# TPB TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

September 4, 2020

#### 1. WELCOME, VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES, AND MEMBER ROLL CALL PROTOCOL

Staff described the procedures and protocols for the virtual meeting and conducted a roll call. Meeting participants are documented in the attached attendance list.

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE JULY 10, 2020 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

There were no questions or comments regarding the July Technical Committee meeting. The minutes were approved.

# **ITEMS FOR THE BOARD AGENDA**

#### 3. PARTICIPATION PLAN

Mr. Hayes referred to his presentation and described the purpose of the TPB Participation Plan. He said that the plan guides TPB staff interactions wit the public so they can: 1) reach as many people as inclusively as possible, and 2) collect meaningful input and build support to inform TPB plans, programs, and aid in decision making. He talked about the 2007 and 2014 Participation Plans and explained how the 2020 update builds upon those older plans. He described the contents of the 2020 plan and the process for developing the plan. His presentation concluded with a review of the public comment period and the plan for summarizing and responding to comment. He said that the TPB started collecting public comment on August 25 and that the comment period ends on October 9.

Mr. Hayes encouraged members of the Technical Committee to review the draft plan and submit comment at mwcog.org/tpbcomment.

Mr. Philips encouraged Mr. Hayes to add a slide providing more detail about equity's role in the Participation Plan and how staff will seek to reach traditionally marginalized communities.

Mr. Erenrich suggested that staff provide more regional context about other documents in the region that guide public participation and public engagement.

Mr. Srikanth recognized the other comments and said that the presentation can be updated to include regional context around participation plans and on equity.

#### 4. PERFORMANCE BASED PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING - TRANSIT SAFETY DRAFT TARGETS

Mr. Randall briefed the committee on the draft regional targets for the transit safety performance measures. He reminded the committee that they were briefed at the June meeting on the requirements under the federal performance-based planning and programming (PBPP) rulemaking for public transportation providers and MPOs to set targets for transit safety performance measures, including fatalities, injuries, safety events, and system reliability.

Mr. Randall referred to his presentation and reviewed the federal rulemaking history and requirements. The four performance measures for which transit safety targets must be set were displayed. He then reviewed the applicability of the rule in detail: WMATA and PRTC are direct federal recipients of Section 5307 funds and the Maryland local systems are sub-recipients through MTA, so they are all working towards the transit safety requirements. However, the Northern Virginia local bus systems don't receive federal funds and the rule is not applicable to them. He then reviewed the calculation that went into developing the regional targets, adding up numbers for the number targets but for the rate targets

summing the nominator and denominator figures regionally first. The draft targets for the region across the five modes: heavy rail, streetcar rail, urban bus, commuter bus, and paratransit/demand-response were then shown. He noted a number of caveats to the draft figures, including that some were not yet approved by agencies or in the case of the streetcar rail even yet developed.

Mr. Randall closed the presentation by reviewing next steps, including coordination with the transit agencies on the finalization and formal adoption of their targets. The board will be briefed on the federal rulemaking and the draft targets at its September meeting, but adoption of the targets is not anticipated until the November meeting to give time for all agencies in the region to complete their own final target-setting process.

Mr. Erenrich asked if there were any way targets could be developed for all of the transit systems in the region.

Mr. Randall responded that without any federal requirement for the transit systems for which the rulemaking is not applicable, it was unlikely those systems would set targets. He also noted that the targets are not reported to the FTA, only to the State DOTs as the overseeing organizations for MPOs.

Mr. Erenrich asked if the agencies report this safety information anyway.

Mr. Srikanth added that perhaps this is an issue that the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee could take up.

Mr. Randall responded that as this will be an annual process with actual performance data being reported next year for 2020 when the 2021 targets are set, actual performance data for all the systems in the region could be collected and reported, and over time transit safety trends could be determined for the region as a whole.

Mr. Phillips asked if beyond the targets whether the differences in the figures among the different bus systems has provided any useful information and whether any agencies were of particular concern.

