



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
SUBJECT: Public Comment for the November 2021 TPB Meeting
DATE: November 17, 2021

The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email (tpbcomment@mwkog.org), online (mwkog.org/tpbcomment), and phone. Comments are collected until noon on the Tuesday before the TPB meeting. These comments are compiled and shared with the board at the meeting the following day.

Between the October 2021 TPB meeting and noon on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, the TPB received 3 comments. All comments were submitted via email.

The comments are summarized below. All full comments are attached to this memo.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Arlene Montemarano – Email – November 13 and November 14, 2021

Montemarano, resident of Silver Spring, sent two emails.

The first, from November 13, includes a link and text to a Washington Post article from October 22 entitled “Five myths about highways.” Montemarano highlighted sections of the text about how expanded highways induce demand and create additional traffic. The second, from November 14, shares a quote from the West Montgomery County Citizens Association: "Our main goal and indicator of success is not growth, but is being at the top of the Happiness Ratings, having a high quality of life, and above all, respecting and enhancing the environment. Our vision is a County which is not developer-centric but rather is resident-centric and environment-centric, where the focus is on sustainable growth, not simply population, business, and job growth."

Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth – Email – November 16, 2021

Bill Pugh submitted a letter from the Coalition for Smarter Growth to be included in the meeting materials for the November TPB meeting. The letter states that the TPB’s FY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program should include staff time to: develop actionable climate proposals, conducted detailed scenario analysis, enhance modeling and forecasting, and improve public outreach.

TPB Comment

From: Arlene <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 13, 2021 8:54 PM
Subject: "Five myths about highways"
Categories: Blue category

From last month, for those who may have missed it. Interesting article shining a light on some long held beliefs about highways and how we use them.

As to myth #1, I have been told that there is currently a house-building boom in Haymarket. Could that be a direct response to more roadway having been recently built? And how many additional cars will that put on all that newly created road space? Problem back, worse than ever. And what have we foolishly lost in the process?

(Bolding is mine as an aid to skimmers.)

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www.washingtonpost.com[washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

Perspective | Five myths about highways

Oct. 22nd, 2021

https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/five-myths/five-myths-about-highways/2021/10/22/d1e88c06-30f8-11ec-93e2-dba2c2c11851_story.html

Infrastructure Week may have become a Beltway joke, but suddenly highways are a truly pressing subject. President Biden has made passage of his \$550 billion infrastructure package a top legislative priority, and roughly a fifth of those funds could go toward roads. Even if you use a car to get to work — as roughly 85 percent of American commuters did before the pandemic — you might harbor some misperceptions about the pavement you drive on. Here are a few that pop up frequently.

Wider highways let traffic move faster.

From Maryland to Los Angeles, transportation agencies list their highway expansion projects under goals such as “Less Traffic.” A Washington Post headline on Oct. 9 stated that widening I-95 in Fredericksburg, Va., would bring “relief for drivers at one of the highway’s biggest bottlenecks.” The idea seems to make sense: If too many cars clog a highway during rush hour, adding lanes will give drivers room to spread out and travel faster.

But that kind of thinking doesn’t reflect how humans respond to expanded roadways. **Extra lanes may speed up traffic for a little while, but people rapidly adjust their travel decisions as they notice the faster highway — and in the process, they slow everyone down again.** Some who previously beat

traffic by driving early or late might shift toward rush hour. Others might stop using transit and choose to drive instead. **Ultimately, the highway ends up as congested as before.** That's what has happened in places including Houston, where the Texas Department of Transportation spent \$2.8 billion widening the Katy Freeway, part of Interstate 10, to as many as 26 lanes in 2011: **Gridlock grew worse than ever. This process is known as induced demand, and it's so widely accepted among economists that they call it the "iron law of congestion."**

Ninety-four percent of crashes are caused by human error.

Some myths have mysterious origins. This is not one of them. In 2015, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published a report about vehicle crashes that stated "the critical reason, which is the last event in the crash causal chain, was assigned to the driver in 94 percent of the crashes." That figure, often stripped of its context, has had a long shelf life, particularly among transportation agencies. For instance, in 2019, the North Dakota Department of Transportation published a report claiming that "94% of motor vehicle crashes can be attributed to a preventable human behavior." Autonomous-vehicle companies frequently cite the statistic — as Waymo does on its FAQ webpage — when touting the supposed safety benefits of their technology.

