

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force

FROM: John Swanson, Senior Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Background information for the kickoff meeting of the Scoping Task Force on October 20, 2010

DATE: October 14, 2010

As approved by the TPB on September 15, the kickoff meeting of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force will be held on October 20 at 10:00 a.m.

Background and Work Plan

On July 21, the TPB voted to form a task force to determine the scope and process for developing a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

The task force is being formed as follow-up to the event the TPB held on May 26 called the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities, which addressed regional transportation challenges, opportunities, and possibilities for enhancing the process of setting and implementing regional priorities. The impetus for that event was a request by the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for the TPB to develop a "Regional Priorities Plan" that would serve as a financially unconstrained regional vision for transportation investment.

The task force is currently scheduled to meet four times, every other month between October and April. The following schedule of meetings provides a suggested work plan that the committee will be asked to discuss at its first meeting:

- October 20: Kickoff meeting; briefing on background information and discussion of key questions.
- December 15: Receive additional briefings; discuss key questions related to the scope and process, and seek consensus on the task force's preferred approach.
- February 16: Review and refine a draft scope and process.
- April 20: Finalize and approve the scope and process for developing a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

Task Force Membership

The membership list below represents a cross-section of interests, jurisdictions and roles within the TPB process. Most of the members were participants at the Conversation event on May 26th. TPB Vice Chair Todd Turner has agreed to chair the task force.

- *Todd Turner* (Task Force Chair), Bowie City Council
- *Monica Backmon*, Prince William County
- *Andrew Beacher*, Loudoun County
- *Tom Biesiadny*, Fairfax County DOT
- *Maureen Budetti*, CAC
- *Gary Erenrich*, Montgomery County DPW&T
- *Lyn Erickson*, MDOT
- *Tom Harrington*, WMATA
- *Julia Koster*, NCPC
- *Carol Krimm*, City of Frederick
- *Larry Martin*, CAC
- *Glenn Orlin*, Montgomery County Council (Deputy Staff Director)
- *Karina Ricks*, DDOT
- *Kanti Srikanth*, VDOT
- *Harriet Tregoning*, District of Columbia Office of Planning
- *Emmet Tydings*, CAC
- *Jonathan Way*, City of Manassas
- *Vic Weissberg*, Prince George's County DPW&T
- *Chris Zimmerman*, Arlington County Board
- *Representative(s) from the Access for All Advisory Committee*

Resource Materials to be Presented at Kickoff Meeting

At the first meeting of the task force on October 20, staff will brief the TPB on the following items, which were described in staff's "next steps" memo to the TPB on July 21. Following the briefings, the task force will discuss how the scope for a regional transportation priorities plan might be developed in light of the information presented.

- ***Draft Regional Inventory of Unfunded Transportation Priority Projects***

Staff is developing an inventory of priority projects that are included in regional, state and local plans in our region. This inventory will include a list of projects and short descriptions, as well as a map. The inventory will be limited to projects that are 1) regionally significant, and 2) included in plans or documents that have been officially approved by TPB members.

The sources for projects in the inventory are as follows: District of Columbia - DC's Transit Future System Plan; Maryland – County Priority Letters to MDOT; Virginia – TransAction 2030 (Northern Virginia Transportation Authority) and a draft version of Virginia DOT's Surface Transportation Plan 2035

A memo on the methodology for developing the Inventory is included in this memo as **Attachment A**. Staff is currently working to refine and clarify the project lists and to map the projects. We hope to provide a draft list of Inventory projects prior to the meeting on October 20.

- **Research on Financially Unconstrained Planning Activities of other MPOs**

TPB staff has conducted research on the financially unconstrained planning activities and project prioritization of other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), especially those that are multi-state. A memo with preliminary findings is included in this memo as **Attachment B**.

Staff researched the following MPOs, including review of plan documents and telephone interviews:

- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (Philadelphia)
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (San Francisco Bay Area)
- Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City)
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (Cincinnati)
- Southern California Association of Governments (Los Angeles)

Staff found that all MPOs investigated for this research engage in some form of unconstrained regional transportation planning or regional prioritization of projects. The research identified major differences in the methods used and the role that such activities ultimately play in the development of Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs), particularly in multi-state regions.

Unconstrained elements are often included in RTPs to show funding shortfalls by mode/category or to list specific projects that could be built if additional funds became available. Some MPOs prioritize projects by filtering RTP project submissions through regional criteria or through a scoring system based on regional goals. Some MPOs set aside a certain percentage or amount of regional transportation revenues to be used for projects that are designed specifically to achieve regional goals. Finally, we found examples of MPOs that produce an unconstrained plan as a “vision plan” resulting from a regional policy process or scenario analysis that arrives at a consensus preferred alternative.

