman Pourciau said the projects submitted by DDOT are part of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative that focuses on a fresh look at land use and transportation development. She said the projects improve regional access and connectivity, and also restore the historic street grid to promote land use options that are more sustainable and preferred by the community. She introduced Kathleen Penney, DDOT Chief Deputy Engineer, to briefly describe DDOT's project submissions.

Referring to a handout presentation, Ms. Penney described the South Capitol Street Improvements, including the new Frederick Douglas Memorial Bridge. She also described the 11th Street Bridge replacements. She said these projects were part of Mayor Williams' Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. She described the studies that are underway. She also described the sources of funding for the projects, including federal earmarks.

Ms. Sorenson said she was confused as to which projects were in the study phase and which should be listed for construction.

Vice Chairman Pourciau said that DDOT has been working closely with Mr. Kirby to ensure that the timing and process is clear in the current CLRP and TIP documents. She said the projects were moving quickly, particularly since the federal earmarks were authorized. She said the 11th Street Bridge is getting close to being at the end of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. She said the project would need to be included in a conformity finding, so it was moving forward as quickly as possible.

Ms. Sorenson asked if that meant that all these projects were moving forward for construction.

Vice Chairman Pourciau said that was correct.

11. Briefing on Improving CLRP Information and on Proposed New Public Involvement Activities

Referring to the mailout memorandum and the handout presentation, Mr. Swanson briefed the TPB on current public involvement activities and efforts to improve those activities. He noted the 2005 Citizens Advisory Committee Recommendations on improving information and analysis, which were presented to the TPB in January. He said the staff efforts to improve public involvement were intended to be complementary and responsive to the CAC recommendations. He described planned activities, including the Community Leadership Institute, which is planned for the spring of 2006, and a number of improvements in CLRP information. He said that two consulting firms had been engaged to assist in these efforts: Fitzgerald & Halliday and the Academy for Leadership Foundation.

Vice Chairman Pourciau said that she had met with the consultants to discuss the development of

the Community Leadership Institute. She said she understood that the consultants would be meeting with other TPB members. She said she found the discussion useful.

Ms. Porter said this is a good process and she was glad to see staff following up on the recommendations of the CAC. She said the public forum in Takoma Park in November was useful.

Mr. Fellows asked how community leaders would be identified for the Community Leadership Institute.

Mr. Swanson said the consultants were conducting listening sessions with TPB members to identify participants. He said it would be a challenge to find the appropriate level of participants, i.e., people who are not yet involved with the TPB, but are established community leaders who could benefit from getting involved in the Institute.

Mr. Fellows agreed that the selection of participants would be key to the success of the project.

Chairman Knapp said the consultants would be meeting with the TPB Steering Committee on March 3.

12. Review of Draft FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Referring to the mailout material, Mr. Kirby said the draft UPWP has been reviewed by the Technical Committee at its February meeting. He said the work program reflects an increase in budget and includes two major new items: a household travel survey and strengthened public outreach.

13. Other Business and Adjourn

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:07 p.m.