



TPBnews

A Publication of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

Volume XXII, Issue 10

May 2015

TPB TO CONGRESS: INCREASE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING, RENEW FOCUS ON MAINTENANCE AND MULTIMODALISM

A year after urging the United States Congress to act to avoid a looming insolvency of the federal Highway Trust Fund, the TPB at its April 15 meeting called on the lawmaking body to substantially increase federal transportation funding and to fund priority needs like system maintenance and multimodal travel options.

The TPB's call took the form of a set of policy principles for Congress to consider as it works to extend or reau-

thorize MAP-21, the law authorizing federal spending on transportation in the Washington region and around the country. MAP-21 went into effect in 2012 and was extended last summer through May 31 of this year.

A significant increase in funding headlined the list of policy principles. In its formal resolution adopting the principles, the TPB said that the lack of adequate

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PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PROJECTS IN VIRGINIA TO RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES FUNDING

The TPB in April approved nine pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects in Northern Virginia to receive approximately \$2.5 million in funding under the federal Transportation Alternatives program for the coming year.

The funding will cover the capital costs of constructing the nine major improvements, which include sidewalk enhancement projects, new bike lanes and bikeways, and accessibility improvements for persons with disabilities.

The projects are spread across Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties. They were selected by the

TPB based on how well they support or advance regional goals, including providing more transportation options, strengthening Activity Centers, improving access to transit, and serving disadvantaged populations.

A selection panel reviewed a total of 17 applications for funding and worked with the Virginia Department of Transportation to select projects that both serve regional needs and reflect state priorities.

The Transportation Alternatives Program was created in 2012 under MAP-21, the law authorizing federal spending on transportation. The program combines several

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Upcoming meetings and items of interest:

TPB Meeting: May 20, 2015

- Briefing on a study to identify pedestrian/bicycle access improvements at select rail stations in the region
- Briefing on the DC2RVA High-Speed Project Under Development by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

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BIKE TO WORK DAY IS SET FOR FRIDAY, MAY 15

At its April meeting, the TPB officially proclaimed Friday, May 15, to be Bike to Work Day in the Washington region. The event is organized each year by the TPB's Commuter Connections program and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA). Organizers are expecting 19,000 people to register to participate in this year's event, which would be a 13 percent increase over last year. ♦



For more information and to register, go to www.BikeToWorkMetroDC.org.

TPB LETTER TO CONGRESS

(Continued from page 1)

funding undermines economic growth in the region and hinders its global competitiveness. The resolution also highlighted the difficulty that state and local transportation agencies face in planning and implementing vital improvements to the transportation system without the predictability of long-term federal support.

In the policy principles it adopted, the TPB called on Congress to consider a full range of “reasonable and predictable” strategies for securing sustained, long-term funding, among them increasing the flat, per-gallon federal fuel tax. The tax hasn't been raised since the early 1990s, during which time it has as a result of inflation lost more than 40 percent of its purchasing power.

The principles also called for consideration of other approaches, like indexing fuel taxes and user fees to inflation, and less traditional solutions like road-use pricing, public/private partnerships, and infrastructure banks and bonding programs.

Last year, in a letter to Congress urging action to raise new revenue, the TPB pointed to the examples of Virginia and Maryland, which both took historic steps in 2013 to

raise user fees and other taxes to pay for transportation. “Now it's time for the federal government to do its part,” the letter said.

Beyond increased overall funding, the MAP-21 policy principles adopted by the TPB on April 15 also call for more funding for keeping the country's transportation system safe and in a state of good repair, and on funding multimodal transportation improvements, especially public transit and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as communities seek to reduce dependency on driving and serve non-drivers.

At its meeting, the TPB voted to include a call for restoring the parity in federal tax breaks for drivers and transit users. Last year, Congress dropped the maximum allowable tax-free employer transit subsidy to \$130, even as it kept the allowable parking subsidy for drivers at \$250 a month.

The TPB's MAP-21 policy principles also call for more streamlined federal project review processes and more funding to help states and metropolitan areas meet new federal performance-based planning and programming requirements. ♦

COG, METRO OFFICIALS BRIEF TPB ON RESPONSE TO JANUARY 12 SMOKE INCIDENT

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) deputy executive director Stuart Freudberg and Metro deputy general manager Rob Troup briefed the TPB at its April 15 meeting on actions taken by both agencies in response to the January 12 smoke incident in a tunnel outside Metro's L'Enfant Plaza station that killed one passenger and injured several others.

