

July 21, 2004

Progress Report on Actions to Improve Regional Transportation Communication and Coordination During Incidents

Ronald T. Burns

Maryland Department of Transportation

James Austrich

District Department of Transportation

Presentation to the

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

July 21, 2004

Course of Action for Strengthening Transportation Communications and Coordination

- On May 19, TPB endorsed a course of action for strengthening transportation communications and coordination during significant transportation incidents and emergency situations
- A work program of technical and procedural improvements, training, and duty rotation of the region's transportation agency staffs is to be implemented over a six-month period, and would include funding requirements
- If implementation of the above actions proves insufficient, creation of a new organization should be considered. New York's TRANSCOM is one potential model.

Effort Started by an Ad Hoc Work Group

- Overseen by senior program managers from DDOT, MDOT, VDOT, WMATA
- Initiated June 3 to determine the best way to proceed
- Agreed to form two specialized subcommittee work groups, and to coordinate through MOITS and the TPB
 - Core of DDOT, MDOT, VDOT, and WMATA on all committees, outreaching to other stakeholders when necessary

Specialized Work Groups Formed

- **Systems Integration Work Group**
 - Focusing on integration of technical systems and databases among key transportation and public safety operations centers, and related technical improvements
 - Example: automated sharing of computerized roadway condition data among transportation agencies
- **Operations Work Group**
 - Focusing on procedures, staffing, cross training, updating contact information, communications and coordination needs
 - Example: improved linkages and compatibility among paging systems maintained by individual transportation agencies, and with the RICCSSM

Operations Improvements Since 9/11/01

- **Contacts**
 - Regional Incident Managers
 - Public Safety
 - WMATA
 - Regular Meetings
- **Communications**
 - Center to Center
 - Regional Incident Coordination and Communications System (RICCS)
 - OPS Center Pages
 - Nextel Radio
 - 800MHz Radio
 - Media

Operations Improvements Since 9/11/01

- Regional Coordination Plans
 - E-Routes
 - Emergency Support Function #1 (ESF#1)
 - Regional Emergency Support Function #1 (RESF#1)
 - Regional Emergency Coordination Plan(RECP)
 - Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination Annex. (REETC)
- Technical Improvements
 - 24/7 Ops Centers
 - CHART Workstations
 - CCTV Video Sharing
 - Highway Advisory Radio System (HARS)
 - Dynamic Message Signs (DMS)
 - Detection Sensors

Operations Improvements Since 9/11/01

- Service Patrols
 - DOT Patrols Supporting Each Other
 - MD ERT / DC ROP / VA SSP
- Procedural Changes
 - Chain of Command
 - Notifications WMATA, Public, and Media
- Capital Wireless Integrated Network (CapWIN) Implementation
 - NCR DOT's and Public Safety Working Together
 - Interoperability

Immediate, Short and Mid Term Initiatives Being Considered

- Immediate (0-6 months): Improved Paging/Contact System
- Short Term (6-12 months): Major Incident Data Systems integration through a virtual center – RITIS Model
- Mid Term (1-2 years): Complete Data and Ops Systems Integration with Police & Fire, Emergency Medical and 511/Traveler Information – RITIS + CapWin

Outlook

- Next update to TPB September 15
- Questions

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD**

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD**

July 21, 2004

Members and Alternates Present

Chris Zimmerman, Arlington County Board
Phil Mendelson, D.C. Council
Mike Knapp, Montgomery County Council
Patrice Winter, City of Fairfax Councilmember
Cathy Hudgins, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Kathy Porter, Takoma Park
Brian A. Glenn, Federal Transit Administration
Edward L. Thomas, WMATA
David F. Snyder, City of Falls Church
Rodney M. Roberis, City of Greenbelt
JoAnne Sorenson, VDOT-NOVA
Karina Ricks, DC Office of Planning
Jeff Jennings, DC City Councilmember Jim Graham
Julia Koster, NCPC
Bill Wren, Manassas Park, VA
Rick Canizales, Prince William County
Damon Harvey, District Department of Transportation (DDOT)
Mick Staton, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Art Smith, Loudoun County
Andrew Fellows, City of College Park
Bruce Reeder, Frederick County Commissioners
Bob Dorsey, City of Rockville
Edgar Gonzalez, Montgomery County Executive Branch
Wayne Cooper, Charles County Commissioners
Cicero Salles, Prince George's County Executive

