

Developing a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) for the National Capital Region



Draft Interim Report 2

*Public Outreach Activities Completed through June 30, 2012,
Communicating and Refining the RTPP materials,
and Proposed Public Outreach Activities through January 31, 2013*

July 18, 2012

Table of Contents

Section A: Introduction and Background on the RTPP	4
Section B: Major Public Outreach Activities from January 2012 – July 2012	6
Section C: Refinement of RTPP Presentation and Materials	9
Section D: Public Outreach Activities for July 2012 – January 2013.....	16

Section A: Introduction and Background on the RTPP

RTPP Purpose

As growth in our region continues to place heavier demands on our transportation network, decision-makers will be challenged to make critical improvements to roads, public transportation, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities while at the same time funding is becoming more limited.

In response to these challenges, and at the request of the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee, the TPB has embarked on a process to develop a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP). The purpose of the RTPP is to identify those transportation strategies that best promote the TPB's goals for economic opportunity, transportation choices, system safety and efficiency, quality of life, and environmental stewardship. Ultimately, it is envisioned that 10 to 15 strategies will be identified that the region can agree are the top priorities for addressing the most pressing challenges that the region faces in meeting the TPB's goals.

Schedule

The RTPP development process began in July 2011, when the TPB approved the scope of work for the RTPP. The scope of work acknowledged the importance of public support for the RTPP, and called for extensive public outreach the process. In January and February 2012, TPB staff conducted a series of listening sessions with regional stakeholders representing a variety of interests throughout the region as well as citizen groups. More recently, the TPB hosted a citizen forum comprised of a representative sample of citizens from throughout the region. These two public outreach events provided TPB staff with valuable feedback that is helping to ensure that the RTPP process and products are meaningful to the residents of the region. These two major public outreach efforts are described in greater detail below. The RTPP, expected to be complete in mid-2013, will continue to rely heavily on public input throughout the coming year.

RTPP Development Schedule

Tasks	FY2011				FY2012				FY2013				FY2014	
	Jan~Jun		Jul-Dec		Jan~Jun		Jul-Dec		Jan~Jun		Jul-Dec		Q1	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Task 1 Reaffirm Regional Goals and Agree Upon Performance Measures	[Solid blue bar from Q3 FY2011 to Q4 FY2011]													
Task 2 Determine Regional Challenges and Strategies to Address Them -Near Term -Longer Term	[Dashed blue bar from Q3 FY2011 to Q4 FY2011]													
Task 3 Develop Regional Priorities, both Funded and Unfunded -Near Term -Longer Term	[Solid blue bar from Q1 FY2012 to Q4 FY2013]													
Interim Reports	[Orange triangle at Q4 FY2011, Q1 FY2012, Q1 FY2013, Q4 FY2013]													
Public Outreach and Comment	[Purple circle at Q4 FY2011, Q1 FY2012, Q1 FY2013, Q4 FY2013]													
Final Reports	[Red square at Q1 FY2014]													

Section B: Major Public Outreach Activities from Jan. – July ‘12

Effective communication of the RTPP is essential for gathering public input on regional priorities. Accordingly, the major public outreach activities undertaken between January and July 2012 – listening sessions and a forum – focused on how best to communicate RTPP concepts and materials.

The listening sessions and Citizens Forum tested several approaches on how to best communicate the RTPP to the public. These outreach events help TPB staff to determine which formats were readily understood and meaningful to the general public, and which ones were not.

Listening Sessions

Design and Conduct of Listening Sessions:

Between January and February 2012, five regional stakeholder and citizen listening sessions were convened to provide feedback on the initial set of performance measures, challenges, and strategies. The listening sessions were also intended to provide guidance and input on framing identified challenges for the public during subsequent outreach phases.

In preparation for the listening sessions with regional stakeholders and citizen groups, TPB staff developed a list of performance measures to help identify regional challenges and measure progress toward meeting the challenges. Performance measures included things such as daily VMT per capita, job accessibility within 45 minutes, mode share, lane miles of congestion, Metro escalator availability, and bus stop accessibility.

