



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Stacy Cook, Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: TPB Site Visits to Member Agencies - Summary and Staff Recommendations for Future TPB Staff Activities
DATE: April 24, 2020

PURPOSE OF THIS MEMORANDUM

In September 2019 staff began to conduct visits to local jurisdictions to support implementation of Visualize 2045, TPB's long-range plan (LRP) and its Aspirational Initiatives, and to prepare for the 2022 LRP update. TPB staff visited TPB member jurisdictions and transit agencies to meet with transportation and planning leadership and their technical staff¹. During these meetings, TPB and jurisdictional staff discussed the projects, programs, and policies that TPB member agencies are advancing that align with the TPB policy framework. They also discussed how TPB might be able to support its jurisdictions and agencies in these efforts. TPB staff also shared information about recent TPB activities that promote Visualize 2045 implementation.

This memorandum summarizes the recurring themes that arose during the site visits that TPB staff conducted from October 2019 through March 2020. It also provides preliminary ideas for actions that TPB staff might take to support its members, in response to what TPB staff has learned from this meeting series. During the May 1, 2020 TPB Technical Committee meeting, TPB staff would like to receive feedback from the Committee on the ideas presented at the end of this memorandum. Committee feedback will help TPB staff prioritize which actions they might undertake.

BACKGROUND

The TPB policy framework is comprehensive. It acknowledges key issues and sets goals for a broad range of transportation priorities. The policy framework is comprised of four key documents, including the TPB Vision, Region Forward, the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, and the TPB-endorsed Aspirational Initiatives that were included in Visualize 2045. In early 2018 TPB called for these initiatives to be included in the aspirational element of the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan and for other future concerted action.

The Aspirational Initiatives are:

- Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together
- Expand Bus Rapid Transit and Transitways Regionwide
- Move More People on Metrorail

¹ All meetings have been completed as of 3/30/2020, except meetings with the City of Greenbelt, the City of Manassas, and PRTC.

- Provide More Telecommuting and Other Options for Commuting
- Expand Express Highway Network
- Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail

The TPB noted that these ideas, if funded and enacted, would have the potential to significantly improve the region's transportation system performance compared to current plans and programs. With its endorsement, the board issued a call to action for its member jurisdictions and agencies to commit to fully explore the concepts contained in the initiatives and act to implement projects, programs, and policies to fully realize the potential improvements in the transportation system's performance. The site visits are one of the TPB staff responses to this request from the Board.

SITE VISITS – TPB COMMUNICATIONS

In each meeting TPB staff covered four topics. At the beginning of each site-visit meeting, TPB staff provided an overview of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) functions and role. Next, TPB staff summarized the TPB policy framework and priorities, focusing on the recently TPB endorsed Visualize 2045 Aspirational Initiatives. Third, they explained the process that produced Visualize 2045 and that the next long-range plan will be due in 2022. TPB staff explained that the TPB must work through a cooperative process with its regional partners to develop and implement its plans. TPB frequently describes its work with the phrase 'Think Regionally, Act Locally.' To support implementation, TPB is working with its member agencies to advance projects, programs and policies that will be proposed for the next plan that align with the regional priorities. Fourth, TPB staff provided information about TPB technical assistance that is available to support studies that advance regional priorities.

TPB staff provided information about recent and ongoing TPB activities that member agencies might be able to benefit from to advance their local projects, policies or programs, or to collaborate on with TPB where there are opportunities to do so. These included, but were not necessarily limited to the following (each topic is hyperlinked to more information):

- [TPB Transit within Reach project](#)
- [National Capital Trail Network](#)
- [Transit Oriented Communities](#) initiative and [Transit Oriented Communities analysis](#)
- [High Capacity Transit Station map](#)
- [COG Housing Initiative](#)
- Commuter Connections has developed [telework templates](#) for employers
- TPB is active in the Transportation and Climate Initiative, to learn more about this initiative, please see the presentation online at: [Transportation and Climate Initiative](#)
- TPB Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Planning

During the meetings, TPB staff shared that the TPB wants to document and highlight any projects, programs, and policies that local jurisdictions and transit agencies are advancing that expedite, enhance or improve accessibility, connectivity or other TPB priorities. TPB staff noted that if there are examples of good projects, programs, and policies, to bring them to TPB to share them with the Board and other TPB member agency staff.

SITE VISITS – COMMON DISCUSSION THEMES:

While each TPB site visit discussion was unique to the context of the jurisdiction or transit agency that TPB was visiting, there were common themes that emerged from these conversations. These common themes include the following:

- Transportation and Land Use Coordination
- BRT/Transitways/Cost Effective Transit
- Improve bike/walk connectivity and access to transit Congestion Reduction - Express Lanes and Telecommuting
- Safety and Quality of Life
- Communications Needs
- State of Good Repair
- Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV)

For each theme, this memorandum provides high-level information about the TPB member agency activities, challenges, and opportunities, as communicated by TPB member agencies. Following this summary is a list of preliminary ideas as to potential TPB staff actions to respond to the information shared by the TPB member agencies.

