

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
May 21, 2014**

Members and Alternates Present

Rick Canizales, Prince William County
Marc Elrich, Montgomery County
Dan Emerine, DC Office of Planning
Dennis Enslinger, City of Gaithersburg
Gary Erenrich, Montgomery County Executive
Lyn Erickson, MDOT
Jay Fisette, Arlington County
Tawanna Gaines, Maryland House of Delegates
Jason Groth, Charles County
Rene'e Hamilton, VDOT
Konrad Herling, City of Greenbelt
Cathy Hudgins, Fairfax County
Shyam Kannan, WMATA
Julia Koster, NCPC
Tim Lovain, City of Alexandria
Bridget Donnell Newton, City of Rockville
Karen Oliver, City of Falls Church
Mark Rawlings, DC DOT
Kelly Russell, City of Frederick
Paul Smith, Frederick County
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County
Kanathur Srikanth, VDOT
Jonathan Way, City of Manassas
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
Eric Randall
John Swanson
Rich Roisman
Andrew Meese
John Swanson
Andrew Austin
William Bacon
Ben Hampton
Bryan Hayes
Sarah Crawford
Erin Morrow
Lamont B. Cobb
Debbie Leigh
Deborah Etheridge
Chuck Bean COG/EO
Paul DesJardin COG/DCPS
Judi Gold CM Bowser
John B. Townsend AAA Mid-Atlantic
Nick Alexandrow PRTC
Jeanette Tejada de Gomez AAA Mid-Atlantic
Monte Edwards Committee of 100 on the Federal City
Dag Gogue Transit Labs
Isabella Neihardt Coalition for Smarter Growth
Stewart Schwartz Coalition for Smarter Growth
Mike Lake Fairfax County DOT
Malcolm Watson Fairfax County DOT
Danielle Wesolek WMATA
Pierre Holloman City of Alexandria
Patrick Durany Supervisor Jenkins/Prince William County
Christine Green Greater Washington DC Safe Routes to School Network
Mike Lambert Kimley-Horn
Maria Sinner VDOT
Bill Orleans Resident

1. Public Comment on TPB Procedures and Activities

Monte Edward, vice chair of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, spoke about the importance of rail. He expressed concern about Item 12 in which DDOT has proposed an amendment to the Long Bridge study that would delete one of the proposed tracks for study, reducing the number of rail tracks from four to three for the rebuilt Long Bridge. He said it would be impossible to accommodate future growth if passenger and freight rail are forced to share three tracks on the Long Bridge. Copies of his remarks were distributed for the record.

Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth, said that Northern Virginia focuses too much on highway and road expansion. He said the Commonwealth's flawed priorities were reflected in the list of projects that were submitted for the Transportation Improvement Program.

2. Approval of Minutes of April 16 Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and passed.

3. Report of the Technical Committee

Referring to the handout summary, Mr. Srikanth said the Technical Committee met on May 2 and reviewed two items on the TPB agenda:

- Related to Item 8, the Committee was briefed on projects that a TPB selection panel had recommended to receive suballocated funding for Northern Virginia under the federal Transportation Alternatives Program.
- Related to Item 9, the Committee heard a briefing from the executive director of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) regarding the status of the reauthorization of federal surface transportation legislation.

Mr. Srikanth said the Technical Committee reviewed a number of other items, including the TPB staff's qualitative assessment comparing the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan with the Constrained Long-Range Plan and a TPB study of how the federal shutdown of October 2013 affected travel conditions in the region.

Regarding the quarterly congestion report, Mr. Emerine asked if the TPB staff have information or data regarding the impact of roadway congestion on transit vehicles.

Mr. Srikanth said the Technical Committee would review that suggestion.

4. Report of the Citizen Advisory Committee

Referring to the handout report, Ms. Loh said the CAC met on May 8. She said the majority of the meeting was dedicated to conducting a listening session on how the region can measure progress in the implementation of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. She said that staff

intends to conduct similar listening sessions with the staff of the TPB's member jurisdictions and she encouraged participation in these sessions.

5. Report of Steering Committee

Mr. Miller said the Steering Committee did not take any actions at its meeting on May 2. Referring to the mailout material, Mr. Miller asked Mr. Swanson of TPB staff to speak about the listening sessions that Ms. Loh described in her report. Referring to the memo that was included in the Letters Sent/Received packet, Mr. Swanson said that staff would conduct approximately 15 listening sessions over the next two months. He said the purpose of these sessions is to gather information on whether and how key stakeholders and constituencies believe the region is achieving goals that were laid out in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. He said the information that is received in these sessions will be used for the development of the assessment report that will be released in September. The information will also help to frame future work activities.

