

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, June 23, 2008

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

PLACE: COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE
First Floor, Room 1

CHAIR: TBD

**VICE-
CHAIRS:** TBD

Attendance:

Fatemeh Allahdoust	VDOT – Northern Virginia
Monica Backmon (tel)	Prince William County
George Branyan (tel)	DDOT
Cheryl Cort	Coalition for Smarter Growth
Mary Dietz (tel.)	MDSHA
Leverson Boodlal	KLS Engineering
Randy Dittberner	VDOT – Northern Virginia
Ashley El-Zein (tel)	Fairfax Inova Hospital
Randy Hodgson	VDOT
Michael Jackson (tel.)	MHSO
William McGuirk	DDOT
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Transportation Safety Board
Stephen Read (tel)	VDOT
Dick Shaffer	FHWA
Shiva Shrestha(tel.)	MDSHA Planning
Russ Ulrich	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Stephanie Yanowitz(tel.)	MDSHA
John Z. Wetmore	Perils for Pedestrians TV

COG Staff Attendance:

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Michael Farrell
Karin Foster
Andrew Meese

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves. Mr. Farrell chaired the meeting. Mr. Farrell noted that the Safety Element of the Constrained Long-Range Plan was due for revisions in the Fall, and invited comments.

2. April 29 Pedestrian Safety Workshop

Mr. Farrell spoke to a powerpoint on the April 29 Pedestrian Safety Workshop. The workshop was sponsored by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, in cooperation with AAA, the State Departments of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The event was well-attended. A theme of many participants was the promotion of walkability for economic development as well as safety. The speakers agreed that the Street Smart campaign should be sustained. Best practices discussed included multimodal performance measures, bus stop siting and guidance, adherence to ADA, better traffic enforcement, better data, pedestrian-safe speed limits, and more consistent laws across the region. The major outcome was a set of recommendations for improving pedestrian safety that were embodied in a COG Board resolution R32-08 which was adopted on June 11, 1998.

Staff will develop a draft set of pedestrian-related performance measures, which the bicycle and pedestrian subcommittee, as well as this committee, will examine and provide comments.

Mr. Meese noted that many of those present had attended the pedestrian safety workshop, and suggested that this Traffic Safety Subcommittee may be able to help make some good suggestions.

Ms. Allahdoust said that at the workshop participants had recognized the importance of partnerships. The Virginia legislature may be more supportive in the future. Mr. Reade asked if there had been an effort to look at bus stops and identify crashes near them. Fairfax County has done a study of safety at bus stops, and WMATA is in the process of doing the same thing. Ms. Yanowitz added that the Montgomery County Ride-On bus stops have also been studied. Mr. Read said that an inventory and latitude and longitude of all bus stops would be very useful for safety planning. Ms. Allahdoust added that there should be a safe path to these bus stops. Fairfax County has done that, but it has not been done for Northern Virginia as a whole. WMATA has been coordinating a bus stop access inventory for WMATA member jurisdictions.

Mr. Branyan added that the presence of bus stops was noted as part of studies of high pedestrian-crash intersections. Intersection redesigns in DC take bus stop placement into

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account.

Mr. Farrell said that a work program would be developed to flesh out the recommendations in the COG Board Resolution, which would eventually be presented to this Subcommittee.

3. Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Campaign

Mr. Farrell spoke to a hand-out on the Street Smart campaign. The program is now done twice per year.

Mr. Meese noted that this activity lends itself to a regional approach. Other activities may also lend themselves to a regional approach, while some may not. Mr. Farrell noted that the more parties have to agree and coordinate, the more difficult the activity becomes.

Another regional activity worth mentioning is the TLC or Transportation-Land Use coordination program, whereby the TPB provides some consultant help for transit-oriented development planning. However, resources for the program are limited.

4. Status of the State Strategic Highway Safety Plans

- **VDOT**

Mr. Read spoke to a powerpoint on the Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

The plan had 119 strategies, of which 50 related to VDOT. VDOT found 150 actions relating to those 50 strategies. A key engineering action element included better data: more accurate crash locations, and more timely data. Safety planning is needed at the local level, including intersection safety and roadway departures. The 150 actions were grouped into four areas, including public awareness, program investment, accountability, and legislative changes. The “highway safety challenge” is the umbrella campaign to promote traffic safety.

Mapping density of crashes is another critical initiative, so far carried out on the primary road system. High-crash segments were identified, as well as high-congestion segments. Safety corridors were defined by crash rate, and then segments were ranked according to density of injuries and fatalities. The focus is on projects that can be implemented quickly, within the existing right of way.

The TREDs program is meant to make crash reporting electronic, and to have it include GIS location data. The goal is to have information on 80% of crashes within 48 hours. The central database will have geolocated crashes as well. The program is about a year away from completion.

Mr. Meese asked whether VDOT would be providing assistance to local jurisdictions that manage their own roads. Mr. Read that at the moment the system did not extend to the cities that

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own their own roads, though VDOT will reach out to them. In 2008 the new crash report will have latitude and longitude information for all crashes, so it can be tied to the road system.