But laying blame on the driver lets many other parties off the hook — such as transportation engineers who could have created a **safer road**. For instance, slip lanes at intersections are intended to allow drivers to maintain speed while making right turns. That design can work well in rural areas, but in cities it often places too much onus on a driver, who must monitor her speed, watch for traffic while merging and yield to pedestrians crossing the slip lane at a crosswalk. If a collision ensues, police will find the driver to be at fault, ignoring the engineers who placed her in a dangerous situation.

Meanwhile, transportation agencies have underinvested in **sidewalks in low-income neighborhoods** in such places as Boston and New Orleans, leaving pedestrians vulnerable to crashes. Responsibility also falls on automakers that have created distracting infotainment systems and designed SUVs and trucks so tall that children just outside the vehicle are all but invisible to its occupants. As National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy recently tweeted: "Stop with the 94%! Simply put: It's not true. Crashes are more complex than that."

Congestion pricing hurts the poor.

The idea of charging a fee to drive into a dense downtown during the daytime is gaining momentum. It's already been deployed in cities including London, Singapore and Stockholm; New York is poised to become the first adopter in the United States. One of the most common critiques of congestion pricing concerns its impact on the poor. "Social equity was the conversation stopper when it came to congestion pricing," Stuart Cohen, then the head of the nonprofit TransForm, told the New York Times in 2019. New York Daily News columnist Michael Lawler wrote on Sept. 26 that "it's regressive, hitting low-income New Yorkers in transit deserts hardest."

But fewer than half of New York City households own an automobile, and, as in most cities, those who do own cars have a significantly higher average income than those who don't. **New York plans to spend congestion tax revenue on public transportation** improvements, which would disproportionately benefit lower-income residents. As UCLA urban planning professor Michael Manville wrote, "Free roads are not a good way to help poor people." With or without congestion pricing, affluent people drive more. So if you want to help low-income residents, you're better off improving infrastructure that they use more than most people do, like **bus systems and sidewalks**.

Gasoline taxes pay for highways.

Since 1919, when Oregon became the first state to tax gasoline, gas tax revenue has been a key funding source for highways. The landmark Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 launched the American interstate system, built with funds collected from the federal gas tax. There is an intuitive appeal to charging drivers in proportion to how much fuel they use. “The user fee works because it’s sustainable,” Ed Mortimer, the vice president of transportation and infrastructure at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, told Politico in June. In 2015, Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) proposed ending the “diversion” of gas tax revenue to mass transit, saying he sought to ensure “that the Highway Trust Fund can fulfill its namesake duty — to fund highways, without an increase in the gas tax rate.”

Today, the gas tax doesn’t come close to keeping pace with federal spending on roads and highways. It has become so politically sensitive that Congress hasn’t raised it in 28 years. Since 2008 Congress has topped off the Highway Trust Fund with more than \$140 billion in general revenue — collected from all taxpayers, regardless of how much they drive. States, too, **supplement their gas tax revenue to pay for roads.**

The ascent of electric vehicles, whose owners pay no gas tax at all, may force change. Already, states like Texas are considering levying new fees on electric-vehicle owners, while Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has mulled the feasibility of replacing the gas tax with a charge on vehicle miles traveled. **But for now, at least, all Americans pitch in to pay for highways — whether or not they drive on them.**

Americans, the story goes, have always had a special relationship with the automobile, cherishing the freedom that a car or truck can provide. University of Virginia history professor Peter Norton has traced the idea to Groucho Marx, who spoke of a “burning love affair” between Americans and automobiles while hosting a television show in 1961. The idea stuck. In 1995, TBS ran a four-hour documentary titled “Driving Passion: America’s Love Affair With the Car.” In 2006, a Honda television ad matched smiling actors with automobiles, concluding, “It must be love.”

The automobile is certainly ubiquitous in the United States. But outside of a few big cities such as San Francisco and Chicago, sprawled development, **sparse transit service and a paucity of bicycle lanes often leave automobiles as the only, not necessarily the preferred, transportation option.** Without a car, most Americans are at a severe disadvantage: Researchers have found that carless households saw their incomes fall in both relative and absolute terms over the last 50 years (but, intriguingly, not if they lived in transit-rich New York City). So there seems to be more utility than passion in Americans’ enduring relationship with the automobile.

-- Arlene Montemarano, 240-360-8691, Lawndale Drive

Please add your name to this petition indicating opposition to Hogan's private toll highway expansion plan: <https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/stop-toll-lanes-highway-widening-proposal-in-maryland>

The State's plan to add 4 private toll lanes to 495 and 270 would impact six national park sites, threaten dozens of local and regional parks, and endanger 30 miles of streams, 50 acres of wetlands, and 1,500 acres of forest canopy.