The listening sessions included the following stakeholder and citizen groups:

- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - January 12
- Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC) - January 23
- Regional Stakeholder Group 1, which included representatives from the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Action Committee for Transit, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, Sierra Club, Urban Land Institute, and UMD/National Center for Smart Growth – February 22
- Access for All Committee (AFA) - February 23
- Regional Stakeholder Group 2, which included representatives from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance, Greater Washington Board of Trade, AAA Mid-Atlantic, Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance, DC BID Council, Buchanan Partners, and Washington Airports Task Force – February 24

Each listening session began with a presentation of the six goals and possible performance measures, as well as some example challenges based on the performance measures. When time allowed, a discussion of strategies followed this discussion.

Lessons learned:

TPB staff gleaned two main lessons in moving forward with the RTPP:

First, TPB staff found that greater emphasis should be placed on the use of narrative, simple charts, and pictures to describe challenges and potential strategies to address them. Both stakeholders and citizen groups found many of the performance measures somewhat confusing. In general, listening session participants found the performance measures too technical and did not understand their significance for identifying regional challenges. It seemed clear that these performance measures would be just as confusing to the general public in future stages of the RTPP.

Second, regional disaggregation of challenges is often necessary. While some challenges are best presented at the regional level (such as air quality), other challenges are more meaningful if shown in a more locally-specific form (such as congestion and access to jobs).

Staff spent March thru May rethinking and reframing how to communicate the RTPP at the Citizens Forum.

June 2 Citizens Forum

Design and Conduct of the Forum:

TPB staff conducted a Citizens Forum on Saturday, June 2, 2012 to test the new approach to communicating the RTPP.

The purpose of the forum was twofold. The first objective was to assess how best to communicate goals, challenges, and strategies to the general public. Additionally, the forum sought to assess whether the challenges and strategies presented were meaningful to the general public, and if there were any additional challenges or strategies that participants could suggest.

The format of the forum utilized a public outreach model called a deliberative forum. A deliberative forum allows citizens to learn about issues, share their thoughts via small group discussions and real-time polling, and hear from their peers. TPB staff contracted with *AmericaSpeaks*, a non-profit public outreach organization that specializes in the deliberative forum format, to help develop content, assist with logistics, and facilitate the June 2 forum.

Forum participants were carefully selected to ensure a sample that was fairly representative of the region in terms of home jurisdiction, race/ethnicity, gender, and other important characteristics. A group of 50 participants was sought, and 41 people ultimately participated in the forum. Participants were provided with a \$100 stipend for their time.

The forum took place in the COG Training Center, and lasted for 5 hours. The morning was dedicated to an introduction to the RTPP, including an in-depth explanation and discussion of the regional goals and challenges using PowerPoint presentations and a printed Discussion Guide. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss the challenges, vote on how significant they thought the challenges were to achieving regional goals, and identify and vote

on additional important challenges that they developed amongst themselves. The afternoon was spent on presentation, discussion and polling on strategies. Here, the participants were encouraged to discuss pros and cons of each of six sample strategies, vote on the importance of pursuing these six strategies, and propose and vote on additional strategies that they developed.

Evaluation Results Concerning Communication of Goals, Challenges and Strategies:

Because a major objective of the forum was to determine if the RTPP concepts were effectively communicated to the general public, a combination of evaluation forms, keypad polling questions, and debrief meetings with discussion facilitators were used to gather information about communication.

In response to the question, “Overall, do you feel that we are on the right track in clearly communicating regional transportation goals and challenges to the general public?,” 37% of participants answered “Yes,” an additional 55% of participants answered “Almost right, but needs a little tweaking,” and 8% said “No: the level of detail and presentation is too confusing.”

Some specific “tweaks” that were suggested from participant evaluation forms include:

- **Use simplified goal language**
Some goal language should be simpler and less technical. For example, Goal 4, “Maximize operational effectiveness and safety of the transportation system” could be changed to “Get the most out of the existing transportation system.”
- **Use examples whenever possible to describe challenges**
A few challenges sounded vague at first, but the use of examples helped participants understand the issue at hand. For example, participants were initially confused by the concept of bottlenecks on the freight network, but responded well to a picture of the Virginia Avenue tunnel.
- **All strategies must be explained thoroughly and at the appropriate level of specificity**
Some strategies that TPB staff thought were self-evident, such as bikesharing, were not universally understood. Circumferential transit was felt to be too general; more specificity on which radial corridors would be connected would help, as for the example of the Purple Line.

