
**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

October 20, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT

Charles Allen, TPB Chair – DC Council
Thomas Maloney – DC Council
Kristin Calkins – DC Office of Planning
Mark Rawlings – DDOT
Jason Groth – Charles County
Denise Mitchell – College Park
Patrick Wojahn – College Park
Jan Gardner – Frederick County
Mark Mishler – Frederick County
Kelly Russell – City of Frederick
David Edmondson – City of Frederick
Neil Harris – Gaithersburg
Emmett V. Jordan – Greenbelt
Michael R. Leszcz – Laurel
Gary Erenrich – Montgomery County Executive
Evan Glass – Montgomery County Legislative
Terry Bellamy – Prince George’s County Executive
Victor Weissberg – Prince George’s County Executive
Deni Taveras – Prince George’s County Legislative
Bridget Donnell Newton – Rockville
Kacy Kostiuk – Takoma Park
Mark Korman – Maryland House of Delegates
Carol Krimm – Maryland House of Delegates
Nancy King – Maryland Senate
R. Earl Lewis, Jr. – MDOT
Canek Aguirre – Alexandria
Christian Dorsey – Arlington County
Dan Malouff – Arlington County
Walter Alcorn – Fairfax County
James Walkinshaw – Fairfax County
David Snyder – Falls Church
Robert Brown – Loudoun County
Kristen Umstattd – Loudoun County
Pamela Sebesky – Manassas
Jeannette Rishell – Manassas Park
Ann B. Wheeler – Prince William County
Victor Angry – Prince William County
Paolo Belita – Prince William County
David Marsden – Virginia Senate
John Lynch – VDOT
Norman Whitaker – VDOT
Maria Sinner - VDOT
Shyam Kannan - WMATA

Mark Phillips – WMATA
Tammy Stidham - NPS
Sandra Jackson - FHWA

MWCOG STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Kanti Srikanth
Chuck Bean
Lyn Erickson
Mark Moran
Tim Canan
Andrew Meese
Nick Ramfos
Paul DesJardin
Tom Gates
Lynn Winchell-Mendy
Jeff King
Eric Randall
Leo Pineda
Sergio Ritacco
Bryan Hayes
Andrew Austin
Bill Bacon
John Swanson
Dusan Vuksan
Deborah Etheridge
Jon Schermann
Elisa Walton - CAC
Shyamai Hauth – Fairfax County
Regina Moore - VDOT
Ciara Williams – DRPT

Materials referenced in the minutes can be found here:
mwcog.org/events/2021/10/20/transportation-planning-board/

1. VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES, MEMBER ROLL CALL, AND VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

Chair Allen called the meeting to order and reminded the board that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast. He said the process for asking questions and voting would be the same as at previous meetings. After each item, members would be asked for comment or to vote by jurisdiction.

Ms. Erickson conducted a roll call. Members that were present are listed on the first page of the minutes.

Ms. Erickson said that three comments were emailed from the same person. She referred to a memo that summarized the comments and said that they reflect the commenter's opinion on the Maryland HOT Lanes project.

2. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 22, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Chair Allen made a motion to approve the minutes from the September TPB meeting.

Ms. Sebesky seconded the motion.

The board unanimously approved the minutes for the September 22, 2021 TPB meeting.

3. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Groth said that the committee met on October 1. At the meeting the committee covered items on the TPB agenda. He said the committee was also briefed on other topics, including the Regional Travel Survey. Referencing the survey, he said that telework is prevalent at locations within a half-mile of high-capacity transit and that people who earn higher salaries are responsible for higher occurrences of telework. He said that more information on the October Technical Committee meeting can be found in the report for this item.

Ms. Kostiuk asked if the committee discussed higher levels of traffic even though the levels of telework are pretty high in the region..

Mr. Groth noted said that the data analyses the committee was working with was from a pre-pandemic period. He also said that the committee discussed the recent observations of higher traffic volumes with increased telework matter and that there was no definitive explanation. He said that there continues to be some reluctance in using rail transit and carpooling which contributes to increased auto travel. He noted that with transit ridership gradually increasing and more offices opening for in-person work the region is in transition at this time.

4. CAC AND AFA REPORT

Ms. Walton said that the Community Advisory Committee met on October 14. At the meeting the committee was briefed on the Climate Mitigation Study of 2021. She said that the committee shared questions and comments on the study with staff. These included questions about how the TPB can help set regional goals for shifting travel behavior, sharing results of the study, and possible impacts on increased electric vehicle use on the region's electrical grid. She said that the committee was also briefed on the Enhanced Mobility program and Connected and Automated Vehicles. She said that more detail on each of these items, including comments on the Climate Mitigation Study, can be found in the report for this item.

