

# **National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board**

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## **MEETING NOTES**

### **WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, July 31, 2007

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

**PLACE:** COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE  
First Floor, Room 1

**CHAIR:** TBD

**VICE-  
CHAIRS:** TBD

#### **Attendance:**

Levenson Boodlal	KLS Engineering
Christine Burke	Inova Fairfax Hospital
Susan Culin	Fairfax County Police Traffic Division
Randy Dittberner	VDOT
Matt Greene	Offices of the County Executive, Montgomery County
Michael Hawkins	Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division, Maryland State Police
Randy Hodgson	VDOT
Carol Kachadoorian	
Taft Kelly	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
Jim McAndrew	McAndrew & Co.
Mary McAndrew	McAndrew & Co.
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Transportation Safety Board
Shiva Shrestha	MDSHA Planning
Paul Sullivan	FHWA Operations
Chris Wells	Fairfax County
John Z. Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians TV

#### **COG Staff Attendance:**

Michael Farrell

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Andrew Meese

### 1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves. Mr. Farrell chaired the meeting.

### 2. Notes from the June 6, 2007 Regional Safety Forum

The group reviewed the notes. The main event at the forum was the presentation of the three State Highway Safety Plans. Under federal law the States are required to produce a Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The MPO's role is less involved; its obligation is to incorporate and summarize the elements of the strategic highway safety plans into its long-range plan. Safety, which used to be subsumed under security in the regional long-range transportation plan, is now a separate planning factor. We also decided that at least for the purpose of overseeing the creation of the Safety element, that a Safety Subcommittee should be formed. We also brainstormed what a Safety Subcommittee might do beyond the Safety Element. The COG and TPB committee structures do not routinely involve safety specialists. Safety is a specialty, but it is a wide-ranging specialty, and it incorporates many disciplines, from traffic engineering to law enforcement. The Transportation Planning Board deals with transportation, and as such may have an engineering bias. But we need to bring in other perspectives. We also need better data compilation and analysis on the regional level, which may produce information of interest to our Board, which in turn could affect the content of long-range planning and budgeting, to the benefit of safety.

### 3. Review of Safety in the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Farrell discussed a hand-out on the Safety work program item in the Unified Planning Work Program, which is federally funded. The UPWP is created annually, and describes the work of the TPB staff. The TPB staff supports the work of the TPB committees, and creates its own products, such as the long-range transportation plan. The work program provides \$75,000 for Safety, or about ½ full-time equivalent staff. Interaction with other TPB committees that have an interest in Safety, as well as creation and maintenance of the Safety element of the long-range transportation plan would be important work items. Membership of the committee should consist, at a minimum, of representatives of the three State DOT's, however many agencies are interested in Safety, so membership is fairly open.

Mr. Greene suggested that the subcommittee examine the trade-offs between safety and mobility, in particular the safety problems associated with speed.

Mr. Farrell replied that one benefit of this regional safety planning exercise is that it serves as a statement of priorities, and as a means of bringing Safety to the attention of the TPB. Agencies are also required to state how their project proposals serve safety goals. In addition, the plan can

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be used as a tracking measure. We will be tracking obligations of funds, and we should be able to tell based on our funding codes to determine which projects are primarily intended to address safety. So we will be able to raise awareness both of what the problem is, and give the public an idea of how much, in a budgetary sense, is being done about it.

Mr. Shrestha suggested that the subcommittee should examine safety on local roads that are not under State DOT control.

### **4. Role of Safety in the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan**

Mr. Farrell spoke to a hand-out. The long-range transportation plan is the defining task for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. It contains all regionally significant, federally funded transportation projects and programs for the next 25 years. It is developed in cooperation with the States and WMATA. It is updated annually to include new projects and programs, and major updates are done every three years. It covers the TPB member jurisdictions. The TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) is a six-year financial plan for obligating federal transportation funds. A new TIP and CLRP are adopted each Fall.

The TPB Vision advises State and other implementing agencies in their project selection process.

Federal requirements include fiscal constraint, which puts the "C" for constrained, in the CLRP. Funding for projects in the CLRP must be reasonably anticipated to be available. Air quality conformity is another important requirement.

In addition to these "hard" requirements, the plan should incorporate a number of planning factors, including safety.

The current long-range transportation plan has some safety components to it. The TPB Vision calls for specific measures to improve safety. Beyond that, the "Street Smart" Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety program involves some compilation and analysis of regional safety data.

New requirements under SAFETEA-LU (2005) include a safety element, which must incorporate or summarize the emphasis areas of the State Highway Safety Plans. All regional plans adopted after October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 must be SAFETEA-LU compliant.

