



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director
SUBJECT: Public Comment for the February 2022 TPB Meeting
DATE: February 16, 2022

The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email (tpbcomment@mwkog.org), online (mwkog.org/tpbcomment), and phone. Comments are collected until noon on the Tuesday before the TPB meeting. These comments are compiled and shared with the board at the meeting the following day.

Between the January 2022 TPB meeting and noon on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, the TPB received 2 comments. Both comments were submitted via email.

The comments are summarized below. All full comments are attached to this memo.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth – Email – January 20, 2022

On behalf of the MetroNow Coalition, which includes the Coalition for Smarter Growth, he shared MetroNow's *Bus Transformation Project (BTP) Progress Report* and their accompanying press release, and he shared an invitation to their February 2 event.

Alrene Montemarano – Email – January 28, 2022

Montemarano sent an article, titled "More lanes on I-95 won't fix Virginia's traffic woes, VDOT says", from Greater Greater Washington.

TPB Comment

From: Stewart Schwartz <stewart@smartergrowth.net>
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2022 4:49 PM
To: Chuck Bean; Kanti Srikanth; Lyn Erickson; Paul DesJardin; John Swanson
Cc: TPBcomment
Subject: Fwd: RELEASE: Progress Report on DC regional Bus Transformation

Categories: Yellow category

On behalf of the [MetroNow Coalition](#), which includes CSG with the region's leading business associations, I am reaching out to share MetroNow's [Bus Transformation Project \(BTP\) Progress Report](#) and accompanying press release (attached) that we published this morning.

We produced this report to measure progress against the 2019 [Bus Transformation Project Strategy](#) and [Action Plan](#) but more importantly, to call the region to action. By prioritizing better bus service we can improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who use the bus today – increasing access to opportunity, strengthening the regional economy, and creating a regionally coordinated bus network that will help this region grow stronger as we emerge from the pandemic.

Transforming bus service will require a combination of sustained political will, as well as capital and operating funding. We need Bus Champions who are willing to stand up for buses and bus riders, granting the bus the same political importance as Metrorail, or even more. We believe it is high time we recognize the essential role that bus plays in our transportation system.

With that in mind, the MetroNow Coalition is hosting the 2022 Bus Champions Roundtable -- a series of moderated discussions with the region's key business, transportation, and elected leaders with an overarching goal of identifying and cultivating a generation of "bus champions" and accelerating regional bus transformation. Each of the discussions will focus on one or more of the six big moves for 2022 that we identified in our [Progress Report](#).

We would love for you to Join us at the public launch webinar to learn more about the progress report and about how to be a MetroNow Bus Champion.

When: Wednesday, February 2 from 10:00-11:00am

Where: Virtual (Zoom) - [Register here](#)

Who: You and any of your staff

If you have any questions or would like a private briefing on the report, please let me know.

Stewart

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TPB Comment

From: Arlene <mikarlgm@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 28, 2022 9:56 PM
Subject: More lanes on I-95 won't fix Virginia's traffic woes, VDOT says
Categories: Yellow category

This two-year-old article of course leaves out the pandemic-caused rise in teleworking which has caused such a big reduction in the number of vehicles using our highways these days. We know that some of that change is permanent. Traffic is not what it was in 2017 when this plan was devised, and which was entirely based on figures that no longer reflect reality. And haven't for two years.

What the article talks about is that adding lanes does not fulfill its promise to reduce traffic. Traffic gets worse each time we do it. And this is from the Virginia Department of Transportation, itself.

What is the definition of madness again?

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. These words are usually credited to the acclaimed genius Albert Einstein. Mar 23, 2017

Author: Albert Einstein

(Bolding is mine.)

Please click on link to see graphics.

<https://ggwash.org/view/75945/virginia-i-95-traffic-vdot>

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More lanes on I-95 won't fix Virginia's traffic woes, VDOT says

Canaan Merchant February 4, 2020

If you want to ease congestion and improve travel times on Interstate 95, **widening the roads won't do the trick.**

That's a conclusion reached by the **Virginia Department of Transportation** after studying how to improve the busy I-95 corridor throughout the state. Sections in Northern Virginia are some of the busiest and most congested spots in the country, by some measures, and VDOT predicts that **adding one to three general-purpose lanes to I-95 would bring "minor to no speed improvements" by 2040.**

Researchers reached that conclusion in part by looking at what the state has tried already. As one

example, VDOT added a fourth general-purpose lane to I-95 in 2011 and found that it **didn't reduce travel times long-term—in fact, speeds since then have gone down, which means worse congestion instead of relief.**

“Additional general purpose lanes do not address these goals [to improve travel time reliability] on the I-95 corridor,” VDOT said in an October presentation about its I-95 improvement plan. **“Transit and carpooling offer best opportunities.”**

This recently widened section of 95 has **only gotten slower since the new lane opened.**

Part of the reason adding more roads may be ineffective is because more people are **choosing different ways to get around on the corridor.**

The decline of the single-occupant vehicle

Today most people traveling through the corridor aren't driving by themselves. They're using a **mix of transit and carpools**, in some areas making up about **60%** of the travelers along the I-95 corridor at rush hour.

That's important because it means that **solutions aimed at moving more and more cars may not be helping the greatest amount of people traveling through the area.** Another important thing is that **transit and other driving alternatives can move a lot of people** even in places that do not seem particularly transit-friendly.

And that shows up in other places as well. In an online survey, VDOT asked participants what improvements people wanted to see in the corridor. The **two most popular responses were improved and expanded Metro and Commuter Rail service.**

That bodes well for the state's recently announced plans to greatly expand VRE service thanks to a series of plans throughout the corridor aimed at increasing commuter rail frequency through the state.

The people want transit!

That said, some pure road improvements are planned. There are plans to expand the I-95 express lanes where speeds are kept constant through tolling down across the Rappahannock River into Fredericksburg. Smaller plans to extend acceleration and deceleration lanes are in the works for a number of exits where there are persistent back ups.

Another big project is improvements to real-time traffic adjustments on nearby roads like US-1 which is a local alternative to I-95 that often faces punishing back-ups that block parts of the road, when there are crashes.

A real-time system that could change traffic light timings could improve traffic throughput when those crashes occur.

Doubling the number of lanes on 95 wouldn't do much to make traffic better.

Beefing up bike and pedestrian infrastructure

A gap in the study is a lack of options when it comes to walking and biking. That's not an option on I-95 itself, but identifying ways to make local trips easier to make by walking and biking can **reduce pressure to take cars** instead. Additionally, Virginia does have a number of trails along the East Coast Greenway aimed at providing cycling and walking routes across the state and entire east coast.

Notably, while the study is focused on the I-95 corridor, it's looking at more than just cars on that road. Officials were tasked to look at how many people were traveling through the corridor, rather than just how many cars and trucks moved through the area.

The push for a **people-orientated study** was due to the efforts of State Senator Scott Surovell, who represents some of the areas inside the corridor in Northern Virginia.

While the idea that there is no easy "fix" to congestion on I-95 might be discouraging to some, it's also an encouraging sign from VDOT to see the emphasis on expanded transit and alternative options when it comes to traveling throughout the state. That's good for Virginians, for traffic, and the environment.

Arlene Montemarano, 240-360-8691, Lawndale Drive

The State's plan to add 4 private toll lanes to 495 and 270 would impact six national park sites, threaten dozens of local and regional parks, and endanger 30 miles of streams, 50 acres of wetlands, and 1,500 acres of forest canopy.

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