

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
November 16, 2005**

Members and Alternates Present

Hilda M. Barg, Prince William County
Rick Canizales, Prince William County
Wally Covington, Prince William County
Lyn Erickson, MDOT – OPCP
Ludwig P. Gaines, City of Alexandria
J. Rick Gordon, Prince George’s County
Catherine Hudgins, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Sakina Khan, D.C. Office of Planning
Michael Knapp, Montgomery County Council
Julia Koster, NCPC
Deborah Lipman, WMATA
Michelle Martin, MDOT
Phil Mendelson, D.C. Council
David Moss, Montgomery County
Carol Petzold, Maryland House
Kathy Porter, City of Takoma Park
Michelle Pourciau, DDOT
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Arthur J. Smith, Loudoun County
David F. Snyder, City of Falls Church
JoAnne Sorenson, VDOT-NOVA
Patrice Winter, City of Fairfax
Bill Wren, City of Manassas Park
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
Andrew Meese	COG/DTP
Mark Moran	COG/DTP
Daivamani Sivasailam	COG/DTP
Dusan Vuksan	COG/DTP
Wendy Klancher	COG/DTP
Jill Locantore	COG/DTP
Debbie Leigh	COG/DTP
Michael Farrell	COG/DTP
David Robertston	COG/EO
Steve Kania	COG/OPA
Jeff King	COG/DEP
Paul DesJardin	COG/HSPPS
Alex Verzosa	City of Fairfax
Lee Schoenecker	TPB/CAC
Harry Sanders	Action Committee for Transit
Jim Clarke	Action Committee for Transit
Alex Hekimian	M-NCPPC-Montgomery County
John B. Townsend II	AAA Mid-Atlantic
Randall Carroll	MDE
Al Francese	Centreville (VA) Citizens for Rail
Arlee Reno	Cambridge Systematics
Jeff Price	Arlington
Tom Biesiadny	Fairfax County/DOT
Maria M. White	City of Alexandria
Patty Nicoson	Dulles Corridor Rail Association
Mary Beatty	Base Technologies

1. Public Comment

Harry Sanders, Action Committee for Transit, said it was time to integrate the results of the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study with the process of developing the Constrained Long-Range Plan. He said that information from the study should be integrated into the project submission process for the CLRP and woven into the CLRP's consideration and final approval. Copies of his remarks were submitted for the record.

Chairman Mendelson noted that the implementing agencies were asked this year to consider activity centers in their project submissions.

Mr. Sanders said he was asking the TPB to go another step by making sure that information from the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study is actually official input to the agencies and to the public.

Chairman Mendelson asked how the study information might be an input.

Mr. Sanders said it was important to make sure that what has been learned in the study is easily available. He said the information on both planning processes—the CLRP and the scenario study—needs to be tied together in a way the public can understand.

2. Approval of the Minutes for the Meeting of October 19, 2005

Chairman Mendelson noted that a revised attendance list for the October 19 meeting had been handed out.

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

3. Report of the Technical Committee

Referring to the mailout report, Mr. Mokhtari said the Technical Committee met on November 4 and reviewed the following items on the TPB agenda:

- The status report on the financial plan update for the 2006 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP)
- The draft Call for Projects document and the schedule for the 2006 CLRP and the FY 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Proposed amendments to the budget and work activities for the fiscal year 2006 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), in response to the SAFETEA-LU requirement
- The draft results of the PM2.5 conformity assessment analysis of the 2005 CLRP and the FY2006-2011 TIP. The committee recommended these results be released for public comment
- Information on the definition of the regional activity centers and clusters, and on future efforts to update the activity centers maps.
- Implementation of traffic signal optimization in the region.

The committee also received a presentation by the chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian

Subcommittee on recent bicycle and pedestrian activities in the region.

4. Report of the Citizens Advisory Committee

Referring to the handout report, Mr. Swanson of the COG/DTP staff gave the CAC report because CAC Chairman Dennis Jaffe was absent.

Mr. Swanson said the CAC met on November 14. Most of the meeting focused on a discussion with Bill Womack, legislative director for Congressman Tom Davis, regarding H.R. 3496, which would provide funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). He said the discussion included a number of details, but the bottom-line question was: "What can members of the CAC do to support funding for WMATA?" Mr. Womack responded that members should lobby legislators in their jurisdictions to support approval of dedicated funding sources.

Mr. Swanson said the Committee also began a discussion regarding whether WMATA needs a full-time pedestrian/bicycle coordinator. He said that members of the CAC believe WMATA should have such a position. The CAC agreed to take the issue up in the future.