Mr. Aguirre said that the AFA met on September 24. At the meeting the committee was briefed on the Voices of the Region focus group public outreach activity. He identified several recurring themes. These themes include safety while riding on transit, cleanliness on buses, transportation affordability, and the connection between land-use and transportation. He said the committee was also briefed on wheelchair accessibility and connected and automated vehicles. More detail can be found on each of these items in the report for this item.

Ms. Taveras asked about challenges that automated vehicles in detecting people who have different skin colors.

Mr. Srikanth said that this is more related to technology and that this and other similar issues associated with object recognition are continuing to be examined.

Ms. Taveras encouraged the TPB to explore the assumptions that go into designing automated vehicles and work to make sure that they include equity.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Srikanth said that the Steering Committee met on October 8. At the meeting, the committee reviewed and approved a letter from TPB, MWAQC, and CEEPC jointly providing comments to the federal docket in support of proposals to improve fuel economy standards. He referenced his report and said it includes the meeting schedule for 2022. He said that pages 21 to 42 of his report include a memo that compiles roadway safety input received from MDOT, VDOT, and DDOT. The fatalities have increased despite a significant reduction in vehicle miles traveled. He said even in Virginia which reported a slight decrease in fatalities, the decrease was not proportional to the reduction in vehicle miles traveled. He said that all three states have noted aggressive driving, enabled by lower congestion and speeding, were some of the main contributing factors. He said one piece of good news was that all three states have reported a decrease in serious injury crashes. Mr. Srikanth referenced other items not in the report. These include the in-depth analysis of the Regional Travel Survey data and the planned in-person kick off of the Street Smart Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety campaign on Thursday, November 4th, in Oxon Hill, in the plaza in front of Mount Joy Baptist Church .

Mr. Snyder said it is important to maintain a focus on improving safety.

Mr. Korman asked about Maryland data listed on page 24. Specifically, he asked why MDOT reported that they are not likely to hit the targets set for 2017-2021 period.

Mr. Srikanth said that the federal government requires targets to be data driven and to be set for a five-year rolling period. Since there is a lag in certified data becoming available, the current report uses data that is a year behind and the trend in the data indicates that unless there is some enhanced level of intervention and changes, the target is not going to be achieved.

Mr. Korman asked for the 2020 data.

Mr. Srikanth said that staff will be able to collect the 2020 data and share it when it is available.

6. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Allen said that he is concerned about the high and increasing number of deaths on the roadways related to aggressive driving in the region. He said that the District of Columbia has seen an increase in the number of people killed on streets and at intersections. He noted how the board has discussed enhanced enforcement of safe driving a year or so ago and that he had specifically mentioned how the lack of reciprocity among states in enforcing payment of fines for moving violations makes it a challenge to keep unsafe drivers off the road. He said that it is in the collective interest of the region to have administration officials have a regional reciprocity agreement in enforcing unsafe driving citations issued by automated traffic enforcement devices. He also addressed the current situation of WMATA rail car safety, and said that it is a very significant and serious issue. He said he sees that WMATA is taking safety seriously and is taking steps to address this even as some of the actions like the changing train schedules impacts many people in the region. He said that while a detailed review of the matter including questions such as how much of the issue was known and when takes place, the immediate actions taken are viewed as putting safety first and foremost of the riders and that there would be steps taken to rebuild the trust of the riders.

ACTION ITEM

7. OPTIMIZING LAND-USE AROUND HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT AND ELEVATING EQUITY EMPHASIS AREAS

Referring to his presentation, Mr. Bean said that the COG board approved regional housing targets in 2019 and climate targets in 2020. He described the importance of high-capacity transit station areas and land-use. He said that transit, land-use, housing, and climate are region-shaping planning constructs that will frame the next decade. He added that equity, as represented in the TPB's Equity Emphasis Areas and COG's current work on equity are interwoven with these four planning constructs. He said that within that context, the COG board passed resolutions and asked the TPB to do the same. He listed the members who serve on both boards: Mr. Collins, Ms. Gardner, Mr. Jordan, Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Newton, Mr. Snyder, Ms. Wheeler, and Mr. Dorsey.

Mr. Dorsey said that the COG board is very enthusiastic about pursuing a unified planning framework. He said that a unified framework ensures a consistent pursuit of goals, year after year, even as membership changes. He said that the two resolutions approved by the COG board and up for consideration by the TPB account for the differences that exist across the region, but also seek to focus on the similarities. He said there is a shared regional understanding about the value of maximizing the 10 percent of the region's land that is proximate to high-capacity transit and pursuing greater opportunities to create more affordable housing. He said the first resolution calls upon local governments to prioritize High-Capacity Transit areas at all levels of planning. He said that the second resolution commits the region to a framework of accountability for equity. He said that the Equity Emphasis Areas can be used to guide capital investments and programmatic initiatives and activities. He said that the COG board calls upon the TPB to endorse these COG resolutions.

Mr. Dorsey made a motion to approve Resolution R4-2022 to adopt HCTs and EEAs as planning constructs for the region to optimize land-use around transit and elevate equity.

Ms. Newton seconded the motion.

Chair Allen thanked the board members and staff who worked on making this happen. He said it creates a big sense of alignment between the COG board and the TPB.

Mr. Weissberg endorsed this work and encouraged the reason to dig deeper to forward equity and investment in high-capacity transit station areas.

The board approved Resolution R4-2022 unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

8. STATUS REPORT ON THE 2021 ENHANCED MOBILITY GRANT PROGRAM

Ms. Winchell-Mendy said that every two years the TPB runs a solicitation for Section 5310 of the Enhanced Mobility program. Referring to her presentation, she described the solicitation process and how the program seeks to accomplish the goal of improving mobility for older adults and people with disabilities in the Washington region. She said that the Coordinated Plan is a federally required plan that guides the implementation of the Enhanced Mobility program. She said this plan is required to be updated every four years and will next be updated in 2022 with input from the Access for All Advisory Committee. She shared a list of priority projects for the region. These include mobility management, door-through-door transportation, and direct transportation for clients of human service agencies. She said that the two-year process is funded at approximately \$6.6 million in federal funding and requires a 20 percent match for capital and mobility management projects. She said a 50 percent match is required for operating grants. She said that during the solicitation the TPB received 23 applications requesting \$11.1 million in funding. She said that Mr. Aguirre chaired the selection committee. She said

that the selection committee recommendations are in the process of being finalized and that the board will be asked to approve the resolution for the recommended projects at the November TPB meeting.

Mr. Aguirre thanked staff for running the process and described the challenges of reviewing and recommending projects for funding.

9. PBPP: DRAFT TRANSIT SAFETY TARGETS

Mr. Randall said that there is an annual federal requirement for providers of public transportation and MPOs to set transit safety targets. He said that today's presentation covers the draft targets and that the board will be asked to approve the targets at the November TPB meeting. He described the Performance-Based Planning and Programming requirement. He said that the four measures for which targets must be set are fatalities, serious injuries, safety events, and reliability. He said that the draft regional targets are based on those set by transit providers in the region. He referenced his presentation and highlighted the four targets.

Mr. Snyder asked if WMATA could provide a report on safety and enterprise risk management in general and the recent safety issues with the (7,000 series) railcars.

Mr. Srikanth said that due to the ongoing investigation of the recent events with WMATA's railcars that involves the NTSB and Metrorail Safety Commission he understands WMATA will not be able to report much on it. He said that regarding a general briefing on WMATA's safety program, staff will follow up with WMATA to schedule a presentation.

Mr. Kannan noted WMATA's inability at present time to report on the rail car safety matter at this time and that he would follow up with staff on a timing for general report on safety program.

10. BUS TRANSIT SERVICE AND FARE EQUITY

Mr. Randall provided an outline of a paper that assessed bus transit service for equity during the pandemic. He shared key findings and demonstrated a web map that visualizes data from the study. He said the study can aid in prioritization for recovery from the pandemic and identify where to look in the future to improve equity of the region's bus service. He said the study looked at bus routes, bus stop locations, frequency of service, when does service start, and when does it end compared to the locations of historically disadvantaged populations identified in the Equity Emphasis Areas. He said that the white paper provides more detail. He referenced the presentation and highlighted findings from the white paper.

Mr. Randall demonstrated the interactive web map and walked board members through the process of how to use it to identify bus stops, Equity Emphasis Areas, distribution of transit service, and more.

Mr. Randall turned back to his presentation about fare equity. He thanked Mr. Castañeda for authoring the memo that is included with the meeting materials. He said the memo synthesizes recent transit fare relief efforts locally and nationally. He described a number of the fare relief efforts in place at the region's bus providers. He said that when fares are reduced or eliminated, ridership increases. Fare relief can improve safety and equity for bus riders and operators by eliminating fare disputes. Fare relief can also improve quality of life and sustainability. Ridership gains can overwhelm smaller systems. He said the biggest obstacle to implementing fare relief programs is the cost.

Chair Allen said that this briefing and this type of review was very important to how decisions are made, aimed at those hardest hit by lack of transit access as has been evident during the pandemic and also how we can recover and grow the ridership on our transit system. He said that a successful transit system is important for the region as a whole. He noted that while it is important to consider the cost of transit, it is equally important to look at the routes to ensure it will take the rider where they need to go – work, school, grocery, etc. He noted some of the recent decisions WMATA had made on fares and asked if Mr. Kannan can share any WMATA plans to look at bus services.