Staff contacts at several MPOs noted that the scoping processes for their long-range plans included extensive discussion and consideration of the fundamental approach and overarching objective that their plan should focus upon. We found that some MPOs have emphasized one of these approaches for one plan, and a few years later, focused on another approach. And based on phone interviews for this research, no single approach is universally regarded as successful or worthwhile by MPO staff. But the clear trend among large MPOs, even those that are multi-state, is to engage in at least some kind of regional project prioritization activity.

It is also significant to note that none of the MPOs investigated for this research conduct updates for their RTPs on an annual basis.

- ***Improvements in Public Information on the Current Planning Process***

Staff is in the process of developing public education tools to better inform citizens about how this region's planning process currently operates. This information will be designed to explain and illustrate: 1) the regional influences on project selection, including regional policy goals and federal planning requirements, especially financial constraint; and 2) the roles and responsibilities of the TPB's members, and the various opportunities at the state and local levels for public involvement. These tools include the following:

- A web-based "Regional Transportation Clearinghouse" on the CLRP website will provide interested citizens with links to up-to-date information on planning activities that are currently underway at the local, state and regional levels throughout the region. The goal for establishing this portal is twofold: (1) citizens will be able to easily access a variety of information about TPB processes and major projects, and (2) citizens will be able to access and better understand appropriate avenues for public involvement with regard to regional transportation planning. Using pages 19-31 of the Citizens Guide for Transportation Decision Making as a general rubric, information available on this website will be organized according to three major categories: 1) Regional Long-Range Planning Activities, 2) Six-Year Programming Cycles at the State Level, and 3) Major Project Information. ***Attachment C*** is a memo regarding the clearinghouse.
- A new brochure called "Transportation Planning in the Washington Region: An Introduction to Players, Process and Principles." This brochure will provide basic information about the TPB and the regional transportation planning process. A draft is included in the memo as ***Attachment D***.
- The TPB's Community Leadership Institute (CLI) will hold its 7th session on November 4 & 6. The CLI is designed to help community leaders better understand how transportation decisions are made in this region and how community leaders can make a difference. Facilitated by former elected officials Peter Shapiro and Kathy Porter, the CLI includes two half-day workshops that use interactive group exercises and discussions to help participants better understand regional challenges, strategies for change, and opportunities for successful public involvement. At each step of the way, participants discuss ways in which the interests of their local communities connect with the planning issues facing the entire region. By providing this big-picture context, the CLI encourages participants to "think regionally and act locally."

Inventory of Transportation Priority Projects - Methodology

TPB staff is developing a regional inventory of local, state and regional transportation priority projects. The inventory essentially comprises a list of unfunded or partially funded transportation projects that have been identified in plans and other official documents of the TPB's member jurisdictions.

We envisage that this inventory will complement the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), providing a wider context for public understanding of the CLRP. In November 2009, the TPB directed staff to develop this inventory for use as an information resource.

As advised by staff at the state and local levels, information was taken from the following sources:

- The District of Columbia - DC's Transit Future System Plan
- Maryland – County Priority Letters to Maryland DOT
- Virginia – TransAction 2030 (Northern Virginia Transportation Authority) and a draft version of Virginia DOT's Surface Transportation Plan 2035

TPB staff reviewed the inventory in order to remove any projects that were already included in the CLRP, and entered into a dialogue with member jurisdictions' staff to refine the list and to obtain more information for mapping purposes.

Additional information regarding the methodology is as follows:

Virginia

TransAction 2030 categorized projects as 'Trail', 'Highway' or 'Transit'. Trail projects were not included in the inventory. TransAction 2030 also categorized projects by the nature of the planned improvement. Projects categorized as 'Reconstruction' were not included in this inventory.

The projects in the Surface Transportation Plan are listed by area. All 'Northern Region' projects were included in this inventory with the exception of ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) recommendations.

Maryland

With the exception of Prince George's County, information was taken from the most recent County Priority Letter on the Maryland DOT website. TPB staff contacted staff in Counties whose most recent letters appeared to be more than a year old to verify that there was not, in fact, a more recent letter. As a result, Prince George's County supplied a list of projects that was developed for inclusion in its next letter.

The letters were structured in various ways, but generally-speaking, TPB staff attempted to employ the same criteria for inclusion as it had for Virginia. Thus, 'Streetscape and Sidewalk Retrofit Projects' were not included from Frederick County, while 'Trails' and projects designed to 'Improve pedestrian and vehicular safety' were not included for Prince George's County. Any projects with too general a scope for mapping purposes (e.g. WMATA Funding) were also omitted, though such projects represented a tiny fraction of all of those considered.

