

ITEM 7 – Action
March 16, 2016

Review of Comments Received and Approval of Project Submissions
for the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the 2016 CLRP Amendment
and the FY 2017-2022 TIP

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on responses to comments received and adopt Resolution R8-2016 to approve project submissions for inclusion in the air quality conformity analysis for the proposed 2016 CLRP Amendment and FY 2017-2022 TIP

Issues: None

Background: At the February 17 meeting, the board was briefed on the major project changes submitted for inclusion in the air quality conformity analysis of the 2016 Amendment to the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) which were released for a 30-day public comment period that ended March 12. At the March 16 meeting the board will be briefed on the comments received and recommended responses, and asked to approve the project submissions for inclusion in the air quality conformity analysis of the 2016 CLRP and the FY 2017-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff Director
SUBJECT: Summary of Comments Received and Proposed Responses on the Project Submissions for Inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the 2016 Amendment to the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and FY 2017-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
DATE: March 16, 2016

At the February 17, 2016 meeting the board was briefed on the draft project submissions to be included in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the 2016 CLRP Amendment and the FY 2017-2022 TIP. The project submissions were released for a 30-day public comment and interagency review period at the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee meeting on February 11. This comment period closed on March 12.

Comments submitted by individuals, organizations and businesses have been posted on the TPB's website at www.mwcog.org/transportation/public/comments.asp. This memorandum provides a summary of the comments received and responses provided by TPB staff in consultation with the implementing agencies. A compilation of the comments received is provided separately from this memorandum.

The TPB will be briefed on the comments received and responses provided. Following that briefing, the board will be asked to approve the project submissions for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the 2016 CLRP Amendment and FY 2017-2022 TIP.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Comments were received on the following projects and topics:

- A. DC Dedicated Bicycle Lane Network
- B. DC Streetcar: Union Station to Georgetown
- C. 16th Street Bus Priority
- D. VRE Haymarket Extension
- E. I-395 Express Lanes
- F. I-66 Multimodal Improvements Inside the Capital Beltway
- G. I-66 Corridor Improvements Outside the Capital Beltway
- H. VA 28 Widening and HOV
- I. Lack of new projects in Maryland
- J. Arlington Memorial Bridge Improvements

A. DC DEDICATED BICYCLE LANE NETWORK

Almost 140 comments were received on DDOT's proposal to add eight new segments and about 4 miles of dedicated bike lane network by removing one or more lanes. Seventy-one comments were received in support of the package of projects.

1. **Comment:** How do these projects fit into an interconnected regional bicycle network and are any of these segments dependent upon future facilities for successful integration? Which segments provide multi-modal access to Metro stations or other modes of travel?

Response: DDOT states that each of these CLRP submissions fit within a larger vision for a complete bicycle travel network described in the District's moveDC Long Range Multi-Modal Transportation Plan. Each project may:

- only represent new bike lane projects that would require roadway reconfiguration,
- complement existing bike lanes or trails,
- complement other bike lane proposals that do not require roadway reconfiguration.

Each project contributes to the bicycle travel network, in some significant way.

- 4th St NE, from Lincoln Rd to Harewood Rd, would extend existing bicycle lanes that begin in Eckington, creating a continuous link of over one mile to the southern end of the Catholic University campus and the Brookland Metrorail Station.
 - The Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lanes study would connect Shaw with downtown DC, paralleling the Metro Green Line for over 1.5 miles.
 - Blair Rd NW, from Peabody to Aspen St, is a part of the larger Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase II project, that will extend from the Maryland border to Brookland Metro station, paralleling the Red Line.
 - Constitution and Louisiana Aves NW, from Pennsylvania to Columbus Circle, would close a substantial gap between existing bicycle travel facilities in downtown (the Metropolitan Branch Trail/1st St NE on the north end, the Pennsylvania Avenue protected bike lanes on the west end), and providing a direct connection to Union Station.
 - Harewood Rd NW would link a possible extension of bicycle lanes on Rock Creek Church Rd to the west, with possible new bicycle lanes on Taylor St NE to the east, thus providing a vital safe corridor to cross North Capitol St for bicyclists (particularly students of charter schools along Taylor St NE).
 - Klinge Rd NW, from Adams Mill Rd to Porter St, would provide a safer bicycling connection to and from neighborhoods east of Rock Creek Park, to the Klinge Valley Trail currently under construction through the park, that will connect to Rock Creek Trail, and neighborhoods west of the park.
 - Piney Branch Rd NW, from Georgia Ave to Underwood St., would close a small gap between existing bike lanes on Piney Branch, and create a continuous bike lane link over a mile long between the Brightwood retail core, and the Takoma Metro Red Line station.
2. **Comment:** Sixty-six comments were received objecting to the implementation of bike lanes on the 1200 block of 6th Street NW, as proposed in the Eastern Downtown Study segment. These comments included the following concerns:
 - Increased congestion and traffic delays on 6th Street NW and in the vicinity of the Verizon Center and Washington Convention Center
 - Removal of parking and convenient access to the United House of Prayer church and associated housing

