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What will it take to meet the region's long-term transportation goals?

Apr 13, 2017



If you had to choose 6-10 projects, programs, or policies to move the region closer to achieving its long-term transportation goals, what would go on the list? Eight-car trains for Metro? A new highway bridge across the Potomac River? More bike-lanes and pedestrian paths?

The TPB's recently reestablished Long-Range Plan Task Force is aiming to answer that question, and the group met for the first time on April 10. In addition to a discussion of regional goals and challenges, the task force also engaged in a rapid-response brainstorm session that provided a glimpse at the types of initiatives that could be included in the group's initial recommendations due out this summer.

MORE: Find out who's on the Long-Range Plan Task Force

Getting started with a discussion of regional goals and challenges

The main purpose of the task force's first meeting was to review the group's mission and to agree on a list of regional goals and challenges to guide its deliberations over the coming months.

The group's official mission and tasks, approved by the TPB in March, call for developing measurable goals and performance metrics to aid in identifying impactful projects, programs, and policies. The mission and tasks also call for drawing directly from existing governing TPB and COG policy documents.

At the April 10 meeting, staff presented a summary of established regional goals spelled out in the TPB Vision, COG's Region Forward, and the TPB's Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. The goals touch on a wide range of issues, including system maintenance and preservation, expanding travel options, improving environmental quality, and enhancing freight movement.

Task force members agreed to use the summary list as a starting point for their work because the goals are comprehensive and consensus-based, and they're familiar both within and outside COG and the TPB.

The task force also discussed key challenges standing in the way of achieving regional goals. Staff again drew on existing work, presenting the 14 challenges identified in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. The challenges similarly cover a wide range of issues, from roadway congestion and Metrorail crowding to development near Metro stations and pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

What task force members thought was missing

One of the key things that some members thought was missing from the list of regional goals was congestion relief.

Task force member Martin Nohe said that "traffic" is often among voters' top concerns and that the task force would be remiss not to identify and use it as a top goal.

"Relieving congestion has to be a goal," Nohe said. "If the Transportation Planning Board isn't relieving congestion of some type, then we're not the Transportation Planning Board."

Summary of Regional Goals

- Provide a comprehensive range of transportation options to **promote a strong regional economy and address regional congestion, accessibility, and mobility**
- Provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone
- Develop and maintain an interconnected system, including a healthy regional core and dynamic activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing and services in a walkable environment
- **Prioritize state of good repair:** Give priority to **asset** management, performance, maintenance and safety of all modes and facilities
- Use the best available technology to maximize system effectiveness
- Plan and develop a system that enhances and protects natural environmental quality, cultural and historic resources and communities
- Achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning
- Achieve enhanced funding for regional and local priorities that cannot be met with current/forecast funding sources
- Support inter-regional and international travel and commerce



Long-Range Plan Task Force
April 10, 2017

At its April 10 meeting, the Long-Range Plan Task Force reviewed and discussed a list of established regional goals to use in guiding its upcoming deliberations. The task force made some additions and changes to the list (marked in **bold** above) to better highlight congestion relief, economic vitality, and maintenance as key regional goals. (TPB)

TPB Chairman Bridget Newton, who is serving on the task force in her role as a board officer, pointed out that the main impetus for the task force in the first place was to find ways to address significant anticipated increases in congestion on area roadways under the current Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

“The reason this task force was formed, if you go back to the very beginning, was because there were a lot of us on the TPB who said, ‘We cannot sanction spending \$100 billion on 500 projects and going nowhere on congestion,’” Newton said.

Some task force members took a different view, saying that it would be neither necessary nor desirable to add an entire goal area focused on congestion relief. “At a regional scale, we recognize that congestion reduction is important but it’s not a goal in and of itself,” said Dan Emerine. “We reduce congestion to achieve other things, like getting people to jobs or schools—to do some activity.”

Staff said that the TPB has traditionally highlighted congestion as a challenge standing in the way of meeting broader regional goals and pointed out that it is among the 14 challenges identified in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

In the end, the task force agreed to incorporate congestion relief into an existing goal focused on providing a comprehensive range of transportation options.

The group also added economic vitality as a component of the same goal, and sharpened another goal's focus on keeping the region's transit and highway systems in a state of good repair.

In its later discussion of regional challenges, the task force recommended calling greater attention to the safety of motorists and transit users. It weighed adding this issue to a challenge regarding bicyclist and pedestrian safety, but ultimately included it in a challenge focused on the traffic effects of major incidents. The group also added the idea of "reliability" to the challenge focused on recurring congestion on area roadways.

A glimpse of projects, programs, and policies that might make the list

At the end of the meeting, task force chairman Jay Fiset led the group in a 10-minute, rapid-response brainstorm session, going around the table several times and giving each task force member the opportunity to offer their own suggestions.

In all, task force members made nearly 40 suggestions, including eight-car trains for Metro, new Potomac River crossings, and expanded bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The brainstorm also yielded the suggestion of dedicated funding for Metro, expanded transit lanes, new regional parking and job-location policies, and robust strategies to get travelers to use non-driving commute modes.

The ideas suggested at the April 10 meeting range significantly in scope, cost, and technical and political feasibility. It will be the task force's job in the coming months to winnow down that brainstorm list to just 6-10 initiatives.

Next steps for the task force

The task force is scheduled to meet seven more times between now and July. Its next meeting is set for Wednesday, April 19, immediately following the TPB's regular monthly meeting.

At that meeting, the task force will review the TPB's past work analyzing different transportation and land use scenarios for the region. The purpose of this review will be to understand what past analyses of various projects, programs, and policies have shown and to help the task force identify the initiatives it would like to analyze in its upcoming work.

Once the task force presents its recommended 6-10 projects, programs, and policies this summer, the TPB will engage the assistance of an outside consultant to evaluate the initiatives more extensively and identify by December those with the greatest potential benefits for the region.

MORE: [Get the full schedule of upcoming task force meetings](#)

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