

TPB Gives Green Light to Long-Range Plan Amendments Including Intercounty Connector

Maryland's Intercounty Connector was among a package of amendments to the region's long-range transportation plan approved by the Transportation Planning Board on November 17. The ICC is the first new limited-access highway added to the plan in more than 20 years.

**CLRP/TIP
2004**

The normally two-hour TPB meeting lasted nearly four hours, including five divided votes and one hour of public comment.

The ICC, which has dominated this year's amendment process, is a proposed 18-mile highway linking I-270 near Gaithersburg to I-95/US1 near Laurel. In order to receive federal funding, the ICC, like all regionally significant projects, must be included in the TPB's plan, officially called the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

Supporters of the highway said it must be built to relieve traffic congestion and ease travel across the northern part of the region. They also said it will spur economic development.

"They should call the ICC the Golden Highway," said John Giannetti, Maryland State

See **Long-Range Plan** on page 2

Concept Endorsed for Incident Communications

The TPB on November 17 endorsed a concept proposed by member transportation agencies to strengthen regional transportation coordination during incidents. Under the endorsed concept, an existing partnership of public safety and

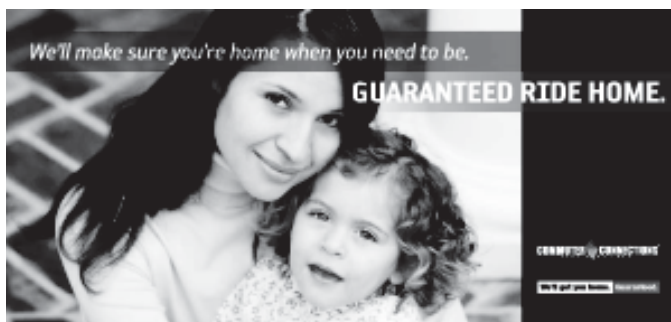
transportation agencies currently developing field personnel communications systems would now also address the need for regionwide communications and coordination during major transportation incidents. This existing partnership is the Capital Wireless Integrated Network (CapWIN) System.

"This could turn out to be one of the most significant actions we take around here," said TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, regional leaders at the TPB and the Council of Governments (COG) have been working intensively to make sure the region is better prepared for large-scale

See **Incident Communications** on page 3

Ride Guarantee Provides "Insurance Policy"



The Guaranteed Ride Home Program, operated through the regional Commuter Connections services, provides an "insurance policy" for people who might otherwise drive alone because they are nervous about getting stranded at work. Recent customer surveys indicate a 95 percent satisfaction rate with the program.

Long-Range Plan *continued from page 1*

Senator. "What raises the economic vitality of our region affects everyone."

Opponents said the ICC would push economic development away from eastern and core jurisdictions. Critics also questioned the ICC's funding plan, which uses Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds to be repaid through future federal transportation funding allocated to Maryland.

Vice Chairman Phil Mendelson said he feared that Maryland was mortgaging its future transportation revenues and that important regional priorities, including funding for transit, would be jeopardized. "This is going to hurt us, and it's going to hurt the regional transportation system, what we are responsible for."

Five TPB members, citing opposition to the ICC, voted against the final approval of the long-range plan. Voting "no" were TPB Vice Chairman Phil Mendelson of the District of Columbia Council, College Park Councilmember Andrew Fellows, Prince George's Councilmember David Harrington, Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter, and Greenbelt Councilmember Rodney Roberts.

Prior to the vote on the CLRP, Mayor Porter offered a motion to remove the ICC from the proposed CLRP. That amendment was defeated by a vote of 17 to 9.

At the November 17 meeting the TPB also approved the FY 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which essentially is a detailed six-year subset of the CLRP.

Before approving the CLRP and TIP, the board first approved an "air quality conformity determination," which is required by federal law. This determination shows that forecasted vehicle emissions based on the region's transportation plan will "conform" to emissions ceilings ("mobile emissions budgets") laid out in the region's air quality improvement plan.

On two occasions earlier this year, the TPB voted against proposals to conduct an air quality analysis that would have isolated the effects of the ICC by measuring anticipated emissions with and without the project. Supporters of the ICC argued that such a focused analysis was not required by federal law, and the project should not be treated differently from other projects included in the long-range plan.

The Maryland Department of Transportation

must still complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the ICC before construction can begin. However, the project cleared a major hurdle with the CLRP amendments because TPB approval is one of the requirements of the NEPA process.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project, a key step in the NEPA process, was released on November 21. Public hearings on the DEIS will be held January 4, 5 and 8 in Greenbelt, Gaithersburg and Silver Spring. For more information see www.iccstudy.org. ■

Other November Agenda Items

Other items on the TPB's November 17 agenda included:

- ***Metro Matters funding added to the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).*** At the request of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the TPB added



Metro Matters includes money for eight-car trains to reduce crowding.

