

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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TPB Technical Committee
Item #4

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 4, 2013

To: TPB Technical Committee

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

Re: Proposed Responses to Comments Received on the
Draft TPB Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

Following the work session and briefing at the July 17 TPB meeting, a draft version of the RTPP report was released for a 30-day public comment period on July 24. Comments received during this period have been posted on the TPB's "Regional Transportation Priorities Plan" web-site. In addition to these comments, TPB staff has assembled and reviewed comments made by respondents in optional comment boxes in the web-based survey of 660 residents of the Washington region, as well as those by individuals who took this survey after it was made available to other groups and the general public on July 24. All of these comments are also now available for review on the TPB's RTPP web-site, grouped into two categories: those associated with the selected sample of 660 residents; and those associated with other groups and the general public. (In the first category, 418 respondents provided a total of 1887 optional comments, an average of 4.5 comments per respondent. In the second category, 78 of the 141 individuals who took the survey provided 492 optional comments, an average of 6.3 comments per individual.)

The TPB was briefed on the comments received on the draft RTPP at its September 18 meeting, as well as on potential revisions to the plan. In general, the comments received reflected a good understanding of the information presented in the draft RTPP document, and in the web-based survey. Staff is developing a revised version of the RTPP document for release at the October 10 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting and presentation at the October 16 TPB meeting. Another 30 day comment period will be provided on the revised document, from October 11 through November 10. In addition to the comments received to date, staff will also address in the revisions to the RTPP comments or recommendations received at the recent COG Economy Forward event held on September 27. (A summary report on this event is attached to this memorandum). Comments received by November 10 will be incorporated in a revised version for release at the November 14 CAC meeting and presentation at the November 20 TPB meeting. It is anticipated that the final RTPP document will be scheduled for approval by the TPB at its December 18 meeting.

Review of the comments received to date suggests that the following key topics need to be clarified or expanded upon in the revised version of the RTPP:

- (1) Tolling of existing highway lanes
- (2) The relationship between regional strategies and specific programs and projects
- (3) The relationship between the RTPP and the CLRP
- (4) The relationship between the RTPP and Metro's "Momentum" strategic plan
- (5) The relationship between the RTPP and COG's Region Forward initiative
- (6) The process by which challenges and strategies were developed for the RTPP

(1) Tolling of existing highway lanes

A number of comments urged that the RTPP should include a strategy of applying congestion pricing by tolling all existing highway lanes. The TPB has conducted a number of scenario studies involving the tolling of a significant number of existing highway lanes (including the major parkways, for example), and recently completed a study funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the public acceptability of congestion pricing in the Washington region. This latter study included three different congestion pricing scenarios, all of which included pricing of existing highway lanes, and one of which included pricing of the entire highway system. The study found support for some of the scenarios, but also found significant concerns about a number of aspects of the pricing proposals.

During the course of the FHWA sponsored study of the public acceptability of congestion pricing, the new MAP-21 legislation enacted in July of 2012 included language which permits certain types of toll-financed construction activities, including: new highways; new lanes added to existing highways (so long as the number of existing toll-free lanes is not reduced); reconstruction of highways (non-Interstate only); reconstruction or replacement of bridges or tunnels; and capital improvements to existing toll facilities. Also permitted is conversion of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, both on and off the Interstate system.

Some limited opportunities to toll existing highway lanes are provided under MAP-21 through two pilot programs: the Interstate System Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program (ISRRPP) and the Value Pricing Pilot Program (VPPP). The ISRRPP is currently available to only three states (North Carolina, Missouri, and Virginia), and requires approval of a program application by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

With regard to the VPPP, MAP-21 continues FHWA's ability to enter into cooperative agreements, but no additional funds are available after Fiscal Year 2012 for discretionary grants to the 15 state agencies currently authorized to participate. (The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia are included in these 15 authorized agencies). FHWA has indicated that requests for tolling authority under the VPPP will be limited to situations that cannot be accommodated under the mainstream tolling programs, such as the pricing of existing toll-free facilities without substantial reconstruction of those facilities.

As a result of these new MAP-21 legislative provisions, the TPB Aspirations Scenarios were revised to remove any instances where the number of toll-free lanes would be reduced. The results of the

revised scenarios were reported to the TPB in April of 2013, and were used in the RTPP web-based survey and subsequent July 2013 draft RTPP report.

(2) The relationship between regional strategies and specific programs and projects

There were some comments relating to the lack of specific programs and projects in the RTPP, and the exclusive focus on regional strategies. The relationship between strategies, programs, and projects was considered and discussed at some length in the development of the RTPP work scope approved by the TPB in July of 2011. The work scope called for a focus on regional strategies that offer the greatest potential toward addressing regional challenges and that the public can support. A major focus of the RTPP work effort has been in communicating regional goals, challenges, and strategies to representative groups of the public in the region, and seeking their comments and responses. This involved presenting challenges and strategies in a form to which the public could relate and respond. Potential benefits and costs of alternative strategies were presented in largely qualitative terms that would allow survey respondents to provide some rankings of the relative importance of alternative approaches. Respondents were invited to suggest additional strategies in optional comments boxes.

