

Long-Range Plan Approval Delayed

The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has delayed approval of the full 2003 update to the region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRTP) because recently developed "mobile emissions budgets" (ceilings on transportation-related emissions) have not yet received federal approval. The TPB also postponed approval of the full fiscal year 2004-09 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

As a "Plan B" the board approved an interim long-range plan and TIP. These interim documents contain only projects and portions of projects that are exempt from air quality "conformity"

requirements or are already underway.

The federal Clean Air Act requires the TPB to demonstrate that emissions from the region's long-range transportation plan and TIP "conform" to emissions improvement goals established in the region's air quality plan.

Air quality plan still under review

The Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), an independent body at the Council of Governments, approved an air quality plan with updated mobile emissions budgets on August 13. In early September, it was forwarded to the US Environmental Protection Agency, which has 90 days to review the plan. Because EPA had not completed its review by the November 19 TPB meeting, the board could not make the conformity finding that is necessary for approval of the full CLRTP and TIP.

The approval of the Interim CLRTP/TIP is intended to mitigate the effects of a possible "conformity lapse" in January that would trigger a freeze in federal funding for many of the region's transportation projects. The conformity finding for the region's last triennial CLRTP update was approved by federal agencies on January 21, 2001. This federal approval will expire on January 21, 2004.

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Beltway HOT Lanes Discussed



The TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee hosted a meeting on November 18 to discuss a proposal to build high occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes on a portion of the Capital Beltway in Northern Virginia. HOT lanes permit solo drivers to pay tolls to use carpool lanes. Pictured left to right are Gary Groat of the Fluor Daniel company; Allen Muchnick, CAC vice chair; Tom Farley, VDOT District Administrator; and Catherine Hudgins, Fairfax County Supervisor. More than 100 participants at the meeting included supporters as well as opponents of the proposal. See page 5 for more information.

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EPA is expected to rule on the mobile emissions budgets by mid-December. If the emissions budgets are “found adequate,” the TPB at its December 17 meeting would approve the full CLRP and TIP, which would then be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for approval. This approval is expected to take several months, during which time the Interim CLRP and TIP would be in effect.

The Interim CLRP/TIP includes projects that are exempt from air quality conformity requirements, including studies. It also includes projects that are already underway. Federal funding will continue for these projects in the event of a conformity lapse in January.

Ron Kirby, Director of COG’s Department of Transportation Planning, explained that the temporary exclusion of some projects or project phases would probably not affect their development, as long as the Interim CLRP and TIP are only in effect for only a few months.

Mr. Kirby emphasized that the full CLRP and TIP have been analyzed and found to be in conformity with the mobile emissions budgets that are under review by EPA.

This year’s conformity issues contrast with problems that arose in past years. In 2001-2002, the TPB had difficulty making a conformity determination because forecasted emissions would have exceeded the air quality plan’s limits. This year, a conformity determination can be made when—and if—EPA finds the proposed mobile emissions budgets to be adequate. (See chart on page 3.)

U of M Connector study retained in plan

In a vote of 9-8, the TPB voted against a proposed amendment to delete a study from the

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CLRP and TIP for the University of Maryland Connector, a proposed road that would link the University of Maryland campus with the interchange of the Beltway and I-95.

Peter King, College Park councilmember, offered the amendment to delete the study, which is funded at \$1 million. He said the City of College Park and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center had initially agreed to a study of this corridor only for transit options. He said the new study would focus on single occupant vehicle traffic, which would be destructive to the local community and to the agricultural preserve, a federal facility. More importantly, he emphasized that the funding would be better spent on improvements to Route 1, which is very congested and unsafe.

“To wait for the study to come back... suggests that we are simply avoiding our responsibility and failing to deal with it at the earliest possible time, a time when other jurisdictions in Prince George’s County are going begging with a tin cup on transportation needs,” said Mr. King.

Marsha Kaiser of the Maryland Department of Transportation said that Mr. King’s amendment was “misplaced in this body.”

“This is a decision that should be made at the local level, not at the regional level, and it should be made by our governor and our General Assembly,” said Ms. Kaiser. “This body is a transportation planning body, and if we stop projects from going through the planning phase, then we’re going to interfere with planning studies before we get the information needed make informed decisions.” Ms. Kaiser also said “we’ve made that commitment that we will not move forward until the scope is committed to by those parties affected by it.”

Western corridor study removed

The TPB unanimously approved an amendment to eliminate a study of the Western Transportation Corridor in Virginia on the condition that staff could verify that funding for the study had been cut by the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board. Staff later confirmed that the study has been defunded, and the project was removed from the

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Air Quality Conformity: A Comparison of Challenges This Year and Last

KEY ISSUES/TASKS

LAST YEAR

THIS YEAR

CONFORMITY DETERMINATION

— For any CLRP or TIP amendments or updates, the TPB must demonstrate that emissions produced under the CLRP and TIP are within ceilings (“mobile emissions budgets”) established in the regional air quality plan (the State Implementation Plan—SIP). A conformity determination is valid for three years from the date of the federal approval of the CLRP Triennial Update and two years from the TIP’s approval.

