

**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TPB CAC)**

**RECOMMENDATIONS
Regarding the
Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study (RMAS)**

**February 21, 2007
Jim Larsen, 2007 CAC Chair
Emmet Tydings, 2006 CAC Chair**

I. OVERVIEW

The Transportation Planning Board Citizens Advisory Committee (TPB CAC) continues its long-standing interest in the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. The CAC was the first in 2000 to call for a regional "what if" scenario study that would discuss and debate different transportation network and land use alternatives. Since the study's inception the committee has been an integral player in moving the analysis forward and ensuring a robust region-wide debate on the challenges and policy options facing local and state government. For example, in 2003 the committee proposed the "Region Undivided" scenario, to consider job and housing growth shifts to the eastern side of the region. In recent years, the committee has sponsored or participated in forums called "What if the Washington Region Grew Differently?" that seek to educate the public on regional challenges as they are identified in this study.

As 2006 ended, the CAC was pleased to note the release of Phase I of the study in November and the establishment of the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program which will promote and support the initial local efforts to implement some of the study's findings.

TPB staff has indicated that Phase II of the study will focus on the following activities:

- More detailed analysis of already developed scenarios ("drilling down").
- Analysis of variably priced lane networks and implementation options.
- Public outreach to inform as wide a segment of the public as possible of progress on the development and refinement of composite scenarios.

The CAC is pleased that these activities are continuing to move forward. We hope that the new TPB will continue its keen interest in and commitment to this study, and will ensure they are pursued in an organized and purposeful manner.

We believe the study is already making an impact in promoting regional awareness of growth and transportation issues. However we believe the study's greatest potential to influence the regional policy debate still lies ahead. The CAC is offering the following goals and recommendations on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study to help maximize the study's overall usefulness. This document includes recommendations on both the study's short-term implementation and longer-term next steps for scenario planning activities.

II. GOALS

- **The study should be used as a tool to *influence project selection*.**

The CAC believes the study should become a principal tool in project selection and project implementation and should influence local efforts to better integrate land use and transportation planning. As 2006 CAC Chairman Emmet Tydings noted, TPB leaders are on record in stating that the RMAS should influence project selection. For example, in the *Region* magazine, former TPB Chairman Phil Mendelson wrote that “With this information [from the scenario study] available, transportation leaders can give high priority to projects that advance the TPB’s goals.” In that same publication, last year’s TPB Chairman Michael Knapp emphasized that “We need to think about how the study can feed back into planning decisions.”

We understand that ours is a complex, multi-jurisdictional region, and, therefore, project selection can be quite nuanced and will inevitably occur at a variety of levels and in a variety of ways. For this reason, among others, the CAC is not seeking or recommending a regionally-imposed “one-size-fits-all” approach to project selection or implementation. The committee understands that the responsibility for most project selection will — and should — remain at the jurisdictional level, which is responsible for funding and political accountability. But, as a planning tool, the results of RMAS can influence both bottom-up decision-making at the local or state level and regional top-down policy setting and prioritization.

- **The study should be used to *raise awareness with decision-makers and citizens about regional challenges*.**

The CAC believes the region is ripe for an intensified discussion about the challenges of growth and transportation development. The scenario study and the presentation “What if the Washington Region Grew Differently?” provide important tools to bring this discussion into regional focus. The scenario study highlights key regional challenges including the jobs/housing imbalance, the east-west regional divide and the need to use land around transit stations more effectively. These issues have a direct impact on quality-of-life concerns of people across the region. Through past outreach efforts, we know that citizens are tired of congestion, concerned about transportation capacity and worried about affordable housing and access to jobs. The TPB’s scenario study should be used to raise awareness about the connections among these everyday concerns and the challenges of growth.

- **The study should effectively *use public outreach to inform future scenario planning activities, including the development of regional priorities and identification of implementation strategies*.**

The TPB should use the scenario study not just as a tool to raise awareness, but also as a vehicle to obtain public input. This input should be used to develop composite scenarios that identify regional priorities and also identify steps that TPB member jurisdictions can take to implement some of the strategies and projects identified in the study.

The CAC is encouraged by recent TPB staff outreach efforts that are designed to solicit and document public feedback. This outreach is designed to find out how citizens feel about the big-picture, “macro” aspects of the study’s scenarios, as well as localized “micro” issues suggested by the study, including attitudes about how the scenarios would look and feel in people’s own neighborhoods.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Move forward with developing composite scenarios.

Consistent with the TPB’s current work program, the CAC supports the continuing development of composite scenarios that will identify packages of transportation projects and land use strategies that produce positive, synergistic results. The TPB should work to ensure that the analysis of these composite scenarios is useful to decision-makers involved in project selection.

It is particularly important that the RMAS study and its results be fully explained to the wide range of incoming elected officials who will play a major, if not defining, role in local and state transportation project selection, funding and implementation, as well as in local land use planning. Both Mayor Fenty and Governor O’Malley, for example, should be fully briefed on RMAS and what it can contribute to their administrations’ initial efforts to identify and define transportation and land use planning priorities and policies.