The incident occurred after arcing from the electrified third rail caused heavy smoke build-up in the tunnel. Upon encountering the smoke, a southbound Yellow Line train stopped in the tunnel where it remained for more than 30 minutes while emergency personnel worked to reach it and evacuate passengers.

In their joint presentation on April 15, Freudberg and Troup briefed the TPB on steps to improve communications and other emergency response procedures, and to upgrade electrical equipment that caused the smoke in the first place. Communications and coordination lapses are said to have been one of the primary causes of the delay in reaching and evacuating passengers on January 12.

Freudberg's presentation focused on COG-led efforts to better coordinate emergency response procedures, including developing a new regional training and exercise plan for responding to incidents on Metro.

Freudberg told Board members that COG's fire and police chiefs committees and its rail safety subcommittee have all been working together to review and update best practices for transit-related emergency response. He said that the groups have also begun work to develop enhanced training opportunities and schedules to ensure that all of the region's 10,000 or so first responders are properly trained in Metro incident response.

In his presentation, Freudberg noted that Senator Barbara Mikulski had requested the updated response and training plan in a letter to COG and Metro in early February.

He also pointed to a request from Senator Mark Warner for an update on plans to improve communications.

Freudberg described new protocols for testing emergency radio equipment in underground stations and tunnels and making information about known outages available to Metro operators and emergency personnel on an ongoing basis. He also summarized the results of recent tests by WMATA and COG's 911 Directors Subcommittee of the ability to contact 911 by cell phone while underground.

The second half of the April 15 briefing focused on steps taken by WMATA to replace faulty equipment and update the agency's own procedures for responding to emergencies.

In his presentation, Metro deputy general manager Rob Troup described a total of ten early actions the agency has taken, including instituting quarterly rather than annual emergency training exercises for first responders, establishing new emergency operations protocols for the Rail Operations Control Center, and replacing damaged third-rail cables.

Troup also described an upgrade of WMATA's main radio system, used by transit police and train operators for regular day-to-day communications, to use the same frequency as the public safety system designed for emergency responders. He said the upgrade is being coordinated with cell carriers working to expand cell service in Metro stations and tunnels. He said the work will take three to four years.

Following his presentation, Troup responded to questions from Board members seeking greater clarity about Metro's plan to improve communications in underground stations and tunnels.

"What accountability system is in place to make sure that outages reported by train operators are being resolved?" asked Board member Elissa Silverman, who is a new member representing the District of Columbia Council.

Troup explained that the first step is getting the reported outages properly recorded, which he said the agency is

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VIRGINIA PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PROJECTS

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different programs that existed prior to MAP-21, including Safe Routes to School, Recreational Trails, and Transportation Enhancements.

In future solicitations, the TPB hopes to fund one or more projects that improve non-motorized access to underutilized rail transit stations in the region. In a recent study, it identified more than 3,000 possible pedestrian and bicycle improvements near 25 stations that are currently operating below capacity but that are anticipating significant ridership growth in the coming decade.

The TPB is currently soliciting applications for approximately \$2 million in funding for projects located in Maryland for the coming fiscal year. The deadline to submit applications is May 15. The TPB will solicit applications for projects in the District of Columbia later this year.

For more information about the TPB's Transportation Alternatives program, go to: www.mwcog.org/TAP. ♦

FY 2016 Transportation Alternatives Projects for Northern Virginia

Arlington County

McKinley Rd/ N Ohio St Safe Routes to Schools — Construction of raised, pedestrian curb extensions, and buffered bike lanes.

Funding - \$220,000

Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor Accessibility

Improvements — Improvements to sidewalks and streets to remove obstruction that restrict access by persons with disabilities.

