

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
February 19, 2014**

Members and Alternates Present

Monica Backmon, Prince William County
Bob Brown, Loudoun County
Marc Elrich, Montgomery County
Dennis Enslinger, City of Gaithersburg
Lyn Erickson, MDOT
Jay Fisette, Arlington County
Jason Groth, Charles County
Rene'e N. Hamilton, VDOT
Cathy Hudgins, Fairfax County
Sandra Jackson, FHWA
John D. Jenkins, Prince William County
Shyam Kannan, WMATA
Tim Lovain, City of Alexandria
Michael May, Prince William County
Karen Oliver, City of Falls Church
Mark Rawlings, DC-DOT
Rodney Roberts, City of Greenbelt
Kelly Russell, City of Frederick
Paul Smith, Frederick County
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County
Kanathur Srikanth, VDOT
Harriet Tregoning, DC Office of Planning
Jonathan Way, City of Manassas
Victor Weissberg, Prince George's County
Patrick Wojahn, City of College Park
Scott K. York, Loudoun County
Sam Zimbabwe, DDOT

MWCOG Staff and Others Present

Gerald Miller
Robert Griffiths
Nicholas Ramfos
Andrew Meese
Eric Randall
John Swanson
Jane Posey
Martha Kile
Andrew Austin
Dan Sonenklar
Ben Hampton
Bryan Hayes
Sarah Crawford
Debbie Leigh
Deborah Etheridge
Daivamani Sivasailam
Dusan Vuksan
Wenjing Pu
C. Patrick Zilliacus
Mark Moran
Erin Morrow
Jessica Mirr
Steve Kania COG/OPA
Matt Kronenberger COG/OPA
Amanda Campbell COG/DEP
Sunil Kumar COG/DEP
Judi Gold CM Bowser
Jameshia Peterson DDOT
Danielle Wesolek WMATA
Nick Alexandrow PRTC
Faramarz Mokhtari MNCPPC/Prince George's County
Adam Sheffer AISI
Jeanette Tejede de Gomez AAA Mid-Atlantic
Mike Lake Fairfax County DOT
Malcolm Watson Fairfax County DOT
Patrick Durany Supervisor Jenkins' Office/Prince William County
Jonathan Berard GWU
Bill Orleans

1. Public Comment on TPB Procedures and Activities

Vice Chair Lovain said he was filling in for Chair Wojahn who was out of the country.

Mr. Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, said it is premature to include the Dulles Air Cargo Access Highway in the CLRP. He also said that the region, and specifically the transportation sector, is not doing enough to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. York responded that the Loudoun Board of Supervisors will receive a report from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on the air cargo road, noting that it is one of four options for cargo access. He said the Board of Supervisors would not support the option requiring the largest funding. He added that the roadway is not premature and is needed to relieve congestion in Loudoun County.

2. Approval of Minutes of January 15 Meeting

A motion to adopt the minutes of the January 15 TPB meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Report of the Technical Committee

Mr. Srikanth reviewed the report of the Technical Committee, which met on February 7. He said the Committee reviewed the items on the TPB agenda, including the projects to be included in the air quality conformity analysis of the 2014 CLRP; the Place + Opportunity report adopted by the COG Board in January; the draft FY 2015 Commuter Connections Work Program; and the draft FY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program. He said the Committee also reviewed two additional items: WMATA's light rail transit and streetcar interoperability study; and an update on the MARC system's growth and investment plan.

4. Report of the Citizen Advisory Committee

Ms. Loh introduced herself as the 2014 Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and said the February CAC meeting was cancelled due to weather. She referred the TPB to the 2013 CAC End-of-Year Report, which she said highlights the work of the CAC on the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP), among other things. She said a major focus of the 2014 CAC would be continuing to follow up on the RTPP, which the CAC believes requires constant monitoring and updating in order to move forward with its implementation. She said the CAC is interested in taking a fresh look at how funding from the federal Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) Program is allocated and used in the region.

5. Report of Steering Committee

Mr. Miller said the Steering Committee met on February 7 and passed a resolution requested by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to amend the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to fund the relocation of utilities on an interchange on I-95. He referred to the Letters Sent/Received packet, and noted a letter from the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration approving the conformity of the 2013 CLRP that the TPB adopted in July 2013. He said the second letter was from the Prince George's County Council, urging the US Senate and US House of Representatives to support the mass transit federal personal income tax benefit.

6. Chair's Remarks

Mr. Lovain called on Chuck Bean to brief the TPB on the status of the search for the new Director of the Department of Transportation Planning.

Mr. Bean said the RFP was issued in December to hire a search firm to assist in the hiring of a new transportation director. He announced that Slavin Management Consultants were selected, and that the firm's most recent searches were for the executive director of a rail system in Chicago and the county executive in Prince William County. He said that he expects to announce the search for the director in March, and that the search would continue through April. He said that in May, applicants would be screened and interviewed. He hoped the selection would be made in June. He said he expects the search to be local, regional, and national. He said the selection panel, which will advise him, will include the TPB Chair, the COG Board Chair, and the TPB Technical Committee Chair. He explained six essential attributes that would be expected of a new director. He said he is consulting with TPB staff, as well as the staff of state departments of transportation, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and leading MPOs across the country.

