
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

VIRTUAL

November 15, 2023

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT

Reuben Collins, TPB Chair – Charles County
Christina Henderson – DC Council
Heather Edelman – DC Council
Mark Rawlings – DDOT
Anna Chamberlin - DDOT
Rebecca Schwartzman – DC Office of Planning
Mark Mishler – Frederick County
David Edmondson – City of Frederick
Neil Harris – Gaithersburg
Brian Lee – Laurel
Marilyn Balcombe – Montgomery County
Gary Erenrich – Montgomery County
Oluseyi Olugbenle – Prince George’s County
Bridget Newton – Rockville
Shana Fulcher – Takoma Park
Heather Murphy – MDOT
Marc Korman – Maryland House
Kris Fair – Maryland House
Takis Karantonis – Arlington County
Dan Malouff – Arlington County
Catherine Read – City of Fairfax
Tom Ross- City of Fairfax
James Walkinshaw – Fairfax County
Dave Snyder – Falls Church
Rob Donaldson- Loudoun County
Kristen Umstattd – Loudoun County
Pamela Sebesky – City of Manassas
Anne B. Wheeler – Prince William County
Victor Angry – Prince William County
Paolo Belita – Prince William County
Bill Cuttler – VDOT
John Lynch - VDOT
Allison Davis – WMATA
Mark Phillips – WMATA
Laurel Hammig – NPS
Julia Koster – NCPD

MWCOG STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Kanti Srikanth
Lyn Erickson
Andrew Meese
Nick Ramfos

Paul DesJardin
Tim Canan
Mark Moran
Jeff King
Leo Pineda
John Swanson
Sergio Ritacco
Rachel Beyerle
Marcela Moreno
Deborah Etheridge
Kim Sutton
Jane Posey
Cristina Finch
Jamie Bufkin
Pierre Gaunaud
Cherice Salisbury
Dusan Vuksan
Charlene Howard
Kathrine Rainone
Janie Nham
Eric Randall
Michael Farrell
James Davenport
Mohammad Khan
Don Varley – WMATA
Jordon Holt - WMATA
Andrew Bossi – Montgomery County

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

Chair Reuben Collins called the meeting to order. He said the meeting was being conducted in a virtual (online-only) format. He described the procedures for conducting the meeting.

Lyn Erickson conducted a roll call. (Attendance for the meeting can be found on the first pages of these minutes.) She confirmed there was a quorum.

Lyn Erickson said that between noon October 17 and noon November 14, the TPB received four comments by email and 20 project-specific comments from the Visualize 2050 initial project list feedback form. She said a summary, as well as each individual comment, can be found on the meeting web page. She reiterated that staff has created a project list feedback form on the TPB comment page to help share specific project comments with project sponsors. She said that staff is sharing the comments twice a month, at the Technical Committee and at TPB. She said these comments were attached to the memo. She said a short summary of them was provided at the front of the memo and then provided in full. She said that all the comments received were posted on the website.

Lyn Erickson summarized the rest of the comments. She said that Joseph Schiarizzi, who is a member of the City of Falls Church Environmental Sustainability Council, called attention to the city's recently adopted greenhouse gas emission reductions targets of net zero emissions by 2045 and he expressed support for the bus transit project on Route 7. George Aburn shared comments asking how the TPB is addressing climate justice and air quality hot spots associated with transportation projects, and he submitted a letter that he also shared with MWAQC and CEEPC regarding environmental justice in the region. Kevin O'Brien

submitted communication expressing concern about the 15 percent increase in nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries over the past five years and asked the TPB to make safety investments a higher priority in their Visualize 2050 project submissions. They also offered a different definition of what regionally significant projects could mean. (In response, Lyn Erickson noted that for federal conformity purposes, the TPB is required to use a specific federal definition.) Lastly, Bill Pugh, senior policy fellow for the Coalition for Smarter Growth, provided comments about road fatality trends and the safety benefits of narrower lanes. CSG also expressing concern about the rise in traffic deaths and asking TPB members to make safety investments for vulnerable road users a higher priority in their Visualize 2050 project submissions.

2. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 18, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Walkinshaw asked that the October minutes be corrected to show that he was present.

Approval of the minutes was moved by Mr. Walkinshaw and was seconded by Chris Fair. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Referring to the posted material, Mark Rawlings said the Technical Committee met on November 3 and reviewed three items for inclusion on TPB agenda: Draft regional target for transit safety and highway safety; selection process for projects to be funded under the 2023 Enhanced Mobility Grant Program; and an update on Visualize 2050. He said that three items were presented for information and discussion: A briefing on the new motor vehicle emissions budget approved by the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee; a status report on the National Capital Trail Network; and an update on the TPB regional resiliency program.

4. COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Richard Wallace said the Community Advisory Committee met virtually on November 9. The meeting brought the CAC together with two TPB officers – Chair Collins and Vice Chair Walkinshaw – and Vice Chair Christina Henderson's legal legislative staffer, Gabrielle Rogoff. He said the session featured comments from the officers and Gabrielle Rogoff, and then broke into state-based discussion groups. He said the discussions were spirited and insightful.

James Walkinshaw said the dialogue with the Virginia CAC members was very robust. He said he left the meeting with some new insights.

Heather Edelman said that Gabrielle Rogoff, who is Vice Chair Henderson's legislative director, found the CAC meeting to be very helpful.

Chair Collins said a strong focus of his group's discussion was on how the CAC can have more of an impact on the actual direction that the TPB goes in terms of policy. He said the committee represents a great opportunity for TPB members to hear directly from citizens.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

Lyn Erickson began the item by reminding the board that the COG annual awards luncheon would be held on December 13.

Referring to the posted materials, Kanti Srikanth said the Steering Committee met on November 3 and approved two amendments. The first amendment, at the request of DDOT, replaced federal STBG funds with

Federal Highway Safety improvement funds and added additional highway safety improvement funds to the District's traffic signal maintenance and traffic safety input programs. The second amendment, at the request of VDOT, added funding for a Duke Street transit enhancement project and also added funding for the Dulles West Boulevard Phase 2 project.

Kanti Srikanth called attention to two sets of comments, received from WMATA and from the Coalition for Smarter Growth, regarding the draft statewide carbon reduction strategy documents that the states are required to submit to the USDOT.

Kanti Srikanth said the posted material included two letters from the TPB in support of applications from Loudoun County for Commonwealth-wide transit grants. He also noted that the posted material included information on a new database featuring projects funded through the TPB's local technical assistance programs. Also included in the posted material was a staff summary of the regional level discussions that the Council of Governments has been facilitating about WMATA's funding options for its operations in fiscal year 2025.

Kanti Srikanth made additional announcements that were not included in the posted material. He said that a project in Alexandria, funded through the Regional Roadway Safety Program, had received an award through the Institute of Transportation Engineers. He said the latest round of the Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Outreach Campaign officially was kicked off on October 25. He announced that MDOT would be holding open house meetings for the American Legion Bridge and I-270 corridor program. He also noted that National Geography Week was currently underway, and he described some of the TPB staff's recent GIS efforts.

Kanti Srikanth concluded by noting that this November marked the 10th anniversary of the death of Ron Kirby, who was the TPB's long-time director. He acknowledged Mr. Kirby's contributions and continuing legacy, and he noted the personal impact he had on so many people, including Mr. Srikanth himself.

6. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Collins congratulated TPB members who recently won reelection. He also said that consistent with the TPB bylaws, he would be convening a nominating committee to bring to the board a slate of candidates for the chair and two vice chair positions for next year. He thanked Bridget Newton, Pamela Sebesky, and Charles Allen for agreeing to serve on the nominating board. He said the board would elect its officers at its December 20 meeting.

Chair Collins acknowledged the retirement of John Lynch of VDOT who has represented Virginia on the TPB. He noted some of Mr. Lynch's accomplishments, thanked him for his service, and presented him, virtually, with a certificate of appreciation.

John Lynch said it has been a pleasure to serve on the TPB and to serve the region for a couple of decades.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

7. PBPP: TARGETS FOR TRANSIT SAFETY AND HIGHWAY SAFETY

Referring to the presentation materials, Eric Randall provided an overview of the draft annual regional transit safety targets. He stated that under federal rules, Section 5307-funded urban public transportation providers have to annually set targets for four transit safety performance measures. He said that once the agencies adopt targets, the metropolitan planning area has 180 days to adopt regional targets.

Eric Randall stated that the four transit safety performance measures are: total number of fatalities, fatality rate per vehicle revenue mile, reportable injuries, and system reliability. He said that every agency has always set a target of zero for fatalities, but several hundred safety events, particularly in the bus environment, are anticipated.

Eric Randall reported that injuries for Metro heavy rail were lower than target; however, safety events for heavy rail, streetcar, commuter bus, and demand-response transportation exceeded targets. He said that demand response and vanpool agencies decided to set targets for zero because they do not have hard data on which to set targets this year with the expectation that they agencies will exceed those targets.