• **Conformity determination had been delayed for one year.** In July 2001, approvals of amendments to the CLRP and TIP were delayed until 2002 because conformity could not be demonstrated due to an unanticipated increase in the number of sport utility vehicles and light trucks. A conformity determination was made in July 2002 that included commitments to new Transportation Emission Reduction Measures (TERMs).

• **Conformity has been demonstrated based on mobile emissions budgets in a new air quality plan currently under review by EPA.** Emissions forecasts for the 2003 CLRP and FY 2004-09 TIP have been demonstrated to be “in conformity” with the emissions ceilings (“mobile emissions budgets”) in a new air quality plan submitted to EPA in September 2003.

CLRP/TIP APPROVAL – The Constrained Long-Range Plan and the 6-year Transportation Improvement Program are typically amended every year, which requires a conformity determination. The CLRP must be comprehensively updated every 3 years; such a triennial update is required for 2003. In order to receive federal funding, regionally significant transportation projects must be included in the CLRP/TIP.

• **CLRP/TIP approval delayed one year—July 2001 to July 2002.** Amendments to the CLRP and a new TIP were delayed for one year until a conformity determination could be made (see box above).

• **Interim CLRP/TIP approved on November 19, 2003.** In case the region has a “conformity lapse” (see bottom row) this January, the interim CLRP and TIP have been approved to ensure that federal funding will continue to flow for exempt projects and for projects already underway.

CONFORMITY LAPSE — A conformity lapse occurs when a valid conformity determination expires. This means that federal funding for most transportation projects will be frozen unless provisions have been made through an interim CLRP and TIP for funding to continue for exempt projects and for projects already underway.

• **No threat of a conformity lapse last year.** Federal transportation funding has continued to flow to the region under a conformity determination associated with the last CLRP Triennial Update, which is valid from January 21, 2001 to January 21, 2004.

• **Conformity lapse will occur this January if federal agencies do not issue approvals in time.** If there is no valid air quality conformity determination in place by January 21, 2004, a “conformity lapse” will occur, which would mean that federal funding would be frozen for many transportation projects except for projects included in the Interim CLRP/TIP (see box above).

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interim CLRP and TIP, as well as from the full CLRP/TIP that will be considered after air quality conformity issues are resolved. The amendment was offered by Jim Burton, Loudoun County Supervisor.

The Western Transportation Corridor study is part of a long history of proposals and plans to build circumferential roads outside the Capital Beltway. The study was launched by VDOT in 2000 as an Environmental Impact Statement study. The corridor under that study would have formed a 50-mile western arc starting at I-95 in Stafford County, going through Prince William and into Loudoun County, and ending at Route 7 or the Potomac River. The Commonwealth Transportation Board, which acts as a board of directors for VDOT, voted to de-fund the study in June of this year.

For more information on the Interim CLRP and TIP, see www.mwcog.org. ■

“Walkable Communities” Workshops Planned for Spring

Missing sidewalks, hazardous intersections, dim lighting. These are some of the obstacles to walking that will be discussed at eight “Walkable Communities” workshops that the TPB has been chosen to host next spring. Through a competitive application process, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking selected the Washington region to host the events.

The workshops will take place next spring, over a one-week period, the exact dates yet to be determined.

During the four-hour workshops, trainers will describe the elements of a walkable community and solutions to common problems. Trainers will then lead participants on an interpretive walking tour of a pre-determined study area. Participants will conclude by identifying specific measures to make communities more pedestrian friendly.

Each of the eight workshops has a local sponsor— either a local government, a nonprofit organization, or a citizens group—that provided a statement of interest and a \$500 local match.

In their statements of interests, the local sponsors described walkability challenges that are endemic in many auto-oriented communities. They wrote that too frequently pedestrians risk their lives crossing busy roads, and motorists make unnecessary trips between multiple destinations because business areas are unpleasant places for walking.