Mr. Randall stated that he was unprepared to make any comments on individual agency safety trends. He did note that different agencies have different definitions and standards that are not yet harmonized. In addition, bus agencies operate in different environments, for instance hazards are quite different in downtown DC as opposed to Prince William County, which could be a factor in actual safety performance. The point of PBPP though is that agencies and then the region collectively put effort into understanding performance to better inform transportation investment decision-making.

## 5. VISUALIZE 2045: PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

Ms. Armendariz briefed the committee on a region-wide public opinion survey. This project has been called Voices of the Region and is planned to launch in September 2020. She explained that the survey will examine broad challenges and opportunities related to regional transportation. The survey is divided into three sections: Travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic; Our Transportation Future; and Future Factors. She said that the survey has been designed to be statistically valid for 10 geographic areas (see memo for more details). The survey is expected to be used to inform the TPB's plans, programs, and policies. Staff expects this survey to also be used by the TPB, member jurisdictions, and elected officials as quantitative support for any projects that align with the TPB's Planning Policy Focus Areas and Aspirational Initiatives.

Mr. Rawlings asked if the Technical Committee could see the survey questions prior to releasing the survey to the public. He said that he was interested in seeing how staff developed questions for the COVID-19 Pandemic and Our Transportation Future themes.

Ms. Armendariz said that staff was still in the process of finalizing survey questions. She said that she would work with Mr. Swanson to brief committee members on the questions once they were finalized.

Mr. Brown asked if 2000 was the number of surveys completed that are needed to make this survey significantly valid.

Mr. Swanson said that 25,000 letters will be sent asking people to participate in the survey. He said that staff expects to have 200 surveys completed at the county level, which would ultimately result in 2000 surveys completed in total.

Mr. Edmondson said that the City of Frederick is planning to conduct a similar survey over the course of next year. He said that he would like to see the survey questions and methodology to inform their survey formation process. He said that he would like to see some parallels between both surveys.

Ms. Armendariz said that she would work with Mr. Swanson to develop a plan to share the questions and the methodology guiding this survey.

#### 6. REGIONAL EMPLOYER TELEWORK SURVEY RESULTS (ORIGINALLY ITEM 8)

This item was originally scheduled to be presented as Item #8, but was switched at the time of the meeting since this item is now scheduled to be presented to the TPB at its September 16 meeting.

Mr. Ramfos presented information to the group on recent results from a regional Commuter Connections Employer Telework survey conducted. The focus of the survey was regarding the telework experience during the coronavirus pandemic. The survey is normally conducted every three years for Maryland jurisdictions where employers are provided with telework assistance through the Commuter Connections Employer Outreach program.

Mr. Ramfos explained that the Maryland-based telework attributable to the Telework program element is calculated by defining the telework universe among Maryland commuters, and examines employers' and commuters' sources of information for telework and the value of that information or assistance in their starting or expanding telework programs. A similar analysis is conducted for Virginia employers and teleworkers through the Telework!VA program. Results from both surveys are used in the regional TDM Analysis report. This year the survey was expanded to include employers in the District of Columbia and Virginia due to telework being more prominent during the coronavirus pandemic. He said the survey examined telework changes made by employers during coronavirus pandemic. Respondents were employers that were in either the Commuter Connections Employer Outreach database or federal ETC/Telework coordinator database. The survey was sent through both email and USPS inviting respondents to respond to an Internet-based survey. Follow-up phone calls were also made to respondents.

Mr. Ramfos said the questionnaire addressed the following broad topics: Change in worksite operation due to coronavirus pandemic, the number of employees teleworking at the time of the survey and before the pandemic, changes in telework programs or policies in response to the pandemic, the likelihood to continue telework after the pandemic ends, assistance received with telework planning or implementation, significant telework issues encountered during the pandemic, employee and manager benefits received by teleworking, and employer characteristics such as size, location, and major industry. The survey was sent to 4,539 employers in the region in May and June. 180 employers responded to the survey; the response rate was 4%. The survey was conducted by LDA Consulting in conjunction with CIC Research, Inc. Mr. Ramfos stated that a companion briefing report that detailed the survey results is also included in the agenda packet. The diverse sample included majority Maryland and Virginia worksites with employer types being 49% private, 33% not-for-profit, 13% federal, and 5% state/local government. Industries included government, medical, trade association, education, real/estate property management, and a few others. There was an even representation of small, medium, and large organization sizes that participated in the survey.