Mr. Farrell discussed a proposed outline for a safety element. It should include emphasis areas from the State plans, as well as areas of special concern to the Washington region. Regional data should be included, but we are dependent on data already gathered by the States, and there are some data compatibility issues. Ideally there will be data on every emphasis area. Absolute numbers and rates per population will be emphasized, rather than rates per VMT. We could highlight a few model projects.

We will track funding of safety projects in the TIP. Safety funding can be tracked by funding

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source (HSIP, Safe Routes to School, Work Zone Safety), by check box in the TIP project submissions, and by reading the project descriptions. Capturing the safety aspects of non-Safety projects is difficult.

Mr. Meese noted that over the years the documentation requirements for TIP submissions have become more extensive. Projects are usually well-developed by the time they are submitted to the TPB. On the other hand, those at the agencies that are responsible for submitting projects for the TIP tend to be budget rather than safety specialists. We hope to clarify the agencies' understanding of what is or is not a safety project.

Mr. Farrell added that any time one relies on agency reporting, there is a lowest common denominator problem in terms of reporting quality and timeliness, and a problem with varying interpretations of what constitutes a safety project. So it is important not to rely completely on self-reporting to determine what is or is not a safety project.

Mr. Kelly pointed out that enforcement and education are also important aspects of safety, in addition to the TIP engineering projects. The Safety subcommittee may want to address safety issues outside of the TIP process. Ms. McAndrew noted that there is no regional seatbelt initiative, even though seatbelts are a high priority for FHWA. There is also no regional motorcycle safety initiative, even though motorcycle deaths now exceed pedestrian deaths in the US.

We are trying to bring in a here and now focus to the committees to complement the long-term planning in the CLRP.

Mr. Muchnick suggested tracking the HSIP federal funding program, and track how much and where that funding is going by jurisdiction. The other federal program that should be tracked is Section 402 behavioral funds, which the States allocated for education and enforcement campaigns.

Ms. Kachadoorian asked if a percentage of the funding in the TIP could be allocated to regional education. Mr. Farrell replied that that would probably not happen, since the States determine the allocation of funds. However, we do have a model in the Street Smart program, whereby federal 402 funds and local funds are allocated on an annual, voluntary basis. There is a possibility that such programs could be supported out of COG dues in the future, but thus far the COG Board has not chosen to do that. Clean Air Partners is another example of a program with a separate task and budget within MWCOC. MATOC, which deals with the transportation response to an emergency, is another example. All these programs have required considerable time and effort to get running and to maintain. This subcommittee might be a good incubator of such efforts. Planning funds are earmarked for planning and cannot be spent on regional media or enforcement.

Data compilation itself is an important effort. We need to know more about what is happening.

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Once we agree on the data, we can move on to the solutions.

Mr. Farrell noted that another way of getting at what in the TIP is safety-oriented is to read the program descriptions, which is time-consuming but which might yield more information than a check-box. Other Safety programs may not appear in the TIP. One thing that is somewhat limiting about doing a Safety element of the long-range plan, rather than a Safety plan, is that the long-range transportation plan contains long-range capital projects, not management or operations or enforcement.

Another possibility would be to do something similar to what the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee already does for Bicycle and Pedestrian projects, which is to select a list of top priority unfunded Safety projects. These projects should already be included in an adopted local or agency plan. Member government staff rather than advocates nominate the projects. The list is a means of calling attention to a few unfunded projects that should be funded. The downside of this activity is that it requires both staff time and calendar time. Mr. Meese suggested that we follow the example of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan by creating the plan first, and then selecting projects. Mr. Muchnick suggested that education and enforcement projects be eligible for such a list, not just capital projects. The list should be short and easily fundable – if the list is too long it becomes less convincing as a statement of priorities.

The question was raised as to how elected officials could be persuaded to fund safety programs, including Street Smart. Mr. Meese replied that lobbying is the role of private citizens and organizations. Mr. Farrell added that typically it is not staff advocacy that makes a program happen, but advocacy from a board member. As staff we have to tread cautiously about lobbying our own board. However, citizens are welcome to register to make public comments to the board at its monthly meetings.

It was also suggested that we could compare MWCOG safety data with safety data from other MPO's.

Another concern was the liability and public relations issue related to releasing a list of unsafe locations. Mr. Farrell replied that as part of the State High Safety Plans the DOT's are required to list the top 5% most hazardous locations, and they are not required to instantly fix all of them, and the Safety committee's list might come from the State list.