The eight workshops will be held in the following communities:

1. Fort Totten, D.C.
2. Minnesota Avenue/Benning Road, D.C.
3. Long Branch area of East Silver Spring, Montgomery County
4. Olney Town Center, Montgomery County
5. Capitol Heights, Prince George’s County
6. Oxon Hill, Prince George’s County
7. Landmark, City of Alexandria
8. Richmond Highway (Route 1), Fairfax County. ■

TPB Alphabet Soup

CAC	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
CLRP	-	Constrained Long-Range Plan
COG	-	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
DDOT	-	District Department of Transportation
EPA	-	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	-	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	-	Federal Transit Administration
MDOT	-	Maryland Department of Transportation
SIP	-	State Implementation Plan for air quality
TERMs	-	Transportation Emission Reduction Measures
TIP	-	Transportation Improvement Program
TPB	-	Transportation Planning Board
UPWP	-	Unified Planning Work Program
VDOT	-	Virginia Department of Transportation
WMATA	-	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Other November Agenda Items

Other items on the TPB's November agenda included:

- **Review of comments received and approval of recommended responses** for the air quality conformity assessment, the 2003 Update to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), the FY2004-09 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and project information to develop an Interim 2003 CLRP and FY 2004-09 TIP. The TPB voted to approve the inclusion of the staff-developed responses in the CLRP update and TIP documents.

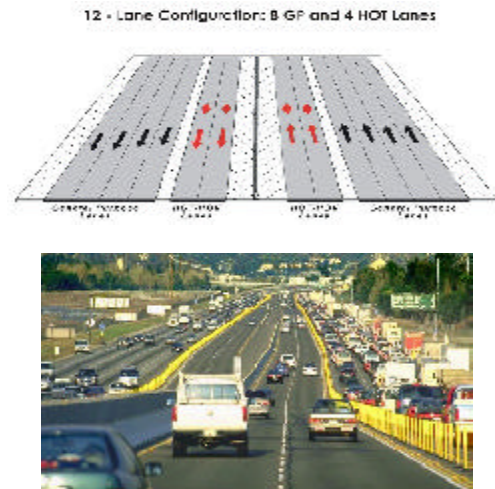
- **Certification of the urban transportation planning process** for the National Capital Region. Federal planning regulations require the TPB, as a metropolitan planning organization, to "annually certify to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration that the planning process is addressing the major issues facing the area and it is being conducted with all applicable requirements." The board endorsed a statement of certification.

- **Appointment of nominating committee** for year 2004 TPB officers. The nominating committee will present a slate of officers— a chairman and two vice chairmen— at the December 17 meeting for action by the TPB.

- **Approval of letter to the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee** providing TPB comments on the revised State Implementation Plans (SIPs) related to updated 2005 mobile budgets, transportation control measure substitution, and the development of budgets for transportation conformity under the new 8-hour standard. The board approved a letter for transmittal to MWAQC. See www.mwcog.org for a copy of the letter.

- **Briefing on the study of near term regional transportation funding** needs, funding availability, and project/program priorities. The initial report for this study is anticipated in December. ■

Beltway HOT Lane Proposal



The illustration above shows the configuration for the Beltway HOT lanes that was discussed at the Citizens Advisory Committee public meeting on November 18. The photo depicts a similar road configuration on SR 91 in Orange County, California.

The Fluor Daniel company is proposing to build the HOT lanes under Virginia's Public-Private Transportation Act. The new lanes, which would run between Springfield and Route 193, would cost \$693 million. Eighty-seven percent of these costs would be repaid through toll revenues. Using existing right-of-way for the most part, Fluor Daniel estimates that the project could be completed by 2009.

Opponents of the proposal have questioned its financial feasibility, funding opportunities for transit, the feasibility of using the lanes for bus service, and congestion relief effectiveness.

Upcoming TPB Agenda

The TPB's November 19 agenda will include:

- **If EPA approval of the new emissions budgets is received by December 17, approval** of air quality conformity determinations, full update to the 2003 CLRP and FY 2004-09 TIP.
- **Review** of study results of near-term regional transportation funding needs, funding availability and project/program priorities.
- **Progress report** on regional traffic signal optimization Transportation Emissions Reduction Measure (TERM)
- **Report** on TPB Access for All Advisory Committee's recommendations for transit services for people with disabilities.
- **Report** on coordination planning activities for regional transportation evacuation/protective actions. ■

Calendar of Events

Dates and times subject to change. 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 N. Capitol St., NE (Enter from 1st Street).

December 2003

- December 2 — Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- December 3 — Outreach Meeting: "Columbia Pike Revitalization: Can It Be a Model to the Region?"
7:00-8:30 pm. Arlington County Career Center, 816 South Walter Reed Drive,
Arlington, VA, Meeting sponsored by the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee.
- December 5 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- December 5 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- December 9 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical
Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- December 11 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- December 12 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- December 16 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- December 16 — Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Evaluation Group (noon)
- December 17 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- December 23 — Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) — *tentative*

January 2004

- January 7 — Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- January 9 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- January 9 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- January 13 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical
Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- January 15 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- January 16 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- January 20 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- January 20 — Commuter Operations Subcommittee (noon)
- January 20 — Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- January 20 — Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (2 pm)
- January 21 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- January 22 — Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- January 23 — Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9 am)
- January 27 — Travel Monitoring Subcommittee (9 am)
- January 27 — Travel Management Subcommittee (11:15 am)

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