Janie Nham provided a briefing on the regional highway safety targets. She said that the set of regional safety targets is: number of fatalities, rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), number of serious injuries, rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT, and number of nonmotorized fatalities and serious injuries. She stated that all targets are recorded as five-year rolling averages.

Janie Nham said that the number of fatalities in the region continued to increase in 2022 while serious injuries decreased in 2022. She reported that the largest increase was seen in the number of nonmotorist fatalities and serious injuries, which increased by approximately 23 percent from 2021 to 2022. She stated that the region fell short of meeting the targets set for all five categories, and the rise in nonmotorist fatalities is notable.

Janie Nham stated that the nonmotorist fatalities have had the highest annual increase since 2006. She said the TPB is planning on a safety study similar to the study completed in 2020, and the board will be briefed on the findings once the study is completed.

David Snyder stated that, in the past, the TPB has finalized these goals that the region is not meeting, and the board listed things that members are doing or plan to do to meet and exceed goals in the future. He asked whether the board can make a similar effort when the targets come before the board for final action.

Kanti Srikanth noted that the draft targets proposed by staff do not increase the rates for any category above what has previously been adopted. Kanti Srikanth said that the TPB has been focusing on trying to change the safety trajectory and staff have a number of activities planned. He said that staff intends to examine 2022 data to determine if residents in the Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) are disproportionately represented in the dataset and to better understand what needs they have. He stated that staff are looking into ways to better understand the increase in nonmotorist pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries.

He stated that staff is also planning to hold a forum or webinar on safety best practices with state safety engineers to understand that is being done at the state level.

Kristen Umstattd asked whether information is available on how many pedestrian and bicycle crashes occur after dark versus during daylight hours.

Janie Nham stated that the TPB does not currently have the breakout, but staff can explore that data once it is collected from each state DOT and jurisdiction.

Kristen Umstattd said that she wonders if a large percentage of those crashes occur during night or early morning and whether there should be a public information campaign. She stated that in Leesburg there are a significant number of workers traveling early morning on foot or by bicycle, some wearing dark clothing. She said that she wonders whether information should be shared to educate travelers, including information in Spanish, about white clothing and reflective strips or vests. She commented that Loudoun County has shared this type of information and wonders whether other jurisdictions have.

Janie Nham said that this is a contributing factor for crashes in the region and she said staff will circle back when they have had an opportunity to look at the figures.

Kanti Srikanth said that three or four years ago TPB member Matt Letourneau chaired a COG task force on traffic incident management that set recommendations for the region's consideration. He said that one recommendation was holding a federally developed assessment of safety programs or maturity model. He stated that the TPB staff is happy to bring back those recommendations to see which are particularly focused on improving roadway safety outcomes.

Takis Karantonis commented that there have been conversations in Arlington County about walking with dark clothing. He said that we cannot ask walkers and cyclists to dress in an appropriate way while we do not ask drivers to behave safely by not racing or by not buying very heavy and unsafe cars. He stated that he thinks that the onus for traffic safety falls on drivers in the first place and on designers of the transportation system.

Takis Karantonis asked whether TPB staff sees any correlation between the tendency to buy heavier, taller, bigger cars and the number of or gravity of crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

Janie Nham stated that the TPB has seen research and reports showing a correlation, although causation is not stated at this time, between the increase in vehicle size and the rise in fatalities. She stated that the TPB's 2020 safety study did not specifically address this issue, but the TPB is currently developing the scope of work for the study update and are exploring all kinds of factors.

Takis Karantonis said that he has read that heavy cars and SUVs are exempt from the strictest requirement for energy absorption when crashing. He stated that he would like the TPB staff to include this topic as part of the focus because there is a need to learn whether vehicles are allowed that are unfit to circulate on urban streets.

Kanti Srikanth said that earlier in the year a federal representative briefed the TPB on a new approach to safety that identified all the factors involved in any kind of crash or incident. He said that the approach was to build redundancy by taking action on all of the factors so that if a driver fails to follow safety practices then the design helps to negate that oversight.

Takis Karantonis said he is considering all involved parties yet he sees street design as the first priority.

David Edmonson said that the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety released a study that looked at vehicle design and found that larger and blunter vehicles has a significant negative impact on crashes and crash survivability. He commented that he wonders whether the TPB can focus on advocacy to U.S. DOT to see about rules that would limit impacts.

