
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MONTHLY REPORT

September 14, 2023
Richard Wallace, CAC Chair

The September meeting of the 2023 - 2024 TPB Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was held on Thursday, September 14. The committee received a presentation from MDOT and VDOT about their funding and project prioritization process, and an overview of the National Capital Region Freight Plan. The meeting was held in a hybrid format with an in-person option at COG and virtual option on WebEx.

MARYLAND FUNDING & PROJECT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Kari Snyder, MDOT Regional Planner, provided an overview of the MDOT Policy Framework, 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), and the Transportation Trust Fund. This presentation is part of a series from the various state agencies to TPB's advisory committees to inform them about the state and local processes, and how they coordinate at the TPB.

Member comments and questions included:

- **Emphasis and discussion on how accessibility, safety, and GHG reduction goals are addressed in MDOT's goals and priorities.** A committee member asked for clarification on how accessibility is considered under the draft proposed goal of System Quality. MDOT staff responded that the System Quality goal is comprehensive in improving the system's environmental resiliency, state of good repair (SGR), and accessibility. She added that this goal includes continuing public participation. She also noted the administration's goal to prioritize equity and accessibility with current and future MTPs. Another member asked if MDOT is considering flexing federal highway funding for safety projects, noting that bike, pedestrian, and first/last mile connections to transit are often underfunded. They added that roadway projects often encourage high car speeds over safety and impact vulnerable populations. MDOT staff noted that 80-85% of funding goes to maintenance and SGR, with the remainder to new projects. She added that funding at the state and regional level, including TPB technical assistance programs, provide funding to projects that encourage bike and pedestrian connections. Another member asked about how MDOT prioritizes projects that meet GHG reduction goals. MDOT staff noted that there several funding sources for projects that advance climate goals that help prioritize local projects. She added that projects typically need to be shovel ready. She also noted that the new administration's priority on GHG reductions will help these projects move forward.
- **Discussion about causes and solutions projected budget shortfalls.** A committee member asked about how MDOT intends to address projected budget shortfalls if not pursuing a public-private partnership. MDOT staff noted the new administration's priorities and that federal funding is being pursued for the American Legion Bridge. She added that the TRAIN Commission was created to identify funding for transportation as well as the emerging trends in transportation, and additional resources can be found on their website. Another member asked about contributing factors to the shortfall. MDOT staff noted the impact of reduced gas tax revenue, and inflation on project materials.
- **Interest in coordinated public participation efforts.** One committee member asked about how community perspectives are represented in priority letters. MDOT staff shared that each jurisdiction has a different approach for public participation, and that they engage hard-to-

reach communities. The committee member noted that differences in strategies could be addressed by coordinated guidelines.

- **Discussion about Maryland's contribution to WMATA.** One committee member asked what percentage of the Transportation Trust Fund is dedicated to WMATA. MDOT staff stated the draft FY 24 – 29 CTP includes \$1.2B in state funding for WMATA out of approximately \$20B total operating funds.

VIRGINIA FUNDING & PROJECT PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

Amir Shahpar, VDOT's Director of Transportation Planning for the NoVA District, provided an overview of the Virginia's Project Selection & Funding Process, Common Goals & Priorities, and Virginia's Approach to Visualize 2050. This presentation is part of a series from the various state agencies to TPB's advisory committees to inform them about the state and local processes, and how they coordinate at the TPB.

Member comments and questions included the following:

- **Desire for state agencies to share their strategies to address WMATA funding gap.** Several committee members expressed interest in better understanding the state by state approaches to fund Metro's core capacity improvement. VDOT staff shared several projects (Potomac Yard, Silver Line, second entrance to Crystal City) that support WMATA. Another committee member noted SMART Scale, the Commonwealth Mass Transit fund, and VDRPT support WMATA's system, and that a core capacity alternative has not been selected so more information may be forthcoming.
- **Discussion about modifying SMART Scale criteria.** A committee member asked about how criteria in SMART Scale can be modified – specifically about how environmental quality could be more heavily weighted. VDOT staff responded that the criteria are currently being reviewed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), which includes stakeholder outreach.
- **Interest in early and continuing public participation.** One committee member asked about public input opportunities on Visualize 2050 project inputs after mid-September. VDOT staff mentioned public hearings in Prince William County and Fairfax County have occurred, along with the ongoing TPB public comment opportunity. He added that there will be another opportunity to comment on the submitted project inputs in March 2024.
- **Question about funding priorities and inflation.** One member asked about how severe inflation impacts are to transportation projects and their prioritization. VDOT responded that inflation is especially problematic for transportation, especially considering the cost estimation component of SMART Scale.
- **Question about streamlining the funding process.** One member asked if there has been consideration to reduce the length of time needed to fund a project. VDOT staff noted that the presentation covered the main funding process for transportation projects, but there are other types of funding with shorter timelines.

DRAFT NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION FREIGHT PLAN

Andrew Meese, TPB Systems Performance Planning Program Director, provided an overview of the 2023 update of the National Capital Region Freight Plan. He discussed the importance of regional freight planning, the TPB's freight planning activities, and an overview of the plan contents.

Member comments and questions included the following:

- **Clarification about the National Capital Freight Plan and types of freight in the region.** A committee member asked about how the modes of freight differ. TPB staff responded that rail carries heavier, less valuable goods. Another staff member elaborated that the mode of freight provides different advantages, like the ability for trucks to navigate dense areas, etc. Another member asked for a high-level summary of changes from the 2016 update of the plan. TPB staff noted the equity analysis and impacts of the pandemic and e-commerce. One member asked for clarification on the equity analysis. TPB staff listed the data sources used but noted that they are limited.
- **Discussion about transportation policies and infrastructure that impact freight and passenger travel.** A member asked about the impact of introducing a policy that limits freight truck travel on I-95. TPB staff noted that this topic has not been discussed at the Freight Subcommittee. Another committee member said that the southern extension of I-495 is being considered to support truck freight. Another member asked if the plan discusses the negotiation to share use of rail for passenger and freight travel through the District of Columbia. TPB staff stated that the plan describes the current status and includes Virginia's progress with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority. One member asked about the tunnel rebuilding to allow double stack trains. TPB staff listed several projects that will remove constraint to full-height double stacked trains.
- **Question about the impacts of truck electrification.** TPB staff noted that information on truck electrification is limited, but that there may be operational concerns.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Vice Chair Amin announced that the next CAC meeting will take place on October 12 as a virtual meeting held on WebEx.

ATTENDEES

Members

Richard Wallace, *Chair*
 Ra Amin, *Vice Chair*
 Ashley Hutson, *Vice Chair*
 Christina Farver
 Daniel Papiernik
 Felipe Millán
 Gail Sullivan
 Heather Gaona
 Jacqueline Overton Allen
 Jason Stanford
 Jeffery Parnes
 Kalli Krumpas
 Larkin Turman

Mark Scheufler
 Timothy Davis

Staff

Rachel Beyerle
 Lyn Erickson
 Andy Meese
 Marcela Moreno
 Janie Nham

Other

Kari Snyder, MDOT
 Amir Shahpar, VDOT