As the RTPP process moves forward, highly ranked strategies can be developed into more specific programs and projects, including those aimed at system maintenance and operations as well as location-specific improvements in system capacity. An in-depth review of benefits and costs based on quantification of program components and location specific factors will be necessary for this level of assessment. The recent “bus-on-shoulder” discussions conducted for a TPB Task Force illustrate the complexity and effort involved in taking a broad strategy like “bus-on-shoulder” to the level of location-specific projects.

(3) The relationship between the RTPP and the CLRP

The draft RTPP report noted that the TPB will soon initiate steps toward the next federally required four-year update of the CLRP, and that the results of the RTPP should be considered in this significant CLRP update. (The 2010 CLRP update was approved the TPB on November 17, 2010, and approved by FHWA and FTA on February 9, 2011. The 2014 update must be completed within four years of these dates.)

A number of comments sought additional information on the CLRP update process, and the revised RTPP report will address this topic in greater detail. Additional discussion will be provided on the continuing and cooperative nature of the CLRP process, and the relationship between inclusion of programs and projects in the CLRP and the extensive location specific studies conducted by sponsoring agencies. It will be noted in particular that the CLRP is not “carved in stone”, and that in the past CLRP projects have been modified and even removed entirely along with the addition of new programs and projects. In addition, the report will note that the TPB will shortly launch a new “Transportation Planning Information Hub for the National Capital Region” that will describe transportation planning activities at the regional, state, and local levels, and provide links to high profile projects, documents, and resources.

(4) The relationship between the RTPP and Metro's "Momentum" strategic plan

Metro's "Momentum" strategic plan document was developed and reviewed during the spring and summer of 2013, somewhat in parallel with the web-based survey and drafting of the July 24, 2013 version of the RTPP. "Momentum" identifies three major activities: maintain the existing system; increase system and core capacity and improve the effectiveness of the rail and bus networks (Metro 2025); and a long-range Regional Transit System Plan which is still under development (Metro 2040).

The first two of these three Momentum elements are consistent with Priority One (Metro and Highway Repair Needs) and Priority Two (Address Transit Crowding and Roadway Congestion) in the RTPP, and these Momentum elements will be included explicitly in the discussion of Priorities One and Two in the Recommendations chapter of the RTPP. If specific project elements and funding mechanisms can be identified for these two elements of Momentum in the next few months, they could be considered for incorporation in the upcoming 2014 update of the CLRP.

(5) The relationship between the RTPP and COG's Region Forward Initiative

The relationship between the RTPP and Region Forward is discussed briefly in Chapter 1 of the RTPP. The September 27 COG event, "Economy Forward: Help Shape the Future of the Region," provided an opportunity for regional decision-makers and stake-holders to discuss the relationship between Region Forward, Economy Forward, the Regional Activity Centers Strategic Development Plan, and the RTPP. A brief summary report for this event has been developed and is attached to this memorandum. A more in-depth report which analyzes all of the comments recorded from the 16 discussion tables will be developed over the next three months.

Key outcomes of the September 27 event will be incorporated into the next version of the RTPP. A key theme will be the need for more collaboration among the area's local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and citizens to advance regional priorities, recognizing that transportation and land use decision-making is very decentralized throughout the region. Success will require greater focus on "thinking regionally, acting locally."

(6) The process by which challenges and strategies were developed for the RTPP

The challenges and strategies presented in the RTPP were developed by TPB staff based on the range of technical data and forecasting resources available within the TPB process, the input of the TPB and its committees, and subcommittees, and the ongoing suggestions of citizen and stakeholder groups. The overall objective of this effort was to frame the challenges and strategies in a form that could be readily understood and commented upon by members of the general public, most specifically in the form of a web-based survey. This provided an opportunity to obtain feedback from a representative sample of the region's citizens, and resulted in some valuable insights on how best to frame the priorities in the RTPP.

Summary Report

Economy Forward
Washington, D.C. – September 27, 2013



More than 100 leaders from around metropolitan Washington – elected officials and community representatives - met last week to identify the most important steps needed to develop the region and ensure it remains one of the world’s most attractive places to live and do business.

The day-long, interactive session also produced strong support for more collaboration among the area’s local jurisdictions, stakeholders and citizens to advance regional priorities. The meeting focused on transportation and land-use concerns, which grew out of a series of strategies called *Economy Forward* developed in 2012 at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The strategies aim to connect a diverse web of Activity Centers – or mini-downtown locations that include residential, business and retail segments – to convenient transit and transportation hubs.

The participants were seated around large round tables to discuss the need to increase regional collaboration, develop strong Activity Centers and improve support for the region’s transportation needs. Between a third and half of the participants were already familiar with those proposals. Using computers and voting keypads, the participants’ conclusions were tabulated by America Speaks, a nonprofit company that specializes in enhancing citizen engagement.