Mr. Ramfos explained how 96% of worksites had shut down or reduced on-site operation either completely (81%) or partially (15%) since the pandemic began. In May and June, at the time of the survey, 95% of sites with reduced operation were still closed or had limited on-site operation. 97% of worksites had at least some telework since the pandemic began and 55% of those worksites had all their employees teleworking full-time. During the pandemic, the average share of employees who teleworked grew from 36% to 82%. 76% of worksites had a least some telework happening pre-pandemic. 14% of worksites developed a formal telework program/policy due to the pandemic, 61% already had a formal program in place, and 25% still do not have a telework program in place. Most of the worksites who had a telework policy prior to the pandemic made changes to expand telework eligibility.

Mr. Ramfos stated more than half of the worksites anticipate the continuance of teleworking at a higher rate than the pre-pandemic level. Seven in ten worksites will consider implementing work hours or commute strategies after the restrictions are lifted to reduce future coronavirus outbreaks. These strategies include flexible/staggered work hours, compressed work schedules, employee shuttles, and expanded telework. Employers have also considered implementing other coronavirus-prevention strategies at their worksites such as social distancing strategies, mask requirements, hand sanitizer stations, more telework/virtual meetings, and temperature checks. 50% of employers noted significant telework issues with child and dependent care being the most prevalent.

Mr. Ramfos explained that employee isolation, spouse/partner conflict, disconnection from management, and access to equipment were also considered significant telework issues. 80% of employers said managers have reported benefits of managing remotely. Nearly three in ten organizations said managers noted greater worker productivity and increased communication with workers. 92% of employers said employees reported benefits of working from home. The greatest employee benefits were not commuting, comfortable work environment, and personal cost savings. As telework is a generally accepted in the Washington, DC region, 7 in 10 survey respondents did not report receiving any telework assistance. For those who did, half received assistance from an internal or corporate source, indicating technological issues as the primary need for the assistance.

Mr. Nembhard stated that this survey was employer based and wanted to know whether employees would be surveyed on teleworking.

Mr. Ramfos stated that there would be additional opportunities through some upcoming surveys this fiscal year including a Placement Rate Survey of commuters who have contacted Commuter Connections for services and a Retention Rate survey of past applicants which will allow for a deeper examination and the gathering of more intelligence of workers experiences and thoughts on teleworking. In 2022, the State of the Commute survey will be conducted and will allow for another mile marker and to examine how teleworking in the region will really look after the dust settles. Another factor will certainly be how the coronavirus plays out and when a vaccine will be available.

Mr. Srikanth stated that there has been a wide amount of interest in this matter particularly with jurisdictions looking at commuting patterns and addressing congestion through the use of telecommuting. He also stated the telecommuting rates have been growing a few percentage points every few years and there has been some reluctance to make it to the next level and from a program implementation level the current situation is a great experiment that both employers and employees have gone through. There is also a great potential to make this additional telework bump happen. The question will be how much of the current teleworking during this crisis will be sustained after we are through this period which will help inform the region's long-range planning. Clearly the survey results show the benefits of teleworking but there are also some remaining issues. Some of those issues stem from schools being closed and it will be interesting to see what the aptitude will be once things return to a normal state which will be important for transportation infrastructure and investment planning, and more importantly economic development.

Mr. Brown commented that teleworking pre-pandemic was much different than teleworking during the pandemic given all the back to back virtual meetings which may have raised stress levels.

Mr. Ramfos stated that depending on the employer this type of technology has been available, and some employers have used it better than others; however, it's also made it easier for employers to pivot to full-time telework for their employees with little or no effort. During pre-pandemic times there may have been fewer meeting get-togethers and perhaps a random conversation in the hallway or someone's office. It's also important that boundaries be set and that sometimes it may be okay to opt out of some of the virtual meetings.

Mr. Whitaker asked whether the Commuter Connections Employer Telework Survey was connected to a recent survey of employers conducted by the Greater Washington Partnership (GWP).