District of Columbia

Information regarding Streetcar projects was sourced from the table on pages 4-15 and 4-16 of DC's Transit Future System Plan, and information regarding Metro Express was taken from pages 4-8, 4-9 and 4-14 of the same document.

MEMORANDUM

From: Darren Smith, TPB Staff

To: TPB Regional Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force

Date: October 14, 2010

Re: Research into Methods Used by Other MPOs to Develop Unconstrained Plans or Prioritize Projects

As part of the follow-up to the May 2010 “Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities,” and in preparation for the launch of the TPB Regional Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force, the TPB directed staff to investigate the financially unconstrained planning activities of other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The research includes information on the methodologies for developing unconstrained long-range plans or other methods of evaluating project submissions against regional goals.

This research is not exhaustive, but is intended to provide an overview of the range of practices while also providing enough in-depth information about a limited number of MPOs to yield insights beyond those of a surface-level survey. MPOs investigated include several among the TPB’s peer group in terms of size, with a special focus on those that, like the TPB, are multi-state. MPOs in states that have state legislation directing MPOs to engage in various forms of unconstrained planning (e.g. California and Texas) were de-emphasized for this research, though some were included for illustrative purposes. The TPB and/or the Task Force may wish to request information on additional MPOs or greater detail about the investigated MPOs at a later date. Information gathering took place via a combination of telephone interviews and online review of pertinent documents, including Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs)¹.

MPOs Investigated:

- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (Philadelphia)
- Denver Regional Council of Governments
- East-West Gateway Council of Governments (St. Louis)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (San Francisco Bay Area)
- Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City)
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (Cincinnati)
- Southern California Association of Governments (Los Angeles)

¹ Although a handful of MPOs, like the TPB, use some variation of Constrained Long-Range Plan as the title of the plan document, along with the acronyms CLRP or LRP, the majority of MPOs refer to the constrained plan document as the Regional Transportation Plan or RTP, which will be used upon subsequent references in this memorandum.

Findings

All MPOs investigated engage in some form of unconstrained regional transportation planning or regional prioritization of projects. In fact, a concurrent research project by Reid Ewing of the University of Utah, entitled “Best Practices in Metropolitan Land Use and Transportation Planning,” found that “nearly all MPOs also [in addition to constrained plans] conduct needs assessments and produce needs-based plans. Needs typically exceed reasonably expected revenues by a third or more” (pg. 5 of DRAFT report obtained in September 2010). Ewing’s draft report, which surveys many more MPOs than this memorandum, also states that when it comes to implementing regional smart growth priorities “what differs from region to region is not so much the desire for smart growth or the projected benefits, but the degree to which it is actively encouraged in the RTP” (Ewing, 10).

There are indeed major differences in the methods used and the role that such activities ultimately play in the development of the RTP, particularly in multi-state regions. An unconstrained element in the RTP may be simply intended to show funding shortfalls by mode/category or to list specific projects that could be built if additional funds were available. MPOs also may choose to prioritize projects by filtering RTP project submissions through regional criteria or a scoring system based on regional goals, or they may set aside a certain percentage or amount of regional transportation revenues to be used for projects that are designed specifically to achieve regional goals. In some cases, MPOs produce unconstrained plans as “vision plans” resulting from a regional policy processes or from studies of alternative transportation and land-use scenarios that arrive at a consensus preferred alternative.

Some MPOs have tried one of those techniques, and then abandoned it in favor of another. And based on phone interviews for this research, no particular method is universally regarded as successful or worthwhile by MPO staff. But the clear trend among large MPOs, even those that are multi-state, is to engage in at least some kind of regional project prioritization activity. It is also significant to note that none of the MPOs investigated for this research conduct project solicitations and updates to their RTPs on an annual basis.

The remainder of this memorandum will summarize four different techniques of unconstrained planning used by MPOs, presenting specific examples from the research completed. It will also briefly discuss some additional variations that show up even among the four categories, including integration with land-use scenarios or strategies, the use of cost estimates, and the frequency of updates. The four categories of unconstrained planning methods presented here are not perfectly exclusive; there is some overlap between them, there are MPOs who engage in more than one, and undoubtedly there are some MPO practices that do not easily fit this rubric. But nonetheless it is a useful way to consider the possibilities for the TPB if it chooses to engage in unconstrained planning.

An Unconstrained Element as an Illustrative Supplement to the RTP

Most of the MPOs surveyed include an unconstrained element in their RTP document in some fashion. This can be useful to MPOs as a way of demonstrating the need for additional revenues, and in fact contacts with several of the MPOs said their unconstrained elements have been or would be used as advocacy tools in that fashion.

