

**ITEM 9 – Action**  
December 19, 2018

Visualize 2045: Aspirational Initiatives

**Staff Recommendation:** Briefing on the recommendations from three committees on what projects, programs, and policies will advance the Visualize 2045 aspirational initiatives.

**Issues:** None

**Background:** In November, the board heard recommendations from the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee on what projects, programs, and policies advance the Visualize 2045 aspirational initiatives. The board will discuss a draft resolution which provides direction to undertake actions the TPB and its members could take to implement the aspirational initiatives in future years.



**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD  
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002**

**RESOLUTION TO TAKE ACTION ON RECOMMENDED PROJECT, PROGRAM AND POLICY  
IDEAS THAT WOULD IMPLEMENT TPB'S ASPIRATIONAL INITIATIVES IDENTIFIED IN ITS  
VISUALIZE 2045 PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board (TPB), as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington Region, has the responsibility under the provisions of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Metropolitan Area; and

**WHEREAS**, the TPB, as part of the regional metropolitan planning process, continues to develop and adopt a fiscally constrained long-range plan (formerly referred to as the "CLRP", now called "Visualize 2045") as mandated by the federal FAST Act as a means of ensuring that federal funding and approval for transportation projects in the region are made available; and

**WHEREAS**, based on concern that the combination of project inputs to the 2016 CLRP was forecast to result in unsatisfactory performance compared to current conditions, with peak hour congested lane miles increasing by 65%<sup>1</sup>, daily vehicle hours of delay increasing by 74%<sup>1</sup>, and reductions in CO2 emissions falling far short of the region's 80% multi-sectoral goal; and

**WHEREAS**, the TPB, with the understanding that one of its primary responsibilities is "to coordinate future plans, provide fair, balanced and comprehensive data and analysis to decision-makers to inform and influence transportation programming decisions so as to advance the regional Transportation Vision and Priority Principles by advancing a more effective set of projects and policy inputs to the region's long-range transportation plans"; and

**WHEREAS**, the TPB agreed that the region needed to develop a long-range transportation plan that goes beyond the project inputs reflected in its fiscally constrained long range plan, one that includes a combination of aspirational projects, programs, and policies that would better achieve the broad range of transportation goals embedded in TPB and COG's adopted guiding documents; and

**WHEREAS**, the TPB created a Long-Range Plan Task Force and carried out the charges outlined in Resolution R16-2017, As Amended, and Resolution R1-2018 that included detailed analysis of a set of ten improvement initiatives created by the task force by combining mutually supportive projects, program and policy ideas anticipated to have the

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<sup>1</sup> Transportation Planning Board, "Performance Analysis of the 2016 CLRP Amendment", November 16, 2016

greatest potential to provide meaningful improvements in the long term performance outcomes of the transportation system; and

**WHEREAS**, in December 2017 the TPB accepted the recommendations of the Long Range Plan Task Force in the form of a set of five improvement initiatives from the ten that were analyzed that rose to the top as having the most potential to address the region's transportation challenges and help make significantly better progress towards achieving the TPB's transportation goals and recommends the TPB endorse these initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, in December 2017 the TPB adopted Resolution R8-2018 endorsing a set of five initiatives, found to have the potential to significantly improve the performance of the region's transportation system compared to current plans and programs, for future concerted TPB action and directed staff to include these initiatives in the aspirational element of the TPB's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045; and

**WHEREAS**, in January 2018 the TPB adopted Resolution R12-2018 that added two additional pedestrian and bicycle priority initiatives as aspirational elements to the five that had been adopted in December 2017; and

**WHEREAS**, during 2018, the TPB and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and its various committees of subject matter experts have been engaged in examining what specific project, program and policy actions could the TPB members take, individually or collectively, that would help realize the region's seven aspirational transportation initiatives (attached); and

