
**TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

June 17, 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT

Charles Allen – DC Council
Samuel Stephens – DC Council
Jim Sebastian – DC DOT
Mark Rawlings – DC DOT
Kristin Calkins – DC Office of Planning
Kelly Russell – City of Frederick
Neil Harris – Gaithersburg
Emmet V. Jordon - Greenbelt
Gary Erenrich – Montgomery County Executive Office
Deni Taveras – Prince George’s County
Victor Weissberg – Prince George’s County Executive Office
Bridget Newton – Rockville
Kacy Kostiuik – Takoma Park
R. Earl Lewis, Jr. – Maryland DOT
Canek Aguirre – Alexandria
Walter Alcorn – Fairfax County
James Walkinshaw – Fairfax County
Evan Glass – Montgomery County
Kristin Umstadd – Loudoun County
Robert Brown – Loudoun County
Pamela J. Sebesky – City of Manassas
Victor Angry – Prince William County
David Snyder – Falls Church
Rene’e Hamilton – Virginia DOT
Chris Laskowski – DC Council
Denise Mitchell – College Park
Dan Malouff – Arlington County
Jason Groth – Charles County
Mark Korman – Maryland House
Tammy Stidham – NPS
David Edmondson – City of Frederick

MWCOG STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

Kanti Srikanth
Chuck Bean
Lyn Erickson
Tim Canan
Mark Moran
Andrew Meese
Tim Canan
Sergio Rittaco
Bryan Hayes

John Swanson
Joh Schermann
Dusan Vuksan
Deborah Etheridge
Charlene Howard
Deborah Etheridge
Michael Farrell
Abigail Zenner

Kari Snyder - MDOT
M Norman Whitaker – VDOT
Mark Phillips – WMATA

1. VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES, MEMBER ROLL CALL, AND VIRTUAL PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

Chair Russell called the meeting order. She said that the meeting would use the same procedures for questions and comments that it used at previous online meetings. She said that the first item was a roll call of members followed by public comment.

Ms. Erickson conducted a roll call. Members that were present were listed on the first page of this document.

Chair Russell asked if any comments were received from the public.

Ms. Erickson said that there was an email from Mr. Kandasamy.

Mr. Kandasamy, in an email, requested that slugging pickup locations be added to the Commuter Connections website. He also asked that slugging be added to outreach and promotional materials for Visualize 2045. He said he feels he hasn't received a response on his previous request and asked that the board take action on this topic.

Mr. Srikanth said that he addressed the Citizens Advisory Committee, of whom Mr. Kandasamy is a member, in January. At that time, he directly addressed Mr. Kandasamy's request. He said that the state DOTs that oversee Commuter Connections have responded to Mr. Kandasamy's requests as well. He said that Commuter Connections has taken action on this topic.

Mr. Ramfos said that information about slugging was added to the Commuter Connections website in the summer of 2019. He said that the CarpoolNow app was enhanced to add park and ride lots in the region where carpools are formed. He said that a page was also added to the CarpoolNow website that includes the information.

Ms. Taveras asked to speak. She asked that the TPB send a letter to Maryland's governor and the head of MDOT to encourage them to complete negotiations with the Purple Line Transit Constructors (PLTC) to expedite the completion of the Purple Line.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 20, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2020 TPB meeting.

Ms. Sebesky seconded the motion and it was approved by the board.

3. TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

There were no comments or questions about the Technical Committee Report.

4. CAC AND AFA REPORT

Ms. Abeles referred to the CAC report and said that the committee met on June 11. She said that the CAC liked the list of Transit Access Focus Areas. She said that bicycle and pedestrian access to transit is important to many committee members from across the region. She said that the committee was briefed on the Transportation Safety Recommendations. She said that the committee has been discussing safety for over a year and that many of the recommendations made by staff reflect input from those committee discussions. She said that the committee will discuss the safety recommendations further at the July meeting. She said that the committee also discussed the VRE-MARC Run-Through study and the update for the TPB's Participation Plan. She said that the committee thanked Mr. Wilhite for his service on the committee.

Ms. Newton thanked Ms. Abeles and the committee for volunteering to advise the TPB.

Ms. Kostiuk said that the AFA met on June 2. She referred to the AFA report and said that the committee was briefed on the Participation Plan update. The committee discussed and provided feedback on the participation policy. The committee said that more audio options would make it easier for people with vision impairments to access TPB materials. They suggested addressing the medium or method of delivering materials in the policy. The committee reminded staff that it is important to reach people who have not previously been engaged at the TPB. The committee was also briefed on Connected and Autonomous Vehicles. She said that the committee is concerned about safety and equity related to CAVs. The committee also discussed requirements for universal design and accessibility, hacking, and the potential equity benefits.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE ACTIONS AND DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There were no comments or questions for this item.

6. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Russell said that as fellow humans living and working together in our communities, it is our responsibility and obligation to conduct our daily activities thoughtfully, and with fairness and respect for one another. She said that at COG and the TPB, this credo is reflected in the conscious effort to strive for equity in the organization's work – in the products produced and the processes that are utilized. She said she could not overstate the importance of ensuring that equity is an integral part of the TPB's thinking, conversations, and actions. However, she said the reality is that there is much more work to do. She said the events across the region, the country, and around the world, following the senseless murder of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer has in recent weeks, brought this deficiency into sharper focus. She said she wanted to assure everyone that the TPB will not just continue its commitment to equity, but also work diligently and deliberately to enhance its conscious efforts toward equity in everything it does. She said she was sure each of the TPB members will continue to do the same as they support their jurisdictions, communities, and agencies in developing plans and programs focused on providing fair and equitable transportation and mobility, and meeting accessibility needs of the residents and travelers in this region.

Chair Russell announced that Ms. Hamilton is retiring from VDOT after 32 years of service. She said that the board appreciates her work with the TPB over the past 10 years. She read the acknowledgment of service that was included on a certificate that was sent to Ms. Hamilton.

Ms. Hamilton thanked her colleagues at VDOT and the TPB staff.

INFORMATION ITEMS

7. SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Schermann referred to his materials and said that the draft resolution would be presented in four parts. In the first part of the proposed resolution, the TPB urges members to reaffirm their commitment to roadway safety as a top priority and furthermore to take actions to increase seat belt use, reduce speeding, reduce impaired driving, and reduce distracted driving. He said that making progress on these four behaviors would result in fewer crashes and also would make the crashes that do happen less devastating. In the second part, the TPB urges its members to commit to working individually and/or collectively to implement the broad range of safety measures developed as part of the study. About 50 recommended safety measures were identified in this part and were described in an attachment to the resolution. In the third part the TPB would establish a Regional Roadway Safety Program which would be funded by the TPB with assistance from member state DOTs. This program would provide assistance to member jurisdictions as they work to improve safety and also help the region implement projects, programs or policies to improve safety outcomes for all roadway users. The fourth part calls upon TPB member jurisdictions and agencies to adopt equitable Vision Zero policies and develop local roadway safety plans and ensure their equitable impacts on all roadway users. It also calls upon its member states to adopt primary seatbelt legislation and increase the use of ignition interlock devices for impaired driving offenders.

Chair Russell reiterated her early remarks to integrate equity considerations into everything the TPB does, including the resolution that staff will bring to the board for approval in July. She proposed the language to be considered for inclusion in the resolution, and read it: *Every action the TPB considers, every debate we have, and every decision we make as the region's MPO must be viewed through the lens of equity, fairness, and non-discrimination. Past actions that have been exclusionary or had disparate impacts on underrepresented communities must be recognized, and actions taken to correct or mitigate the resulting unfairness. From infrastructure to education and enforcement, we must act fairly, without partiality or prejudice, to ensure all people have true access to safe and equitable mobility. The TPB Officers and staff are committed to this mission.*

Mr. Jordan referenced slide four. He asked if the behaviors were ranked from most impactful to least impactful.

Mr. Schermann said they were not put in rank order. He said that not wearing seatbelts is one of the primary factors in fatal crashes. He said all the factors are important.

Mr. Jordan said it might be helpful if there was a ranking, or an indication of change over time. He also suggested that ease of implementation might be a useful consideration.

Ms. Kostiuk said that this is good work and it moves the region in the right direction. She asked if it was possible to include a reporting mechanism for progress reports. Regular assessment can help determine effectiveness.

Mr. Erenrich thanked staff for working with the Technical Committee to go over the resolution. He said it is very promising. He said that an act that Congress is considering as part of the reauthorization of the federal transportation bill includes language that would require monitoring and would specify that the number of fatalities and serious injuries cannot increase.

Mr. Weissberg thanked staff for this robust initiative. He said that adding equity to how we look at everything is very important.

Mr. Lewis said that the resolution was strong. He said that federal planning funds can be used to support the program as well is something that makes this good to move forward with.

Mr. Alcorn asked to make sure that in the resolution road design issues from the report are called out.

He said that Fairfax County is spending a lot of time improving roadway designs to improve pedestrian safety.

Mr. Schermann said that the attached document with the large list of recommendations included engineering safety improvements. He said that list can be updated if something identified that is missing.

Mr. Alcorn said it is important to call out roadway design.

Mr. Allen thanked staff for this work that takes a data driven approach to analyze safety for the whole region. He said many of the recommendations dovetail well with efforts that the District is making as part of Vision Zero. However, he said that he thought that the recommendations would not include calling for a seatbelt infraction to be used as a primary reason for pulling someone over. He said that stops like this are disproportionately used against communities of color. He said it is important to be thoughtful about recommendations regarding law enforcement initiating stops.

Mr. Schermann said staff received Mr. Allen's input on this recommendation. He said that it was being presented because it is a strategy that works. He said that the board should decide whether or not it should be included.

Mr. Srikanth said that particular strategy is currently law in the District and Maryland. He said it is not law in Virginia. He said that this inconsistent approach in interconnected regions poses an issue in terms of getting people to adhere to a particular behavior or safety practice. Noting the statement about racial inequities in enforcement of many traffic laws, he said that he trusts and believes it is best to lead with engineering solutions and educational strategies to improve road user safety. He said that the recommendations would not be to go to enforcement as a preferred strategy. He added that enforcement can be an effective strategy as long as it is done in an equitable manner.

Mr. Allen said he agrees that standardization across the region is important. He said that the District has collected several years of data that shows a disproportionate number of black drivers have been pulled over. He said he appreciates the chair's remarks and thinks it is important to review this through a racial equity lens. He said the law enforcement regime plays an important role in safety and this is something that the board can wrestle with at the next meeting. We warned that this enforcement strategy may unintentionally create interactions with law enforcement that are not what the strategy is trying to create. He asked the board to think about this so that it can be discussed at the July meeting. He said that this is really great and thoughtful work.

Chair Russell asked everyone to consider Mr. Allen's remarks.

Ms. Umstadd said that there are quite a few Loudoun County residents that do not own cars and rely either on walking or biking. She said she was curious to know if there was data about whether fatalities and serious injuries occur during the evening or day. She asked if there was information or an education campaign to encourage people to make themselves more visible at night.

Mr. Malouff cautioned against recommendations that people wear a uniform or carry special equipment to walk around their community.

Mr. Snyder said he supports the proposed statement on equity. He said that more thought needs to be put into how pedestrians protect themselves. He said it is critical that drivers protect pedestrians, but he would like to see recommendations about good practices for pedestrians. He addressed Mr. Allen's comments and said that seatbelt enforcement does save lives and prevent injuries. He suggested that the recommendation could include comments to address equity concerns. He said he hoped that language can be worked out before the next board meeting. He also asked about commercial vehicle crashes. He said that this needs to be dealt with, especially on certain parts of the Beltway.

Ms. Sebesky thanked Chair Russell for her leadership and TPB staff for their work on the study and recommendations. She said she appreciated the board discussion.

Mr. Phillips endorsed the proposed equity statement and Ms. Kostiuik's recommendation for an impact assessment of TPB safety actions. He said that road diets should be used judiciously because they can forego bus priority lanes and other prioritization treatments.

8. TRANSIT ACCESS FOCUS AREAS

Mr. Swanson referred to the mailout materials and briefed the board on the identification of a list of Transit Access Focus Areas (TAFAs). He said that staff had identified the TAFAs to be places that should be prioritized for improvements in pedestrian and bicycle access to transit. He said that the draft list of TAFAs identified 49 locations, which are places with existing deficiencies in infrastructure for walking and biking, as well as being locations with significant densities of jobs and housing. He said the project originated in the seven aspirational initiatives approved by the TPB as part of Visualize 2045, the long-range plan approved in 2018. He said the TAFAs list, among other things, would be used as a criterion for selecting projects for the Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program and the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program. He described the methodology for identifying the TAFAs and he presented the draft list. He said this project was being presented as an information item in June and would be presented as an action item in July.

Mr. Phillips congratulated staff for the development of this product and expressed appreciation for the inclusion of WMATA throughout the development process. He called attention to the fact that 3% of the region's land area is within a half-mile of transit. He said this land-use context should be emphasized more extensively when talking about the region's transit mode share.

Mr. Brown noted that one of the station areas on the list— Ashburn— had been a TLC project in the past.

Mr. Snyder expressed appreciation for the inclusion of West Falls Church because it will be seeing a lot of development in the near future. He asked why East Falls Church was not included.

Mr. Swanson said that East Falls Church was not included because its anticipated density was expected to be relatively low. He noted that staff expects to update the list on a regular basis and so that location will be considered in the future.

Mr. Srikanth added that improvements at all station areas are important, but from a regional perspective, the TPB staff sought to develop a limited, prioritized list.

Mr. Malouff agreed that East Falls Church merits investments, but he said that Arlington understands the TPB's plans for regional prioritization through the TAFAs project.

Ms. Newton asked why Twinbrook was included but not Rockville Town Center.

Mr. Swanson said that Twinbrook scored the highest of the station areas in Rockville. He said that each jurisdiction was roughly assigned a designated number of station areas for the list.

Mr. Harris said he did not think Metropolitan Grove was the right selection from Gaithersburg for inclusion on the list. He thought the transit center at Lakeforest Mall would be a more appropriate choice.

Mr. Swanson said that he believed the choice of Metropolitan Grove was based on input received by staff. However, he said that TPB staff would revisit the selection with Mr. Harris and Gaithersburg staff.

Ms. Taveras complimented staff for this work and said the selections for Prince George's County were appropriate. She was pleased with the inclusion of West Hyattsville, which will be a center for development in the future. She noted that Cheverly was not on the list, which she regretted.

Chair Russell said that specific jurisdictional concerns should be addressed in separate conversations with TPB staff.

9. NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL NETWORK

Mr. Farrell referred to his presentation and provided a brief history of the National Capital Trail. He said that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee worked with jurisdiction and agency partners helped develop the trail in 2014. He said that the trail was included as one of the Aspirational Initiatives in Visualize 2045. In 2019, the TPB asked staff to expand the trail to include all TPB jurisdictions. More detail on the process for developing this expanded trail can be found in the materials. He said that this trail can be used to help prioritize funding. He said that the trail will be brought back to the board for adoption in July 2020.

Mr. Lewis said that the governors of Maryland and Virginia announced the Capital Beltway Accord which will construct a new American Legion Bridge that would include new bicycle infrastructure.

OTHER ITEMS

10. ADJOURN

No other business was brought before the board. The meeting adjourned at 2:01 p.m.