However, for the most part, the MPOs investigated for this research did not use their unconstrained projects exclusively to illustrate regional need. It is certainly possible for an MPO to develop an inventory of unfunded projects or a compilation of the unconstrained plans of various jurisdictions in the region and attach that to the RTP for illustrative purposes but not use it in any other way. But it appears that most MPOs that did include an unconstrained element in their RTP documents also either used an unconstrained list as a starting point from which to prioritize projects for the constrained plan, or included unfunded project lists derived from a regional vision plan or as part of a special plan category. More details on those techniques follow.

Two of the ten MPOs investigated do not currently include an unconstrained element as part of their RTP: **DVRPC (Philadelphia)** and **MTC (San Francisco Bay Area)**. In both cases, the MPOs previously included lists of unfunded projects in their RTPs, but in their most recent rounds they decided to focus their four-year planning process on prioritizing projects at the regional level for inclusion in their financially constrained plans. Both MPOs begin the RTP development process with an unconstrained project list that is then scored and prioritized using regional criteria to arrive at a constrained plan, which falls under the next heading.

An Unconstrained List as the First Step in a Prioritization Process for the RTP

Several MPOs included in this research begin their RTP development process with an unconstrained project list. A key variable among them is the extent to which the list is derived from regional assessment of needs or from submissions by individual jurisdictions. The list may just be a collection of all the projects submitted by the region's jurisdictions in response to the RTP project solicitation (inclusive of those for which funds have not been identified), or it may be a conglomeration of the unfunded list from the past RTP cycle (which in some cases is already prioritized), projects identified through regionally-led corridor or area studies, projects identified through regional scenario planning, and the jurisdiction-supplied projects.

For example, the multi-state **Cincinnati**-area MPO has been very active in conducting area needs assessments and corridor studies for just about every corridor or area in the region in need of transportation investment, working closely with its local and state jurisdiction members. Those studies have yielded lists of projects, prioritized within each area or corridor, that are then evaluated in a

region-wide scoring process that is based on regional policy goals and priorities, and benefit-cost analysis. The result is the region's constrained plan. The complete unconstrained project list, regarded as exhaustive and comprehensive for the region, is included in the RTP document, though without the scores assigned to each project during the prioritization process. About the unconstrained plan, the MPO deputy executive director said, "It's not like we couldn't live without it, but it certainly helps us keep track of the recommendations [that are generated by the area and corridor studies]."

The Cincinnati MPO bases its scoring system on the "Strategic Regional Policy Plan," which was developed through an extensive visioning process between 1998 and 2005. The Policy Plan emphasizes that its recommendations are voluntary when it comes to land use, but that it will be used (as it has been) to prioritize transportation investment in the region.

The multi-state MPO for the **Kansas City** metropolitan area, which deals with nearly equal populations and transportation budgets for the areas on either side of the state line, also prioritizes project submissions with a scoring system based on regional policy goals. The source of projects is primarily the state and local jurisdictions, unlike in Cincinnati, and the MPO conducts a financial analysis separately for each state to determine the score cutoff given available revenues. This results in the possibility that a Missouri project with a lower score will get in the constrained plan above a Kansas project with a higher score, and vice versa. The MPO publishes the unfunded projects, and their scores, in the RTP alongside the projects approved for the constrained element of the plan. The unfunded list does serve as a queue for projects to be added to the constrained plan should more funding become available, according to staff in Kansas City, though a project planned for completion in the near-term may be chosen for the constrained plan ahead of a long-term project with a higher score.

The criteria used in scoring, prioritizing, and ultimately selecting projects for the constrained plans in each region vary, but almost all are derived from a regional policy visioning process and reflect a range of policy goals. For instance, the Kansas City scoring criteria are derived from a regional public involvement process in the late 1990s called "Imagine KC" as well as a regionally adopted sustainability vision and a regionally preferred land-use scenario. The criteria fall under the categories of Accessibility, Economic Vitality, Energy Use and Climate Change, Environment, Place Making, Public Health, Safety and Security, System Condition, and System Performance.

For its 2011 RTP update (called PLAN 2040), the **Atlanta** MPO is using a process to narrow down from an unconstrained project list using four "Key Decision Points." ARC states that for PLAN 2040 (the RTP update for 2011) they will use a process to narrow down projects for funding using 4 "Key Decision Points." The first step allocates available funds across maintenance, management and operations, and expansion, and different modes and regional programs. The second step evaluates the pool of potential projects against PLAN 2040 Policy and "filters out projects inconsistent with stated policy," including "adopted study recommendations" regarding transportation systems, and the "Unified Growth Policy Map." The third step is evaluating each project with project-level performance measures, including benefit-cost analysis. The fourth step selects projects for inclusion based on their step three performance, but also on "project sponsor priorities, regional equity, and project readiness."

