

ITEM 11 – Information

January 19, 2022

Consideration of Climate Goals for Surface Transportation

Background:

The TPB completed the Climate Change Mitigation Study, which examined potential actions TPB member jurisdictions/agencies could take. The TPB has expressed its interest in adopting climate change goals. Chair Sebesky will outline the process for developing a majority consensus on the climate change goals and strategies to inform future updates of the long-range transportation plan.



MEMORANDUM

TO: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ms. Pamela Sebesky, Chair, TPB
Mr. Reuben Collins, Vice Chair, TPB
Ms. Christina Henderson, Vice Chair, TPB.

SUBJECT: Process to Add Climate Change Mitigation Strategies to the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Planning Process

DATE: January 13, 2022

This memorandum describes how climate change mitigation activities can be integrated into the TPB's long-range transportation plan (LRTP) and the associated planning process. The TPB has agreed that mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change should be a regional planning priority along with other regional planning priorities previously adopted and documented in TPB policy documents¹. The specific climate change elements to be included and the process for doing so proposed in this memo are based on the primary principles and outcomes that the Chair and Vice Chairs of the TPB have identified as key to securing the region's unified commitment to reduce on-road, transportation-sector greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to help the region attain its multi-sectoral GHG reduction goals² for 2030 and 2050.

PRIMARY TASK

The goal of this task is articulating the TPB's on-road GHG reduction goals and endorsing a set of vehicular GHG reduction strategies. The primary tasks are (1) to identify the potential on-road GHG reduction goals, along with a set of multi-pathway strategies, to reduce vehicular GHG emissions and (2) to secure the consensus of the board for including these in the region's LRTP and planning process.

The purpose of including the on-road GHG reduction goals and a set of multi-pathway strategies in both the LRTP and the planning process is to help guide transportation investment decisions of the TPB member jurisdictions and agencies in the coming years. It is the TPB's expectation that the planning priorities included in the plan document, including climate change along with other priorities such as safety, increasing accessibility, reducing congestion, and increasing the usage of both transit and non-motorized modes are considered by its members' decision making processes to provide a more equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation system.

¹ Documents describing TPB policy priorities may be found at: <https://visualize2045.org/goals-and-future-factors/>.

² The region's multi-sector GHG reduction goals adopted by COG in 2008 and 2020: Reduce GHG emissions – 20% below 2005 levels by 2020, 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 and 80% below 2005 levels by 2050.

PRINCIPLES TO GOVERN THE CURRENT TASK

The two primary principles to govern the tasks of including on-road GHG reduction goals and a set of strategies to achieve these reductions in the TPB's Plan and its planning process are: **consensus** and **commitment to implement equitably**. The TPB's primary interest in this task is reducing GHG emissions from on-road motor vehicles to contribute this sector's appropriate share toward the region's multi-sector GHG reduction goals. The first part of articulating climate change mitigation as a planning priority is adopting GHG reduction goals for the on-road sector. While the GHG reduction **goals** adopted for inclusion in the LRTP and the planning process could be aspirational, they should also be **based** on the **consensus** of TPB members, representing their jurisdictions or agencies. These goals should be consistent with the goals adopted by the region and the goals adopted by many of the TPB member jurisdictions. The second part of articulating climate change mitigation as a planning priority is endorsing a set of multi-modal and multi-pathway **strategies** (projects, programs, or policies) that have the **commitment of TPB member jurisdictions and agencies** to implement the applicable on-road GHG emissions-reducing projects, programs, and policies equitably and as expeditiously as possible.

Studies by both the TPB and others have made clear that mitigating and adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change requires a multi-sector and multi-jurisdictional effort that is comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous. For the TPB's commitment and efforts to reduce on-road GHG emissions to be successful and effective in informing transportation planning and programming decisions of its member jurisdictions and agencies, it is critical that the TPB actions be consensus-based and supported by the commitment of its member jurisdictions/agencies to work continually and in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Unless appropriate and expeditious actions are undertaken by the TPB members, at both local and state levels, the region will struggle to achieve the reductions in on-road GHG emissions that are needed for the region to achieve its GHG reduction goals.