Transportation and Land Use Coordination

Site visit discussions highlighted TPB member jurisdictions' activities to improve coordination between transportation and land-use. Member jurisdiction activities include developing new comprehensive plans and transportation plans that increasingly acknowledge the importance of transportation and land use coordination through policies, programs, and projects to support that coordination. Many localities are looking to add new housing in activity centers and close to high capacity transit centers. For example, many jurisdictions have undertaken transit-oriented development and encourage pedestrian-oriented design around transit stations. When asked about the COG Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC) initiative, member agencies were supportive of the concept and anticipate that the related TPB analysis and tools will be beneficial to local planning efforts. Most jurisdictions are also aware of and active in the COG Housing Initiative.

Re-occurring topics that were raised during the meetings include the changing nature of land use products. The definition of housing and jobs land uses is blurring as some new buildings have office-like work areas built in. Also, as communities look to add density, the question of where to add that density and what types of products could and should be built is a point of discussion. For inner jurisdictions, the availability of new land on which to develop or the assembly of existing parcels large enough to redevelop can be challenging. As traffic impact assessments and mitigation options are at the intersect of transportation and land use, several jurisdictions mentioned that there may be local interest and benefits in updating these local tools.

Many jurisdictions noted uncertainties as to car ownership and use models in the future, for example how many cars each household might own. This issue impacts structured and unstructured parking requirements for new development. It also relates to how the streets in our region operate. For example, many jurisdictions are developing solutions to manage where ride-hailing vehicles pick up and drop off passengers. The spaces used by these services are often also used by freight vehicles, scooters, and bicycles. Some member agencies referenced a need to work together as a region to

address these issues, which together are referred to as ‘curb space management’ as demands for this space increase with more online shopping deliveries, ride-hailing, the introduction of scooters, and other demands. Jurisdictions also expressed interest in or that they are actively reducing structured parking requirements for new development and are thinking about parking cost’s relationship to housing affordability. The staff are also considering how to redevelop parking lots in the future if the need for parking is further reduced.

A common concern communicated by the jurisdictional staff was the challenge of coordinating the evolving transportation and land use systems, as our communities redevelop and add density. Some noted that as areas change, communities’ expectations for quality of life come into conflict with the speed and amount of traffic on state roads that pass through urbanizing areas. These areas are often also unaligned with safety initiatives. The state roads have traditionally focused on moving cars, but as the region is increasingly dense and more urban/denser suburban, there is a need to improve the safety, mobility and access for all modes on these state roadways. To address these issues, DRPT has created the Multimodal System Design Guidelines (2013), which VDOT and localities use during project planning. In Maryland, MDOT SHA released the draft Context Guidelines for State roadways in January 2020 to help to address this issue. TPB member agencies expressed a need for increased coordination to implement the ideas in the state guides.

Another challenge is that there is often public concern that density could lead to, at least in the interim (prior to increased transit frequency, BRT etc.), more car trips that could increase congestion. These are challenges in how transportation and land-use projects are timed and coordinated.

BRT/Transitways/Cost Effective Transit

TPB’s member jurisdictions expressed wide support for continued investment in Metrorail.

Across the region, local transportation agencies are looking for ways to quickly and cost-effectively move existing bus services faster and more reliably. Agencies are interested in transitways, BRT-type services and bus transit signal prioritization. Many jurisdictions are looking to conduct BRT/transitway feasibility studies, are advancing planning activities for BRT/transitways, or are implementing projects. Transitway and BRT ideas mentioned include a variety of approaches, including bus on shoulder, transit, or express buses on highways. Member agencies noted that to support BRT feasibility studies, they would like to better understand origin/destination patterns. TPB member agencies generally agree that there is a need to work regionally on transportation solutions such as BRT/transitway projects and widenings for corridors that pass through more than one jurisdiction.

TPB member agencies noted several challenges to planning and implementing BRT and transitways, including public concerns regarding changing communities or removal of travel lanes or parking. Jurisdiction and transit agency staff expressed a need to ‘make the case’ to the public about BRT and transitways and raise the public’s awareness about the service’s features and advantages.

Jurisdiction and transit agency staff noted a need to determine how to get support in prioritizing the bus, including coordinated and effective enforcement of bus-only lanes. Several jurisdictions and transit agency staff communicated that they are looking into how to improve the value and function of regular bus service through low-cost, short-turnaround changes, which is still very important throughout the region.