- Disproportionate impacts on low-income and/or minority communities
- Requirement for Congestion Management Documentation

Response: DDOT is still studying and evaluating alternative design concepts for the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane project and a final design alternative has not been selected. As the project development activities continue DDOT anticipates completing the planning study and selecting the preferred alternative later this year. In order to meet the TPB's schedule for including projects in its air quality emissions analysis DDOT advised TPB to use one of the four build alternatives with the maximum potential to change traffic conditions and thereby potential emission estimates in its analysis. Alternatives being studied by DDOT include protected bike lanes on 5th Street, 6th Street and 9th Street NW and the "no-build". Inclusion of the 6th Street alternative in the regional air quality emissions analysis at this time does not preclude DDOT from selecting one of the other study alternatives, including the "no-build" OR making other changes to this alternative as part of its efforts to evaluate alternative design concepts. The project does not provide any additional capacity for single-occupant vehicles, so Congestion Management Documentation is not required by federal law.

B. DC STREETCAR: UNION STATION TO GEORGETOWN

Three comments were received regarding this project, two in support and one in opposition.

1. **Comment:** The streetcar project should not be included due to the high cost and poor performance of the system implemented thus far.

Response: The project is already included in the CLRP. The information provided for this amendment updates the lane configurations on H Street NE/NW, New Jersey Avenue NW, and K Street NW to allow the streetcars to run on a dedicated transitway.

C. 16TH STREET BUS PRIORITY PROJECT

One comment was received in support of implementing this project.

D. VRE HAYMARKET EXTENSION

Ten comments were received regarding this project, with nine in support of implementation and one opposed.

1. **Comment:** The extension of VRE should terminate at Gainesville with a preserved right-of-way to Haymarket for future expansion.

Response: VRE is evaluating an extension to Haymarket as part of the Gainesville-Haymarket study currently underway in order to understand the effects (e.g., ridership, environmental, cost) of a full extension. No decisions have been made to date on the scope of the extension such as station locations or a service plan and public comment is being sought regarding the extension. A decision on a locally-preferred alternative is anticipated in late 2016.

2. **Comment:** The project should be postponed in favor of the Long Bridge Improvement and after evaluations following the I-66 improvements.

Response: The VRE Gainesville-Haymarket extension (GHX) and expanded VRE Manassas Line service is not dependent upon implementation of the Long Bridge expansion. VRE has the ability to add daily trains to expand Manassas Line service in conjunction with the extension by revising its current schedule and adding revenue trains within its contractual limits with host railroads to achieve approximately 20 minute peak period - peak direction headways. The GHX study currently underway will evaluate potential VRE ridership taking into consideration the I-66 Express Lanes and proposed bus transit service. Expansion of the Long Bridge, once complete, is expected to enable further reduction of VRE peak headways and introduction of reverse peak and/or additional midday service.

E. I-395 EXPRESS LANES

Fifty-eight comments were received in general support for its implementation.

1. **Comment:** A reasonable, guaranteed, annual transit payment, sufficient to expand transit and other travel options in the corridor be established to support multimodal improvements, as determined by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transit Commission (PRTC), and directed to those agencies. NVTC and PRTC should be designated as the lead transit agencies on the project, with the authority to plan multimodal improvements and select improvements for funding.

Response: In response to this and other comments VDOT working with member jurisdictions has provided additional commitments to further developing and funding the transit and Travel Demand Management (TDM) components of the I 395 Express Lanes extension project. These commitments are included in the revised TPB resolution under agenda item 7 for the March 16, 2016 meeting.

2. **Comment:** In conversion of I-395 to a High Occupancy Toll facility, a strong preference should be given to public ownership and operation, as it affords additional funding for transit in the corridor. We want VDOT and DDOT to demonstrate that the project will not lead to gridlock in DC.

Response: This project is an extension of the existing I-95 Express/HOT lanes system. In November 2015, the Commonwealth signed a Framework Agreement with Transurban, our private partner on the 95 and 495 Express Lanes. The agreement establishes the 395 Express Lanes extension as a Concessionaire's Enhancement, and that the work will be done by Transurban under the current I-95 Express Lanes Comprehensive Agreement. In addition, VDOT and Transurban will work over the course of the next year to finalize the scope and cost estimates for the project, as well as the amount of annual funding that will be dedicated to improve transit/TDM in the corridor. VDOT will engage the public and key stakeholders throughout the environmental and preliminary design process in order to help shape the project and ensure that all improvements are in the public's best interest.