\$1.24 billion to the FY 2005-2010 TIP. The amendment funds essential needs that are packaged in the "Metro Matters" program. On October 21, the WMATA board approved Metro Matters funding after the system's member jurisdictions individually

agreed to pay their designated contributions. The program will fund Metrorail and Metrobus rehabilitation and maintenance projects, rail and bus fleet expansion and associated facilities upgrades and a security program. It includes 185 new buses and 120 new rail cars.

- ***TPB supports study of relocation of the CSX rail line within the District of Columbia.*** The TPB approved a letter from TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman to the National Capital Planning Commission expressing support for the commission's study of the relocation of the active seven-mile stretch of CSX rail line within the District of Columbia. The study will address security concerns created by the movement of hazardous materials on this line. The TPB letter said the potential diversion of hazardous materials "must be assessed for the entire region." ■

Incident Communications

continued from page 1

incidents. DDOT, MDOT, VDOT, WMATA, and other transportation agencies have been revising and improving operations procedures, participating in training and exercises, and improving technologies. They have increasingly recognized the need to address these issues on a collaborative, interagency basis. Additionally, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and others have pushed for a visible, increased level of interagency transportation coordination in the Washington region, pointing to the success of coordination by the TRANSCOM organization of the New York City metropolitan area.

CapWIN was established in 1999 to provide a system for police and other responders from different jurisdictions to share data among their in-vehicle computer systems, and to better communicate among responder vehicles from different organizations and jurisdictions who may be at the scene of a large incident. Because the CapWIN board and staff already include key agencies and jurisdictions from police, fire, and transportation perspectives, regional leaders believe it will be an effective base upon which the new communications/coordination function can be established. This "enhanced CapWIN", likely to be renamed and reorganized to reflect expanded responsibilities, will require dedicated funding and permanent staff. Using CapWIN as a base will avoid many of the difficulties of trying to establish a brand-new entity, and potentially shorten the time needed to get activities fully "up and running."

Although individual agencies would continue

to be the responders to incidents, the new regional system at CapWIN would make sure all transportation, police and other agencies across the region are kept in the information loop so they can make quick decisions to manage sudden transportation system surges, changes, or other "ripple effects" – such as to adjust traffic signal timing or reroute buses. Quick dissemination of information will also help agencies let the public know about the status of transportation systems by providing better information through the media, or, for example, on message signs on highways and in Metro stations.

The new regional transportation coordination effort will utilize and aid the infrastructure for sharing information established two years ago by COG, the Regional Incident Communications and Coordination System (RICCS), as well as help provide information needed by state and local emergency management agencies involved in major regional incidents. John Contestabile of the Maryland Department of Transportation explained that a coordinating agency is needed to make sure the RICCS is fully used and the information gets out.

"You may be the 'owner' of an incident, but it is often very difficult for you to provide regional notification at the same time that you are trying to respond to that incident," said Mr. Contestabile. "So what we're saying is you need a third party whose job is to do that—to send that information out."

The transportation agencies, working with the University of Maryland, have agreed to report progress regularly to the TPB, including a more detailed work plan anticipated for the TPB's January 19 meeting. ■

Upcoming December Agenda

The TPB's December agenda is expected to include:

- Election of TPB officers for 2005.
- Briefing on the draft 2005 Solicitation Document and air quality conformity assessment schedule for 2005. The Solicitation Document lays out the official process for submitting projects for the CLRP and TIP.
- Briefing on the State of the Commute survey conducted by Commuter Connections.
- Briefing on results of the 8-hour air quality conformity assessment of the 2004 CLRP and FY 2005-2010 TIP. New EPA regulations require the TPB to show that under the new "8-hour standard" for ozone analysis, the CLRP and TIP will meet regional air quality goals.
- Briefing on travel characteristics for minority and disadvantaged populations based on the 2000 Census. ■

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Calendar of Events

Dates and times subject to change. All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 N. Capitol St., NE (Enter from 1st Street).

December 2004

- 3 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 3 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 7 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 9 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 10 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 14 Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee (10 am)
- 14 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 15 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

January 2005

- 5 Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 7 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 7 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 11 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 13 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 14 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 18 Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 18 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 18 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 19 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 21 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9 am)
- 25 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) *tentative*
- 27 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- 27 Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

February 2004

- 1 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 4 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 4 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 8 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 10 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 16 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

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