David Edmonson said that it is important to deal with lighting so that clothing choices don't necessarily have as much impact on safety. He stated that local jurisdictions, the region, and the states are uniquely placed to advocate for safer vehicles and to eliminate some options that drivers have that hurt roadway safety. He stated that these efforts would be alongside those that mitigate crash energies and issues around road design that incentivizes speeding, unsafe driving, and unsafe crossing such as wide gaps between sidewalks. He stated that focusing on pedestrian safety is an interesting stopgap, but ultimately the responsibility needs to come from the people who are using the vehicles and not necessarily from those who might just be on a sidewalk when someone jumps the sidewalk.

Janie Nham stated that while the MPO is not allowed to explicitly advocate for certain issues, a few months earlier the TPB staff submitted a letter to NHTSA in response to proposed legislation to revise NHTSA's five-star vehicle rating system. She said that the TPB's recommendation was that the rating system should incorporate or consider pedestrian impacts.

David Edmondson said that explicit advocacy is not necessary but rather expressing concerns and highlighting the issues around incentives created by the federal regulatory system and how those incentives alter the safety environment and inhibit the MPO from meeting its targets.

Kristen Umstatted responded to Takis Karantonis's comment, which she thought was well taken. She said that she thinks that many pedestrians do not understand how invisible they are at night to people driving cars. She said that while she would never mandate any clothing choice, she does not think that people understand that they will not be seen by drivers of vehicles if they're wearing dark clothing while crossing the street outside a crosswalk. She reiterated that is why she wondered if anyone in the region has a public information campaign underway for education purposes.

Gary Erenrich said that the TPB has had prior discussions on the impact of seat belt use and inebriated driving and the percent of fatalities associated with those instances. He said that one of the follow ups needed is to address enforcement and how campaigns help. He said that he would like to ask staff for information on each state's statistics and performance on safety. He stated that he thinks that it is important that the region see why certain jurisdictions are outperforming or underperforming on the safety metrics. He asked that TPB staff look at breaking data up by jurisdiction and county to have a better understanding of the regional picture.

Kanti Srikanth said that the data is available from federal and local databases. He cautioned that the data does not automatically lend itself to fully informed comparisons and inferences due to the geography, design, roadway conditions, patterns, and timing, and that there are a number of variables involved. He stated that it would be good information to see what is happening in one jurisdiction; however, it might not be enough to say that a particular jurisdiction's design is better than another's.

Jordan Holt of WMATA provided an overview on the safety targets that WMATA shares with TPB. She stated that WMATA begins gathering inputs in the spring reaching out to internal stakeholders such as bus maintenance and rail maintenance staff. She said that during June and July, the senior executive team and labor management and safety committee team review target proposals and provide guidance. She stated that the agency safety plan is published in December.

Jordan Holt said that in addition to the targets the TPB sets, WMATA also measures assaults based on an FTA requirement. She stated that WMATA likes to use peer data from the National Transit Database and looks at measure comparisons with BART, MARTA, SEPTA, MBTA, CTA, Los Angeles Metro, and MTA.

Jordan Holt said that WMATA has seen improvements in collisions and derailments between 2018 and 2022. She noted that WMATA has experienced slight increases in customer and employee injuries. She stated that WMATA met its system safety event rate target for FY 2023. She said that Metro Access conducted a targeted safety campaign by communicating daily safety messages and reminders which contributed partially to the decrease.

Jordan Holt commented that of the Metrobus collisions in FY 2023, two-thirds were deemed unpreventable. She said that the FY 2023 target was met for all three modes for customer injuries with the biggest decrease in slips, trips, and falls on the escalator system. She stated that the customer and employee assault rate on Metrorail has decreased since a spike in FY 2022. She noted that part of this is contributable to escalation training.

Jordan Holt noted that Metrobus customer and employee assault rate is moving in a different direction and that similar to rail, it is predominantly customer on customer assault. She said that WMATA has seen a 50 percent increase in customer assaults in FY 2023 compared to FY 2022 although assaults on employees has decreased.

Brian Lee said that a couple of his constituents raised a question about the size of the police force for Metrorail and Metrobus with concerns that the size of the force was not adequate.

Jordan Holt said that through FY 2023, WMATA has been supplementing its police force with partnerships of jurisdictional police forces to help WMATA police patrol key areas at key times. She stated that select stations are supplemented with contracted private security officers.

Brian Lee said that the concern is that the constituents would like their tax dollars to go toward increasing their own police forces and asked if there is there anything the jurisdictions can do to support the Metro Transit Police being supported for additional positions for their force and not through the assistance of other forces.

