
MEMORANDUM

TO: EMMET TYDINGS, TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
FROM: DARREN SMITH, TPB STAFF
SUBJECT: UNCONSTRAINED PLANNING ACTIVITIES OF OTHER MPOS
DATE: 6/15/2006
CC: JOHN SWANSON, TPB STAFF

Financially Unconstrained Planning Activities by MPOs in Major Metropolitan Areas

This memo is in response to your request to John for information about what some other MPOs in the country are doing as far as financially unconstrained planning activities, especially in relation to the recommendations made in last year's CAC report on the CLRP. This is certainly not an exhaustive or detailed list, but it gives an idea of the range of things going on.

In some cases, the unconstrained plans are project listings that have resulted from a visioning and/or scenario study process. In other cases, the plans are project listings generated from the bottom up simply as collections of additional improvements desired by local jurisdictions. Even then, however, a visioning and/or scenario study process may be used to go back to the unconstrained list and prioritize unfunded projects, highlighting certain ones as top candidates for inclusion in future constrained plans. In addition, some MPOs have used unconstrained plans as tools for exploration of additional funding sources.

Atlanta: The Atlanta Regional Commission has an "Aspirations Plan" that began essentially as a collection of additional projects desired by localities on top of those included in the constrained plan. It is referred to as a "reservoir of projects" for future constrained plans. However, ARC's recent "Envision6" program has developed needs assessments for corridors and activity centers, guided by a visioning and public input process that included polling. The needs assessments are then to be compared with the Aspirations Plan to see what projects deserve higher priority.

Dallas/Ft. Worth: The State of Texas has mandated each MPO to do a "Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan" that is an unconstrained plan. In the case of the North Central Texas COG, they did an analysis of needs based on modeled systems performance using a measure they created called the "Texas Congestion Index". The Mobility Plan includes projects designed to reach a certain region-wide level of service as defined by that index. Public input is at the back end, as they presented the list of projects for comment at workshops and such. They also went back to the state and requested approval for turning some highway projects already funded in the constrained plan to toll highways, thus generating an addition \$4 billion in revenue to put toward projects in the unconstrained Mobility Plan.

Houston: Also under the state requirement; they call their unconstrained plan the “100% Plan” and they have a set of relatively detailed policy criteria that determine project selection (or are supposed to, at least). The process that led to the policy criteria is not clear, nor is it clear what public involvement took place.

Sacramento: Began with a public involvement and visioning process that included scenario development and public opinion polling on attitudes toward the scenarios, especially in relation to the baseline scenario. This led to a “preferred scenario” that included a financially unconstrained transportation plan. They are now considering a funding incentive program for projects that conform to the scenario, technical assistance provision and creation of a “toolbox”, a possible project certification program, and evaluation and tracking of the success of the process at influencing land use and transportation trends.

Denver: Has an \$88 billion “vision” plan and a \$63 billion constrained plan. The “vision” projects do not appear to be prioritized against each other.

San Francisco: Their plan lists projects and gives a “funded element” and a “vision element”. There is frequently both a funded and an unfunded portion for the same project, though there are also completely unfunded projects listed.