Overall, the feedback was positive, and it appears that we are generally on the right track to effectively communicating the RTPP.

Section C: Refinement of RTPP Presentation and Materials

The listening sessions and forum that took place over the last several months have provided important feedback and recommendations for how best to communicate the principles and concepts of the RTPP to the public.

Takeaways from June 2 Forum

In refining RTPP presentations and materials, the following big picture points will be kept in mind:

- **The general public may generate other challenges that could be included in the RTPP**
Participants identified some important new themes, including the importance of agency transparency and accountability to ensure that existing and any possible additional future funds are spent effectively.
- **Regional challenges will continue to be emphasized in order to provide a context for developing strategies**
There is a tendency to bring up strategies without connecting them to regional challenges. RTPP materials and outreach tools should make it clear that strategies should be designed to respond to one or more identified challenges.
- **Potential funding mechanisms will be identified along with strategies**
Likely project costs and potential funding mechanisms should be suggested for each strategy. Participants had difficulty in evaluating strategies without some information on how much they would cost and where funding might come from.
- **Presentation of the RTPP needs to be even more concise**
Although the materials presented at the June 2 forum were an improvement over previous iterations, they are still quite lengthy. The next version of the materials ideally should be shorter and easier to understand.

Changes to Goals, Challenges, and Strategies

There are three major components of RTPP materials: goals, challenges, and strategies. Based on the findings and lessons learned, the goals, challenges, and strategies will be refined in preparation for future RTPP public outreach events in the following ways:

Goals:

The regional goals, which come from the TPB Vision approved in 1998 and are further informed by Region Forward, require minor refinement. To address concerns that some of the goals are confusing, brief labels will be used to introduce each of the goals:

- **Goal 1 – Options:** Provide a comprehensive range of transportation options for everyone
- **Goal 2 – Activity Centers:** Promote a strong regional economy including a healthy regional core and dynamic activity centers
- **Goal 3 – State of Good Repair:** Ensure adequate maintenance, preservation, and safety of the existing system
- **Goal 4 – System Effectiveness and Safety:** Maximize operational effectiveness and safety of the transportation system
- **Goal 5 – Environment:** Enhance environmental quality, and protect natural and cultural resources
- **Goal 6 – International and Inter-regional:** Support international and inter-regional travel and commerce

Challenges:

Several modifications to the challenges will be made prior to the next round of public outreach. It is expected that the list of challenges will expand beyond the list of 12 presented at the June 2 forum, perhaps to include up to 3 challenges per goal. A revised list of challenges will be more comprehensive and incorporate forum participants' feedback on which challenges worked well and which ones did not. Additionally, some key participant-generated challenges, such as the lack of agency transparency, will be added to the revised list of challenges.

All challenge descriptions will utilize more examples, pictures, and performance measures where appropriate to address participants' requests for clearer, more technical descriptions of challenges.

The following pages contain the regional challenges that TPB staff have highlighted under each goal. The original challenges that were presented in the June 2 forum are listed first, and one new, proposed challenge under each goal is highlighted with a grey background.

Challenges for Goal 1 – Options:

The transportation system is too congested: The region’s roadways are among the most congested in the nation, and the Metrorail system has severe crowding problems. Congestion limits travel options, and means that providing transportation choices is even more important.

Many people cannot access affordable and convenient transit: People with disabilities and those with limited incomes do not have comprehensive, cost-effective, and accessible transportation options.

Transit is too limited in its coverage, frequency, and reliability: Existing transit service is too limited in its coverage, frequency, and reliability, making transit a less viable option for many people.

Challenges for Goal 2 – Activity Centers:

Development and transportation are often not well-coordinated: Too many Metrorail stations, especially on the eastern side of the region, are surrounded by underutilized land rather than walkable, mixed-use Activity Centers.