Mr. Kannan said that the topic of transit equity is expansive. He said that in addition to demography, it includes education, economics, the environment, and understanding who rides transit. He noted that these factors are quite different between Metrobus and Metrorail. He said that 80 percent of Metrobus riders are persons of color, majority of the train riders were white; that 50 percent of bus riders live in households that make under \$30,000 per year 50 percent of rail riders made over \$100,000 per year; that about 60 percent of bus riders do not have access to a car 75 percent of rail riders have access to a car. He applauded the recent COG and TPB actions focusing on transit and equity.

Mr. Kannan noted the various changes in WMATA's fare policies as efforts to recover the ridership and address transit costs. He noted the City of Alexandria's recent decision to provide free transit along with their restricted routing; he applauded the District's proposal for transit subsidy for residents. He said that work on transit fares is being undertaken and noted that there is more work to be done.

Mr. Kannan said that regarding service and routing, Metrobus ridership outpaces Metrorail ridership since the beginning of the pandemic. He said that Metrobus riders list factors like frequency and reliability as being more important to them than the fare cost. He identified some positive fare equity proposals and actions in the region. He said that creating more dedicated bus space on the region's roads will have a big impact on both. He said that WMATA is developing a transit equity strategy that unites and expands WMATA's existing actions on frequent service.

Mr. Kannan said that in keeping with the recommendations of WMATA's Bus Transformation project recommendations, WMATA is scoping a bus network redesign for all of its bus service and that they have been working with jurisdictional staffs on this. He said the funding for the study has been approved, participation from jurisdictions secured and that it is ready to launch and waiting executive approval to proceed.

Chair. Allen thanked Mr. Kannan for the information about the bus network redesign and said that the TPB is interested in this work proceeding and that the board would look to how it can help in getting the go ahead.

Mr. Glass said that Montgomery County lets children ride free and as a result, ridership among youth increased 50 percent. He asked how WMATA is building support for its equity strategy at the jurisdiction level.

Mr. Kannan thanked Mr. Glass for his work to make it easier for kids to ride free. He listed three things jurisdictions can do to advance equity now. First, they can adopt the bus service guidelines to synchronize service profiles on different networks. Second, they can continue work to synchronize pricing. Finally, he suggested the region needs to decide on a single approach to bus priority on roadways to reduce customer confusion.

Ms. Russell asked about the process for updating the Equity Emphasis Areas with new census data.

Mr. Srikanth said that given resolutions that the COG board approved last week and the TPB approved at this meeting, the Equity Emphasis areas are a clear policy-level preference for informing planning and programming. For this reason, he said it is important that the EEAs reflect the latest population data from the 2020 Census. He said that only part of that data has been released and more is expected early next year. He said the EEAs will be updated with the new data as it becomes available.

Ms. Umstatt said she hopes the region can have a more nuanced definition of the types of riders who need more regular bus service. She observed that the Loudoun County's efforts with increased bus service in some of the areas of the county with large population of people of color had not succeeded related more to income levels. She said she feels that income is a more accurate way to assess need. She also noted that the bus service routes displayed on the map did not appear to include the County's regional (commuter) bus routes.

Mr. Srikanth said staff will look into the bus routes included and also that staff will look to update the memo to provide more clarity on income level of households. He said he agrees that income is often a significant deterrent to having access to transportation.

Mr. Wojahn asked if the analysis examined bicycle and pedestrian access to bus service.

Mr. Dorsey suggested that the region rethink its perspective on buses. He said that often times bus is looked upon a less attractive mode of transit that leads to disincentive to invest in buses. He said that the ability to adjust bus routes to meet the evolving commercial, business needs and ability to better connect destinations makes it more useful and cost effective than rail. He noted that decision making with regard low ridership bus routes should focus on why and ways to change that. He suggested that the positive environmental impact of moving from driving alone to bus use should be considered as part of the fare relief discussion.

Mr. Snyder said that he is interested to know how bus-rapid transit fits into the bus equity discussion. He said that many bus stops in the region do not have shelters. He said that shelters should be a priority to promote more bus use. He also reminded the board that Virginia funds WMATA differently than D.C. and Maryland.

Chair Allen asked about incorporating comments from board members about bus service, the equity aspects of fare and service design and communicating it to WMATA to get their network redesign work initiated.

Mr. Srikanth said that it is clear that this is a priority for the region and that staff can draft a letter for WMATA.

11. MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF CLIMATE PLAN STRATEGIES: VEHICLE ELECTRIFICATION

This item was postponed to a future TPB meeting.

12. ADJOURN

No other business was brought to the board.

Chair Allen adjourned the meeting.