According to the MPO website, “The draft constrained RTP project list resulting from the project selection process outlined by the RTP Performance Framework is then vetted with local jurisdictions, project sponsors, stakeholders, and the public. The project list is also evaluated against plan-level performance measures to determine the performance of the cumulative investment strategy on the transportation system.”

St. Louis’s multi-state MPO also scores and ranks project submissions based on regional policy goals. This scoring process, combined with input and discussions with the region’s implementing agencies, produces the constrained list of projects included in the RTP. The scores are not included in the RTP document, but according to the RTP document, projects were prioritized as follows: “Project priorities were established through a two-step process. First, East-West Gateway staff analyzed each project within a quantitative evaluation framework. That framework consists of performance measures based on the six focus areas used by the Council to guide decision-making: preservation, safety, congestion, access to opportunity, goods movement, and sustainable development. After projects were evaluated, a priority ranking was established. These rankings were then shared with and compared to priorities of the implementing agencies, and discussions between East-West Gateway and the implementing agencies produced the final list.” The implementing agencies play less of a role in selecting projects submitted by local jurisdictions, as opposed to the state DOTs, for funding with sub-allocated STP and CMAQ monies.

Chicago’s most recent RTP project selection process began with the development of an unconstrained list of “major projects” (their tight definition of major projects only includes expressway-based road projects and fixed-guideway transit) as well as a quantification of overall funding needs. (In the final RTP, the total unfunded cost for major projects was identified to be approximately \$60 billion, while total unfunded needs were \$100-220 billion.) All projects submitted as part of a regional inventory were scored based upon a combination of qualitative and quantitative criteria. The quantitative scores are based upon regional goals established through the visioning process for “Go To 2040,” their new regional comprehensive plan. The project ranking/scoring has been used to identify projects for their federally required constrained list of projects. The projects that were unfunded also received scores, which were identified in the plan appendix. The main plan document includes a list of unfunded major projects, but does not show rankings for the unfunded projects.

According to staff at the Chicago MPO (the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning), prioritized transportation planning was one of the main reasons their agency was created in 200x. Staff said the process of prioritizing projects is useful to help direct where resources will go. In addition, the identification of unfunded projects is important for long-range preparations, such as right-of-way acquisition, that help make projects viable in the future. Prioritization is also important for advocacy, including efforts to get additional funding. Their plan identifies two new funding sources: a state gas tax increase and a congestion charge. Finally, the prioritization process provides needed regional leadership, which has been welcomed by the implementing agencies because it takes some political heat off them.

An Unconstrained Plan Tied To a Specific Land-Use and Transportation Vision

Perhaps the most elaborate type of unconstrained planning element is one directly derived from a regional visioning process and representing a regional preferred transportation scenario or vision plan. This seems to be relatively rare, and though many regions arrive at a preferred growth alternative through a public involvement and scenario planning exercise, few have tied a preferred, well-defined, comprehensive transportation network to the preferred land-use scenario, and then moved on to link that land-use and transportation vision to the constrained RTP.

The **Denver** Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) is one example of an MPO that has directly linked its land-use and transportation vision plan to the selection of projects for the constrained element of its RTP. The Denver “Metro Vision” was first adopted in 1997 as a result of a lengthy public involvement process, and has been updated twice since. The latest version, Metro Vision 2035, is a comprehensive vision plan that includes both growth strategies and an unconstrained transportation network. The RTP document is directly based on Metro Vision 2035 and is itself essentially an unconstrained land-use and transportation vision plan, with the constrained list of transportation projects included as a subordinate chapter. The Vision element of the RTP includes a general summary of transportation needs and policy guidance, as well as 35 individual corridor assessments that include unconstrained lists of needs. Within each corridor vision, there is a basic level of prioritization identifying projects that are needed in the short-term. The total Metro Vision 2035 RTP has an estimated cost of \$130 billion, of which \$91.1 billion in projects is actually included in the constrained element of the RTP.

According to DRCOG plan documents, “The 2035 MVRTP is consistent with the goals and policies set out for each of the elements in Metro Vision. It is based on the foundation that transportation interacts closely with the growth, development, and environmental elements. This interaction is referenced through much of the document. The 2035 MVRTP represents the ‘next step’ for implementing Metro Vision’s transportation element, as well as the other elements. The Fiscally Constrained 2035 RTP was prepared by reducing the Metro Vision transportation system to the highest priority projects and pooled expenditures that can be accommodated with future expected revenues To be recognized [for the RTP], [a] project must meet certain criteria that reflect Metro Vision policies.”