Another concern was that the Safety Subcommittee might be short-circuiting or contradicting the State planning process. Mr. Farrell replied that it might happen that a project such as say, a bridge between two jurisdictions, might not make the cut in either of their planning processes, yet would still be important to the region. The bicycle and pedestrian projects are often but not always the top priority unfunded project of the jurisdiction; we ask the members to choose projects that are of regional significance according to an agreed set of criteria. We could also move away from suggesting specific locations and suggest programs that are not location-specific, which are more likely to be regional in character than specific locations.

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Mr. Wetmore suggested that pedestrian and bicycle accommodations be included in all large projects such as the beltway widening. Mr. Farrell replied that our mandate was to deal with general traffic safety rather than pedestrian and bicycle safety, but that if the subcommittee felt that something was being overlooked in a major project we could comment.

Currently only jurisdiction-level data is being compiled at the regional level, but all the States are moving in the direction of producing geolocated crash data. All the plans required that traffic reporting and data systems be upgraded. Traffic reporting will become more real-time and paperless, so instead of waiting a year for crash data, you might only wait a week, and instead of jurisdictional summary data you might have geolocated data.

Mr. Wetmore asked about data release provisions in SAFETEA-LU.

Mr. Farrell demonstrated the visualization of the CLRP on Google earth. Major projects in the CLRP are displayed on Google earth. Most, if not all, of these projects are capacity-building rather than Safety projects. If you click on a project icon project information is displayed. Safety projects could be incorporated into the visualization by adding a separate layer of safety projects, which could be pulled up as needed.

A draft safety element will be posted on the web site.

Mr. Farrell asked for suggestions regarding a schedule for meeting dates. Mr. Muchnick suggested holding it on the same day as the bicycle and pedestrian subcommittee, on Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>. Meeting availability will have to be examined. We should add a teleconferencing/speakerphone option.

There will also be a new freight subcommittee.

At the Safety forum it was suggested that we might consider performance measures. Deaths and injuries, rates per population, funding for Safety in the TIP, and obligation of federal funds for safety are all possible measures. Programs funded out of the Highway Safety Improvement Program funding pot in SAFETEA-LU are safety projects, as are those funded with work zone safety funds or Safe Routes to School Funds. We should be able to tell how much of the funding in the TIP is for Safety projects, as well as the proportion of funds actually obligated (spent) that were for Safety based on the funding pots that were used. We also have a check-list asking TPB members to identify safety projects, and the project descriptions.

Mr. McAndrew suggested that seatbelts might provide an opportunity for coordination, since DC and Maryland have separate and uncoordinated efforts on seatbelts. Ms. McAndrew suggested that TPB staff could attend the meetings for some of the existing coordination programs such as Smooth Operator.

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### **5. Current Regional Safety Efforts**

Mr. Farrell spoke to a hand-out summarizing current safety efforts in the region, including Street Smart, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program, and the Smooth Operator anti-aggressive driving program. Street Smart was a bottom-up initiative. Local governments realized that they lacked the resources individually to run a regional media campaign. Washington Regional Alcohol Program has \$2 million per year and its own nonprofit organization and staff to run it. Smooth Operator is run through the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration. Click it or Ticket is sponsored by DDOT and NHTSA, and includes radio and TV ads, with enforcement by DDOT. Other seatbelt efforts take place in the region but are not coordinated with the DDOT program.

### **6. Transportation Safety Subcommittee Administration**

Mr. Farrell noted that the Subcommittee was still in need of a Chair, who should have an interest in the subject matter, should not be too far away, and should represent a TPB member jurisdiction or agency. Ms. Kachadoorian, Ms. Shrestha, and Ms. Greene volunteered to serve on a selection committee. Chairmanships often rotate every one or two years. The first chair could serve through the end of 2008. Calendar years and a one-year term are the most popular. On the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee it has been common to rotate between the States. We also have Vice-Chairs, which is less critical, but useful in case a Chair can't attend. The obligation of a Chair is to Chair the meeting, attend the meetings, and work with staff in advance to set an agenda. Mr. Farrell distributed a draft mission statement for the Subcommittee based on the TPB work program. The mission statement can be a discussion item for the next meeting.

### **7. State and Jurisdictional Updates**

Mr. Boodlal announced that the DC Highway Safety Plan was approved yesterday. It will be made available on the web in the future.

One of the minor functions of our committee is to serve as a distribution list which you can use to publicize events, make announcements, etc.

Virginia's grant awards for Highway Safety were announced a week ago, and are available at the DMV web site.

### **8. Adjourned.**