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Member of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion, cabe495.com

TPB Comment

From: Arlene <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 14, 2021 9:03 PM
Subject: How to kill city life. Or not kill it.

Categories: Blue category

When 'The Highwaymen' have it their way, this is what you get. Do these things belong in the middle of our urban areas?

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"Our main goal and indicator of success is not growth, but is being at the top of the Happiness Ratings, having a high quality of life, and above all, respecting and enhancing the environment. Our vision is a County which is not developer-centric but rather is resident-centric and environment-centric, where the focus is on sustainable growth, not simply population, business, and job growth." -- **West Montgomery County Citizens Association.**

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November 16, 2021

Hon. Charles Allen
Chair, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

Re: Critical UPWP activities needed in 2022 and FY23

Chair Allen and TPB Board members:

Looking beyond the current Climate Change Mitigation Study (CCMS) to the upcoming early update of the long-range transportation plan starting in late 2022, the TPB's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) will be critical. This planning and budgeting document must ensure that the necessary staff and consultant resources are provided and studies are completed.

The FY23 UPWP must be crafted (and the current FY22 UPWP may require amendments) to:

1. **Develop actionable climate proposals out of the CCMS findings** - Staff will need to take the findings of the CCMS and turn them into actionable proposals that the TPB board can prioritize and adopt into the next Visualize 2045 update, which will start early next fiscal year.
2. **Conduct detailed scenario analysis** - Establish funding and scope for more detailed scenario analysis using the regional travel model and with multiple Build scenarios in the next Visualize 2045 update, per TPB June 16, 2021 resolution.
3. **Enhance modeling and forecasting** to address important gaps and regional trends.
4. **Improve public outreach** to inform Visualize 2045 and local project submissions from the earliest stages of the process.

The mixed outcome of the United Nations climate conference shows that our region cannot rely on national or even state-level policy to do the work needed for a livable climate. The National Capital Region can and must act boldly to tackle our largest source of damaging climate pollution, the transportation sector.

Thank you,

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director

Bill Pugh, AICP CTP
Senior Policy Fellow

Addendum: Detailed UPWP Recommendations

**Recommendations for the TPB FY23 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
(with potential amendments needed to the FY22 UPWP)
Coalition for Smarter Growth**

1. **Actionable Climate Proposals for Visualize 2045 Update** - Broadly, the staff needs to take the findings of the TPB Climate Change Mitigation Study (CCMS) and turn them into actionable proposals that the TPB board can prioritize and adopt into the next Visualize 2045 update by 2024.
2. **More Detailed Scenario Analysis** - Funding and scope must be established for more detailed scenario analysis using the regional travel model (not sketch modeling) for each scenario, creating different project networks to align with the Mode Shift and Travel Behavior strategies that advance out of #1. This is needed to implement the TPB Board's June 16 resolution to update Visualize with multiple Build scenarios. The scenarios could include:
 - a. No build
 - b. Business as usual -- current Visualize 2045 as approved in 2022
 - c. Business as usual -- funded projects only, zero-based budgeting network
 - d. Expanded transit, ped, bike and local complete streets projects including connections to transit, and with reduction in future road expansion projects
 - e. Expanded transit, ped, bike and local complete streets projects WITH land use, pricing (parking pricing, and possible pricing of existing lanes), and with reduction in future road expansion projects
3. **Enhanced Modeling and Forecasts** - As part of this effort, staff must analyze and incorporate into the modeling:
 - a. Impact of post-pandemic telework and resulting changes in travel patterns on regional peak period congestion and travel forecasts.
 - b. An improved TPB regional travel demand model that incorporates current best practices in modeling non-car trips, induced demand, telecommuting, TOD internal trip capture, and realistic volume-to-capacity ratios.
 - c. Enhanced transit station access and active transportation networks, especially in activity centers.
 - d. Updated cooperative forecasts that fully incorporate the COG commitment to focus 75% of regional housing and job growth in high-capacity transit centers and the goal to bring 100,000 additional households above current forecasts and plans into the region by 2040.
 - e. Because planning and financial estimates for transit expansion projects have traditionally lagged that for many road projects, staff should identify how financial estimates can be made for alternative scenarios that are different from the current baseline. Similarly, because smaller scale bike/ped and local street projects might not meet the planning threshold, these should be combined into TOD investment packages with financial estimates for each, and incorporated in the appropriate scenario.
4. **Earlier Public Engagement** - An improved public outreach process that begins with the development of the scenarios and informs local project submissions at the earliest stages.