The CAC also discussed improvements that the TPB staff is making in providing information on the Constrained Long-Range Plan. Jill Locantore of the TPB staff gave a presentation on two improvements that are underway: a new CLRP brochure and a CLRP webpage.

Finally, Mr. Swanson noted that the CAC would be hosting a public meeting that evening in its series "What if the Washington Region Grew Differently?" The meeting would be held in Takoma Park and would include a presentation on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. TPB Vice Chair Michael Knapp would be moderating the event, and Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter would also be speaking.

5. Report of the Steering Committee

Referring to the mailout material, Mr. Kirby said the Steering Committee met on November 4, and approved one amendment to the FY 2005-2010 TIP to fund leasing of Park and Ride spaces in Loudoun County, as requested by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Referring to the letters packet, Mr. Kirby called attention to a letter from Jo Anne Sorenson of VDOT providing a status report on the Techway study. The letter confirms that the study currently is on hold and remains dormant, and the listing that is in the TIP is for historical and informational purposes only, and that at this point, there are no plans to restart the study.

Mr. Kirby said the letters packet also included copies of the letters that were sent by the TPB on

October 25 to all of the jurisdictions regarding funding for the Street Smart pedestrian and bicycle safety campaign. Mr. Kirby reminded the Board that in previous years, funding was provided on an ad hoc basis, but this year, the Board decided to send out formal requests for funding. He said the request letters asked for letters of commitment by mid-December, and funding by mid-February, so that the campaign can be funded for next spring.

Mr. Zimmerman asked what was the total that would be raised if all the jurisdictions agreed to commit the funding.

Mr. Kirby said the total would be \$207,000 from the local governments that would match \$300,000 in federal funds.

Mr. Zimmerman asked how would that compare to the previous efforts.

Mr. Kirby said it would be higher than in the past. He said the request used the same rate that jurisdictions like Fairfax contributed in the past, and applied it to all the jurisdictions. The federal contribution will be the same as it was before.

Mr. Zimmerman reiterated his earlier point that such a campaign either needs a significant level of funding or it was not worth doing at all. He urged the jurisdictions to support it.

Mr. Kirby said it might be worth returning to the Board with more detailed information on what the program would involve. For example, he said he had a request from Charles County for information on how many busback signs would be funded for Metrobus routes in their jurisdiction.

Chairman Mendelson asked that staff provide that information next month.

Mr. Smith thanked the Steering Committee and VDOT for their support in expanding Loudoun County's Park and Ride system.

6. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Mendelson did not have any remarks.

7. Appointment of a Nominating Committee for the 2006 TPB Officers

Chairman Mendelson said the TPB bylaws require that the Nominating Committee be established in November so that there will be time to present the slate of officers in December. He said it is the TPB custom to have one person from each jurisdiction. He announced that he was appointing Kathy Porter from Maryland, Christopher Zimmerman from Virginia and Michelle Pourciau from

the District of Columbia. Chairman Mendelson noted that these appointments did not require a vote.

8. Approval of Funding and Transmittal Letter for the TPB's 2006 Membership in the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)

Chairman Mendelson said the TPB, which is a Metropolitan Planning Organization, has been a member of AMPO since its inception. He said the dues are \$19,750, which was a slight increase over last year. He said that among other things, AMPO has been successful in securing an increase in MPO funding through the federal surface transportation reauthorization legislation that was enacted in August of this year.

Chairman Mendelson moved approval of the funding. He noted that he is a member of the AMPO board.

The motion was seconded was passed unanimously.

9. Status Report on the Financial Analysis for the 2006 Update to the Financially Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP)

Referring to the mailout memorandum and the handout version of his slide presentation, Mr. Reno of Cambridge Systematics gave the Board a status report on the 2006 CLRP financial analysis. He explained the purpose of the analysis, changes since the last analysis in 2003, and progress to date. He said that despite some recent funding initiatives in the region, the region is still facing near-term and long-term funding shortfalls. He noted that transportation systems across the nation are facing similar shortfalls. He called attention to a study conducted by Cambridge Systematics for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that showed, among other things, that the Federal Highway Trust Fund Highway Account could have a negative balance as early as 2008. He said the funding gap is due, in part, to a decline in gas tax revenues. As a short-term solution, he said the federal government should consider indexing the gasoline tax. As a long-term solution, he suggested states should consider implementing fees on vehicle miles of travel (VMT). He said that the state of Oregon is now testing VMT fees that would be applied in major metropolitan areas.