TPB member jurisdiction and transit agency staff expressed an interest in scenario planning for future changes in transit and land use. A few ideas included looking at corridor studies and other areas where there is potential for adding density and transit. Agencies want to understand how to get better land use changes and strive for long-term visions (40-year needs) for land-use vs '10-year visions' that are outgrown in demand by the time development is in place.

In the outer suburbs, jurisdiction staff noted that there might be options to improve transit by making better use of existing transitways, including commuter rail, where feasible. Some examples of desired service improvements include providing more service during the weekdays, and service on weekends. They also mentioned providing service on commuter rail and commuter buses in both directions (many buses make return trips without riders/revenue. Some of them also noted that there is a 'chicken and egg' problem for regional transit in lower density areas, based on current demand, agencies find it hard to justify adding service, but until there is more frequent service and longer hours/bidirectional service, choosing transit is not a convenient choice for many people. Other suggestions included focusing on regional bus rather than commuter bus. Jurisdictions and agencies also expressed an interest in and need for micro-transit, or other types of services to support last mile connections and to replace low-rider routes/hours.

Some member agencies noted that in some areas, stimulating the economic development and dense land-use patterns around Metro can be very challenging. Member agencies encouraged conducting studies regarding potential Metrorail enhancements, extensions, or connectivity with bus/micro transit feeder systems.

Improve Bike/Walk Connectivity and Access to Transit

Across the region, bicycle/pedestrian internal circulation, access to transit, and regional connections are three areas of focus. Jurisdictions noted that as they are planning and implementing bicycle and pedestrian projects, they are making strides to improve connectivity, fill gaps, and create more 'grid' networks. The member jurisdictions are improving access to transit and planning new transit-oriented developments near commuter rail or new Metro stations. To advance such projects, many jurisdictions have participated in the TPB Transit Within Reach project and have benefitted from the TPB transportation and land-use connections (TLC) program.

There are still some challenges in funding and constructing the backlog bicycle and pedestrian projects in local plans, given competing funding priorities and constraints. One jurisdiction noted that it would help jurisdictions if major state of good repair projects, such as bridge improvements or restoration could also include trails and other enhancements to facilities.

TPB member agencies are supportive of the National Capital Trail Network concept. Member agencies noted that there are some challenges to completing the small projects at the borders and connecting trails. To address the trail gaps that cross or approach jurisdictional borders, TPB noted that member jurisdictions might consider joint TLC or TAP applications, where feasible.

Congestion Reduction - Express Lanes and Telecommuting *

Please note that nearly all the TPB site visits were conducted prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore this summary does not recent work-at-home changes.

Express highways are in service in Virginia and are being planned in Maryland. TPB endorses express highway networks on which vanpool, carpool, and transit travel for free. Some jurisdictions noted this requires public and political will and expressed that some additional challenges include limited land available for highway expansion, and there is significant public concern for taking land for these expansions.

In Virginia, jurisdictions noted the success of the Express Lane model, not only in moving traffic and providing options for paying tolls to reduce one's delay, but also that the carpool/vanpool ride free and transit on Express Lanes is widely supported. Jurisdictions and transit agencies also identified transit projects that would be supported by the funds produced by the tolls.

In Maryland, jurisdictions noted that there are numerous regional opportunities and benefits that might be achieved if commuter buses were able to move at 45 miles per hour down the anticipated Maryland Express Lanes. There was strong support for any future express lanes to be implemented to support express-bus type service.

TPB staff discussions with the member jurisdictions suggest that the availability and use of telecommuting options and support services range from one jurisdiction to another. Some agencies have substantial TDM programs that include telework while others noted the challenges in gaining employer support for telework. Jurisdictions that include areas more rural in nature have noted that broadband is not available to all and that increasing access to broadband is a high priority to enable telework as an option. Smaller jurisdictions have noted they might make use of the telework templates that the Commuter Connections program has developed and they want to identify the transportation demand management (TDM) actions that they can take that require the least resources and provide the best return on investment.

Safety and Quality of Life

The issue of safety is increasingly prominent across the region. Many jurisdictions have a Complete Streets policy to accommodate all modes of transportation for streets and have adopted or are working on Vision Zero to protect people using the transportation system. Jurisdictions are seeking to advance policies, programs, and projects that increase safety.

Member agencies noted that through-traffic is a challenge to quality of life in the neighborhoods of larger jurisdictions, and for the smaller jurisdictions in general. Many smaller jurisdictions find that they have a lot of cost/other burdens to bear to address the impacts of through traffic. Smaller jurisdictions find that the challenges, strategies, and approaches of the larger jurisdictions are not always parallel with those strategies needed by smaller jurisdictions; member agencies suggested that it might be helpful to have more coordination specific to smaller jurisdictions.