7. Approval of a Proposed Agreement Between the TPB and the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) to Conduct the Transportation Planning Process in the Portion of Stafford County That is Part of the Washington DC-Virginia-Maryland Urbanized Area

Referring to the mailout material, Mr. Kirby explained that following the 2000 Census, the urbanized boundary of the Washington area expanded into Stafford County and also into Charles County. He said the St. Charles portion of Charles County had joined the TPB as a member. Mr. Kirby said that Stafford County was already a member of a Metropolitan Planning Organization—the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO). He said the TPB has had a working agreement with FAMPO for a number of years dealing with air quality conformity. Following the 2000 Census, the U.S. Department of Transportation requested that a decision be made regarding the status for transportation planning purposes of the portion of Stafford County that is now part of the Washington region's urbanized area. Mr. Kirby said that FAMPO and Stafford County have expressed the preference to stay within the FAMPO area. He said this would essentially maintain the status quo. He said that FAMPO has asked for the TPB to agree formally through this resolution that Stafford County would remain, for MPO purposes, entirely within the FAMPO area.

Chairman Zimmerman said this item has been reviewed by all the local staffs, the TPB staff and the Steering Committee, which had no problem with it. He moved approval of Resolution 1-2005.

The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Mendelson.

The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Progress Report on Actions to Improve Regional Transportation Communications and Coordination During Incidents

Mr. Snyder reminded the Board that it recently approved revisions to the regional emergency coordination plan on transportation. He said these revisions covered four needs: 1) a public education campaign; 2) better coordinated public information when an incident is occurring; 3) continued drilling and work among the different agencies; and 4) improved coordination and communications among transportation agencies. He said the status report would focus on this fourth point.

Mr. Snyder said the region functioned extremely well during the recent dedication of the World War II Memorial and the Reagan funeral, but he said that level of coordination needs to be ready for events that are not known in advance. He said that presentations under this item would be given by two staff people from departments of transportation who are working to ensure that the region will function as one entity in a coordinated way.

Mr. Snyder added that the Board of Trade recently hosted a session which brought in staff from the TRANSCOM organization in New York. He said there was a thorough discussion about using that model in the Washington region. He said an alternative approach was the CapWin model, which was developed through the TPB committee structure and has since been spun off as a separate initiative.

Referring to the handout material, Ron Burns, Assistant Director with the Office of Engineering and Homeland Security for the Maryland Department of Transportation, briefed the Board on operations coordination improvements. He said that on May 19, the TPB passed a resolution that charged the transportation agencies, including the Virginia, Maryland, and District departments of transportation (VDOT, MDOT, DDOT), and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), to conduct activities to ensure their traffic operation centers are communicating with each other.

Mr. Burns said he chairs the Systems Task Force for this effort. This subcommittee is ensuring the systems in different jurisdictions talk to each other electronically in a seamless way. He said that important improvements that are already underway do not receive much attention because improvements in things like protocols or paging systems do not create great ribbon-cutting opportunities.

Referring to a PowerPoint handout, Jim Austrich, Chief of the Roadway Operations and Patrol Branch for the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), continued the presentation. Mr. Austrich chairs the Procedures and Operations Task Force for these improvement efforts. He thanked Mr. Snyder and Andy Meese of the TPB staff for their work.

Mr. Austrich said that since September 11, staff from different jurisdictions have forged very close working relationships. He said that informal relationships remain very important. He said that they were working to make sure that agencies or staff in various jurisdictions feel they are being made fully aware of incidents with a regional impact. He said that the agencies involved through the MOITS coordination activities believe that information is being shared. He said that since the "tractor man" incident, coordination has truly improved, and that was evident during the World War II Memorial dedication and the Reagan funeral.