Many residential areas have limited transportation options: Most housing, particularly affordable housing, is located far outside of Activity Centers and has limited options for transit, walking, and biking to jobs, shopping and other purposes.

Some communities are resistant to high density development: Some communities are resistant to high density, mixed-use development because of concerns about increased traffic, rising housing costs, and changes to community character.

Challenges for Goal 3 – State of Good Repair:

Deferred Metrorail maintenance causes unreliability: Deferred Metrorail maintenance over the years has led to unreliability, delays, and safety concerns today.

Aging roadways needs repair: Aging bridges and roads are deteriorating and in need of major rehabilitation to ensure safe and reliable travel for cars, trucks, and buses.

Lack of transparency: There is a lack of transparency, trust, and oversight for maintenance of roadway and transit facilities.

Challenges for Goal 4 – System Effectiveness and Safety:

Traffic incidents are a major source of delays: Major incidents on roadways and transit systems cause severe delays and inconvenience.

Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities are a growing concern: Bicycle and pedestrian fatalities are a growing proportion of total transportation fatalities.

Safety education is inadequate: There is need for more extensive safety education for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians throughout the region.

Challenges for Goal 5 – Environment:

Air quality and public health standards are getting stricter: The region will have to meet increasingly stringent standards for air quality and public health in the future.

Development and enhanced environmental quality are often at odds: Wildlife habitat and farmland are at increased risk of being developed, and stormwater runoff negatively impacts the region's waterways.

Incentives to use clean fuel vehicles are insufficient: Affordability of vehicles and limited infrastructure restrict clean vehicle options, such as electric and other alternatively powered vehicles.

Challenges for Goal 6 – International and Inter-regional:

Travel times to & from airports are increasingly unreliable: Travel times to and from the region's airports have become less reliable for people and for businesses that rely on the movement of goods.

Bottlenecks are causing delays of inter-regional movement: Bottlenecks on the highway and rail systems cause delays in inter-regional travel for both freight and passengers.

Freight issues do not receive enough public visibility: It is difficult to generate public support for solutions because the link between goods movement and economic prosperity is not well understood by the public.

Strategies:

The biggest changes will come with the refinement and expansion of the strategies. A more comprehensive set of strategies will be developed. This set of strategies will contain three categories: near-term, ongoing, and long-term so that people can distinguish between strategies with different time-frames, costs, and benefits.

All strategies will have several common features regardless of their category, including:

- Sharpened descriptions that utilize more examples and pictures
- Identified potential funding mechanisms for each strategy in order to address forum participants' concerns about funding sources
- Quantified Benefit-Cost Analyses that accompany the narrative descriptions of strategies

Near-Term Strategies

Participant feedback confirmed that the near-term strategies presented at the June 2 forum ("Expand bike-sharing throughout the region" and "Improve pedestrian facilities and safety around bus stops throughout the region") were clear and understandable. An expanded list of near-term strategies that mimic the level of specificity of the two near-term sample strategies from the June 2 forum will be developed, possibly including the following strategies highlighted with a grey background:

- Expand bike-sharing throughout the region
- Improve pedestrian facilities and safety around bus stops throughout the region
- Expand travel training to educate people with disabilities on the region's transit options
- Improve commuter and coach bus storage facilities in the regional core
- Invest in bicycle and pedestrian facilities that increase access to existing Metrorail stations
- Invest in infrastructure for alternative fuel vehicles
- Create more incentive programs that promote telework/ flexible work schedules, carpooling, transit, biking, and walking.
- Increase Metrorail capacity by adding more cars to existing trains

Ongoing Strategies

Participant feedback confirmed that the ongoing strategies presented at the June 2 forum (“Create a dedicated regional funding source to ensure ‘state of good repair’ for Metrorail trains and facilities” and “Secure dependable sources of funding to ensure ‘state of good repair’ for highways and bridges”) were also clear and understandable. An expanded list of ongoing strategies that mimic the scale and level of specificity of the two ongoing sample strategies from the June 2 forum will be developed, possibly including the following strategies highlighted with a grey background:

- Create a dedicated regional funding source to ensure “state of good repair” for Metrorail trains and facilities
 - Secure dependable sources of funding to ensure “state of good repair” for highways and bridges
- Create a regional source of real-time traffic and incident information to share with the public on system delays and potential alternatives
 - Apply operational management strategies including roadway treatments that speed up buses, traffic signal coordination, and low-cost improvements that alleviate choke points
 - Invest in more public education campaigns to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, the ties between transportation and the environment, and the importance of freight
 - Strengthen requirements for stormwater best management practices to minimize the impacts of new and existing roadways on water quality
 - Expand the use of techniques for preserving open space, farmland, and wildlife habitat

Long-Term Strategies

Participant feedback from the June 2 forum revealed that the two long-term strategies presented at the forum (“Connect existing Metrorail lines with high-quality, circumferential transit” and “Expand the region’s highway network, possible including new Potomac River crossings”) were too vague and needed more geographic specificity. Additionally, comments from the June 20, 2012 RTPP Work Session revealed concerns that the long-term strategies concentrated on individual modes and did not consider the aggregate benefits of integrating different modes into a system.

To address these concerns, long-term strategies will be presented within the context of integrated multi-modal and land-use scenarios that profile alternative futures for accommodating projected growth in our region. The initial set of scenarios will build off the TPB’s existing scenario work. Previously-completed scenarios will be re-benchmarked to the 2012 CLRP using the new transportation model as well as updated travel survey results.

Proposed Scenarios for Long-Term Strategies:

- **2012 Constrained Long-Range Plan** – The 2012 CLRP scenario will serve as the baseline scenario. The 2012 CLRP identifies all regionally significant transportation projects and programs that are planned in the Washington metropolitan region from 2012 to 2040.
- **CLRP Aspirations Scenario** – The CLRP Aspirations Scenario, presented to TPB on October 19, 2011, is an integrated scenario that features a streamlined variable-priced lane network, an extensive bus rapid transit network, and a combination of supportive land-use strategies from previous TPB scenario work.
- **Land-Use Only Scenario** – The land-use strategies used in the CLRP Aspirations Scenario will be analyzed with the transportation projects included in the 2012 CLRP.
- **Additional scenarios** could be suggested by participants in the fall 2012 public outreach activity

Input on Refined RTPP Materials

TPB staff will solicit input from the TPB, the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC,) and the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee on the refined RTPP materials. The TPB, CAC, and AFA members will be able to provide feedback via a web-based comment page on the MWCOC website during a 4 week comment period ending on Wednesday, August 15, 2012.

Section D: Public Outreach Activities for July '12 – Jan. '13

The next major RTPP public outreach event is scheduled to take place in the fall, when TPB staff hopes to utilize a web-based tool to help communicate the latest iteration of the RTPP goals, challenges, and strategies. The web-based tool will allow TPB staff to reach a larger segment of the general public, perhaps a sample of 600 individuals who represent the region, in addition to regional stakeholders and the TPB's citizen committees.

Public Outreach Design and Approach

The design of the fall public outreach activity will be similar to those of the June 2 forum. First, goals will be presented and explained. Challenges will then be presented, and participants will be asked how important they think these challenges are (e.g. on a scale of one to five). Participants will also be asked to suggest any additional challenges that should be under consideration. Next, the near-term and ongoing strategies will be presented. Participants will be asked to rate these strategies in terms of their importance, and to suggest additional near-term and on-going programmatic strategies. Finally, a series of long-term scenarios will be presented that add specificity and spatial components to long-term, project-based strategies. Participants will be asked to share their perceptions of the various scenarios and suggest additional scenarios for consideration.

Whereas previous public outreach efforts focused on effective communication, the next round of public outreach will shift its focus to developing and vetting a more comprehensive list of challenges and potential strategies for consideration.

Public Outreach Outcomes and Application

It is expected that the fall public outreach event will inform a future public outreach event in spring 2013, during which a number of public outreach tools will be utilized, possibly including a combination of web-based polling, additional deliberative forums, and mobile kiosks throughout the region. The purpose of these efforts would be to inform the selection of priority strategies from a longer list of strategies under discussion.

The ultimate goal of these public outreach efforts is to provide information to the TPB on priority strategies that are widely understood and could garner broad-based public support.