2. Use the RMAS composite scenarios to develop a plan of unfunded regional priorities.

As a next step, we believe the composite scenarios should be used to develop a plan of unfunded regional priorities. This recommendation is consistent with our recommendations to the TPB in January 2006, which stated that the TPB should “develop a list or plan of unfunded priority projects that would provide a ‘big-picture’ context for understanding project selection for the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). The development of this plan could start with the projects that have been identified for study in the TPB’s Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.”

Using the composite scenarios as a starting point, this plan could be developed as an unconstrained element of a comprehensive regional transportation plan, similar to the plans of other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Further, this regional transportation aspirations plan should take into consideration the different unconstrained plans that have been developed at the sub-regional, local and state levels, such as the TransAction 2030 Plan in Northern Virginia.

3. Develop useful analysis of existing scenarios (“drill down”) to provide more detail on which actions could be most effective.

The CAC supports TPB staff plans to “drill down” into the scenarios to more extensively examine specific effects, such as impacts on specific transit lines or impacts on specific

localities. The CAC believes that this deeper level of analysis can provide useful information to decision makers and potentially influence project selection. But in order to be effective, this analysis must be accessible. The CAC asks that staff seek to make the results of this “drilling down” as user-friendly as possible to decision-makers, local and state planners, and to the public.

4. *Make available the study findings, including the brochure and “What If” presentation, to local planning efforts.*

The CAC believes that the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study provide an essential regional tool for local land use and other community planning. Many local planning issues and problems are reflected in the regional challenges that have been examined in the RMAS. In recent months, the study was presented to planners and decision-makers in Bowie and in Montgomery County to provide a regional context for very specific local planning challenges. TPB staff should seek additional ways to make the study available to local land use and transportation project planning efforts.

5. *Support and expand the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) program.*

The CAC strongly supports the TPB’s new TLC program and hopes the program will be expanded after its initial pilot phase. As stated in the committee’s resolution to the TPB on October 12, 2006, the CAC “urges the TPB to become a national leader in adopting and generously funding cutting-edge regional transportation planning and capital programs that:

- a. encourage housing and jobs to be located within a pleasant walk or bicycle ride of Metrorail and commuter rail stations and very high frequency service bus stops;
- b. partially reimburse companies that locate in TOD areas and provide transit commute benefits to their employees; and
- c. pay for measures that preserve existing roadway capacity in congested regional travel corridors.”

5. *Expand outreach to educate the public and raise awareness of regional challenges.*

The committee supports efforts to expand outreach related to the scenario study. These expanded outreach efforts should include a greater number of forums and more interactive techniques to help citizens understand regional challenges in an experiential manner.

6. *Establish a process for gathering public input and feeding it back to the TPB for the development of composite scenarios.*

The CAC recommends that the TPB and staff establish a process for public outreach efforts on the development of the composite scenarios. This process should determine the extent of outreach efforts and target a number of outreach forums that will be held around the region. The process also should lay out a method for documenting public input and for using the input in the development of composite scenarios.

7. *Provide public-friendly information on the TPB's variably priced lane scenario as quickly as possible.*

The public has expressed a strong interest in toll lanes during recent presentations around the region. The scenario study's analysis of variably priced lanes could be an important contribution to the regional discussion on this topic. The "What If" presentation should be enhanced as soon as possible with information on the analysis of the variably priced lane scenario.

8. *Analyze a scenario—or scenarios—that assume the conversion of existing general purpose lanes to variably priced lanes.*

Currently, the extensive toll lane scenario under analysis mainly looks at new roads or widening existing roads. The committee would be interested in a scenario that focuses mainly on converting existing lanes to variably priced lanes.

9. *The TPB should establish a working group to look at future phases of and steps to implement the study.*

Once the next steps in the study are completed, the TPB should evaluate how best to advance the study in the future consistent with the Adopted TPB Vision and other regional transportation, land use and integration goals and objectives. Some possible considerations for this future, on-going working group might be:

- a. How will public input be solicited, compiled and reported to TPB for use in the development and evaluation of the composite scenarios?
- b. Have we looked sufficiently at roads scenarios, including a fairly modest roads alternative and at non-motorized mobility options, such as bike and pedestrian-oriented solutions?
- c. Should the study at some point look at more dramatic scenarios that are beyond current local and state plans, including a no-growth scenario or a scenario with Potomac bridges? Have we been creative enough in crafting imaginative scenarios, such as a monobeam scenario?
- d. At what point is the study considered finished? What products are the final "close-out" results, and how will they be reported back to the states and local jurisdictions? How much urgency is there to bring Phase II of the study to completion? Should the study – or at least the follow-up and assessment phases of it – ever be considered "finished"? If not, does it need a different type of institutional vehicle for planning and up-dating, such as is currently done with cooperative forecasting, and the TIP and CLRP?
- e. In general, what is the appropriate group to conduct initial analyses of policy options that implement the study's next or final steps?