F. I-66 MULTIMODAL IMPROVEMENTS INSIDE THE CAPITAL BELTWAY

Eighty comments were received regarding this project, with fifty-six in general support of implementation and twenty-four opposed.

1. **Comment:** The TPB should ensure the upcoming NEPA environmental assessment for the four-mile eastbound widening of I-66 is carefully scoped to include a new and robust long-term plan to best move more people and minimize highway congestion and travel times..

Response: The I-66 Multimodal Study Inside the Beltway recommended a long term plan to move people while minimizing congestion and travel times. The Transform66: Inside the Beltway tolling is the first step to implement the long-range solution recommended in the Multimodal Study. The NEPA process to prepare an Environmental Assessment for the 66 Inside the Beltway Widening between the Dulles Connector Road and Fairfax Drive is currently under development.

2. **Comment:** Citizen objects to the I-66 inside the beltway eastbound widening, thinking that it is “just the first leg in a plan that will ultimately pave over Arlington” with an eight to ten lane super highway.

Response: The Transform66: Inside the Beltway project is reflective of the recommendation from the 2013 I-66 Multimodal Study Inside the Beltway, which was a cooperative effort between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and the local jurisdictions and transit operators. The recommended 2040 configuration of I-66 inside the beltway included the addition of one lane in each direction between the Dulles Access Road and Fairfax Drive, conversion of the facility to HOT lanes in both directions during the peak periods, and a transit, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and bike/pedestrian program to help manage congestion in the corridor. The revisions to the project in the 2016 CLRP include advancing portions of the multimodal recommendation first (peak direction tolling, limited eastbound widening, transit and TDM implementation), with the remaining components happening over time, supported in part by the tolls.

3. **Comment:** Concern about the dropping of the reverse commute tolls and delay in converting to HOV-

Response: Converting to HOV-3 and reverse commute tolling remain in the overall plan for the 66 corridor, with the conversion to HOT-3+ by 2021 and reverse commute tolling by 2040

4. **Comment:** Concern about the acceleration of the eastbound widening of I-66 inside the Beltway.

Response: In early February, Governor Terry McAuliffe and members from both parties and chambers of the Virginia General Assembly announced a bipartisan agreement to move forward on a plan to reduce congestion and provide new travel choices on I-66 inside the Beltway. This plan includes adding new options for single drivers, improving transit, and widening a four-mile stretch of I-66 from the Dulles Connector Road to Ballston. Accelerating the eastbound widening will address congestion in the PM rush hour as well as safety due to the lane drops at the merge and resulting operational weaving of traffic.

5. **Comment:** The widening of I-66 Inside the Beltway westbound should be done at the same time as the eastbound widening.

Response: The project includes the widening of I-66 in the eastbound direction from the Dulles Toll Road (DTR) to Fairfax Drive near Ballston by 2020. It also includes the westbound widening

between the Sycamore Street off-ramp to the Washington Blvd. on-ramp by 2040. The eastbound widening will address a key bottleneck inside the beltway and will add needed capacity as quickly as possible.

G. I-66 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL BELTWAY

Eighty comments were received regarding this project, with fifty-six in general support of implementation and twenty-four opposed.

1. **Comment:** Concern that the Project will induce traffic on ancillary roads

Response: Ongoing traffic forecasting efforts have shown that traffic outside the Beltway would not divert to neighborhoods along I-66 in order to avoid HOV-3 restrictions or tolling. Instead, traffic models indicated that several existing cut-through routes being used today would see a reduction in traffic due to interchange and auxiliary lane improvements to the general purpose lanes that are also part of the project.

2. **Comment:** Concern that the Project lacks a Noise Mitigation Plan

Response: A preliminary noise analysis was conducted as part of the Tier 2 Revised Environmental Assessment that recommended noise barriers at various locations (see study for details). Preliminary decisions regarding both recommended and non-recommended noise barriers may change between the environmental document and final design as a result of changes in the project design, design year traffic, or the level of detail the design contained at the time of the preliminary report. Future decisions during the final design process on whether to provide noise abatement measures will take into account design feasibility, cost, and the opinions of property owners impacted by the noise.

3. **Comment:** Concerns regarding the Project Footprint, Vertical Impact and Residential Relocations

Response: The project has been developed to respond to public input and reflects a reduced footprint, particularly in the Dunn Loring community. The preferred alternative reflects reductions of potential residential relocations from 35 to 11, as well as the elimination of major impacts to Stenwood Elementary School and reconfiguration of the I-495 Interchange to lower ramp elevations and reduce property impacts.

VDOT is continuing to look for opportunities to further reduce the impact of the project as the design moves from preliminary concept phase to final design, and will work with the private sector teams during procurement and the review of their alternative technical proposals.