Mr. Miller called attention to a letter on "planning emphasis areas" that was sent by Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration to the executive directors of MPO organizations. He said that he believed the work program that the TPB approved in March enabled the TPB to address the planning areas that the federal agencies identified.

Mr. Miller called attention to a letter from the D.C. League of Women Voters supporting streetcars extending into Montgomery County.

In the handout material, Mr. Miller called attention to a memo from Mike Farrell to the TPB describing potential implementation of a bicycle beltway. He noted that Mr. Fisetta had asked TPB staff to look into this. He said the TPB would be briefed on this concept in the fall.

Mr. Miller also called attention to a letters exchanged between the WMATA board and Chuck Bean, COG executive director. The WMATA board requested an update on the TPB's TIGER grant projects. The TPB will be briefed on the status of those projects in June.

6. Chair's Remarks

Chairman Wojahn thanked the Commuter Connections staff for their work on Bike to Work Day. He noted that the weather was poor, but nonetheless he said it was a great event. He also encouraged TPB member staff to participate in the sessions that Mr. Swanson described.

Chairman Wojahn asked Mr. Bean to provide an update on the search for the Director of Transportation Planning. Mr. Bean said the selection panel includes the current TPB chair, and three past TPB chairs who have also served as a Metro chair, or an Access for All chair, or a MWAQC chair, or a COG chair. He said the selection panel met that morning. He said a national search has been conducted by the firm Slavin Management Consultant. He said that 45 applications had been received and 19 were deemed qualified. These 19 each received an

extensive questionnaire. Based upon their responses to those questions, the list of remaining candidates was reduced to ten individuals. He said that interviews would be conducted in June. The new director is expected to be on staff by the end of summer.

Mr. Bean announced that the COG Training Center would be dedicated to Ron Kirby in a ceremony on July 23. He thanked Bob Griffiths for his assistance with that event.

ACTION ITEMS

7. Approval of an Amendment to the FY 2013-2018 TIP that is Exempt from the Air Quality Conformity Requirement to Include project and Funding Updates for the Northern Virginia Section of the FY 2013-2018 TIP

Ms. Hamilton spoke to VDOT's proposed TIP amendment. She reminded Board members that it was presented to the TPB at its April 16 meeting and said that VDOT had received no public comment on the proposed amendment. She noted comments from Ms. Smyth regarding projects in the TIP that Ms. Smyth said had already been completed. Ms. Hamilton said that the projects remain in the TIP until a formal closeout process has been finished.

Ms. Hamilton also noted comments from Arlington County, in particular from Mr. Fisette, regarding a resolution passed by the TPB several years ago, pertaining to local concerns about proposed "spot improvements" to I-66 inside the Beltway. Ms. Hamilton explained that VDOT was working closely with Arlington and Fairfax counties and the City of Falls Church to address some of the concerns, in particular by making enhancements to adjacent streets and trails.

Ms. Hamilton moved Resolution R16-2014 for Board approval. The motion was seconded by Mr. York.

Mr. Fisette said he planned to abstain from the vote. He said that he recognized the improved and positive relationship between Arlington County and VDOT, as well as the enhancements to adjacent streets and trails that have been made in recent years, but noted the stated position of the Arlington County Board.

Resolution R16-2014 was approved by the Board, with one abstention, from Mr. Fisette.

8. Briefing on and Approval of Recommended Projects for Funding Under the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program for FY 2015 in Northern Virginia

Ms. Koster, of the National Capital Planning Commission and chair of the selection panel, introduced the recommended FY 2015 Transportation Alternatives Program projects for Northern Virginia. She thanked Kevin Belanger and Stephen Hurst for their help on the selection panel. She said that the selection criteria reflect the Board's interest in multimodal transportation, service to schools and disadvantaged communities, and growth in regional Activity Centers. She also mentioned that projects were chosen on readiness. She encouraged jurisdictions to submit

more high-quality projects in the future. She introduced Ms. Crawford.

Ms. Crawford said that these projects represent the second round of funding in the Transportation Alternatives Program for Northern Virginia. She reminded the TPB that they approved FY13 and FY14 projects for the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia in July of 2013. Referring to her handout, she described the Transportation Alternatives Program as a formula program under MAP-21, that tasks MPOs with selecting projects for a sub-allocated portion of funding. The Transportation Alternatives Program combines three previous programs: Transportation Enhancement, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails. She said that the Transportation Alternatives Program complements ongoing work at the TPB including the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan and the Transportation/Land-Use Connections program.