ACTION ITEM

7. Approval of Green Streets Policy for the National Capital Region

Mr. Farrell presented the final draft of the Green Streets Policy for the National Capital Region. He said that this policy endorses the concept of Green Streets and encourages TPB member jurisdictions to develop their own Green Streets policies. There were no changes to the policy following the February TPB discussion of the draft. He said that after approval TPB staff will hold follow-up implementation workshops that assemble stakeholders and jurisdiction staff who are responsible for Green Streets implementation.

Mr. Smith stated that it is very important that this policy encourages jurisdictions to do what is practicable. He said that as long as the policy encourages jurisdictions to adopt Green Streets policies that are practicable and feasible, he thinks it is a great policy.

Mr. Fisette made a motion to adopt the resolution. Ms. Tregoning seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

INFORMATION ITEMS

8. Update on Project Submissions and Schedule for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment, and Status of the Financial Analysis for 2014 CLRP

Mr. Griffiths briefed the Board on his memorandum summarizing the preliminary project submissions from each of the three states and WMATA. He said that the final list of proposed project submissions, as well as the draft scope of work for the air quality conformity assessment, would be released on March 13 for a 30-day public comment period. He said that the Board would be asked to approve the project submissions and the scope of work at its meeting on April 16. He reminded Board members that the process cannot be delayed any more than it already has been and still meet federal deadlines.

Mr. Lovain opened the floor to questions.

Mr. Way asked whether the priorities and strategies outlined in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, which was approved by the TPB in January, would influence the projects submitted for inclusion in the 2014 CLRP update, and how that might affect the schedule.

Mr. Griffiths said that because the Priorities Plan was just approved in January, it would probably have a greater impact on future CLRP updates than the current one.

Ms. Tregoning expressed disappointment that a more explicit connection would not be made between the Priorities Plan and the 2014 CLRP update. She said she would like to see where in the plan update process it would be appropriate to consider whether the decisions the Board makes, especially regarding projects to be included in the CLRP, are supporting or undermining the shared goals and priorities outlined in the Priorities Plan and other COG planning documents, like the Climate Change report and Region Forward. She asked staff to bring to the March TPB meeting a revised CLRP update schedule showing where those questions could or should be asked.

Mr. Griffiths said that the work program for the next fiscal year calls for the kind of analysis and information that might inform the Board's decision-making.

Ms. Tregoning suggested that a short-term working group should be formed within the TPB to help guide efforts to operationalize and integrate the various planning activities carried out as part of Region Forward, the Climate Change report and the Priorities Plan.

Mr. Griffiths suggested that the Region Forward Coalition could provide the appropriate framework for integrating the activities.

Ms. Tregoning reiterated her concern that the outcomes of those various planning activities have not yet had a direct impact on decision-making and that they might not without the focused attention of a dedicated group.

Ms. Erickson proposed working through the State Technical Working Group and the Technical Committee to identify ways to operationalize the Priorities Plan and other planning activities.

Ms. Tregoning reiterated her interest in forming a working group, outside of the groups mentioned by Ms. Erickson, to help guide such activities. She suggested Mr. Fiset as someone who might be able to be involved in or lead such work, given his involvement to date in various climate-related efforts.

Ms. Loh told the Board that she expects the CAC at its March meeting to pass a formal resolution calling on the TPB to identify ways to operationalize the Priorities Plan and encouraged the Board to begin that process now instead of waiting for further prodding.

Mr. Kannan pointed out that TPB staff have proposed conducting a comparative assessment of the CLRP and the Priorities Plan, and he suggested that that analysis be integrated into the other components of the annual CLRP update process. He also pointed out that the Priorities Plan says that “the TPB will have an opportunity to review, assess, and discuss” the extent to which the projects submitted for inclusion in the 2014 CLRP update support the priorities in the Priorities Plan. He said that if the Board did not have such an opportunity, it would be in conflict with the adopted plan.

Mr. Griffiths said that the Board and the public can, in fact, comment on whether the project submissions being proposed for the 2014 CLRP update are supportive of the priorities in the Priorities Plan. But, he said, a detailed assessment would have to come after the update has been completed. He also pointed out that funding has been identified for state of good repair for transit as well as some new transit services which are important priorities in the Priorities Plan.

Mr. Way reiterated his concern that integrating the Priorities Plan and CLRP would become a huge analytical effort. He suggested taking a few of the major projects and conducting analysis on those in order to develop the appropriate criteria for evaluating other projects.

Mr. Fiset asked staff to develop a plan for how to take advantage of the policy expertise on the TPB to integrate the Priorities Plan and the CLRP. He echoed Mr. Way’s suggestion that staff identify a handful of projects to use as examples in developing a more robust assessment system.

Vice Chair Lovain asked staff to brief the TPB in March on a plan for implementation and coordination between the CLRP and Priorities Plan, as well as Region Forward and other plans like the Place+Opportunity.

