



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Timothy Canan, TPB Planning Data and Research Director  
**SUBJECT:** Follow up to Priority Ground Access Projects Briefing  
**DATE:** April 13, 2021

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## BACKGROUND

At the March TPB meeting, staff presented a list of priority airport ground access projects included in Visualize 2045 that support airport ground access. These projects were recommended by the Aviation Technical Subcommittee as part of the Continuous Airport Systems Planning (CASP) Program, carried out by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), and are important because of their potential to improve ground access to the region's major commercial airports: Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), Washington Reagan National Airport (DCA), and Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD). During the TPB briefing, several questions were raised regarding how the projects were selected to be included in the priority list and what other considerations were given for these projects in addition to their ability to support airport ground access improvements. This memorandum provides an update to the TPB on subsequent discussions on the matter by the Aviation Technical Subcommittee as well as providing more information on the CASP program for additional context.

## PRIORITY GROUND ACCESS PROJECTS

As part of the CASP process, TPB staff, in consultation with the Aviation Technical Subcommittee, prepares ground access forecast updates, travel time studies, and an assessment of priority projects, programs, and policies that support airport ground access.

TPB staff presented the latest priority ground access projects to the TPB at its March 17, 2021 meeting. These projects were identified from among those projects already included in the region's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, and they included 33 highway projects and one transit project. Several members inquired about the process used to identify these projects, including several observations that the list appeared to be disproportionately focused on highway projects. Also, there were questions about what other considerations may have been given to identifying these priority projects, including whether they supported other aspects such as land use development goals within transportation corridors.

Staff shared these observations with the Aviation Technical Subcommittee during its March 25, 2021 meeting. During the discussion, subcommittee members noted that while many projects can support airport ground access indirectly, the projects recommended by the Subcommittee were determined to most directly-support improved airport ground access to the region's three large commercial airports.

The Subcommittee also discussed the process of selecting priority projects from among those already contained in the approved long-range transportation plan and whether it should consider and recommend new projects that are not yet funded. Should unfunded projects be recommended in the future, such recommendations would need to be coordinated with appropriate transportation implementing agencies, and project development activities would need to be carried out by those agencies. If such a project is identified for inclusion in a future priority list, it could not be included in the region's long-range transportation planning until the project has been fully proposed by an implementing agency, appropriate regulatory compliance activities have been completed, and funding has been identified to support its implementation.

## **CASP PROGRAM**

COG has conducted the CASP program since 1975 when the first grant application was approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The goal of the CASP program is to provide a process that supports the planning, development, and operation of airport facilities and the transportation facilities that serve the airports in a systematic framework for the Washington-Baltimore region. The airport system planning process consists of a continuous cycle that begins with a regional air passenger survey. This survey is followed by forecasts of future air passenger travel and the ground travel of these air passengers to and from the region's three commercial airports. These forecasts in turn lead to the development of a revised ground access plan for the region.

The CASP program is funded principally by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) through grants from its Airport Improvement Program (AIP). These grants provide an opportunity for the region to consider and plan for the ground access needs of the region's airports through a systematic framework. The scope of these grants is limited to air systems planning studies and considerations. MAA and MWAA provide additional funding every other year to fund the data collection activities of the biennial air passenger survey. These activities are not covered by the scope of FAA AIP grants.

The CASP program is developed, implemented, and monitored with the assistance of the Aviation Technical Subcommittee of the TPB's Technical Committee. The Subcommittee is responsible for coordinating airport system planning with the regional transportation planning process. The region's three major commercial airports are represented on the TPB by the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA). Although the TPB is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington metropolitan area, the air systems planning region included in its air system planning area consists of both the Washington metropolitan area as well as the Baltimore metropolitan area. As a result, TPB, through its Aviation Technical Subcommittee, coordinates its air systems planning process very closely with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, the designated MPO for the Baltimore metropolitan area.

## **NEXT STEPS**

As TPB staff, in consultation with the Aviation Technical Subcommittee, carries out future CASP program activities, staff will continue to make periodic briefings to the TPB on notable milestones and work products.