



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: John Swanson, Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Phase II Outreach for Visualize 2045
DATE: February 23, 2018

This memorandum describes public outreach activities that are planned in 2018 for Visualize 2045. Public forums in the spring will provide the public with an early opportunity to learn about content that will be included in the plan and provide feedback on the direction of the plan. Open houses in the fall will allow the TPB to inform the public in some detail about the final content of the plan.

BACKGROUND

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. Scheduled for final approval in October 2018, the plan will identify all regionally significant transportation investments planned through 2045 and will provide detailed analysis to help decision makers and the public “visualize” the region’s future under current plans. The plan will focus on regionally significant road and transit projects, but will also highlight bicycle and pedestrian projects and key land-use issues facing the region. The plan will take a multimodal approach, relying not on any one travel mode to accommodate future population growth and address the region’s diverse transportation challenges.

Visualize 2045 is a new kind of long-range transportation plan for our region because for the first time it will include unfunded priorities. In the past, the TPB’s long-range plan only included those projects that the region anticipates can be funded. In contrast, Visualize 2045 will have a wider scope including information about unfunded projects and priority initiatives that the TPB has endorsed for future concerted action.

PHASE I OUTREACH

Public outreach is being integrated into the development of Visualize 2045 over a two-year period during calendar years 2017 and 2018. In 2017, the following activities were accomplished:

- Branding and Identity (Spring 2017) – The name Visualize 2045 and a graphic identity were selected.
- Website and Newsletter (Spring 2017 through Fall 2018) – An electronic newsletter and a new website were developed. These core communications vehicles are currently being used to regularly share information throughout the development of the plan.
- Public Input Survey (Summer-Fall 2017) – Staff conducted a survey to obtain information about public attitudes toward transportation in the region. The survey was intended to “take

the pulse of the region” by getting a general sense about transportation priorities, concerns and ideas. The survey also helped to acquaint the public with the TPB and Visualize 2045. Two methods were used: one method reached a geographically representative sample through a randomized mailing, and the other method reached out to all residents of the region through public events, social media, and other outreach. Analysis of the survey responses will be released in the spring of 2018.

PHASE II ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR 2018

Building on the outreach efforts conducted in 2017, the TPB will pursue outreach activities between March and October of 2018.

- **Public Forums, Spring 2018**

The TPB will conduct a series of nine public forums throughout the region. In these sessions, we will ask residents to “visualize” our transportation future, based on key inputs that we expect will be included in the plan, and with a focus on the unfunded “aspirational” components. The primary purpose of these sessions will be to provide information to the public about the draft content of Visualize 2045, and to qualitatively obtain information about how the public believes we might implement our unfunded priorities.

What the forums will explore

The TPB in December 2017 and January 2018 endorsed seven priority initiatives for inclusion in the unfunded aspirational element of Visualize 2045. They include:

- Regional land-use balance optimization
- Regionwide bus rapid transit and transitways
- Metrorail capacity improvements
- Employer-based travel demand management policies
- Regional express travel network
- Completion of the National Capital Trail
- Pedestrian and bicycle access to high-capacity transit.

These initiatives are consistent with existing plans and policies. The region is expected to invest more than \$300 billion over the next 25 years in projects that will help implement many aspects of these initiatives. However, a more substantial realization of these ideas will require the region’s jurisdictions to greatly accelerate funding for capital improvements and implement major policy changes related to land use and transportation demand management.

The public forums in the spring of 2018 will be used to conduct qualitative research that explores these seven initiatives. In asking participants to visualize each initiative and how it might be implemented, we will discuss the public’s preferences, interests, and concerns. We will also explore how and whether attitudes might change, as citizens learn about how the initiatives are being implemented through planned capital improvements or policy changes.

The sessions will be designed to elicit qualitative feedback that can be summarized in a discrete report, and also reflected in the public involvement chapter/appendix of the long-

range plan. In addition, the forums will also serve to raise public awareness of the TPB and the regional planning process.

Parameters and logistics

The forums will be conducted as open sessions lasting between one and two hours. The sessions will be open to all interested people and will not require advanced registration. Understanding that participants will be self-selected, we will characterize the input received as being reflective of active citizens whose participation will be essential for the implementation of the unfunded initiatives. (Note: The survey conducted in 2017 did include a random sample designed to be statistically reflective of the region's overall population.)

In order to ensure geographic coverage of the region, we anticipate the sessions will be conducted in the following jurisdictions: District of Columbia, Charles County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Alexandria/Arlington (combined session), Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Prince William County. The team organizing the sessions will endeavor to ensure that forum participants reflect a wide cross-section of experiences and opinions from throughout the region.

The sessions will begin with a short opening presentation that will provide information about draft content of Visualize 2045, including "funded" projects, growth forecasts, financial forecasts, and unfunded priority initiatives, which are described above. The majority of the time at the forums will be devoted to group discussions. Care will be taken to ensure that multiple viewpoints are expressed and no single perspective dominates the discussions. The material developed for the events, will also be available to COG/TPB staff and our partners for use in additional presentations and/or discussions.

The sessions will be publicized through a variety of media. If possible, they will be planned in cooperation with community groups and may even be conducted as components of regularly scheduled events/meetings. Outreach will be conducted in a manner that seeks to include a broad and diverse group of participants at the forums.

The schedule for developing and implementing the sessions will be concluded before the end of fiscal year 2018, which ends on June 30. In March, content for the workshops (agenda, presentation, discussion guide document) will be developed. Also in March, the sessions will be scheduled and publicized. It is anticipated that the sessions will be conducted during April, and May. A summary report on the forums will be developed in June.

Consultant assistance is currently being procured for help in planning, scheduling and implementing the nine events.

- **Open Houses, Fall 2018**

In September, as part of the final public comment period for Visualize 2045, COG/TPB will conduct three open houses (in D.C., Maryland and Virginia) in which we will feature displays about elements of the plan.

The purpose of these events will be to provide the public with the chance to learn about the plan contents as part of the final public comment period of the plan and to share information on opportunities to pursue the aspirational elements of the plan. We anticipate that the three sessions will be hosted by a TPB member, preferably an officer of board.

While subject to change, the open house events will ideally be scheduled for a time period straddling the end of the work day—potentially 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. They will feature displays, at “stations” in an open setting, about elements of the plan. The content in these displays will be largely derived from the draft plan. Subject-matter experts from TPB staff who will be on-hand to talk with citizens in an informal, one-on-one basis. Around 6:00 or 7:00 P.M., participants will be greeted by a member of the TPB who will provide an overview of the event, followed by a very short presentation (15-20 minutes) by TPB staff about the funded elements of the plan including the anticipated system performance. The TPB member will then provide an update on the aspirational elements of the plan. The presentation will be followed by questions and answers.

Planning for these open houses will begin in June 2018.

NEXT STEPS

Staff anticipates that by the end of February, a contract will be finalized with a consultant that will assist in the development and implementation of the forums. At the March TPB meeting, staff will provide a briefing on the planned outreach events and will solicit input from TPB members.

Staff anticipates that the forums will be ready to begin during the first week of April.