Mr. Austrich said the region has more than ten different types of operations centers, and the communications among these centers is complex. He said new communications equipment has been purchased. He emphasized the importance of redundancy in communications. He said he has developed relationships with people in the media. He described the development of evacuation routes. He said there are 25 "E-Routes," which are cross jurisdictional and are identified on the DDOT website. He described the integration of communications equipment. He said that Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia all have operations centers that operate around the clock. He described the newly purchased electronic message signs. He described roadway

detection devices and service patrols. He also noted the importance of making improvements in chain of command structures. He said the CapWin system, which was discussed earlier, was a model of interoperability at its best. Finally, he described current goals, including wider dissemination of paging systems; improvements in response to major incidents; and improved integration between public safety agencies and the state DOTs. He said the next update to the TPB would be on September 15.

Mr. Febiows asked if the issue of risk minimization related to freight movement of hazardous materials could be added to the presentation for September 15.

Mr. Kirby said the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is working on the issue of rail transport of freight.

Ms. Koster said that NCPC is currently coordinating with CSX, the Department of Homeland Security, and a number of other agencies on the issue of the freight rail line that goes near the U.S. Capitol in terms of the risks that this is presenting as well as other freight mobility issues. She said the team working on these issues is just starting, but she would be happy to report back in the future.

Vice Chairman Mendelson said he recently encountered a significant accident on Constitution Avenue in which a car was upside down on a sidewalk. He said that four westbound lanes of the road were blocked by fire trucks and ambulances and two lanes eastbound were blocked by police cars for no reason because the accident was on the sidewalk. He said it seemed that no one was interested in traffic. He asked Mr. Austrich when his staff got there.

Mr. Austrich said he did not attend the incident, but he was fully aware of it because they have a camera at 17th and Constitution. He said the U.S. Park Police, Secret Service and Metropolitan Police were in charge of the incident.

Vice Chairman Mendelson said he was not asking about who was in charge of the incident; he was asking about who was in charge of traffic management.

Mr. Austrich said that when the fire and the police agencies arrive, they are technically in charge. He said that when a fatality or a hazardous spill occurs it is his duty to exert his authority to reopen lanes when the appropriate time comes. He said these issues are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Vice Chairman Mendelson said he understood that Mr. Austrich was saying that there is not any priority for transportation management. He said that Constitution Avenue has heavy traffic volumes, so when it is shut down that causes major disruptions. He said he would like to get a report on how traffic management is handled in these situations in the different jurisdictions. He said that on the question of incident management, he was getting the sense that transportation is not "in the equation."

Mr. Austrich said that following an incident the previous day on I-66, the state departments of transportation had been contacted within minutes and messages had been posted on electronic signs. But he said he understood Vice Chairman Mendelson's concerns and he welcomed any assistance in bringing the fire and police agencies together to enhance coordination. He emphasized that his staff knows the importance of getting emergency and police personnel to agree to reopen roads as quickly as possible.

Vice Chairman Mendelson said that hearing that Mr. Austrich might have to beg a fire commander to move a hose or that he does not control a major intersection like 17th and Constitution were indications that incident management in terms of transportation is not a priority.

Chairman Zimmerman added that it also appears to mean that the priority of incident management is not transportation.

Vice Chairman Mendelson said he would like this addressed at the next TPB meeting in two months.

Mr. Sales congratulated Mr. Austrich and Mr. Burns for their efforts. He said they recently did an excellent presentation at the Board of Trade. He said he understood the TRANSCOM organization in New York is working toward providing real-time information, not only for the agencies but also for the general public. He said he would like to see the Washington region head in that direction.

9. Review of Proposed Work Program to Address the Travel Demand Modeling Topics Identified in the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Review

Chairman Zimmerman suggested that because the meeting was running very late and because this item was covered during the morning work session, the Board did not need to spend additional time on it.

Mr. Kirby noted that the materials for this item were in the mailout.

Chairman Zimmerman said this is an important topic and he thought it would be important to come back to it in the future. He noted that there were some important questions raised during the work session and during the public comment period which needed to be further discussed. He suggested that Board members review the letters distributed under Item 5, including a letter from Environmental Defense, which relate to this item.

10. Briefing on the First Phase Results of the TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study

