



December 15, 2004

District of Columbia  
Bowie  
College Park  
Frederick County  
Gaithersburg  
Greenbelt  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
Rockville  
Takoma Park  
Alexandria  
Arlington County  
Fairfax  
Fairfax County  
Falls Church  
Loudoun County  
Manassas  
Manassas Park  
Prince William County

Mr. Michael Replogle  
Transportation Director  
Environmental Defense  
1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Replogle:

In your letter of December 13, 2004 to the Chairman of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the Honorable Christopher Zimmerman, you provide comments on certain aspects of the TPB's travel demand modeling process. This letter provides TPB staff responses to the comments you have made.

- (1) Comment: "The FHWA Travel Model Improvement Program (TMIP) expert panel commissioned by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) calls into question current accounting practices concerning job-housing balance in both the Washington and Baltimore regional travel models and recommends action to fix this problem."

Response: TPB staff will review the TMIP panel report for the Baltimore region, and discuss the conclusions and recommendations in the report with the planning directors for the Washington region, the planning directors for the Baltimore region, and the BMC travel modeling staff. Following these discussions, TPB staff will prepare responses to the panel report addressing implications of the report for the travel modeling process in the Washington region.

- (2) Comment: "TPB's model accounting does not properly account for the travel due to projected job growth by adding sufficient new households or increased in-commuting to ensure enough workers to fill all the jobs - - After 65,609 new jobs were added to the regional Round 6.4A cooperative forecast this summer in response to the proposed addition of the Intercounty Connector to the regional transportation plan, Ron Kirby, TPB Planning Director, stated at the September TPB meeting that the workers at these jobs would commute in from outside the region. But two months later, at the November 17, 2004 TPB meeting, Mr. Kirby admitted that the traffic model essentially would not add these new jobs but rather take them from elsewhere within the region and redistribute them. As he noted then, 'we're consistent with past practice in this. Whether we're correct in this method is open to debate'."

Response: The number of additional jobs added to the regional Round 6.4A cooperative forecast in response to the addition of the Intercounty Connector was 58,300, not 65,609 as stated in the comment.

In the responses to comments on the 2004 CLRP presented to the TPB at its November 17, 2004 meeting TPB staff pointed out that the TPB travel model controls on trip productions, adjusting trip attractions to ensure a match between productions and attractions for the modeled area. This is standard modeling practice. The model incorporates additional jobs into the trip attractions, and uses this information in the trip distribution step of the model. This has the effect of directing proportionally more work trips to the locations with the additional jobs, and attracting more in-commuters to the TPB planning area from external jurisdictions such as Howard and Anne Arundel County in the TPB modeled area as well as from jurisdictions beyond the modeled area.

It is important to recognize that the area included in the TPB model (“the modeled area”) is significantly larger than the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for which emissions and other travel impact results are reported. (The relationship between the modeled area and the MSA is shown in Exhibit 1.) The travel model controls on trip productions and adjusts trip attractions to match productions on the modeled area. Consequently, additional jobs located within the MSA, as is the case with the 58,300 jobs added in response to the Inter-County Connector, will result in additional in-commuting to the MSA from external jurisdictions, as reported to the TPB at its September 15 meeting. It is also the case, as reported to the TPB at its November 17, 2004 meeting, that with respect to the modeled area if there are too many jobs in total relative to the workers generated by the household forecasts, then effectively all of the jobs in the entire modeled area are reduced proportionately in the trip distribution process.

Controlling on trip productions, as is done in the TPB modeling process, is standard modeling practice, although there are some metropolitan areas (Dallas-Fort Worth, for example) that control on trip attractions. The statement cited in the comment that “we’re consistent with past practice in this. Whether we’re correct in this method is open to debate” refers to the fact that not all MPOs adopt

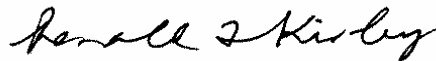
the same practice, and there are pros and cons to the different approaches.

- (3) Comment: “It calls into question the integrity and legal defensibility of the process when TPB member agencies tout job creation benefits for projects like the Intercounty Connector in public debate while manipulating the model inputs in ways that would pretend there are no traffic or emissions impacts from these jobs in the planning and environmental review process.”

Response: It is not the case that the TPB modeling process “would pretend there are no traffic or emissions impacts from these jobs in the planning and environmental review process.” As discussed in the previous response, the additional 58,300 jobs located within the MSA in response to the Intercounty Connector will have impacts on both traffic and emissions within the MSA and within the modeled area as well.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the TPB’s travel demand modeling process.

Sincerely,



Ronald F. Kirby  
Director, Department of  
Transportation Planning

EXHIBIT 1  
**Washington, D.C. - Maryland - Virginia  
Modeled Area  
and  
Metropolitan Statistical Area**

