

ITEM 11- Information

December 17, 2008

Briefing on Alternative Approaches for Linking Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions to Metropolitan Transportation Planning

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the potential applicability of the recently enacted California measure SB375 and other alternative approaches for linking greenhouse gas emissions reductions to metropolitan transportation planning in the Washington region.

Issues: None

Background: At the November 19 meeting, the Board was briefed on the California measure SB375, a bill which will link greenhouse gas emissions reductions to the planning activities of metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) in California.



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 11, 2008

To: Transportation Planning Board

From: Ronald F. Kirby *RFK*
Director, Department of
Transportation Planning

Re: Alternative Approaches for Linking Greenhouse Gas Reductions to
Metropolitan Transportation Planning

District of Columbia
Bladensburg*
Bowie
College Park
Frederick
Frederick County
Gaithersburg
Greenbelt
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Rockville
Takoma Park
Alexandria
Arlington County
Fairfax
Fairfax County
Falls Church
Loudoun County
Manassas
Manassas Park
Prince William County

*Adjunct member

On November 12, 2008 the COG Board of Directors approved the National Capital Region Climate Change Report which included significant greenhouse gas reduction goals for the region, and recommended that a number of strategies be considered for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and land use. The report recommended collaboration with the TPB to evaluate how a process modeled after the current regional metropolitan planning process for transportation and air quality planning might be adapted to address greenhouse gas emissions, and consultation with other regions around the country to broadly evaluate options for regional approaches to greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. SB375 in California).

In a letter of September 17, 2008 to the COG Board, the TPB provided the following comments on the draft Climate Change Report:

- Further work should look into the implications of measuring cumulative greenhouse gas emissions with regard to reduction targets and assessment of emissions reduction measures;
- More information is needed on the applicability of Clean Air Act provisions for greenhouse gas regulation before considering a regional conformity process for greenhouse gas emissions;
- The next step in evaluating greenhouse gas reduction measures should assess implementation costs, cost-effectiveness, and cost/benefit relationships;
- The TPB plans to support future examination of greenhouse gas reduction measures for the transportation sector through its "What Would It Take?" Scenario Study; and

- Any new committee established to address climate change should include at a minimum all of the member agencies and jurisdictions of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

The Climate Change Report recommended the following goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, which were developed to be “consistent with the climate science and the goals adopted by the state and local governments in the Washington region.”

- Return to 2005 levels by 2012 (10 percent reduction from “business as usual”);
- 20% below 2005 levels by 2020; and
- 80% below 2005 levels by 2050.

The TPB is currently moving forward with its “What Would It Take?” Scenario. Under this scenario, staff has developed baseline projections for greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector through 2030, and is analyzing the following three categories of strategies for achieving the 2020 and 2030 goals presented in the COG Climate Change Report:

- Fuel Efficiency
- Alternative Fuels
- Travel Efficiency

The TPB will be briefed on progress to date with this “What Would It Take” Scenario under Item 12 of the December 17, 2008 agenda.

At its November 19, 2008 meeting, the TPB was briefed on the key provisions of California measure SB375, which links greenhouse gas emissions reductions to the planning activities of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in California by

- Setting greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for the automobile and light truck sector for 2020 and 2035, respectively, no later than September 30, 2010;
- Appointing a Regional Targets Advisory Committee by January 31, 2009 to recommend factors to be considered and methodologies to be used for setting targets;
- Releasing draft targets for public comment by June 30, 2010;

- Requiring each metropolitan planning organization to prepare a “sustainable communities strategy”, subject to the federal metropolitan planning regulations, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and light trucks to achieve, if there is a feasible way to do so, the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets; and
- If the sustainable communities strategy is unable to achieve the established greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, requiring the metropolitan planning organization to prepare an “alternative planning strategy” showing how the targets could be achieved through alternative development patterns, infrastructure, or additional transportation measures or policies.

Following the presentation on California measure SB375 at the November 19 meeting, the TPB asked if staff could provide information on other options for addressing the recommendations of the COG Climate Change Report, in addition to SB375, at the December 17 meeting. Staff plans to present and discuss such options for the TPB under the following categories:

- Continue on the present course of analyzing strategies under the “What Would It Take” Scenario, using the goals set in the COG Climate Change Report, while monitoring developments with climate change commissions at the state level and legislative initiatives at the national level;
- Explore the possibility of adapting the California SB375 approach for the Washington region, including processes for target setting and preparation of planning strategies to achieve the targets.
- Work with the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia to explore alternative regional models for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that could reflect climate change activities and reports prepared at the state levels.