Funding - \$200,000

Fairfax County

Louise Archer Elementary School

Missing Sidewalks — The Town of Vienna will install missing portions of sidewalks, as well as gutter, curb, and drainage improvements. **Funding - \$146,000**

Westbriar Elementary School Access – Old Courthouse Rd Sidewalk

— Complete missing sidewalk segments, including new curb, curb ramps, and gutters. **Funding - \$280,000**

Cinderbed Road Bikeway — Construct a 3.1 mile bikeway connecting Fort Belvoir with the Franconia-Springfield Metro station. **Funding - \$150,000**

Van Buren St Multimodal Improvements Project

— Town of Herndon will rebuild a ½-mile section of Van Buren St to include bicycle, pedestrian and subterranean infrastructure improvements, and enhance ADA accessibility.

Funding - \$280,000

Loudoun County

Safe Routes to Schools – Various Locations

— Installation of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails to provide paths for students to walk or bike to school at 12 campuses across the county. **Funding - \$144,580**

Prince William County

Pedestrian Improvements – Smoketown at Gideo Rd, and Opitz Blvd at Potomac Mills Rd

— Improvements to pedestrian facilities at intersections to include new signal-controlled crossings, curb ramps, and cut through pathways at channelized islands. **Funding - \$560,000**

Old Bridge Rd Sidewalk Project — Install 900 feet of sidewalk on Old Bridge Road to integrate with Antietam Rd Safe Routes to School project. **Funding - \$566,160**

COG, METRO BRIEFING ON JAN. 12 SMOKE INCIDENT

(Continued from page 3)

currently doing with a new real-time outage map. Then, he said, crew deployment to make the repairs to faulty equipment, which can take time given the demand for time and space to make other important safety repairs. Finally, developing means and methods to report back to operators that the agency has resolved the radio problem, which Troup said the agency is working on now.

Board member Neil Harris, who represents the City of Gaithersburg, asked why cell service upgrades planned several years ago had not yet been completed. “There was already a project to improve cell service,” Harris said. “What is the status of that project, and how can we be sure that it’s actually going to happen this time?” he asked.

Mr. Troup explained that the private group that had been working on the cell service upgrades went bankrupt and that work ceased on the project for two years. He also said that high-priority safety upgrades called for in the wake of the 2009 Red Line crash had precluded much of the infrastructure installation inside tunnels and stations that would have been needed for the new cell system. He said that WMATA is now in charge of the installation and has a solid plan in place to make sure it is completed in the next three to four years. ♦



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OTHER APRIL AGENDA ITEMS

The TPB’s April 15 meeting also included the following items:

- Approval of an updated scope of work for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2015 CLRP and the FY 2015-2020 TIP to use MOVES2014
- Briefing on the activities of the Transportation Sector Group of the COG Multi-Sector Working Group to Examine Greenhouse Gas Reductions ♦

UPCOMING MAY AGENDA ITEMS

The April 15 TPB meeting is expected to include the following items:

- Briefing on a study to identify pedestrian/bicycle access improvements at select rail stations in the Washington region
- Briefing on Metro's Connecting Communities Key Performance Indicator, Walkability Research and Station Area Strategic Investment Plan
- Briefing on the DC2RVA High-Speed Project Under Development by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Briefing on the activities of the COG Multi-Sector Working Group to Examine Greenhouse Gas Reductions
- Status report on the development of a list of unfunded transportation projects ♦

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 North Capitol St., NE (Enter from First St., NE).

May 2015

- 1 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 1 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 6 Bike to Work Day Steering Committee (10 am)
- 6 Car Free Day Steering Committee (11:30 am)
- 7 Freight Subcommittee – Transportation Safety Subcommittee Joint Meeting (1 pm)
- 14 Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force (noon)
- 14 Vehicle Prove Data Users Group – Management, Operations and ITS (MOITS) Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 14 Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 15 Bike to Work Day (all day)
- 19 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 19 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 20 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 22 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 28 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)

June 2015

- 5 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 5 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 9 Annual Transit Forum (11 am)
- 11 Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 16 Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee (10 am)
- 16 Regional TDM Marketing Group Meeting (noon)
- 22 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 23 Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee (noon)
- 24 Regional Taxicab Regulators (1 pm)

July 2015

- 8 Car Free Day Steering Committee (11:30 am)
- 10 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 10 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 16 Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 17 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 21 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 21 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 22 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 30 Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

Dates and times subject to change.

Please visit our website at

www.mwcog.org

for up-to-date information.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Bryan Hayes at (202) 962-3273 or bhayes@mwkog.org, or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Please allow seven working days for preparation of material.

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Permit # 9770

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