Similar to Chicago (described above), DRCOG uses a scoring method to determine which projects go into its constrained transportation plan and TIP. Most recently, given pervasive funding constraints, the scoring system has become a tool to take projects *out* of the constrained plan and TIP. This scoring method is reflective, in part, of MetroVision goals, including whether a project serves an “urban center” (similar to MWCOG’s activity centers) and whether a project is within the urban growth boundary.

The MPO for metropolitan **Atlanta** developed a transportation “Aspirations Plan” in 2007-8 that began with a transportation Needs Assessment that included assessment of needs for specific corridors and activity centers. Based on the Aspirations Plan, a “Regional Strategic Transportation System” plan was then developed that is financially unconstrained and is “intended to be a framework to help prioritize federal transportation funding. The RSTS maps the region’s most critical, multi-modal transportation facilities. It is proposed to be an early screen in the project prioritization process for federal funds.” The RSTS, therefore, is not a comprehensive transportation scenario in the sense that it does not include all the projects that would potentially be included in the constrained RTP; rather, it reflects the region’s major needs and priorities.

In addition to the RSTS prioritization screen, projects are prioritized based on congestion relief benefits, consistency with a preferred land-use scenario called the Unified Growth Policy Map and environmental quality policy goals, benefit-cost analysis, public comment, project readiness, and local financial commitment. The most recent RTP (from 2008) has appendices with unfunded needs that were once modeled for air quality conformity but had to be removed from the RTP due to funding constraints, as well as additional projects from the Aspirations Plan that are all unfunded. The former are regarded as higher priority than the latter, and are regarded as being at the front of the queue for inclusion in the constrained plan should additional funding become available.

An Unconstrained Element as a Special Subset of RTP Projects and Revenues

Another method of incorporating unconstrained planning into the regional project selection process is to develop an unconstrained element consisting of a special type or subset of projects and needs. In addition to the overall project scoring process described above, the MPO in **Kansas City** developed a “Transportation Outlook 2040 Centers and Nodes” project category. Projects in this category were generated through a regional needs analysis of activity centers included in the adopted land-use strategy. “A regional centers and corridors approach illustrates the impact of taking to a regional scale the kinds of activity centers area governments are planning and implementing. It assumes local and regional policies promote the development of commercial areas into mixed-use centers along transportation corridors with sufficient densities and amenities to make them more walkable, bikeable and easily served by transit; thus achieving integration of land-use and transportation systems. The full realization of these areas would result in less population decline in the urban core and greater preservation of open space.”

All of the projects in the “Centers and Nodes” category are unfunded in the current RTP. MPO staff indicated that their inclusion in the plan is a way of drawing attention to the needs and making the case for a dedicated pot of money to be used for these projects. The total cost estimate for the 35 included projects is \$552 million (the total unconstrained plan is for nearly \$19 billion, of which almost \$9 billion is funded). Many of these projects are of the kind completed by MPO programs similar to the TPB’s TLC Program, though the TLC Program does not currently fund capital projects.

Other Variables

There are several other ways in which unconstrained plan elements and prioritization techniques vary across the MPOs studies. One of particular note is the use of cost estimates for unfunded projects or needs. The **Philadelphia** MPO, for instance, does not list specific unfunded projects in its plan, but does indicate funding shortfalls, by category, between the projects submitted and those actually included in the constrained RTP. Overall among the MPOs studied, when project cost estimates are given, in some cases costs for unfunded projects are estimated based on a per-mile or per-facility figure, and in others they are actually derived from project-specific documentation or corridor studies. The amount by which unconstrained plans exceed constrained plan elements is usually between 25 and 50 percent, though because unconstrained elements are often not comprehensive, there may be additional unfunded projects not listed in plan documents.

The frequency with which unconstrained plan elements are updated also varies, but in most cases they are updated every four years in advance of, or concurrent with, the constrained plan updates. When MPOs use preferred scenarios or vision plans as sources of projects and/or frameworks for project prioritization, however, the updates may be less frequent as these plans usually result from extensive public involvement processes. Again, it is worth noting that none of the MPOs investigated do annual updates to their RTPs, as does the TPB. As a result, the preparation for a plan update is usually more extensive and can involve a more deliberate regional prioritization process and greater public involvement.

To: John Swanson

From: Deb Kerson Bilek

Re: Regional Transportation Clearinghouse (aka One Stop Shop for Regional Transportation Planning Activities)

Date: September 27, 2010

As part of the identified Next Steps from the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities, TPB staff will establish a Regional Transportation Clearinghouse on the CLRP website. The Clearinghouse will provide interested citizens with links to up-to-date information on planning activities that are currently underway at the local and state levels throughout the region. This memo details some work that can be done to establish this portal, and describes how the portal could function and be maintained.