**WHEREAS**, in November 2018 the TPB received a set of recommended project, program and policy actions its members could take, individually or collectively that would help realize the region's seven aspirational transportation initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the TPB finds the recommended actions meritorious and believes a few of the recommendations are best suited for a regional organization to undertake working in collaboration with the TPB's member organizations, and calls on its members to work to integrate these into their project/program development processes; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD:**

1. Directs the TPB staff to undertake the following work activities:
  - a. Identify a set of regionally prioritized high capacity transit stations where pedestrian/ bicycle access improvements have the greatest potential to utilize available capacity and increase transit ridership, by building on the previous work by the TPB and WMATA (Station Access Investment Study), and report on progress by end of June 2019.
  - b. Expand the TPB-endorsed National Capital Trail to provide connectivity to other major trails in the region thereby creating a regional trail network that extends into all TPB member jurisdictions, by building on previous work done by TPB and others, and to report on progress by end of June 2019.

2. Directs the TPB's Commuter Connections program staff to:
  - a. Examine ways in which its existing service applications and programs can be enhanced to integrate the gamification and rewards aspects including University of Maryland's incentive Trip application.
  - b. Develop a process through which TPB member jurisdictions work collaboratively with WMATA to undertake a targeted outreach to employers to increase participation in WMATA's SmartBenefits program.
  - c. Develop policy templates for small and mid-size employers to adopt and implement FlexTime and Telework programs at their work places as a resource for Commuter Connections Employer Outreach program.
3. Calls on the transportation agencies in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia to collaborate and lead an effort to:
  - a. Develop a consistent framework of preferred standards of development density, operations and service to support the regional implementation of Bus Rapid Transit.
  - b. Develop a consistent tolling policy for the region's Express or Congestion priced lanes network that exempts high occupancy vehicles from tolls to prioritize moving more people rather than more vehicles on our roadways.

DRAFT





***DISTRIBUTED IN NOVEMBER  
MEMO INCLUDED FOR REFERENCE***

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff Director  
**SUBJECT:** Subcommittee Recommendations for the TPB Endorsed Initiatives  
**DATE:** November 8, 2018

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This memo summarizes TPB subcommittee activities to advance efforts to implement projects, programs, and policies that promote the aspirational initiatives endorsed by the TPB as part of Visualize 2045. The memo identifies five initiatives that were discussed at the TPB subcommittee level and summarizes subcommittee recommendations for the advancement of those initiatives. On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the following recommendations.

**BACKGROUND**

In December of 2017 and January of 2018, the TPB endorsed a set of seven aspirational initiatives (see Visualize 2045 Chapter 4 pages 25-31) to improve our regional transportation system. These initiatives were the outcome of a two-year effort by the TPB's Long-Range Plan Task Force, which undertook a methodical evaluation of what projects, programs, and policies the region could pursue to substantively improve the unsatisfactory performance outcomes that were forecast during the development of the 2016 Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

With its endorsement of the aspirational initiatives, the board issued a call to action for its member jurisdictions and agencies to commit to fully explore the concepts contained in the initiatives and to take action to implement projects, programs, and policies to fully realize potential improvements in the transportation system's performance. Chairman Allen advised staff to work with the appropriate subject-matter experts to identify specific implementation actions that TPB members could take—individually and collectively—to make such projects, programs, and policies part of the financially constrained element of future updates of the TPB's long-range plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RELEVANT TPB SUBCOMMITTEES**

During the course of this year, staff have engaged subject-matter experts serving on subcommittees at the TPB and COG seeking their ideas about ways to effectively realize the TPB's aspirational initiatives. These ideas were then explored during subcommittee meetings.

In discussing options and developing recommendations for implementation, the subcommittees generally sought to specify key challenges embedded in the initiatives that need to be overcome. In some cases, the recommendations represent specific products or regional planning activities that should be pursued at the local, state, or federal levels. In other cases, the recommendations suggest broader regional tasks that must be tackled at TPB level.

Five of the seven aspirational initiatives were determined to be directly germane to the work of the TPB's subcommittees:

- Expand bus rapid transit and transitways
- Move more people on Metrorail
- Increase telecommuting and other options for commuting
- Improve walk and bike access to transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail

The initiative "Bring jobs and housing closer together" will be pursued through COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee. The initiative "Expand the express highway network" is being actively pursued by the TPB member jurisdictions. Staff notes that express lanes that are currently operational in the region and the constrained element of Visualize 2045 include additional projects that would expand this network.

The subcommittee recommendations for the five initiatives are summarized below. In general, these recommendations should be considered a starting point for further discussions, as appropriate, on specific implementation actions that the region or TPB member jurisdictions could take to realize the aspirational initiatives.

## **EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) AND TRANSITWAYS**

This initiative was the subject of extensive discussions at Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee meetings. The initiative has a focus of expanding BRT, transitway, and streetcar systems throughout the region, implementing routes that are in jurisdictions' plans but not yet in the TPB's long-range plan. This initiative would also improve pedestrian access to transit stations and increase the amount of jobs and housing around the transit stations.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend that the region work together to:

- **Define density standards for BRT service.** The region should identify a set of preferred density measures related to transit service, ridership, and land use in the region as a standard for BRT systems.

This recommendation would develop standards to aid in mapping out the feasibility of BRT systems in a corridor based on land-use, transit ridership, and other metrics and would also assist in measuring the progress being made towards the development and implementation of BRT on these corridors, as well as supportive transit actions such as transit signal priority, rush-hour bus lanes, and other bus transit improvements.

## **MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL**

This initiative focuses on actions that would move more people and enhance the customer experience on Metrorail. This initiative calls for running eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines at all times; adding a second Rosslyn station; and adding a new rail line across the Potomac River



connecting the District and Virginia through Georgetown to Union Station towards the Waterfront. It also would improve bicycle and pedestrian access to rail stations. These actions will increase ridership.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. WMATA's plans to run eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines and ongoing discussions regarding enhancement to the Rosslyn stations were noted.

Of the actions that the region could take in the immediate term, members recommended, as the preferred action, that the region work together to:

- **Eliminate the transfer cost** between Metrorail and the region's bus services.

This recommendation would encourage more people to use Metrorail by lowering total transit fare costs for riders using both Metrorail and bus services. Currently, transfers between most buses are free within two hours, but transfers between Metrorail and bus services are not. Transfers to and from rail only provide a fare discount of \$0.50. Reducing the transfer cost to zero would attract more people to use buses to get to and from Metrorail, which would make the region's transit system more attractive by treating transit as a single mode and would not penalize transit users that need to use buses to get to Metrorail.

As an alternative, members also proposed:

- **Cap total fares charged for transit trips per day.** This recommendation would be adopted by every jurisdiction that operates bus service, as well as by WMATA.

Putting a cap on total fares for a day would make additional transit use more attractive for transit-choice or transit-lifestyle riders and reduce costs for transit-reliant riders or those who have to make several connections, sometimes across multiple services, to get to their destinations.

## **PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR COMMUTING**

The purpose of this initiative is to develop and examine new policies that would reduce single occupant vehicular trips, increase teleworking regionwide, increase the number of employees receiving transit and carpool subsidies, and reduce parking incentives in regional Activity Centers.

The TPB's Commuter Connections Subcommittee has subject-matter experts representing state, regional, local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and other commuter assistance entities together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative.