Ms. Crawford said that VDOT conducted the solicitation for the Northern Virginia projects. VDOT also processed the applications and analyzed them for readiness and eligibility. Then members of Northern Virginia CTB's evaluated and selected projects to fund. Finally, the TPB technical review committee reviewed the remaining projects. Nearly \$3 million were available for distribution, \$2.5 million coming from the FY 2105 sub-allocation with additional funding carried over from FY 2014.

Ms. Crawford said that the panel recommended that the TPB fund three Safe Routes to School projects and three trail connections projects. Additionally, there were sidewalk and facility gap projects that bring facilities into ADA compliance, and some streetscape projects.

Ms. Crawford said that TPB staff are working with the MDOT State Highway Administration and the DDOT on the next round of funding for Transportation Alternatives projects.

Mr. Way asked why the CTB chose some projects, and the TPB chose other projects.

Ms. Crawford said that CTB project recommendations were made first, and that the remaining projects were sent to the TPB for consideration.

Ms. Loh asked if the Northern Virginia project selections were conditional on MAP-21 being reauthorized for 2015.

Ms. Crawford said that was correct.

Mr. Kannan asked how projects were identified and prioritized.

Ms. Crawford said that the TPB selection panel only deliberated on projects that had not already been chosen by CTB members for funding.

Mr. Enslinger said that he was encouraged by the regional review process. He encourages the selection committee to refine the selection criteria to match the priorities identified in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

A motion was made to adopt Resolution R17-2014 to approve projects for funding under the Virginia MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program for FY 2015. The motion was approved.

Mr. Miller acknowledged that Sarah Crawford, who staffed the TPB since 2007, has taken a new job with Arlington County. He noted that she was very effective managing the Transportation/Land-Use Connections program and that she will be missed. The board applauded her service.

9. Briefing on the Status of the Highway Trust Fund and Reauthorization of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), and Approval of a Letter to the Washington Region's Congressional Delegation in Support of Replenishing the Highway Trust Fund and Reauthorizing MAP-21

Ms. Hardy, executive director of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), briefed the Board. In her presentation, she highlighted the fact that the Highway Trust Fund is expected to become insolvent as soon as August of this year, meaning that the federal government will have to stop or delay payments to states and localities for projects that are already underway and programmed to receive federal funding. She said that \$51 billion in spending had been promised in FY 2014, but fuel tax receipts would only amount to \$39 billion, leaving a shortfall of \$12 billion.

Ms. Hardy also provided a quick overview of current efforts in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, particularly by individual committees with jurisdiction over certain elements of the federal transportation program, to extend or reauthorize MAP-21, which expires on September 30. She said several committees are working on this issue, with some expected to announce proposals as early as June. She also provided an overview of the Administration's transportation proposal, known as the GROW AMERICA Act.

Mr. Fisette asked whether there was any threat to the federal Transportation Alternatives Program, under which the Board approved funding for ten projects in Northern Virginia under the Item 8 on the agenda. He also asked about the transfers from the General Fund that Ms. Hardy said had been made in recent years to cover shortfalls in the Highway Trust Fund, in particular whether the size of the transfers was expected to grow in coming years and whether General Fund transfers took money away from other budget priorities.

Ms. Hardy said that transfers would indeed be likely to grow as costs continue to rise faster than receipts from fuel taxes, which are not indexed to keep pace with inflation. She also confirmed that the a primary concern about making General Fund transfers is that it takes money away from other budget priorities.

Mr. Lovain pointed out that the General Fund transfers are a way to keep the Highway Trust Fund afloat without having to find budget offsets.

Mr. Erenrich asked which of the region's members of Congress serve on the key House and Senate committees Ms. Hardy mentioned in her presentation.

Ms. Hardy said that Eleanor Holmes Norton is one of the key members. She encouraged Board members to meet with their Congressional representatives to make the case for funding transportation in the Washington region.

Mr. Herling asked whether any of the plans that are being proposed really solve the ongoing, long-term funding problem.

Ms. Hardy said that there are many ideas on the table, but that it remains politically very difficult to vote for increases in gas taxes and other long-term revenue sources.

Mr. Zimbabwe asked whether AMPO had identified a preferred solution to the funding problem.

Ms. Hardy said that it had not, wishing to keep all reasonable options on the table for consideration.

Mr. Enslinger asked what the chances are of getting a longer-term extension or reauthorization of MAP-21.

Ms. Hardy said the future is very uncertain. She said a longer-term solution is possible, and that longer-term commitments certainly help states and metropolitan areas plan for the future. However, she did not make any real prediction as to what the outcome is likely to be.

Chair Wojahn entertained a motion to approve a letter, drafted by staff, to send to the region's Congressional delegation calling for Congress to address the immediate issue of imminent insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund and to secure more reliable federal funding for transportation in the long term.