Mr. Smith cautioned the Board and staff against trying to develop a system that is too specific and quantitative. He said he thought the best that could be done would be to make sure that

officials and implementing agencies consider the major factors and principles in the Priorities Plan when making decisions.

9. Briefing on “Place+Opportunity: Strategies for Creating Great Communities and a Strong Region”

Ms. Mintier, briefed the TPB on "Place+Opportunity: Strategies for Creating Great Communities and a Stronger Region," a report that was recently approved by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in January. Referring to her Power Point presentation, she said that the goal of the report was to connect local decision-making with regional goals by providing a toolkit of shared strategies designed to strengthen Activity Centers. The report acknowledged that not all Activity Centers in the Washington region are the same, and as such the report details goals, strategies, and tools to account for this difference.

Ms. Mintier also described some overlap between Place+Opportunity and the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. In particular, she highlighted commonalities between the first two goals of the Priorities Plan -- provide a comprehensive range of transportation options and promote a strong regional economy with dynamic Activity Centers. She said that both documents call for concentrating population and job growth in Activity Centers and enhancing circulation within and between Activity Centers.

Vice-Chair Lovain observed that the Place+Opportunity and the Priorities Plan have great potential to reinforce each other.

10. Briefing on Traffic Signal Timing/Optimization in the Washington Region

Mr. Meese briefed the Board on a memorandum originally distributed in September 2013 summarizing ongoing traffic signal timing and optimization efforts in the Washington region. He also gave a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting a few of the key slides. In his presentation he focused on the results of a 2013 survey of area traffic signals, which found that 76 percent of signals had been checked and retimed at least once in the preceding three years.

Ms. Li, of the Virginia Department of Transportation and chair of the TPB’s Traffic Signals Subcommittee, also briefed the Board on VDOT’s ongoing timing and optimization efforts in Northern Virginia. She highlighted the agency’s use of both computerized pre-timing methods for traffic signals as well as the growing use of real-time traffic monitoring and traffic management strategies to optimize traffic flow, especially during special events or weather disruptions.

Mr. Fisette suggested that staff reach out to the Greater Washington Board of Trade to learn more about its interest in further coordinating and optimizing traffic signal timing in the region. He also asked Ms. Li about VDOT’s efforts to coordinate traffic signal timing with Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Ms. Li explained that there were few opportunities or little need to coordinate signals at boundaries with the two other state-level jurisdictions because there were so few connections between the two – just a handful of bridges across the Potomac River. She reiterated the agency’s commitment to coordinating among local jurisdictions within Virginia.

Mr. Enslinger asked Ms. Li about the increasing use of real-time traffic monitoring to optimize traffic flow, especially in responding to increasing numbers of disruptive accidents on major area roadways.

Ms. Li explained that VDOT has a traffic operations center right next door to the signal operations center, which allows for real-time coordination and changes to traffic signals to accommodate detoured traffic resulting from accidents and other major disruptions. She said the agency also makes a point of coordinating among neighboring jurisdictions when the effects of such disruptions are likely to spill across jurisdictional boundaries.

Mr. Enslinger asked Ms. Li whether more real-time, adaptive technology might not require human oversight.

Ms. Li said that humans are still an essential element, as monitoring technology cannot always be trusted to be in perfect working order.

11. Review of Draft FY 2015 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP)

Mr. Ramfos provided a presentation on the draft FY 2015 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP). He reviewed the strategic plan and benefits of the Commuter Connections Program, as well its role in the regional planning process. He reviewed the changes in the budget from the FY 2014 CCWP. He reviewed several of the activities outlined in the FY 2015 CCWP. He said the state funding agencies approved the FY 2015 CCWP in January 2014 and that the TPB will be asked to approve it at the March 19 TPB meeting.

Mr. Way asked Mr. Ramfos to clarify the cost effectiveness and daily impact of the Commuter Connections Program.

Mr. Ramfos said the impacts are based on a three-year evaluation period and represents a compilation of data over that period. He said he would provide further clarification of the specific numbers to Mr. Way following the meeting.

12. Review of Draft FY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Miller gave a presentation on the draft FY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which funds most TPB activities. The federally required work program accounts for funding from three sources: 80% from the Federal Highway Administration, 10% from the state DOTs, and 10% comes from local governments through their COG dues. He said that the level of

funding assumed for FY2015 is \$12.7 million, which is the same as for FY 2014. Referencing the presentation, he said that the proposed UPWP addresses the anticipated planning requirements related to last year's federal reauthorization legislation (MAP-21), which still need to be formalized by federal regulations. He also mentioned that the work program presented to the Board for final approval in March will include carryover projects and funding from FY 2014.

13. Other Business

Mr. Bean thanked Ms. Tregoning for her service to the TPB. He said he appreciated her constructive input, leadership and vision. He also thanked her for her service as the co-chair of Region Forward.

Ms. Tregoning thanked Mr. Bean for the kind words. She said it was a pleasure working with the Board.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:03 p.m.