Of the various actions that the region could take, the following represents the proactive programmatic and policy-oriented recommendations:

- **Leverage technology to enhance TDM programs.** Technological advancements are creating new ways to influence behavior change. Enhancing existing apps (e.g. CarpoolNow, incenTrip) and programs (e.g. Flextime Rewards) with gamification modules that consider behavioral economics concepts may further encourage mode shift while also generating valuable travel choice and travel behavior data for better planning and programming.
- **Collaborate with WMATA to promote SmartBenefits.** The SmartBenefits program provides employers the opportunity to pay employees tax free for all or part of their transit commute expense or let their employees set aside their own funds pre-tax. Reducing transit commute cost is a proven strategy to increase transit usage. The region should implement a campaign to enroll more employers in the program by providing incentives, including limited and tiered financial incentive designed to offset SmartBenefits' start-up costs; offering training and outreach efforts to help reduce perceived administrative burden. Such a campaign now would be taking advantage of WMATA's investment of over \$1.5M to upgrade and simplify its on-line SmartBenefits portal.
- **Flextime & telework resources for mid-size employers.** Telework continues to grow in popularity, particularly among large employers, but logistical and perception barriers remain, especially among small and mid-sized employers. The region should develop policy templates for small and mid-size employers to adopt and implement these trip reduction strategies at their work places.
- **Regional commuter tax benefits.** Existing employer tax benefits at the state level such as the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit and Telework VA! Tax credit exist to incentivize employers to offer commuter benefits and provide varying degrees of tax incentives. Standardizing the types of alternative commute programs eligible for tax benefits for employers and making them consistent throughout the region would encourage more employer participation. Such a regional policy would ease implementation for employers through collaborative education and marketing and would assist those employers with multiple office locations throughout the region to take advantage of the tax benefits in a universal manner.
- **Develop a regional framework for parking cashout policy.** Offering employees who receive free parking cash value of the parking to use transit has been found to be effective in increasing transit usage. A 2016 FHWA research project found that Washington D.C. employers who offer a cash-out policy in addition to pre-tax transit options can reduce VMT by 11%. The region should pilot test this program with customized cash-out policies to fit the various needs of diverse worksites in the region. The result of the pilot program can be used to inform the development and implementation of the program regionwide.
- **Price parking appropriately.** Advocate for codification of "fair-value commuting" within local codes, which would mean higher parking costs at activity centers and especially those that are served by transit and/or HOV lanes. Pricing parking spaces – perhaps in a dynamic fashion – is expected to deter single occupant trips and promote ridesharing or transit usage. Ongoing marketing and outreach activities of Commuter Connections could market free or reduced-cost carpool parking spots and other non-SOV alternatives.

## IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

The goal of this initiative is to increase non-motorized access to high capacity transit stations through improved first- and last-mile connections on foot or by bike.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. In addition, the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee also discussed functionality improvements to transit stations, particularly for bus access and reliability.

Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend:

- **Identify specific stations that are priority locations for access improvements:** Develop a limited list of transit station areas that are regionally prioritized for pedestrian/ bicycle investments. These prioritized locations will be places where critical gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure currently exist and where demand is great for walking and biking to transit. Improvements in these areas will also improve safety in and around the stations, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Prioritize the efficiency of stations for all modes:** Prioritize physical and operational improvements to the transportation efficiency of high capacity transit stations for all modes, including traffic signal timing, turn lanes, crosswalk locations, and transit priority on roadways surrounding transit stations, to improve safety for non-motorized users and improve the reliability of buses.
- **Expanding the TPB's Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) Program,** which currently provides technical assistance to TPB members for short-term planning activities for the development of communities that are multi-modal and mixed-use. Members believe that the TLC program has been highly cost-effective and enhancing the program would assist in having more non-motorized projects ready for funding and implementation.

## COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL

The purpose of this initiative is to complete a network of bicycle/pedestrian trails encircling the region's core. This endorsed initiative was originally conceived of as a "bicycle beltway" and the TPB had directed staff to work with local jurisdictions to identify the basic alignment for this facility.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee notes that the National Park Service (NPS) worked with the TPB Subcommittee to adopt the National Capital Trail (NCT) into its Trail Master Plan. With some of the missing segments of the NCT located within National Park property, this action by the NPS is a significant step towards completing the trail.

One of the basic recommendations related to this initiative is for all appropriate regional jurisdictions and agencies to:

- **Integrate the missing segments** of the National Capital Trail into other highway, transit and other infrastructure projects so that the trail can be completed.