Approval of the letter was moved and seconded.

Mr. Zimbabwe offered a friendly amendment to strike the second and third sentences from the ninth paragraph of the letter drafted by staff.

Chair Wojahn accepted the friendly amendment.

The Board voted to approve the letter, as amended, to the region's Congressional delegation.

INFORMATION ITEMS

10. Briefing on the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Systems Plan

Mr. Allen, chief executive officer of Virginia Railway Express (VRE), briefed the Board on

VRE and its long-range System Plan for 2040. The major elements of the System Plan highlighted in his presentation included the purchase of new railcars to run longer trains and expansion of existing station platforms and parking lots to accommodate more riders. The presentation also featured a handful of larger-ticket items, like expansion of the Long Bridge between Arlington and the District, adding a third track along the entirety of the Fredericksburg line, adding a fourth track between Alexandria and Union Station, extending the Manassas line to Gainesville-Haymarket, extending the Fredericksburg line to Spotsylvania, and adding an in-fill station at Potomac Shores. The total cost of the plan, according to the presentation, is estimated to be about \$2.7 billion. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Allen also touched on the possibility of so-called “run-through” commuter rail service on both VRE and MARC.

Mr. Herling asked whether VRE has considered additional transit and non-auto options for getting people to its stations rather than just building more parking.

Mr. Allen acknowledged the expense of providing parking and said he was hopeful that more and more stations would start to see a greater amount of residential and commercial development within walking distance so that more people could arrive by non-auto modes. He said the new stations coming online will provide an opportunity for that kind of planning, and he said that there are plans around some of the existing stations to encourage more development nearby. He also said that six or seven of the existing stations have good local bus connections to help people arrive by modes other than car.

Mr. Canizales asked how much ridership on VRE was expected to increase under the plan and how much that would affect congestion.

Mr. Allen said that they expect a doubling of ridership under the plan and that increase, according to a study by the Texas Transportation Institute, would result in a 14 percent reduction in congestion on major interstates in the corridors served by VRE.

Mr. Lovain pointed out that Alexandria is planning to build a new pedestrian tunnel to better connect the VRE station and the Metrorail King Street station.

Mr. Allen said that was a good example of efforts to improve pedestrian connections at VRE stations. He also pointed out efforts to run mid-day trains from the Haymarket-Manassas area to Alexandria—not all the way into downtown—to provide an opportunity for people to connect to the Metro system to get into downtown or elsewhere in the region by transit.

Ms. Russell complimented VRE on its policy to allow bicycles on its railcars.

11. Briefing on the MARC Growth and Investment Plan

Ms. Ratcliff, of the MARC, said that in 2007 MARC authored an ambitious Growth and Investment Plan that assumed a robust economy and a well-funded capital program. She said that since the economy slowed, MARC recognized the need to adapt the Growth and Investment Plan

for 2014. Referring to her presentation, she described MARC's current level of service and outlined capacity constraints and other challenges. She said that the four main objectives of the new plan are to: maintain a state of good repair; increase ridership; improve service; and enhance customer experience. For each objective she described strategies for achieving those objectives that include purchasing new train cars and locomotives, building new train storage and maintenance facilities, adjusting train schedules, adding new service on weekends and other non-peak times, and providing improved ticketing and train tracking services.

Chair Wojahn mentioned that foldable bikes are allowed on MARC trains.

Mr. Erenrich commented on the importance of connectivity between commuter rail and other transit services, mentioning specifically MARC's connection to the Rockville, Silver Spring, and Union Station stops on WMATA's red line.

Ms. Ratcliff added that the Purple Line would eventually connect with all three MARC lines that travel east to west.

Mr. Zimbabwe asked whether the new weekend MARC service has lived up to expectations.

Ms. Ratcliff says that it has exceeded expectations and has been very successful.

Mr. Herling asked whether MARC weekend service operated late enough to accommodate people headed home from baseball games.

Ms. Ratcliff said that she believed the weekend service could accommodate those needs.

Ms. Russell said that she supports rule changes that allow bicycles onto MARC trains, and that she hopes that MARC lines can extend to Frederick County and into the City of Frederick.

Mr. Groth thanked Ms. Ratcliff for her service and mentioned that she is retiring in June.

12. Notice of Proposed amendment to update projects and funding in the District of Columbia section of the FY 2013-2018 TIP

Mr. Zimbabwe spoke to the notice of a proposed TIP amendment from the District of Columbia that would be considered and voted on by the TPB at its June 18 meeting.

13. Other Business

There was no other business brought before the board.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm.