

ITEM 14 - Information

November 16, 2005

Briefing on Definition of the Regional Core and Regional Activity Centers and Clusters and Future Updates

Staff

Recommendation: In response to a request by the TPB at the October 19, 2005 meeting, additional information will be provided on the definition of the regional core and regional activity centers and clusters and on future efforts to update them.

Issues: None

Background: In 1998 the TPB Vision identified better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land use planning as a major goal and called for a composite general land use and transportation map of the region. Beginning in 1999 the Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) and the COG Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC) developed an initial regional activity centers map and supporting data.

From July 1999 to March 2002, under the direction of a COG Board and TPB oversight working group a final set of activity centers maps was produced. In April 2002, the COG Board and TPB adopted the set of maps and associated data depicting regional activity centers in the publication: *Metropolitan Washington Regional Activity Centers; A Tool for Linking Land Use and Transportation Planning*.



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Bowie

College Park

Frederick County

Gaithersburg

Greenbelt

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County

Memorandum

Date: November 9, 2005

To: Members, National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board (TPB)

From: Paul DesJardin
Chief of Housing and Planning

Subject: Updating the Maps of Regional Activity Centers and Clusters

In 2002, the Metropolitan Development Policy Committee (MDPC), COG Board of Directors, and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) approved the final Regional Activity Centers, based on the Round 6.1 Cooperative Forecasts. The final printed report of that effort, "Regional Activity Centers: A Tool for Linking Land Use and Transportation Planning is enclosed.

On October 12, the COG Board of Directors approved the Round 7.0 Cooperative Forecasts. Per Resolution R13-02, the PDTAC has begun work to update the Regional Activity Centers and Clusters based upon this new, major update to the Cooperative Forecasts. This memorandum summarizes the Regional Activity Centers project and outlines potential next steps for their update and refinement.

Development of the Regional Activity Centers

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) initiated a regional transportation "Vision Plan" process during 1996 and, in October 1998, the TPB adopted its transportation "Vision ":

"In the 21st Century, the Washington metropolitan region remains a vibrant world capital, with a transportation system that provides efficient movement of people and goods. This system promotes the region's economy and environmental quality, and operates in an attractive and safe setting--it is a system that serves everyone. The system is fiscally sustainable, promotes areas of concentrated growth, manages both demand and capacity, employs the best technology, and joins rail, roadway, bus, air, water, pedestrian and bicycle facilities into a fully interconnected network." (TPB "Vision Statement")

As an element of the Transportation Vision, the TPB also adopted an Action Agenda containing a number of goals, objectives and strategies, including better coordination of land use and transportation planning. To address this goal, the Action Agenda recommended the preparation of:

"... A composite general land use and transportation map of the region that identifies the key elements needed for regional transportation planning – regional activity centers, principal transportation corridors and facilities, and designated green space."

COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) developed the initial Regional Activity Centers between January and July of 1999, based upon COG's Round 5.4

Cooperative Forecasts – the adopted growth projections for the COG member jurisdictions. PDTAC members defined the boundaries of the 'Activity Centers' so that they were based on local land use plans and were not limited to aggregations of COG/TPB traffic zones. This map of the “initial” Regional Activity Centers contained nearly 80 percent of the region’s employment and approximately 20 percent of the region’s households.

The COG Board of Directors adopted the initial Regional Activity Centers in July 1999, but established a COG Board / TPB Regional Activity Centers Joint Working Group to oversee refinements to the map and supporting data. The Joint Working Group worked to establish a common understanding and purpose for the Activity Centers project, and a policy and technical framework under which refinements to the Activity Centers should occur. The Joint Working Group directed the PDTAC members to undertake several revisions to the Activity Centers to primarily identify “regionally significant” Activity Centers.

Regional Activity Centers: Criteria and Typologies

In response to the directive from the Working Group, the PDTAC developed 5 typologies of Regional Activity Centers, each with specific transportation needs:

*(1) **DC Core** - Primary focal point of Metropolitan Washington. Comprises major centers within the District of Columbia. Contains the major governmental, cultural and tourism activities of the region, as well as significant business and commercial activity. Center of the region's transit system. Pedestrian-oriented sidewalk network with an organized street grid / block configuration.*

*(2) **Mixed Use Centers** - Generally urban in character, areas up to two square miles (1,280 acres) that contain either a dense mix of retail, employment, and residential activity or significant levels of employment and housing. Accessible by transit or commuter rail and by major highways. Employment Criteria: Greater than 15,000 jobs and greater than 25 jobs / acre in 2025. Residential Criteria: Greater than 10 units per acre.*

*(3) **Employment Centers** - Higher-density areas up to 3.5 square miles (2,240 acres) that contain significant concentrations of employment. Generally urban or becoming more urban in character. Employment Criteria: Greater than 20,000 jobs and greater than 30 jobs/acre in 2025.*

*(4) **Suburban Employment Centers** - More-dispersed, lower-density areas, less than 6 square miles (3,840 acres). Employment Criteria: Greater than 15,000 jobs and greater than 10 jobs/acre in 2025.*

*(5) **Emerging Employment Centers** – Rapidly developing "campus-style" suburban employment areas less than 6 square miles (3,840 acres) in total area. Employment Criteria: Greater than 15,000 jobs in 2025, and greater than 50 percent job growth between 2000 and 2025 OR less than 50 percent commercial buildout in 2025.*

As seen in Map 1 and Table 1 of the Regional Activity Centers report, the 58 Regional Activity Centers of the Round 6.1 Forecasts contain slightly more than half of the region’s current and future employment and about 10 percent of the region’s households on approximately 4 percent of the region’s land area.

Regional Activity Clusters

While the Regional Activity Centers and maps are largely defined in terms of employment concentrations (excluding “Mixed-Use Centers”), the PDTAC developed the 24 Regional Activity Clusters at the request of the Working Group and based upon the fact that significant

concentrations of residential development currently exist or are planned immediately around the Regional Activity Centers. From a transportation perspective, the PDTAC also defined the Clusters based upon the recognition that the Regional Activity Centers all fall along major transportation corridors and that individual Activity Centers are often in close proximity to each other along those corridors and served by similar transportation needs and infrastructure.

As seen in Table 2 and Maps 2 of the Activity Centers report, the Regional Activity Clusters contain nearly 70 percent of the region's jobs and approximately 31 percent of the region's households on only about 14 percent of the region's total land area. As shown in Map 3, the Planning Directors also unanimously recommended a "bar map" as the best method for portraying the magnitude of growth anticipated in the Regional Activity Clusters.

Other Elements of the Regional Activity Centers project

The Regional Special Attractors map displays many individual locations within the region that merit special consideration because of their potential to generate a large number of trips. The Special Attractors include regionally-significant federal government, retail, and entertainment, historical / cultural, and educational facilities. The Planning Directors felt that such a map would give a finer grain view of important locations within and outside of the Activity Centers.

Finally, the TPB staff, at the request of the Planning Directors prepared 2 maps based on the 2000 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) depicting future transportation improvements and facility studies through the year 2025. At the request of the Joint Working Group, all of the maps depict as "finished" all major transportation improvement projects that are to be completed within the next 2 years.

Round 7.0 and Updating / Revising the Regional Activity Centers Maps

The Planning Directors, Joint Working Group and Metropolitan Development Policy Committee concurred that subsequent revisions to the Regional Activity Centers Maps and supporting data would only be undertaken following the completion of a major "Round" of the Cooperative Forecasts – e.g., "Round 7.0", "Round 8.0", etc. These revisions to the Activity Centers would also incorporate appropriate information from subsequent major updates to the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

Following the approval of Round 7.0 earlier this fall, the Planning Directors and COG staff have recently begun work to evaluate the Regional Activity Centers and Clusters based upon the Round 7.0 Cooperative Forecasts. PDTAC members directed that staff begin their assessment using the criteria and typologies that were approved in 2002. COG staff briefed the MDPC on this analysis during the November 9 meeting, at which time MDPC members concurred with the recommendation of the Planning Directors that the criteria and typologies for defining the Centers and Clusters not be changed for the Round 7.0 analysis.

MDPC members also expressed interest in having the Activity Centers and Activity Clusters maps updated to make them more useful for planning purposes, and requested that TPB and COG Board policy officials consider establishing a new steering committee or joint working group to address these issues.