Characteristics of the Regional Transportation Clearinghouse Website

The Regional Transportation Clearinghouse will be a “one-stop shop” portal that centralizes information about TPB-related processes and major projects. The goal for establishing this portal is twofold: (1) citizens will be able to easily access a variety of information about TPB processes and major projects, and (2) citizens will be able to access and better understand appropriate avenues for public involvement with regard to regional transportation planning.

Design and Access to the Regional Transportation Clearinghouse Website

The design of the Clearinghouse interface can be consistent with the current the design of the CLRP website. A link titled “Regional Clearinghouse” could be added along the top banner of the homepage of CLRP in order to make the Clearinghouse immediately accessible to users. A link to the Clearinghouse could also be strategically placed throughout the COG website (i.e. on the Transportation “What’s Happening” page, on the Transportation “Getting Involved” page) so that users may access it from different online sources. TPB could also partner with other entities – such as the Greater Greater Washington weblog – to avail this link to users who may be interested in regional transportation planning, but may not visit the COG, TPB, or CLRP websites.

Information available on the Regional Transportation Clearinghouse Website

Using p. 19-31 of the Citizens Guide for Transportation Decision Making as a general rubric, information available on this website will be organized according to three major categories:

- Regional Long-Range Planning Activities
 - Narrative on long-range state-wide transportation plans in Maryland, Virginia and DC can be provided and cross-linked so that users have an interactive interface from which to access information about long-range planning. Information could also be provided on the following: long-range statewide policy plans related to transportation, long-range planning activities at the local level, and sub-range sub-regional planning activities as it relates to planning at the state level.
 - Narrative on the TPB CLRP could be provided and cross-linked with the Maryland, Virginia, and DC information provided above, as well as with the existing CLRP website.

- Six-Year Programming Cycles at the State Level
 - Narrative on six-year state-level programs in Maryland, Virginia and DC could be provided and cross-linked so users have an interactive interface from which to access information about six-year programming cycles. This information could also include links to and information about: Maryland's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP); Virginia's Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP); D.C.'s transportation budget and schedule for public involvement opportunities; and WMATA's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) schedule and public involvement opportunities.
 - Narrative on the TPB TIP could be provided and cross-linked with the Maryland, Virginia, and DC information provided above, as well as with the existing CLRP website.

- Major Project Information
 - The existing CLRP website could be enhanced to provide easy access to supplemental information on major projects and corridor studies. Suggestions for improvements include:
 - Adding additional linked information to existing lists based on information TPB already receives from jurisdictions. In effect, provide more detailed information than what is currently available.
 - Improving maps by making them interactive (i.e. so users may mouse over map and have information, such as an image, brief description, or link to additional information, pops up about that particular item)

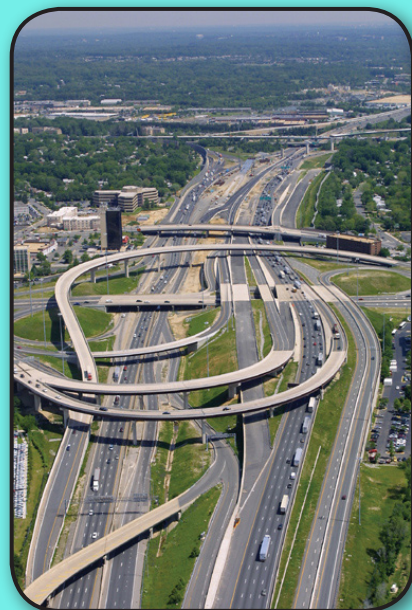
Maintenance of the Regional Transportation Clearinghouse Website

Because information is constantly changing, this Clearinghouse would not be a static site. Rather, it would have to be managed by one or more TPB staff members to ensure that information is updated regularly, and an internal system would have to be established to ensure update occur regularly.

An Introduction to
Transportation Planning
 in the Metropolitan Washington Region

Tying Together a Complex Process

From Woodbridge to Wheaton to Washington, our region's transportation system connects 5 million people every day through thousands of miles of highway lanes, bus routes, rail lines, and a wide network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. In order to maintain and improve this complex system, the region has a transportation planning process based on federal planning requirements and guided by common goals. A broad range of federal, state, and local officials, stakeholders, and members of the public make contributions to this process—no single government or agency controls it.



But there is one group that brings these participants together to coordinate our system's planning and funding. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board—the TPB for short—ensures federal funds are spent wisely and provides a forum for addressing important transportation concerns. Its members include local and state elected officials, representatives of state transportation agencies and Metro as well as non-voting members from key federal agencies and other groups.