The Subcommittee also noted that, thanks to numerous projects that have been built or funded in recent years, the National Capital Trail is well on its way to completion. Therefore, the Subcommittee also recommends that the TPB:

- **Expand the National Capital Trail** to the entire TPB region (National Capital Regional Trail), thereby extending the trail to all TPB member jurisdictions.

There has been great interest among the region's jurisdictions, agencies, and advocacy entities to build on the National Capital Trail, as endorsed by the TPB and adopted by the NPS. The Capital Trails Coalition was established through a public-private partnership to work on this idea. The TPB Subcommittee worked with the coalition to develop a framework through which trails from other jurisdictions that are not included in the NCT would be strategically incorporated to form a true regional trail system (National Capital Regional Trail). This work activity is not complete and is in need of a regional sponsor to take on responsibility for finalization. Once complete, this National Capital Regional Trail could represent the region's prioritized trail network to be considered for local, regional, and state level funding.

## **OPTIONS FOR INITIATIVES THAT ARE NOT LINKED TO TPB SUBCOMMITTEES**

As noted above, two of the seven initiatives were determined to be outside the purview of TPB subcommittees. Options for moving forward on actions related to those two initiatives are summarized below.

### **BRING JOBS AND HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER**

This initiative would optimize the balance of jobs and housing region-wide and provide additional housing in the region to match employment projections. The initiative specifically: seeks to provide more housing within the region for regional workers to meet demand for future job growth; focuses future household growth within a jurisdiction in Regional Activity Centers and/or in areas with high-capacity transit; and seeks to achieve better balanced distribution of future growth in jobs in housing between the eastern and western portions of the region.

TPB staff requested COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) to examine and advise the TPB on how the region can best advance the components of this initiative. Similarly, at its September 12, 2018 meeting, the COG Board of Directors, which provides oversight to the PDTAC, directed the PDTAC to work jointly with the Housing Directors Committee to assess the region's ability to accommodate the estimated need for slightly more than 100,000 housing units beyond those currently anticipated in the Round 9.1 Cooperative Forecasts.

In response to this direction, the PDTAC, in conjunction with the Housing Directors, is developing a workplan to address the region's housing needs. This workplan will include activities such as:

- Synthesizing local housing and land use plans and housing targets;
- Determining how much housing is already approved but not built in the region;
- Reviewing local comprehensive plans and zoning to evaluate whether sufficient development capacity exists;
- Quantifying additional growth likely to occur in Activity Centers and High Capacity Transit areas; and
- Considering whether any revisions to the Cooperative Forecasts are merited.

These activities will be carried out over several months and the TPB will be briefed throughout 2019.

## **EXPAND EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK**

The TPB has endorsed a network of express travel lanes in the region, with specific characteristics that would help move more people and reduce congestion. The specific characteristics of such a network include: the use of dynamic tolls to maintain desired travel speeds; making the lanes free to carpoolers and transit vehicles; and implementation of new express bus services connecting Activity Centers.

- Staff notes that express lanes that are currently operational in the region and the constrained element of Visualize 2045 include additional projects that would expand this network. Opportunities remain for the region to develop projects and policies to more fully realize this aspirational initiative – especially components such as making the lanes free to carpoolers and transit vehicles, and implementation of new express bus services on the express lanes.

## **FUTURE ACTIONS**

On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the above recommendations. The work session will include an open panel discussion. Following the work session, TPB members at the monthly board meeting will be encouraged to provide additional feedback and comments on the proposed recommendations. The TPB could consider formally accepting the recommendations as part of an action plan to help implement its aspirational initiatives and realize the potential improvement in the performance of the region's transportation system. Such a formal acceptance could be in the form a TPB resolution adopted at its December meeting. The TPB could also advise staff to periodically report on the progress being made towards the implementation of the adopted recommendations.