Mr. Srikanth responded that the two surveys were unrelated. The GWP is looking to assist employers planning a re-entry to the office with access to information on public transportation. GWP has reached out to COG/TPB staff through the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee to obtain additional plans from the transit operators in order that it may be shared with employers. In turn employers can use information on public transit availability as one of the considerations for office re-openings.

Mr. Whitaker stated that it would be good to hear more information on the results from the GWP survey.

Mr. Phillips stated that the response rate for the survey was 4% and may not be the true landscape for the future in terms of telework. Those employers surveyed were already in the Commuter Connections databases and were already geared towards offering commuter benefits and telework as an option to their employees or at least they are open to offering these types of programs. He asked about getting a wider response from as many employers in the region as possible whether they were involved with Commuter Connections or not.

Mr. Srikanth stated that this survey was not a random sample survey and was not designed to be statistically significant, and the companies surveyed are already supporting alternative commuting programs. It's important that this issue is monitored through a series of surveys of which this was the earliest one which was previously planned, and we worked with the state funding agencies to expand its scope. This survey allowed us to take a temperature check in the middle of the crisis when the lockdowns were in place. There is a second set of surveys this fiscal year through Commuter Connections which does not involve any new funding to complete a regionwide survey. The upcoming planed surveys will allow for adjustments to capture telework trends. Those surveys include the Placement Rate survey of commuters who have sought assistance through Commuter Connections to join alternative modes and the Retention Rate survey of those commuters who are no longer registered with Commuter Connections. In 2022, we will be able to better assess the sustainability of telework through the State of the Commute survey. There is nothing currently planned for a broader regional employer survey, but if there is interest amongst the jurisdictions, COG/TPB staff would be very interested in helping coordinate such a survey through collectively pulled resources.

Mr. Ramfos then stated that the results from the 2020 Employer Telework survey could be viewed as a large focus group. Mr. Philips commented that this was a good characterization and asked that it be added to the presentation to the TPB.

# **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### 7. REGIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY BRIEFING: INITIAL FINDINGS OF OBSERVED DAILY TRIPS

Dr. Joh presented this item to the Committee. He provided an update on the 2017/2018 Regional Travel Survey (RTS), a once-in-a-decade household travel survey for the National Capital Region. As part of its ongoing presentations on the findings from the RTS, Dr. Joh's presentation shared initial key findings from the trip file, focusing on weekday trip rates, trip purpose, mode share, and trip destinations for commute and non-work trips in the region.

Mr. Canan stated that because the RTS is conducted once every ten years and it is of great interest for many people, we intend to present this item to the TPB in October. Due to limited time in today's meeting, he invited members of the Technical Committee to submit additional questions which will be addressed at the next Technical Committee meeting. Mr. Srikanth suggested to committee members to take some time to review the slides and to tabulate questions, comments, observations, and suggestions and email them to Mr. Canan and Dr. Joh.

# 8. TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (ORINGIALLY ITEM 6)

This item was originally scheduled to be presented as Item #6, but was switched at the time of the meeting since this item no longer scheduled to be presented to the TPB at its September 16 meeting.

Mr. Meese presented, referring to a presentation. A revised memorandum had recently been posted for the committee, superseding an original memorandum. Originally slated to go to the TPB in September, it had been decided prior to this meeting that more work will be necessary, thus this item will go to the TPB in a future month instead. Mr. Meese noted that this presentation featured quickly changing near-term data, as opposed to the long-term data discussed in the previous Household Travel Survey item. Of interest to staff were both the impacts of COVID-19 as well as long-term considerations of how to work with emerging big data sources. The presentation was structured as snapshots serving as insights, not definitive conclusions. Data caveats include potentially differing geographies or time scales across data sources, and that private data providers may have limited whatever insights they had given on their methodologies. Examined were travel and roadway volume impacts; transit and walking impacts; and safety, speeds, and other impacts.