TPB Members

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

Maryland House of Delegates
 Maryland Senate
 Virginia House of Delegates
 Virginia Senate

District of Columbia Department of Transportation
 District of Columbia Office of Planning
 Maryland Department of Transportation
 Virginia Department of Transportation
 Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Ex-Officio Members
 U.S. Federal Highway Administration
 U.S. Federal Transit Administration
 Private Providers Task Force
 National Capital Planning Commission
 Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority
 National Parks Service

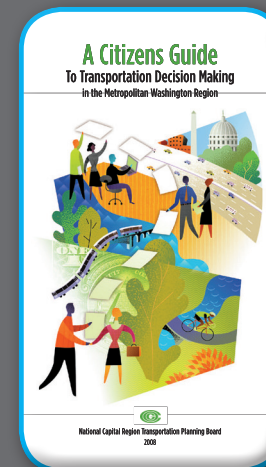
Get Involved

TPB Citizen's Guide

For more detailed information on the planning process, how projects are developed, and how you can get involved, the TPB's Citizen's Guide has your answers.

Visit www.mwcog.org/transportation/involved/ to download the guide and learn more about the process and how you can get involved.

The TPB meets at noon on the third Wednesday of every month at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in northeast Washington, D.C. Public comment is taken at the beginning of every meeting.



An Introduction to
Transportation Planning
 in the Metropolitan Washington Region



The Players

The Process

The Principles

The Players

With two states and the District of Columbia, our region is a complex patchwork of jurisdictions and agencies with different responsibilities that play important roles in the region's transportation planning process.

State departments of transportation—known as DOTs—are largely responsible for building and maintaining the highway systems we rely upon. They also support and in some cases are responsible for public transit, commuter rail, and other systems. The DOTs are the main recipients for federal and state transportation dollars.

Metro and over 40 other agencies provide public transit service in the National Capital Region. The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), which runs Metro, operates on a regional basis across state lines, and it is funded through a variety of sources including state and local government payments.

Local governments have control over land-use planning and zoning, and play a major role in determining a community's transportation needs. Local governments also provide significant funding for transportation. Maryland's local governments tend to have more control over local roads than similar jurisdictions in Virginia.

State legislatures, governors and the District of Columbia mayor are responsible for transportation budgeting. The biggest chunk of funding for the Washington region comes from state and federal sources.



The federal government has a major influence over transportation funding and planning. It controls the Federal Highway Trust Fund, which supports both highway and transit in every state and the District of Columbia. Its laws and regulations all ensure national standards are applied in planning and constructing projects.

Other public sector players participate in our regional transportation planning process, including the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, the National Park Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Interest groups are active in promoting their agendas at many different levels of transportation decision-making. Some groups are formed to support or oppose individual projects, others support particular modes of transportation, and others support issues that relate to broader goals.

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, which is housed at the Council of Governments, is a federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization charged with coordinating transportation planning and funding for the National Capital Region. In addition to its core planning functions, the TPB promotes regional goals through a variety of programs, such as Commuter Connections, the Metropolitan Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) Program, and the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program.

The TPB Planning Process

In order for transportation projects to receive federal funding, they must be included in two plans that the TPB is required to produce under federal law—the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and the six-year Transportation Improvement Program.

These plans must show that the projects have adequate funding (they are not wish lists), contribute to regional air quality improvement goals, and don't have disproportionate negative impacts on low-income or minority communities.

The Principles

The TPB is guided by a policy framework, the *Vision*, which established the region's transportation planning goals and objectives. The Vision's key principles can be summarized as follows:

Provide a range of transportation options. Driving should not be the only option for getting around.

Coordinate transportation and land use planning.

Promote more concentrated mixed-use development, particularly around regional activity centers with access to transportation.

Prioritize maintenance and safety. Citizens need to know they can count on the safe and reliable operation of the transportation system today and tomorrow.

Enhance the management of the existing system.

Using technology and improved coordination systems, squeeze more efficiency out of the system that is already in place.

Improve air quality.

Reduce transportation-related emissions.

Promote alternatives to solo driving.

Promote immediate alternatives to commuting alone by car.

Ensure accessibility for disadvantaged populations. Provide fair and reasonable opportunities for people with special needs.

Provide new capacity when appropriate. Carefully plan new highways, transit and other projects to connect our activity centers and reinforce existing transportation connections.

Achieve funding sustainability. Solve the funding gap. An increasing amount of transportation needs are not being addressed or are being deferred.



Rapid growth. Economic disparities. Aging infrastructure. Stagnant revenues. Climate change. Our biggest challenges are interrelated. In 2010, all 21 local governments in the National Capital Region endorsed Region Forward, a new comprehensive vision plan shaped in part by the TPB Vision and other regional goals.

In support of this effort, the TPB voted to incorporate Region Forward's comprehensive goals into its planning process.