4. **Comment:** Concern that the Project does not provide stormwater mitigation; impacts water quality

Response: A conceptual stormwater management study was completed to outline the general stormwater management requirements within the project area, which is defined as the area of existing and proposed right of way and permanent easements that contain the actual proposed land disturbance necessary to construct the project, as well as to identify potential stormwater management sites. The proposed locations of stormwater management facilities are shown in the conceptual plans for the Preferred Alternative. Resultant water quality impacts are discussed

in the Tier 2 Revised Environmental Assessment. Final design of the stormwater management facilities will be the responsibility of the contractor, and will be designed in accordance with the Part IIC technical criteria of the Virginia Stormwater Management Program Law and Regulations, the latest versions of VDOT's standards and design guidance manuals

5. **Comment:** Concern that the Project Ignores the community's "Do No Harm" Alternative

Response: The suggested "Do No Harm" Alternative would entail ending the I-66 express lanes between Chain Bridge Road and Nutley Street (instead of extending them to I-495) and offering five general purpose lanes to I-495. Traffic operations analysis shows that this alternative would result in significant operational and safety issues along the mainline of I-66 in both directions. A description of the "Do No Harm" Alternative and the results of the analyses are summarized in the Tier 2 Revised EA and additional details are included in the revised Transportation Technical Report (a memo about this subject is located at <http://outside.transform66.org/meetings/documents.asp>).

6. **Comment:** Concern regarding resulting air quality from the project

Response: The Tier 2 Revised Environmental Assessment indicates that the project would meet all applicable air quality requirements of NEPA and federal and state transportation conformity regulations.

7. **Comment:** Concern regarding resulting impacts to Stenwood Elementary School from the project

Response: Public input has influenced design changes during the project's development, resulting in a preferred alternative concept that includes a reduced footprint and elimination of major impacts to Stenwood Elementary School, including impacts to the school's playing field and track. The Department will continue to work with Fairfax County School and local officials to resolve and mitigate outstanding issues.

The preferred alternative shows that the existing noise barrier at Stenwood Elementary School would be replaced with a new wall to reduce noise levels on the school site. Additionally, the replacement noise barrier would serve as a visual barrier between the school and I-66. As the project moves from concept to final design, a final noise study will be completed to determine how best to provide noise abatement.

8. **Comment:** Project may result in compensation events that would prevent extension of Orange Line

Response: The concessionaire agreement would not result in the prevention of the Orange Line. The Preferred Alternative itself includes a median for potential future transit. This approach is consistent with the transportation plans of both Fairfax and Prince William Counties, which include the extension of Metrorail within the I-66 Right of Way in the future. At this time, Metro is focusing on ensuring that equipment and facilities are in a state of good repair, increasing system capacity by purchasing and implementing eight car trains across the system, and improving core capacity. Metro does not anticipate any extensions of the system until these priority projects are completed. The Draft Term Sheet does include a compensation event, but only if Metro is extended and operational within the first 10 years of the concessionaire term (the first 10 years are currently anticipated to end in 2027.) Given Metro's current planning, the risk of a compensation occurring is considered to be very small.

9. **Comment:** Concern regarding the proposed widening of Gallows Road and potential impacts

Response: At Gallows Road, where the existing bridge needs to be longer, additional bridge width is included in the preferred alternative to provide additional pedestrian facilities and to meet Fairfax County Transportation plans in this transit-oriented corridor. The I-66 team will continue to evaluate options that reduce or eliminate impacts as the design is refined.

H. VA 28 WIDENING AND HOV

Seven comments were received in general support of this project and one in opposition.

Comment: Move the completion date of the widening of Route 28 between the Prince William County Line and US 29 in Fairfax County from 2025 to 2019, to match the completion of the I-66/Route 28 interchange

Response: This project has received FY2015-16 funding from the NVTa to begin preliminary engineering and environmental work. It currently is not funded for construction. If funding becomes available, the project may be completed before 2025.

I. LACK OF NEW PROJECTS IN MARYLAND

One comment was received regarding projects in Maryland.

Comment: Maryland seems to have been forgotten, with no plans for projects in Prince George's County or to improve the Beltway and Baltimore Washington parkway.

Response: The Maryland Department of Transportation submits project inputs to the CLRP when the environmental assessment is complete. For the 2016 CLRP Amendment, no new projects have achieved that status.

J. NEED FOR ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

One comment was received on the status of the Arlington Memorial Bridge.

Comment: The Arlington Memorial Bridge needs rehabilitation costing \$250 million for which funding has not been identified, and without rehabilitation the bridge will need to be closed to vehicular traffic in 2021. The closure of the bridge to all motor vehicle traffic should be reflected in the CLRP for the years 2021 and beyond.

Response: It is anticipated the funding for rehabilitation of the bridge will be identified before 2021.