This document summarizes the ideas generated by participants in the meeting and polling results.

Preliminary Polling: Who was at the meeting and what did they know about the plans?

Where do you live?

DC	21%
Maryland	31%
Virginia	48%

What sector do you represent?

Elected Office	14%
Government Staff	30%
Business	13%
Non-profit	24%
Community/Citizen Leader	14%
Other	6%

What best describes your knowledge of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan?

I know a lot	39%
I know some	45%
I don't know much at all	15%

What best describes your knowledge of the Activity Centers Strategic Development Plan?

I know a lot	35%
I know some	55%
What's an Activity Center?	10%

What best describes your knowledge of Region Forward or Economy Forward?

I know a lot about both	35%
I know a lot about Region forward, but not Economy Forward	36%
I know a lot about Economy forward, but not Region Forward	4%
I don't know much about either, but I am a forward thinker	25%

Table Discussions

Over the course of several hours, participants talked in small groups and generated ideas around each of the following topics:

- Regional Issues of Greatest Concern
- Challenges to Collaboration
- Creating Vibrant Activity Centers
- Regional Transportation Priorities

For each discussion, the theme team reviewed ideas from the table discussions and generated a list of the most common themes from all the tables which was then reported back to participants. For all but the Regional Issues discussion, the participants were then asked to use their individual polling keypads to prioritize the list of themes.



Regional Issues of Greatest Concern

- Integrating various planning processes like transportation, environment & development so we don't miss the boat
- Committing to funding transportation
- Ensuring that economic development is coordinated, equitable, and forward-looking
- Overcoming competition between our jurisdictions – need to collaborate to be competitive as a region
- Providing greater transportation connectivity and options
- Planning for environmental sustainability
- Reduce congestion

Challenges to Collaboration

Which 2 of these challenges are holding us back the most in acting regionally? (% of participants)

- No regional decision-making and implementation authority – “region needs one voice” (55%)
- No incentive for regional collaboration – “we’ve never had an economic incentive to collaborate” (49%)
- Competition between jurisdictions (37%)
- Too much fragmentation of services and funding (21%)
- Lack of communication regarding goals and priorities at each level of government (15%)
- Not enough trust between local governments and business - “businesses often see government as adversarial” (10%)

Creating Vibrant Activity Centers

For creating vibrant activity centers, which 3 will be the most important to implement? (% of participants)

- Improve accessibility to and within Activity Centers through a variety of transportation options (54%)
- Focus development around existing infrastructure and transportation (49%)
- “Create places where people want to be” – “attractive & welcoming to diverse groups” (38%)
- Ensure a balance of jobs and housing (32%)
- Invest strategically in specific Activity Centers (29%)
- Understand unique characteristics and market conditions of each Activity Center (27%)
- Build public-private partnerships; leverage private investment (24%)
- Increase public involvement to identify local priorities (ex. Charrettes) (17%)
- Make affordable housing options available (14%)

For creating vibrant activity centers, which 3 will be the most challenging to implement? (% of participants)

- Make affordable housing options available (77%)
- Ensure a balance of jobs and housing (50%)
- Invest strategically in specific Activity Centers (36%)
- Improve accessibility to and within Activity Centers through a variety of transportation options (33%)
- Build public-private partnerships; leverage private investment (30%)
- Increase public involvement to identify local priorities (ex. Charrettes) (26%)
- “Create places where people want to be” – “attractive & welcoming to diverse groups” (17%)
- Focus development around existing infrastructure and transportation (14%)
- Understand unique characteristics and market conditions of each Activity Center (0%)

Regional Transportation Priorities

Which 3 will be most important in implementing our regional transportation priorities? (% of participants)

- Develop a dedicated regional funding stream (gas tax, sales tax, etc) (58%)
- Use what we already have (existing transportation infrastructure) to create new options (42%)
- Increase public engagement so people better understand needs, priorities & consequences of not acting (36%)
- Build partnerships with big employers to anchor activity centers – Federal government, hospitals, etc (34%)
- Create a performance system with measurable goals and outcomes (34%)
- Create a regional transportation authority with power to regulate, prioritize & implement (32%)
- Focus on small improvements first “low hanging fruit” that has a big pay off to rebuild public trust (28%)
- Move beyond the big picture to identify specific priority projects (13%)



In addition to identifying the most common ideas, the theme team also identified some “gems”: ideas that only appeared once, but seemed interesting and worth sharing with all of the participants.

Creating Vibrant Activity Centers - GEMS

- Create a regional infrastructure bank to develop new revenue sources
- “Health needs to be part of the vision for activity centers”
- Create incentives for home ownership (not rentals)
- Make information about transportation systems integrated and accessible to all

Regional Transportation Priorities - GEMS

- Make transportation network more adaptable to meet the needs of future growth, even those we can’t foresee
- Get region to advocate together in States & the Hill for transportation funding



ECONOMY FORWARD
HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE REGION