Mr. Shaffer from FHWA asked if crash types could be isolated at well. Mr. Read replied that it could be. The corridor map shows density of crashes by severity, but it can also be done by collision type, type of vehicle, angle of collision, etc.

Mr. Jackson asked if there were certain types of roads and land use patterns, such as commercial routes, that had higher crash rates. Mr. Read replied that there was; the access point to the mall had higher crashes, as did the sections with number commercial access points. Mr. Jackson suggested that local planners could use this kind of information to promote access management.

- **MDOT**

Mr. Shrestha and Ms. Dietz briefed the group on the Maryland Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Maryland's plan was approved in 2006. It includes a number of safety emphasis areas. State and local agencies were asked to develop teams to create action plans for each emphasis area. There were five regional teams, including one for the Washington region. Southern Maryland has focused on younger drivers. Western Maryland has developed different emphasis areas for different Counties. Baltimore has been very active, holding several summits.

Ms. Yanowitz spoke to specifics on the Washington region. Distracted drivers, intersection safety, and pedestrian safety are important for the Washington region. ADA compliance is improving. Ms. Cort noted that there was a TLC grant to study Prince George's Plaza.

- **DDOT**

Mr. Boodlal and Mr. McGuirk spoke about DDOT's work on its Strategic Highway Safety Plan. DC has hired a Safe Routes to School coordinator and will implement a Safe Routes to School program. A pedestrian master plan is under development.

5. Safety Element of the Constrained Long-Range Plan

Mr. Farrell spoke to a hand-out on the Safety element of the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region. Emphasis areas from the State plans were incorporated into the regional safety element. Activities relevant to safety are discussed, including the Street Smart Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety campaign, and the Transportation-Land Use Connections program.

Mr. Read asked if there had been any efforts to overlay safety data with projects that are in the plan. Mr. Farrell replied that we do not have location-specific crash data, only jurisdiction-level crash data. That might be a good next step. It could be part of the next update of the safety element. Currently in the TIP safety projects can be identified by a check box, and by the

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funding source used.

Mr. Read suggested that geolocated safety data could be used to suggest where safety projects could take place. Mr. Farrell replied that the TPB does not have a history of proposing projects for the TIP; instead it accepts the projects proposed by the DOT's, provided they meet fiscal and air quality constraints. Mr. Read suggested that the TPB might still want to see geolocated crash information. In addition, the 2009 highway safety manual may be able to predict future crash numbers based on current crashes. The new highway safety manual will be a more useful tool if we can get the data ready. Mr. Farrell agreed, and suggested that it would be helpful if data could be collected in a more uniform fashion across the region, since there are differences between states both in terms of priorities, and even definitions of things like "younger drivers" and "older drivers". Mr. Read replied there were bound to continue to be differences in the way the data is coded, and that it might be best to keep the regional data at a more general level, such as number of crashes and their severity. For project level planning the State data can be used to get greater detail on a specific location.

6. Baltimore Metropolitan Council Safety Planning

Mr. Ulrich spoke to a powerpoint. Bala Akundi of BMC prepared the presentation but was unable to attend. The Baltimore region has a strong commitment to Safety planning. MPO's have access to decision makers, important for gaining support at the local level. The BMC has instituted a Safety Committee, which has yet to meet. Early activities will include a traffic safety media campaign directed at distracted driving by younger drivers, a Traffic Records Coordinating Committee, and incorporation of safety into the regional long-range plan and TIP. The campaign web site is <http://drivesafebaltimore.com>

7. "Washington's Mean Streets"

Ms. Cort spoke to a powerpoint. The report assigns a "pedestrian danger index", based on pedestrian crashes per 100,000 population estimated exposure, to the different jurisdiction. The urban jurisdictions tend to do better on this index. Estimated exposure is calculated based on US Census walk to work and bus to work data. Pedestrian fatalities are closely related to speed, and jurisdictions with higher speed roads tend to have a higher proportion of fatal pedestrian crashes. Over the short term there is a need to fix the most dangerous locations. But over the long run the market is demanding more walkable communities, which need to be designed in a way that will make them both safe and accessible for pedestrians. Ms. Cort suggested that in locations with high pedestrian activity the roads should not be designed for speeds greater than 30 mph. "Complete Streets" walkability policies should be incorporated into all design and development review manuals, and staff should be trained in the implementation.

Mr. Jackson noted that in January there had been a trails management seminar. We should incorporate trail crash and injury data in addition to on-street crash and injury data.

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Ms. Allahdoust asked if Ms. Cort was aware of the bicycle and pedestrian staffing levels at VDOT, which she did not believe was reflected in the document. VDOT Northern Virginia has two people working full-time on bicycle and pedestrian issues. Ms. Allahdoust also requested that VDOT's bicycle and pedestrian accommodation policy be discussed as well. Ms. Cort said that the complete streets policy was mentioned as a positive step good, but that implementation was not consistent.

8. Next Steps

Mr. Farrell noted that we have a mandate to develop a work program based on the COG Board resolution, as well as maintain a safety element of the long-range plan. The Subcommittee is proposed to meet on a quarterly basis.

9. Adjourned.