Chairman Mendelson asked if Mr. Reno could provide copies of the Chamber of Commerce report.

Mr. Reno said that copies could be provided. He also said that the report could be found at www.uschamber.com.

Chairman Mendelson asked for more information on how Oregon was experimenting with a VMT

tax.

Mr. Reno said that the test is using pilot vehicles. When drivers to fill their tanks with gasoline, they pay a VMT tax instead of a fuel tax.

Mr. Zimmerman noted that Mr. Reno had described a two-tiered VMT tax: on a state level and on a metropolitan level. Regarding the state level, he asked who would be paying the tax.

Mr. Reno said that all vehicles would pay the state-level tax. He said the state could apply differential fees for the weight of the vehicles to account for different costs.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if this proposal would mean that a person would be taxed for vehicle miles driven in a state.

Mr. Reno said this was correct.

Mr. Zimmerman asked how it would be possible to know how many miles had been driven in a particular state. He said that a vehicle would have to have a transponder.

Mr. Reno said that additional technology would be needed to read the number of miles traveled. He said a transponder would be needed that would tell either a satellite or a fueling station how many miles have been traveled. He said a multi-state test is being done in Iowa that is looking at have a Global Positioning System (GPS) to record VMT.

Mr. Reno added that the Chamber study was not recommending that the federal government institute the VMT fee, because the federal government does not have a current regular reporting system with vehicle owners.

Mr. Zimmerman asked about the impact of tolling.

Mr. Reno said that right now, tolls are about six percent of highway revenues. Getting that up to 12 or 18 percent would have a significant impact, but the needed transportation funding would still be short at least 50 percent.

Mr. Zimmerman said that if every interstate road were equipped with electronic tolling that would result in an incredible infusion of funds.

Mr. Snyder said he was appalled by the magnitude of the national transportation funding gap that Mr. Reno described. He suggested that the TPB draft a letter to Congress forwarding the report from Mr. Reno. He also noted the importance of management and operations to get the most out of existing capacity.

Ms. Pourciau asked how the national shortfall that Mr. Reno described would be reflected in a regional level in the CLRP financial analysis.

Mr. Reno said that the CLRP analysis is constrained and will document available revenues. It does not currently include updating the 2004 Time to Act report, which looked at the short-term gap between what was needed immediately for critical expenditures versus available revenues.

Ms. Pourciau said that needs have grown in the District. She expressed interest in supplementing the Time To Act report.

Mr. Kirby said an update of Time to Act was worth considering.

Chairman Mendelson asked if Ms. Pourciau was asking for staff to develop a recommendation on updating Time to Act.

Ms. Pourciau said that was correct.

Chairman Mendelson asked that this be put on the agenda for December.

Pursuant to Mr. Snyder's request, Chairman Mendelson also asked staff to draft a letter to the Congressional delegation transmitting the Chamber of Commerce report.

Ms. Pourciau suggested it might be more effective to wait and transmit the Chamber report along with the updated Time to Act report.

Chairman Mendelson said the report could be sent a second time.

Ms. Lipman said that the SAFETEA-LU legislation authorized a commission to study the future of the highway trust fund. She said the commission would be taking testimony. She suggested the TPB might want to contribute.

10. Next Steps to Identify Dedicated Funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Vice Chairman Knapp said that discussions are occurring throughout the region to find ways to address the WMATA funding shortfall. He said there were no specific actions to report, but that he believed it was important to bring this issue back to the TPB agenda on a regular basis. He said he would like the Board members to think specifically about action items that could be undertaken, including advocacy efforts in support of the Davis legislation.

Chairman Mendelson asked if Vice Chairman Knapp wanted this to be an agenda item again.

Vice Chairman Knapp said he would like there to be five minutes just for an update to see if are any new developments in different jurisdictions in the region.

11. Briefing on Draft Call for Projects Document and Schedule for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2006 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and FY 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Referring to the mailout material, Ms. Klancher briefed the Board on the Call for Projects document, which in previous years was called the Solicitation Document. She said the document is a broad solicitation for projects to be included in the CLRP and the new TIP. She described the various sections of the document, including the TPB policy framework, federal requirements and the technical process for submitting projects. She noted that the schedule is beginning a month earlier this year to allow implementing agencies more time to submit project information, and the schedule was being lengthened one month at the end of the process. This extra time will allow staff more time to perform the air quality conformity analysis and to develop more public-friendly materials on the draft plan and TIP before the plan is released to help facilitate public comment. This extended scheduled is in response to some of the recommendations from the Citizens Advisory Committee to have more information earlier, including information on projects and analysis. Finally, she noted that all project submissions would be made online this year.

Chairman Mendelson noted that last year he asked for three priority areas to be identified in this document: CapCom, traffic signal optimization and activity centers. He asked that those issues again be highlighted this year. He said that for CapCom, he would like to see full funding.

12. Briefing on Definition of the Regional Core and Regional Activity Clusters and Future Updates

Referring to the mailout memorandum and the handout copy of his presentation, Mr. DesJardin explained the origin of the activity centers project, the reasons for developing activity clusters, the differences between activity centers and activity clusters, and the schedule for updating the activity centers/clusters maps. He noted that the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC) had suggested establishing a joint working group to address this policy issue of how the activity centers and clusters can best be used.

Ms. Pourciau noted that although there has been an agreement that the criteria for establishing the centers should not be changed, she believed there is something wrong with the criteria. She said that some areas with less activity appear as activity centers, while some areas with more activity are not.

Mr. DesJardin said the first step in revising the maps will be to look at the new Round 7 Cooperative Land Use Forecasts and apply the existing criteria to determine what changes have occurred.

Ms. Pourciau said she was concerned that the existing criteria appeared to be flawed. As an example, she cited the fact that Brookland in the District was not considered an activity center, while some suburban areas with less activity were classified as activity centers.

Mr. DesJardin said that the criteria and typologies for the activity centers were agreed upon by MDPC, the joint working group and the Planning Director Technical Advisory Committee. However, the cooperative forecasts actually define the centers.

Ms. Pourciau thanked Chairman Mendelson for requesting that a CLRP analysis look at activity centers. She noted that this analysis showed rail station areas that are not classified as activity centers.

Mr. Zimmerman asked for an indication of the relative magnitude of two slides in the presentation, which showed the Dulles corridor and the regional core in Washington.

Mr. DesJardin said the Dulles corridor was approximately four miles in length. For the District and surrounding areas, he noted that the District's total land area is approximately 62 square miles and so the depicted area would be roughly a quarter of that.

Mr. Zimmerman said that it appeared that the central Washington cluster would fit into approximately the same area as just Reston alone. He said the application of the criteria seemed inconsistent; in close-in areas, the land areas were fairly focused, while in outer jurisdictions, arbitrary areas are just added on. Leaving the issue of the clusters aside, he said he believed the maps had identified places as centers that are enormous and should not be considered centers. In defining clusters, the maps add on even more territory. He said he did not understand the purpose for the maps in the first place.

Mr. DesJardin explained that MDPC, the Planning Directors and the Joint Working Group believed that the clusters represented a great deal of economic activity in an area consistent with the existing traffic analysis zones.

Mr. Zimmerman said his basic question was why this exercise had been done in the first place. He said the answer was that the Vision called for promoting areas of concentrated growth, managing both demand and capacity, and reducing vehicle miles of travel. In order to achieve these goals, he said the Vision called for the creation of more walkable communities and more transit-accessible places. He said the activity centers project was supposed to be a tool to help move the region toward those goals. He said he was concerned that the project had become so buried in data that it had lost sight of this purpose. He said the point of an exercise like this is to look at places like

Herndon that are not quite centers but could be. He said that the act of drawing a larger map around Herndon might increase the number of households in that place, but it defeats the purpose of concentrating households in close proximity.

Mr. Zimmerman continued his point, saying that working with the larger areas creates the false impression that adequate densities are being implemented and that the future does not look so bad. Further it could encourage people to consider these lower densities as models to duplicate. He said the key issue should be whether or not areas are walkable, i.e., whether an area was in a quarter of a mile or at least a half mile from transit. He said he believed the centers are already questionable, and by introducing the use of clusters, the project was inviting decision-makers to believe that future development patterns will be adequate. He said that if the goal is to promote long-term policy changes, the emphasis should be on making the centers mixed-use, walkable places.

Vice Chairman Hudgins said she did not believe the activity clusters were inconsistent with the Vision goals. She said the region would not be able to accomplish the growth that it is facing by working only within the half and the quarter mile areas. She said that Arlington has neighborhoods just outside the half-mile radius of transit, but because they are in proximity to the higher concentrations, it is easier to live a one-car life. She commented that in addition to neighborhoods, there are village centers that have concentrations and that good bus service can be provided to rail stations beyond walking distances from people's homes.

Mr. Zimmerman said his comments were not directed at any actual planning processes. Rather, he said he was concerned that the way in which data are handled runs the risk of obscuring the TPB's goals. Regarding Vice Chairman Hudgins' interest in concentrating development around transit stations, he said the goals of these efforts could be diluted if the size of the area is too large. He said the land use patterns in Arlington have worked because the development has been focused.

Chairman Mendelson said that one approach to this issue is to ask where density should be located and how it should look. Another approach is to ask where the region's transportation infrastructure should be located and how it can be used most efficiently.

Mr. Zimmerman said that if the areas are drawn too large, things will be farther apart and many more vehicle trips will be required.

13. Briefing on the Implementation of Traffic Signal Optimization in the Region

Chairman Mendelson said he believed this issue was very important. He introduced Mr. Meese of the COG/DTP staff to make the presentation.

Referring to the mailout memorandum and the handout copies of his presentation, Mr. Meese briefed the Board on the implementation of traffic signal optimization in the region. His

presentation included an explanation of how these activities are considered a Transportation Emissions Reduction Measure (TERM); a definition of optimization; data on optimization results; and information about related traffic signal activities.

Mr. Zimmerman said the information provided by Mr. Meese was excellent. He noted that a lot of people assume that optimization is equivalent to synchronization, and he said he appreciated Mr. Meese's efforts to explain the difference. He said he understood that the result of optimization should be less overall delay. He asked how the results of these efforts are measured.

Mr. Meese said the most convincing method is to perform "before" and "after" field observations.

Mr. Zimmerman said he would be interested in seeing that data.

Ms. Pourciau said that the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has been looking at Arlington County's use of automated equipment to determine where signal timing should be changed to give priority in a different direction. She said staff are also looking at how pedestrian flow is affected by optimization. She emphasized the importance of considering pedestrians, and not simply optimizing for cars. She said the District of Columbia's portions of the CLRP and TIP contain approximately \$10 million over the next six years to put in place system detection and intersection optimization, which is included under a category called "Traffic Operations Improvements Citywide."

Chairman Mendelson asked whether it is possible to verify the optimization is in fact occurring, including reductions in emissions. He said he understood that such verification would have to include constant updating.

Mr. Meese said the subcommittee is moving more toward an attitude of daily active management of the signals, and centralized control that would permit timing to be changed from a central location.

Ms. Pourciau said it might be worth having a presentation from a signal technician on this subject.

14. Briefing on Proposed Amendments to the FY 2006 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to Address Requirements in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

Referring to the mailout and handout material, Mr. Kirby briefed the Board on proposed UPWP amendments. He explained that SAFETEA-LU increase funding and planning requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), including the TPB. The proposed UPWP amendments would increase the TPB work program by approximately 40 percent (\$3 million) through June 30, 2006.

He explained that the activities that would be funded under the UPWP amendments include:

- Begin to address SAFETEA-LU planning requirements;
- Enhance current work activities;
- Conduct fine particles standards (PM2.5) analysis;
- Survey and monitor current travel patterns; and
- Provide technical assistance to implementing agencies.

Mr. Kirby said that the Board would be asked to approve the amendments to the FY 2006 UPWP at its December 21, 2005 meeting.

15. Briefing on the Fine Particles Conformity Analysis for the 2005 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and the FY 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Referring to the handout material, Mr. Clifford briefed the Board on the methods and results of the conformity analysis for fine particles (PM2.5). He said the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared the region a non-attainment area for PM2.5 in December 2004, and the EPA rules on PM2.5 conformity analysis were released in April 2005. He said the assessment criteria for conformity contained in EPA's rule requires a demonstration that PM2.5 emissions in each analysis year have to be no greater than those estimated for the base year of 2002. He said the conformity analysis showed that forecasted PM2.5 emissions for each analysis year did not exceed the levels in 2002. He noted that this use of the base year 2002 was an interim test and in the future emissions budgets would be established for PM2.5 that would be used as the basis for conformity.

Mr. Clifford said these conformity results were being released at the meeting for a 30-day public comment. At the December meeting, following receipt and response to comments, TPB approval action is scheduled. He said this schedule is designed to provide federal agencies with sufficient time to execute their review and approval process in order to avoid a conformity lapse that would occur on April 5, 2006.

Chairman Mendelson clarified that the conformity determination that the TPB approved in October was for ozone, not PM2.5. He further stated his understanding that the PM2.5 conformity determination is a new requirement.

Mr. Clifford said that was correct.

16. Other Business and Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m.