Mr. Meese said that regional traffic volumes, which in April 2020 had dipped below 50% of 2019 volumes, by July had recovered to over 80% of 2019 volumes, according to COG/TPB staff analysis of over 60 continuous count stations throughout the TPB modeled area (somewhat larger than the TPB membership area). He said that regional vehicle miles of travel (VMT) dipped most dramatically in April, but by July had recovered significantly, according to information published by data provider INRIX. The Washington region's VMT was generally lower than but similar to the median of 26 major metropolitan areas across the country reported by INRIX. Person miles of travel per person regionally had recently returned to near pre-pandemic levels, though people are still more likely to be staying at home than pre-pandemic, according to data published by the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland. In contrast, nationally and regionally, according to INRIX data, truck travel never declined as much as passenger travel did, even at the peak of pandemic precautions.

Mr. Meese said that transit ridership impacts of the pandemic were particularly important, and merited further study than what was presented at this meeting. The raw ridership numbers presented, from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) data portal, showed very significant drops in Metrorail and Metrobus ridership at the beginning of the pandemic's impacts, with modest recovery since. However, the raw numbers do not tell the stories of utilization as a function of reduced capacity due to social distancing requirements, as well as how important transit, particularly bus transit, remains as a lifeline for critical workers. WMATA data will be further addressed in a future analysis. He also

presented were approximate reductions in ridership versus typical levels, reported by selected other transit providers in the region, through an August 5, 2020 COG/TPB questionnaire. Notable was that different transit providers were experiencing different impacts, with very long distance services such as commuter rail and commuter bus experiencing the most severe ridership drops, while local transit services often used by transit-dependent riders accessing critical jobs experienced much less severe ridership drops. Additionally, app-based data, in a case shown from Apple Mobility data, provided an interesting but perhaps unproven insight into walking trends during the pandemic, which had been shown to dip significantly in April, and later return to near but still below pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Meese said that roadway speeds were shown by an example from COG/TPB staff analysis of data from the University of Maryland Probe Data Analytics Suite. Starting in March 2020, regional roadway speeds generally were at free-flow levels, with only a slight reduction since then. But the higher speeds may have contributed to numbers of major incidents remaining at or above pre-pandemic levels, even with reductions in traffic volumes, according to incident information reported by the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) program. Additionally, preliminary crash information (available for the Northern Virginia portion of the region only) showed that though serious crash numbers have been lower monthly in 2020 than in 2019, fatal crashes remained at about the same level as 2019, even during months such as April with significantly reduced traffic volumes.

Mr. Meese said that at the region's three major airports, air travel as measured by enplanements was severely reduced in April 2020, but has recovered somewhat since, though remaining much lower than 2019.

Mr. Nampoothiri commented that, with VMT recently approaching pre-COVID levels, but speeds remaining free-flow, the benefits of telework may be seen and perhaps sustained.

Mr. Srikanth responded that although commute VMT may go down due to telework, non-work VMT typically does not go down. Indeed, considering mathematical traffic engineering curves, under saturated conditions in peak of the peak period, a small reduction in traffic volume can give a disproportionate reduction in congestion. Thus, getting people to shift their work time can have significant impacts.

Mr. Meese also noted that the recent reduced commute VMT may be reflecting not only telework, but also the undesirable higher unemployment rate (more details were described in the memorandum).

## 9. PROJECT INFOTRAK

Mr. Austin spoke to the presentation, describing Project InfoTrak as a replacement to the iTIP database system for collecting project data for the documentation of the long-range plan, TIP, air quality conformity analysis, Congestion Management Process, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Mr. Austin discussed the features of the new system which included federal obligation reporting, financial constraint verification, a consultant-provided help desk, and a publicly searchable database with mapping and comment features. He described the various user types permitted in the system and the training that had been provided in June and gave a status report on implementation and follow-up steps. He also provided a preview of the schedule for accepting and processing requests for amendments and modifications for the remainder of the FY 2021-2024 TIP cycle.

Mr. Austin concluded the presentation with a demonstration of several features of Project InfoTrak, including the data collection form for the long-range plan financial analysis, project mapping, and obligation reporting. He thanked the team of stakeholders from the DOTs and COG staff that had helped in the development and implementation of Project InfoTrak over the past year.

# **OTHER ITEMS**

#### **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **DDOT TIP Amendment**

The board will be asked to approve the DDOT TIP amendment at the September meeting. No public comments were received during the public comment period.

#### **CAC Restructure**

Staff are discussing plans to restructure the CAC so that the committee has a stronger relationship with the board and that committee members better reflect transportation perspectives and jurisdictions in the region.