As suburban areas densify and are retrofitted with multimodal transportation enhancements, there is significant regional interest in bicycle and pedestrian facilities contributing to the overall urban design, attractiveness and safety of a community. Member agencies noted that the emphasis for regional corridors should not be on moving cars but on moving people.

Communication

Member agencies asked if TPB might be able to help make the regional connection to the projects, programs and policies in the in the local jurisdictions and how they address regional issues. TPB member agencies suggested that there is a need for better tools for communicating about local actions and regional priorities/issues/challenges. Many local jurisdictions noted that they are using social media to communicate, and that there is less need for paper products and brochures. Several member agencies noted that information to share in social media that would be very helpful such as infographics, short videos animations or other media formats.

Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAV)

Across the region, member agencies expressed an interest in, or outlined their participation in CAV pilots/studies/discussions. To advance CAV, some member agencies expressed a need for further data coordination and shared procurement. Member agencies also recognized the need for interjurisdictional coordination regarding the 'connected' aspect of CAV.

PRELIMINARY TPB STAFF IDEAS FOR POTENTIAL TPB STAFF ACTIVITIES

TPB staff have considered the common themes from the TPB staff site visits and have suggested potential opportunities to enhance the staff work program and other ways that TPB and its staff might be able to support its member agencies. The following information is a list of the preliminary ideas produced. During the May 1, 2020 TPB Technical Committee meeting, TPB staff would like to receive feedback from the Committee as to which of these ideas might be of most value and assistance to its member agencies. Committee feedback will help TPB staff prioritize its resources as it evaluates which actions to undertake.

Communications

- Include an implementation section in the 2022 LRP about the Aspirational Initiatives
- Develop a biennial LRP implementation update (document or website) that documents what programs, policies and projects TPB member agencies have implemented that align with the TPB policy framework and Aspirational Initiatives (this could be a comprehensive listing, or more of a 'highlights' storytelling approach)
- Develop communications materials that TPB and its member agencies could use that speak to regional transportation goals and issues. These products, such as infographics, animations or other media could be shared through social media and other channels. ***(Underway as of February 2020). Using these materials, lead a social media campaign to raise awareness about the successes and value that local projects bring to the region.***
- Give awards to recognize projects for the best realization of TPB's adopted principles.
- Provide a presentation once a year or more (at Tech and via webinar) about TPB resources to support our members (technical assistance, data, subcommittees)
- Provide flyer with information about TPB resources to support our members (such as TLC and UPWP technical assistance, TPB data clearing house, subcommittees)

Coordination

- Conduct more visits to implementation projects in the field, possibly through subcommittees.
- Provide a forum for small, outer suburb or other 'like' jurisdictions meet once a quarter to discuss common challenges/opportunities. Another option is that TPB could encourage/arrange for 'matchmaking' between two different comparable jurisdictions to discuss issues unique to their context.
- Identify major corridors that serve multiple jurisdictions and serve as a forum for coordination of transportation policies/services along those corridors.
- Create a Covid-19 recovery coordination task force for transit

Data

- To support TPB member agencies origin/destination analysis, communicate results of the big data study as to what types of data might support TPB member agencies in planning BRT/transitways and other transit projects
- Improve coordination through data: Explore ways to strengthen transit data sharing at the local/regional level to gain insights on operational experiences of transit that could improve regional planning.

Technical Assistance/Studies/Analysis*

** Requests for UPWP Technical Assistance should demonstrate that they are of value to more than one member of the region, should help advance a projects or program in the region, and should advance regional priorities.*

- Encourage technical assistance requests for studies of BRT/transitways, and for studies of corridors that cross jurisdictions. A few examples of study ideas brought up by TPB member agencies included:
 - o Conduct a study to identify opportunities related to reverse commutes.
 - o Conduct research that presents examples of Bus Transit Signal Priority (TSP) applications, benefits, and challenges. Develop regional guidelines to encourage consistency of operations in the region for topics such as boarding, turning, off-board fares payment, and enforcement.
 - o Conduct analysis to identify key areas throughout the region where transit experiences significant delay and to identify key areas throughout the region where TSP (or BRT) could greatly improve speed/time/service for disadvantaged communities.
 - o Conduct a traffic signal inventory, which could benefit procurement coordination, transit operations (TSP) and potentially help prep for CAV.
 - o Conduct a parking requirements /right sized parking study for the region using typologies.
 - o Conduct research as to the mode share/switch for activity centers and other areas with a high amount of transportation options.

Information Exchange

- Conduct workshops/webinars about best local and peer practices for topics: A few examples of study ideas brought up by TPB member agencies included:
 - o bike facility implementation and maintenance
 - o BRT/transitways implementation
 - o bus prioritization and quick/low cost improvements for buses
 - o curb space management (note TPB is planning such as workshop)
 - o transportation impact analysis
 - o communication tools for connecting with the public about transportation topics