BACKGROUND

The TPB has long had enhancing and protecting the region's environmental quality as one of its goals for developing the region's long-range transportation plans.³ Consistent with this goal, the **TPB has previously endorsed** the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' **regional multi-sector GHG reduction goals**.⁴ Since 2009, the TPB has undertaken several regional studies⁵ and analyses to examine the projects, programs, and policies ("strategies") that would reduce GHG emissions within the on-road sector (i.e., automobiles, trucks, and buses). Since 2010, the TPB also has been estimating the potential reduction in on-road GHG emissions from its long-range transportation plans to track progress toward the region's multi-sector GHG reduction goals.

With its October 2020 action endorsing new regional GHG reduction goals for 2030 as the impetus, and recognizing the less-than-optimal progress made to date in reducing on-road GHG emissions, together with the urgent need to take action to address the disruptive impacts of climate change, the **TPB recommitted itself** to redouble efforts **to reduce on-road GHG emissions**. To determine the

³ See, for example, The TPB Vision, October 1998, <https://www.mwcog.org/documents/tpbvision/>

⁴ [December 2014 TPB endorsement](#) and [October 2020 TPB endorsement](#).

⁵ [2010 What Would It Take](#); [2016 Multi Sector Working Group](#); [2017 Long Range Plan Task Force](#); [2021 Climate Change Mitigation Study](#).

specific actions that TPB members could take on this front, the TPB undertook a **Climate Change Mitigation Study (CCMS)**, which was completed in December of 2021.⁶ The CCMS built on the findings from the previous TPB studies and other best practices across the country and **examined** ten different scenarios for **reducing on-road GHG emissions** in three specific “**pathways**”: (1) clean fleet – transitioning from fossil fuels to clean fuel such as electric or hydrogen power; (2) reduced vehicular travel – reducing the number of trips or miles travelled; and (3) operational improvements – improving the conditions under which vehicles operate on the roadways. Each scenario entailed a **combination of strategies (projects, programs, and policies)** in one or more of the three pathways that would reduce on-road greenhouse emissions.

PROPOSAL

Based on its work over the past decade and its current recommitment to the effort, the TPB should:

1. Explicitly adopt GHG reduction goals for the multi-modal on-road transportation sector; goals that are consistent and commensurate with the region’s multi-sector GHG reduction goals².
2. Explicitly endorse a set of multi-pathway strategies that are anticipated to reduce on-road greenhouse gas emissions and commit to work towards implementing these equitably and as expeditiously as possible (keeping in mind that many of the most effective GHG reduction strategies might not traditionally be a part of regional LRTPs).

PROCESS

Given the dual goals of 1) developing **consensus** on the specific climate change-related elements to include in the TPB’s LRTP and its planning process; and 2) establishing a clear **commitment** of the TPB member jurisdictions/agencies **to work to equitably implement** the strategies over the coming years, we propose that TPB staff develop a questionnaire for TPB member jurisdictions/agencies (completed by TPB members, acting on behalf of their jurisdiction/agency) on the details of the above two elements, for eventual inclusion in the LRTP and planning process.

This survey, similar to what was previously done with the Multisector Working Group in 2016 and 2017, will be an opportunity for each TPB member jurisdiction/agency to indicate their support for TPB adopting GHG emissions reduction goals for on-road transportation sector as well as their endorsement of a set of on-road GHG reduction strategies that they would support and implement. The GHG reductions strategies will be largely drawn from those examined under the ten scenarios in the TPB’s CCMS⁶. The aggregate results of the survey would be reported to the board to inform its final action of adopting on-road GHG reduction goals and endorsing a set of strategies for inclusion in the LRTP document (Visualize 2045) and the TPB’s planning process to inform future updates of the LRTP.

⁶ ICF, Fehr & Peers, and Gallop Corporation, “TPB Climate Change Mitigation Study of 2021: Scenario Analysis Findings,” Final Report (National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, January 7, 2022). <https://www.mwcog.org/tpb-climate-change-mitigation-study-of-2021/>