#### VDOT I-495 NEXT Project Sensitivity Test

In July VDOT requested changes to the I-495 NEXT Project that impact the Air Quality Conformity Analysis. A sensitivity test was conducted. The project modifications do not impact the finding of conformity.

#### **TPB Work Session on Climate Change**

There will be a work session for the TPB on climate change on October 21, the morning before the TPB meeting. There will be a presentation on the 2030 interim greenhouse gas reduction target and the Transportation and Climate Initiative.

#### Street Smart

Transit advertising is currently being run to promote the Street Smart campaign. This is using funds that weren't used in the spring. The fall campaign will launch near the beginning of October.

#### August 13 Dockless Workshop recap

Baltimore City shared an evaluation report and Montgomery County is expanding its program. Materials are available on the website.

#### Car Free Day – September 22

Commuter Connections has been promoting Car Free Day and the use of safe and healthy practices. They emphasize telework and biking and walking. The website is carfreemetrodc.org.

#### **Greater Washington Partnership Survey**

COG and the Greater Washington Partnership are running a survey to provide information to employers and transit providers with information about transit use and plans to bring workers back the office.

#### Virtual meetings through December 31, 2020

COG will continue to host virtual meetings through the end of the year.

# Chair Russell's remarks at the August 13 meeting of the Maryland House of Delegates, Transportation & the Environment Subcommittee

The Maryland House of Delegates invited the TPB to attend a subcommittee meeting. The TPB chair attended the meeting. The committee discussed changes in travel patterns and how this impacts long-term and short-term transportation planning and programming. Chair Russell's remarks were shared with the committee.

#### New Staff Intro

Sarah Bond is a transportation planner hired to join TPB staff. She formerly interned at the TPB working on the TLC program.

## 11. ADJOURN

No other business was brought before the committee.

# ATTENDANCE

DC	<ul><li>Mark Rawlings (DDOT)</li><li>Kristin Calkins (DCOP)</li></ul>	
MD	<ul> <li>Kari Snyder (MDOT)</li> <li>Gary Erenrich (Montgomery County)</li> <li>Winstina Hughes (SHA)</li> </ul>	<ul><li>Kyle Nemhard (MDOT)</li><li>Alex Waltz (Charles County)</li></ul>
VA	<ul> <li>Malcom Watson (Fairfax County)</li> <li>Robert Brown (Loudoun County)</li> <li>Sree Nampoothiri (NVTA)</li> <li>Ria Kulkarni (NVTA)</li> <li>Regina Moore (VDOT)</li> <li>Chloe Delhomme (City of Manassas)</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Meagan Landis (Prince William County)</li> <li>Dan Malouff (Arlington County)</li> <li>Ciara Williams (VDRPT)</li> <li>Sonali Soneji (VRE)</li> <li>Norman Whitaker (VDOT)</li> <li>Maria Sinner (VDOT)</li> <li>Michael Trent (VDOT)</li> </ul>
TPB/COG Staff	<ul> <li>Mark Philips (WMATA)</li> <li>Kanti Srikanth</li> <li>Lyn Erickson</li> <li>Tim Canan</li> <li>Andrew Meese</li> <li>Mark Moran</li> <li>Nick Ramfos</li> <li>Dusan Vuksan</li> <li>Abigail Zenner</li> <li>Charlene Howard</li> <li>Stacy Cook</li> <li>Ken Joh</li> <li>Jessica Mirr</li> <li>Charlene Howard</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Karen Armendariz</li> <li>Sergio Ritacco</li> <li>Mike Farrell</li> <li>John Swanson</li> <li>Bryan Hayes</li> <li>Erin Morrow</li> <li>Eric Randall</li> <li>Steve Walz</li> <li>J Park</li> <li>Sarah Bond</li> <li>Patrick Zilliacus</li> <li>James Li</li> <li>Yu Gao</li> </ul>
Other	<ul> <li>Nancy Abeles (TPB CAC)</li> <li>Cindy Burch</li> <li>Harun Rashid</li> <li>Lisa Nissley</li> <li>Katherine Youngbluth</li> </ul>	

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