National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
SUBJECT: UPWP impacts from the COVID 19 Public Health Emergency Situation
DATE: April 9, 2020

This memo provides a summary of potential impacts to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) planned activities and budget and to several COG operational programs due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Both internal (100% of TPB staff are working from home) and external (member availability, consultant, and data collection uncertainties) factors have been considered.

STAFF WORK ENVIRONMENT

COG has advised its employees to work from home to the maximum extent possible. Brief visits to the office – to pick up work-related materials – are permitted. As of today, 100% of TPB staff are working from home. Staff is able to access their desk computers and all of the data and the server remotely and able to forward their desk phones to their telework phone. COG's IT system has been able to support all of this work and has not posed any measurable issues to productivity. Staff morale remains positive and we have been able to accept/adopt to the changed work environment.

MEETINGS

All in-person meetings have been cancelled through April 17, 2020. If possible, staff are directed to switch the meeting to virtual if (a) items are time sensitive or (b) if presentations and discussions can be effectively conducted in a virtual meeting. Staff has been advised to consider agenda topics according to these two factors.

Two events that have been cancelled are: 1) the March 31 Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Workshop (new date TBD); and 2) the May 15 Bike to Work Day 2020.

UPWP PROJECT DISRUPTIONS

The following list contains project/activities and the potential impacts:

- One TLC grant project for the City of Falls Church has been impacted. Outdoor traffic counts are needed and have been/will be delayed until a "typical" situation can be analyzed. The project was scheduled to be completed by June 30. The contingency plan is to monitor the situation and re-evaluate the project schedule as necessary. If the counts and subsequent analysis is not complete by June 30, it will continue into FY 2021.
- Two Technical Assistance projects have been affected, and both entail field data collection: 1) District of Columbia Highway Performance Monitoring System (DCHPMS) spring counts,

and 2) Virginia non-motorized spring counts. The spring counts for DCHPMS have been deferred until the fall, in TPB FY 2021. DDOT and TPB staff have identified adjustments to the FY 2021 budget for these counts. The federal requirement is for counts to be conducted during the calendar year so delaying these counts until the fall will not have compliance implications. Staff has requested guidance from the FHWA HPMS Lead on short-term counting cycles impacted by COVID-19. The budget allocated to conducting the Virginia non-motorized counts this spring has been reprogrammed to a new Virginia Technical Assistance project that will not require field data collection. This project, the Northern Virginia Park and Ride (P&R) Assessment, will commence this spring and will summarize existing research and studies, identify current and future needs, set a future vision, and summarize the planning process and funding opportunities for P&R lots. No other project disruptions are anticipated.

- The Connected and Autonomous Vehicles Forums originally planned for the March through June 2020 time frame will be converted as necessary to virtual formats. The March 31 event was canceled; the scheduled May 14 event is under reconsideration; and potential June events will be reexamined as the time approaches.
- The proposed June 2020 Traffic Incident Management self-assessment workshop likely will be deferred to FY 2021 due to target (transportation operations and public safety personnel) participants' non-availability for the foreseeable future.
- The remaining work of completion of the National Capital Trail Network relies on some data gathering and review by county staffs. This work and presentation to the TPB by June may be impacted should current work arrangements impact data availability from member agencies. The plan for presentation to the TPB will be reexamined in May.
- The Annual Private Providers Forum slated for June may be canceled, since it is not anticipated to be effective in a virtual format.
- The Curbside Management Forum slated for May, including a "field site visit" aspect, likely will not be able to be held in person, but a scaled-back version may be possible by webinar.

REGIONAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMS

The following list contains project/activities and the potential impacts:

Commuter Connections Work Program Project Disruptions

- Bike to Work Day – Although disappointing, the annual Bike to Work Day event scheduled for May 15 has been canceled for this fiscal year. This is after much discussion and vetting with the Bike to Work Day Steering Committee pit stop managers, WABA, the state funding agencies and COG's senior staff. Focus will be placed on Car Free Day which will be held on September 22 where current Bike to Work Day registrants will be asked to participate. Next year will be the 20th year of Bike to Work Day in the region, and there will be a strong push to make it bigger than ever.
- Employer Recognition Awards – The selection of this year's award winners have been placed on hold until there is a suitable time to conduct the meeting. It is unclear yet whether a large scale event will be held on June 23.
- Commuter Operations Center and Guaranteed Ride Home – Calls and emails to both programs have dropped by at least 65% over the past few weeks.
- CarpoolNow – The marketing component of the mobile app has been cancelled for the remainder of the fiscal year.

- TDM Marketing and Advertising – The regional umbrella campaign for both ridesharing and GRH have been paused due to the quarantine orders and very little to no commuting occurring on a daily basis. Once recovery and stability begin, the campaigns will be re-examined and implemented.
- TDM Evaluation – The Maryland Employer Telework survey that was slated to begin in March has been paused due to the fact that alert letters need to be sent to those employers with no email addresses to direct them to an on-line survey link. Since most offices are closed, it is highly unlikely that mail would be received The survey will be conducted once offices begin re-opening. Survey implementation will be re-examined in May.

Other Operational Program Disruptions

- Street Smart Campaign - The spring 2020 Street Smart campaign wave originally slated for late April and early May (including a scheduled April 21 kickoff, other in-person aspects, and planned media advertising) will be deferred to a later date, due to gathering restrictions and so as not to compete with current urgent public health messaging. Rescheduling options either to June 2020 or September 2020 will be explored. Since Street Smart funding is on a federal fiscal year basis through September 30, 2020, there is additional flexibility.
- JARC/New Freedom/Enhanced Mobility – All site visits have been suspended until further notice.
- Regional Clearinghouse (Reach A Ride) – The marketing campaign has been cancelled and will be reinstated later this calendar year.

RECRUITMENT

Efforts to fill five staff vacancies are being paused due to current work from home conditions. The situation will be reexamined in late April/May with an eye to minimizing programmatic impacts. These are the vacant positions: two Transportation Planner II positions; Transportation Data Analyst I/II; Transportation Engineer II; junior-level engineer/planner vacancy; and Marketing Communications summer internship.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to monitor the situation as it evolves, track the public health and public movement advisories/rules the District, Maryland and Virginia announce in order to formulate COG's operations and work practices. The telework experience (IT system, setup, employee adaption) to date has proven generally positive with minimum loss in productivity.