

TPB Endorses Metro Funding Panel Recommendations

The Transportation Planning Board at its January 19 meeting endorsed the report of a blue ribbon panel on Metro funding, including a recommendation that the region should implement a dedicated regional revenue source for Metro.

Because of concerns about language in the report regarding sales tax increases, some board

members opposed a full endorsement. But TPB Chairman Phil Mendelson and others urged the TPB to demonstrate leadership.

"The choice is: Should we make a strong statement or

not?" said Mendelson, who is an at-large member of the D.C. Council.

The independent blue ribbon panel, which started work last October, was sponsored by the Council of Governments (COG), the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council. The panel was asked to look at the needs and options for dedicated funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which runs the Metro system. The group comprised 13 members with recognized expertise in transportation and public policy.

The blue ribbon panel's report, released on January 6, said a sales tax was the "most

desirable, workable, and acceptable" revenue source to address Metro's endemic shortfalls.

But Panel Chair Rudolph Penner emphasized that the specific funding source is much less important than the need to raise it. If a sales tax is unacceptable, he said, other revenue sources should be considered, including a regional payroll tax or parallel increases in property taxes.

Metro's deterioration has accelerated in recent years, according to a number of studies

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WMATA



The blue ribbon panel on Metro funding said the system needs a dedicated revenue source to "avoid a downward spiral in its condition and performance."

New Air Quality Requirements Kick In

The Transportation Planning Board took steps on January 19 to comply with new, more stringent Clean Air requirements for ground-level ozone.

The board approved a finding that the region's 2004 Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and FY2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meet the interim requirements of the federal rules for the new 8-hour ozone standard.

The TPB's air quality finding—called a "conformity determination"—does not look much different from the one the board approved just two months ago. Because the region has not had time to develop a new regional air quality plan to reflect the new

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and media reports. The blue ribbon panel wrote that the system is "literally falling apart." Without dedicated and reliable funding, basic maintenance of the system is a challenge that Metro must address anew every year.

The panel's report stated that WMATA's member jurisdictions should "select, authorize, and implement a regional dedicated revenue source." The report suggested a sales tax would be the "most viable" option to implement on a regional basis, but it provided other possible dedicated revenue options as well. The report noted that a 0.5 percent sales tax increase would be sufficient to meet the projected shortfall.



"The choice is: Should we make a strong statement or not?" said TPB Chairman Phil Mendelson.

Farebox revenues currently account for 57 percent of Metro's operating expenses, and the report recommended this rate of

recovery be continued. The panel also emphasized that the federal government should play a major role in meeting the system's shortfall because Metro service is critical for "effective government operations."

The TPB did not directly participate in the panel's work. But the recommendations generated enthusiasm within the TPB, which for years has worked to highlight the region's transportation funding problems. One year ago, the board issued the *Time to Act* study, which put a pricetag of \$25.4 billion on the region's transportation priority needs during the remainder of this decade—more than twice the funding anticipated to be available. The *Time to Act* study included funding needs for transit, highways and other modes.

Although the TPB broadly agreed that Metro's shortfalls must be addressed, three board members opposed the TPB's endorsement of the report, citing concerns about the panel's focus on sales taxes. "I do not want to be on record supporting this," said Carol Petzold, member of the Maryland House of Delegates. Marsha Kaiser of the Maryland Department of

Transportation and Arthur Smith of Loudoun also voted against the resolution.

Other members said the TPB should issue a strong endorsement of the panel's conclusions. "If we're not willing to endorse and move this forward, then I don't know how we expect anybody else to do it," said Chris Zimmerman of the Arlington County Board.

Concerns about MetroAccess

The TPB's final resolution disagreed with the panel on how funding for paratransit services should be treated. The panel wrote that MetroAccess, the transit system's service for people with disabilities, should be viewed "as a societal expense that should be borne through social service funding rather than as a transportation cost."

Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter, who chairs the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee,

expressed serious concerns about the report's language. "I have heard from a number of people in the disability community that they find very offensive the notion that getting a person without disabilities to work is transportation, but getting someone with disabilities to work is a social service program," Mayor Porter said.



The TPB disagreed with the blue ribbon panel's finding that regional paratransit should be considered a "societal expense" rather than a transportation cost.

At Mayor Porter's urging, the final TPB resolution said "the TPB considers it entirely appropriate that transportation system revenues be used to serve people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route system."

The TPB agreed with the panel that a concerted effort is needed to address MetroAccess needs. Last January, the board endorsed a recommendation from the Access for All Committee that a study of MetroAccess should be conducted to identify more cost-

effective ways to better serve more people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route system.

Now what?

The backers of the panel’s recommendations emphasize that time is short. The “Metro Matters” funding agreement, implemented last November, provided urgent funding for the next year or two, but the system’s funding gaps will start to grow rapidly after 2007.

“The region needs to use this window of relative stability to assure that WMATA has the long-term funding it needs for the rest of the decade so that necessary investments can be planned and financed to maintain a quality service,” the panel report stated.

A new advocacy effort, dubbed the Business Transportation Action Coalition (BTRAC), has been launched to lobby elected officials to implement the panel’s recommendations. The Board of Trade, the Federal City Council and the Downtown D.C. Business Improvement District are the sponsors of BTRAC. The first major test of this effort will come early this year during the legislative sessions in Annapolis and Richmond.

The full report of the blue ribbon panel on WMATA funding can be found at mwcog.org. ■

February Agenda

The TPB’s February 16 agenda will include:

- Briefing on *project submissions* for the 2005 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and FY 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These project submissions will be released for public comment on February 10. The public comment period will end on March 12. On March 16, the TPB will vote on whether to approve the projects for inclusion in the air quality conformity analysis for the CLRP and TIP. A complete schedule for this year’s CLRP/ TIP can be found on page 5.
- Briefing on *bicycle and pedestrian* plans as a context for the project priorities identified in the Solicitation Document for the 2005 CLRP and FY 2006-2011 TIP.
- Report on the Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle *Safety Education Campaign*.

Street Smart 2005 Campaign



The third annual *Street Smart* campaign will provide information in other languages, such as the flyer in Vietnamese shown above. *Street Smart* is designed to drive home the message that a moment of carelessness can result in irreversible tragedy. The campaign is managed through the TPB and is funded through federal, state and local governments.

- Update on actions to improve *regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents*. On January 19, the TPB endorsed a work plan to make these improvements through a regional partnership called CapCom, and agreed to seek startup funding. The board will be briefed on recent developments.
- Review of draft FY 2006 *Unified Planning Work Program*. The UPWP is TPB’s annual work program.
- Status report on staff proposals for the FY2006 *Commuter Connections Work Program*.
- Approval of appointments to the TPB *Citizens Advisory Committee*. ■

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Air Quality

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ozone standard, the interim federal rules permit the TPB to base the new conformity determination on emissions ceilings—called “mobile emissions budgets”—that were used under the previous ozone standard. The only major new addition to the new conformity determination was an analysis for the year 2010.

Although not very different, the new conformity determination was essential. Without the finding, the region would have risked a “conformity lapse” in June, jeopardizing federal transportation funding.

Conforming to budgets

Under the Clean Air Act, the TPB is required to show that anticipated emissions associated with the region’s long-range plan and TIP will conform to the mobile emissions budgets established in the regional air quality plan. A conformity finding is required any time the long-range plan or six-year TIP is revised to change highway or transit capacity projects.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued regulations in April of 2004 guiding the implementation of the new 8-hour ozone standard, which replaced previously accepted measure, known as the one-hour standard. The Washington region was classified as a “moderate nonattainment area” under the 8-hour standard.

The new rules require the region to attain national air quality standards by 2010. The January 19 conformity finding included a new analysis for 2010 showing that under the interim federal guidance, air quality goals for transportation emissions are expected to be met in this new attainment year.

The interim federal rules will not last for long. A new regional air quality plan, expected in 2006, will include new emissions budgets reflecting the 8-hour standard. In the future, the TPB will have to base its conformity determinations on these new emissions budgets.

“Meeting the 8-hour ozone standard is expected to be a much more difficult effort, requiring continuation of all mobile and non-

What’s the Difference Between Different Ozone Standards?

The One-Hour Ozone Standard

- Established as the federal standard in 1979
- 120 parts per billion, measured over one hour
- Studies over the past twenty years indicate that this standard protected the public against peak highs, but not against sustained exposure to ozone.

The Eight-Hour Ozone Standard

- Established as the federal standard in 2004
- 80 parts per billion averaged over any given 8-hour period
- This new, more protective standard is designed to reduce ozone exposure for children, asthmatics and people active outdoors.

mobile emission reductions commitments, and possibly new ones in the near future,” wrote Dana Kauffman, chair of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), in a letter to the TPB on January 12.

MWAQC is the regional agency responsible for developing and approving the new air quality plan. Like the TPB, MWAQC is an independent body at the Council of Governments comprising state and local officials.

A more protective standard

Ozone is measured on a continual basis by 18 monitors that are set up throughout the region. When a monitor registers an exceedance of the standard, that counts as an exceedance for the whole region.

The one-hour standard was set at 120 parts per billion, measured over one hour. The 8-hour standard is set at 80 parts per billion averaged over an eight-hour period.

The 8-hour standard is designed to protect vulnerable groups—including children, asthmatics, and the elderly—who can be harmed by prolonged exposure to ozone levels that were permissible under the one-hour standard.

For more information on air quality conformity, see www.mwqc.org. ■

Schedule for This Year's Long-Range Plan Amendments and TIP

At its meeting on January 19, the TPB approved the following schedule for this year's amendments to the region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and the FY 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The amended CLRP will cover the years 2005-2030. The TIP is a six-year, more detailed subset of the CLRP.

Although not a requirement, the TPB **amends** the CLRP and produces a new TIP every year as a matter of practice. Federal law requires a comprehensive CLRP **update** every three years. The last comprehensive CLRP update was approved in 2003. The next update will be in 2006.

**CLRP/TIP
2005**

Under the Clean Air Act, any time the CLRP and TIP are amended or updated in ways that change highway or transit capacity projects, the TPB must show that forecasted vehicle emissions will be "in conformity" with emissions goals established in the region's air quality plan. The air quality analysis necessary for a "conformity determination" is an integral part of the schedule below.

January 19 — Approval of process. TPB released the final Solicitation Document, which lay outs the process for submitting projects to the CLRP and TIP.

February 4 — Submissions deadline. The transportation implementing agencies must complete their electronic submissions of project information to TPB staff.

February 10 - March 12 — Public comment period. The TPB will release for public comment the list of projects that have been submitted for the air quality conformity analysis for this year's CLRP and TIP.

March 16 — Approval of project submissions for air quality analysis. The TPB is scheduled to approve the project submissions for air quality analysis and the scope of work for the analysis, after reviewing public comments. This is a key milestone in the overall approval of the CLRP/TIP because it can be very time-consuming to add or remove projects once the air quality conformity analysis has begun.

June 15 — Briefing on draft air quality conformity determination. The TPB will be briefed on the air quality analysis.

July 20 - September 9 — Public comment period. The TPB will release the CLRP and TIP for public comment, along with the draft air quality determination for these documents.

September 21 — Approval of CLRP, TIP and air quality conformity determination. After reviewing public comments, the TPB is scheduled to approve the CLRP and TIP, along with the air quality conformity determination for the two documents.

Other January Agenda Items

In addition to issues described elsewhere in *TPB News*, the TPB's January agenda included the following issues:

- ***Briefing on priority regional unfunded bicycle and pedestrian projects.***

In recent years, the TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee has developed an annual list of unfunded projects that the subcommittee considers to be regional priorities. This year's list includes nine projects that are recommended for funding consideration for the region's FY 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).



John Weinore

The priority bicycle/pedestrian projects include safety improvements on Route 1 in Fairfax County, which has a number of unsafe crossings and a high rate of pedestrian fatalities and injuries.

The criteria used to select the projects include the following: bicycle network connectivity; pedestrian safety; access to transit; relatively quick implementation time; local support; lack of full funding, and reasonable cost.

At the TPB meeting on January 19, a number of board members said they wanted additional information about the process used to select the projects. That information will be provided at the February meeting.

- ***Update on actions to improve regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents.***

Last November, the TPB approved the concept of using the existing Capital Wireless Integrated Network (CAPWIN) and its association with the Center for Advanced Transportation Technology at the University of Maryland as a basis for undertaking a regional

coordination program. At the January 19 meeting, the TPB endorsed a work plan to make these improvements through a new partnership called CapCom. The board also agreed to seek startup funding.

- ***Briefing on a "Goals" statement developed by the TPB's Task Force on Value Pricing (full text on opposite page).***

At its meeting prior to the board meeting on January 19, the TPB's Task Force on Value Pricing finalized a list of goals for a regional system of value priced lanes.

The best known type of value priced facilities are High Occupancy/Toll (HOT) lanes, in which solo drivers pay a variable toll, while carpools use the lanes for free or at a reduced rate.

At the full TPB meeting on January 19, Maryland Delegate Carol Petzold, who chairs the Value Pricing Task Force, presented the goals statement.

The TPB is scheduled to vote on this statement of goals at its meeting on April 20. ■

TPB Alphabet Soup		
CAC	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
CLRP	-	Constrained Long-Range Plan
COG	-	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
DDOT	-	District Department of Transportation
EPA	-	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	-	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	-	Federal Transit Administration
MDOT	-	Maryland Department of Transportation
MWAQC	-	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
TIP	-	Transportation Improvement Program
TPB	-	Transportation Planning Board
VDOT	-	Virginia Department of Transportation
WMATA	-	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Goals for a Regional System of Variably-Priced Lanes TPB Task Force on Value Pricing for Transportation

The TPB's Task Force on Value Pricing, chaired by Maryland Delegate Carol Petzold, agreed upon the following goals at its meeting on January 19. The TPB is scheduled to vote on these goals at its meeting on April 20, 2005.

As the Washington region moves forward with plans to develop variably-priced lanes, it is anticipated that a system of variably-priced lanes will be implemented in phases, likely with one corridor or segment at a time. The following goals can help guide the regional development of variably-priced lanes that work together as a multi-modal system, while addressing the special policy and operational issues raised by the multi-jurisdictional nature of this area.

1. Operations, enforcement, reciprocity, technology, and toll-setting policies should be coordinated to ensure seamless connections between jurisdictional boundaries. The region should explore options for accommodating different eligibility requirements in different parts of the system of variably-priced lanes without inconvenience to the users.
2. The variably-priced lanes should be managed so that reasonably free-flowing conditions are maintained.
3. Electronic toll collection devices should be integrated and interoperable among the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, and should work with other multi-state electronic toll collection systems, such as E-Z PassSM.
4. To ensure safety and to maintain speeds of variably-priced lanes on high-speed facilities, one lane with a wide shoulder consistent with applicable FHWA guidelines should be provided at a minimum. Optimally, two lanes should be provided in each direction (or two lanes in the peak direction by means of reversible lanes) where possible.
5. Given the significant peak-hour congestion in the Washington area, transit bus service should be an integral part of a system of variably-priced lanes, beginning with project planning and design, in order to move the maximum number of people, not just the maximum number of vehicles.
6. Transit buses should have reasonably free-flowing and direct access to variably-priced lanes from major activity centers, key rail stations, and park-and-ride lots, so that transit buses do not have to cross several congested general purpose lanes.
7. Transit buses using the variably-priced lanes should have clearly designated and accessible stops at activity centers or park-and-ride lots, and signal priority or dedicated bus lanes to ensure efficient access to and from activity centers.
8. The region urges that the Congress and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recognize variably-priced lanes as fixed guideway miles so that federal transit funding does not decrease as a result of implementing variably-priced lanes.
9. The Washington region currently has approximately 200 miles of HOV lanes and a significant number of carpoolers, vanpoolers and other HOV-eligible vehicles. If the introduction of variably-priced lanes changes the eligibility policies for use of existing HOV facilities, transitional policies and sunset provisions should be set and clearly stated for all the users.
10. As individual phases of a system of variably-priced lanes are implemented, users of the lanes should be able to make connections throughout the region with minimal inconvenience or disruption.
11. Toll revenues from variably-priced lane projects may finance construction, service debt, and pay for operation and maintenance of the priced lanes. Should toll lanes operate at a revenue surplus, consideration should be given to enhancing transit services.

Calendar of Events

Dates and times subject to change. All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 N. Capitol St., NE (Enter from 1st Street).

February 2005

- 1 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 4 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 4 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 8 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 10 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 11 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 16 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

March 2005

- 4 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 4 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 8 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 10 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 11 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 15 Commuter Operations Subcommittee (10 am)
- 15 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 15 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 16 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 18 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 22 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) *tentative*
- 24 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- 31 TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

April 2005

- 1 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 1 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 5 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 6 Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 12 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 14 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 15 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 19 Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 19 Commuter Connections High-Tech Ad-Hoc Group (noon)
- 20 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 26 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) *tentative*

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