Jordan Holt said that the topic is tied to the WMATA funding discussion as part of the operational funding supports safety and security in the system.

8. 2023 ENHANCED MOBILITY PROGRAM

Nicholas Ramfos referred to the presentation materials to provide a briefing on the Federal Transit Administration 2023 Enhanced Mobility Grant Program solicitation and selection process for the urbanized area. He stated that the purpose of the program is to assist individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals with transportation options.

Nicholas Ramfos stated that the solicitation process involved the update of the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan which guides the implementation of the Enhanced Mobility program. He stated that the selection committee makes funding recommendations based on certain selection criteria. He stated that the TPB Access for All Committee also identifies priorities of the most significant unmet transportation needs.

Nicholas Ramfos said that there is approximately \$5 million a year in matching grants, and the match requirements are 20 percent for capital or mobility management and 50 percent for operating. He stated that COG received a record number of 30 applications from 27 organizations representing about \$15.6 million in requested federal dollars. He said that only \$2.2 million is available in federal funding,

Nicholas Ramfos thanked District of Columbia Councilmember and TPB Vice Chair Christina Henderson for helping to coordinate the selection committee and also thanked representatives from the District Department of General Services, Maryland DOT, Virginia DRPT, and U.S. Aging for serving on the selection committee.

Nicholas Ramfos said that staff will request TPB approval of selected application on December 20. He said that successful applicants are given 30 days to complete FTA-required forms, and FTA approval can take up to nine months. He stated that once FTA approval occurs, then COG will put together sub-grant agreements for each sub-recipient, and then projects should begin by spring 2025 with the earliest possible delivery of vehicles in summer 2025.

No questions were received on Item 8.

9. VISUALIZE 2050 UPDATE

Cristina Finch, referring to the agenda materials, provided an update on Visualize 2050 and a review of goals, objectives, and the plan development schedule. She provided a recap of how stakeholders and the public have been engaged in the planning process and an update on the technical inputs process.

Cristina Finch explained that the National Capital Region Transportation Plan is the region's policy document for short- and long-term strategies to improve transportation. She said that that the TIP is a budget document that describes planned federal funding obligations for investments to be implemented in the first four years of the plan.

Cristina Finch said that in July 2021, the TPB board directed staff to initiate the next plan update upon approval of Visualize 2045 in June 2022. She said the technical inputs solicitation for Visualize 2050 began in February, and staff began a public comment period to provide feedback on reexamination of projects.

Cristina Finch shared the three-year schedule for Visualize 2050 and stated that the plan would be finalized in 2025. She said that a formal 30-day comment period would begin in March 2024 to provide community members with an opportunity to provide feedback on the regionally significant for air quality investments, how local, state, and transit agencies propose to address transportation issues, as well as the land use inputs and air quality analysis scope of work. She said that in April 2025, the National Capital Region transportation plan and the associated four-year program of detailed financial investments will be available for public comment and the TPB's anticipated approval of the plan, programs, and subsequent air quality conformity approval is June 2025.

Cristina Finch stated that the TPB held a state listening session in March 2023 with board members and state and local transit agency staff. She said that TPB staff initiated Q&A bimonthly sessions in September 2023 to assist TPB member staff with project inputs through December 2023. She stated that as of the first of November, TPB staff received 952 comments and 133 suggestions for new projects which have also been shared with each state as well as at technical committee meetings. She noted that the top three projects to receive comments have been the Op Lanes Maryland Phase 1, the new Long Bridge to be built between Virginia and DC, and I-270 innovative congestion management.

Cristina Finch said that the resubmission of project details is undergoing a thorough QA/QC review by TPB staff. She said that as of November 7, agencies have submitted 79 inputs for staff review and continue to submit. She commented that for the financial analysis, each input will include a total cost estimate in the amounts from each committed or anticipated funding source.

Cristina Finch stated that once the board approves necessary inputs, TPB staff will initiate air quality analysis by developing the envisioned transportation network. She said that staff will use project inputs to estimate future regional travel using a trip-based model and updated networks and land use data. She commented that because the National Capital Region is a nonattainment area, TPB staff will estimate future vehicle emissions using the MOVES, or Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator estimation tool.

Kanti Srikanth thanked TPB member agencies, transit agencies, and staff for their hard work for the past six to eight months because the approach has been to reexamine every project that was in the long-range plan and to reassess whether it is continued to be necessary and if those investments will be there.

10. ADJOURN

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:59 P.M. The next meeting will be on December 20, 2023.