

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEETING NOTES

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, July 15, 2008

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE
First Floor, Room 1

CHAIR: Fred Shaffer –
MNCPPC, Prince George's County

VICE-CHAIRS: Kristin Haldeman
Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority
Michael Jackson
Maryland Department of Transportation
Jim Sebastian, DDOT

Attendance:

Fatemeh Allahdoust	Virginia Department of Transportation
Monica Backman	Prince William County (teleconference)
Cheryl Cort	Coalition for Smarter Growth
Tim Davis	City of Frederick
Jeff Dunckel	Montgomery County (teleconference)
Eric Gilliland	WABA
Kristin Haldeman	WMATA
Jeffrey Hermann	Fairfax County DOT
Michael Jackson	MDOT
Yon Lambert	City of Alexandria (teleconference)
Josh Levin	WMATA
Peter Moe	Maryland Highway Safety Office (teleconference)
Allen Muchnick	Virginia Bicycling Federation
David Patton	Arlington County DES
Tom Pogue	Montgomery County (teleconference)

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Jim Sebastian	DDOT
Fred Shaffer	M-NCPPC, Prince George's County
Charlie Strunk	Fairfax County
John Thomas	Frederick County (teleconference)
Rebecca Torma	City of Rockville

COG Staff Attendance:

Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese

1. General Introductions.

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Review of the Minutes of the May 20, 2008 Meeting

Minutes were approved.

3. Member Jurisdiction Updates

Mr. Shaffer announced that new recommendations for Complete Streets in Prince George's County would be made available on Thursday. MTA's transit buses will soon have bike racks. VDOT is working on wide curb lanes for bicycles, as well as projects to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety as part of the State Highway Safety Plan. The Dulles rail project is focusing on improving pedestrian access to the future rail stations, some of which may be added before the rail project is completed. The Northern Virginia Park Authority is working with VDOT to improve trail crossings. Wherever possible the trail crossings are being grade separated. DDOT will soon adopt a Complete Streets policy. There is no word yet on DC's Pro Walk Pro Bike Application for 2010, but lack of exhibition space is a weakness in the application. If DC does not get it they will be applying for 2012. WABA will be doing a detailed analysis of access to workplaces in the region. A study of safety on the Capitol Crescent Trail is also in progress. DDOT is also looking into adding bicycle parking to its zoning code, even as it may be reducing motor vehicle parking requirements. Copies of the policy are available on-line.

Mr. Muchnick is teaching bicycle safety classes in Alexandria, Road 2, 18 hours of on-road street cycling skills. Mr. Muchnick will also be teaching confident cycling classes with WABA. Arlington County Board will soon adopt an update to the 1994 Bicycle Plan. Virginia is also working on a State-wide bicycle plan. The Virginia Governor's Greenways Conference will take place in Richmond during the first week in October.

WMATA is still working to replace obsolete bicycle racks. Funding to replace 240 racks has been obtained. Next on the list are West Falls Church racks. WMATA had record ridership on

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Friday, 854,000 trips, more than the Reagan funeral. Bicycle access to stations has been growing as well, based on the rail passenger survey. The planning section was tasked with preparing a short-term response. Staff determined that at sixteen stations about 300 new racks should be added. No funding has been identified, but it is likely that funding can be obtained. A long-term plan to improve bicycle and pedestrian access will also be prepared. This Subcommittee could serve as technical committee and sounding board for that plan. WMATA is also working on something called Metrochannel, a communications channel for WMATA, which could be used to gather input for the long-term plan.

Increased ridership is improving farebox recovery. On the flip side, capacity is strained, and expanding capacity can be costly. One possible option would be dedicated bus lanes.

Fairfax County bike map has been completed. Copies were distributed.

4. Top Priority Unfunded Bicycle and Pedestrian Project List

Michael Farrell discussed the list of top priority unfunded bicycle and pedestrian projects. A summary table of the projects was distributed, along with project descriptions. Placement on this list does not guarantee funding for a project; it is more in the nature of a statement of priorities and publicity tool. It is presented to the Transportation Planning Board as the list of unfunded projects, chosen by this Subcommittee, that are most worthy of funding, based on selection criteria including safety, improving the connectivity of the bicycle network, and improving access to transit. It would be desirable to approve the list at this meeting, so that it can be presented to the TPB in September.

Unfortunately Montgomery County has not yet submitted a project. Mr. Dunckel agreed to follow up and submit a project. Mr. Farrell asked if the Subcommittee felt comfortable approving this list with Montgomery County left as a blank, to be completed later.

The Subcommittee had a number of questions. Mr. Thomas asked what the requirement that a project is capable of being funded mean? Mr. Farrell replied that if a project is fully funded it should be on this list. If it is partially funded, you may or may not want to include it on the list as your top priority. Mr. Thomas would like to put a project in this list for Frederick County.

Mr. Muchnick asked about the anticipated schedule for bringing this list to the TPB Technical Committee, as well as to the November TIP forum. Mr. Farrell replied that he had planned to take this list to the TPB Technical Committee and to the TPB in September. Mr. Farrell had no plans at the moment to take the list to the TIP forum. Mr. Muchnick suggested that it would be helpful to have that list at the TIP forum.

Mr. Shaffer suggested that Prince George's might want to take the Henson Creek Trail off the list, since it may soon be funded.

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Ms. Allahdoust had some questions about the table, in particular the meaning of the “funding requested” line and its relation to the other funding columns, such as estimated total cost, total funding allocated, and funding allocated since December 2007. The funding requested line is only for the first year of the TIP. The numbers do not necessarily add up across the columns. The total project cost is not necessarily the sum of previously allocated funds plus funds needed in FY 2010, since additional funds may be needed beyond 2010 to finish the project.

Ms. Allahdoust was also concerned that the list did not identify funding sources. Mr. Farrell replied that in principle this list is a subset of a larger, unfunded list of projects in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. It is a statement that these are priorities.

In the past funding requested for these top priority projects has amounted to less than 2% of total for funding for the first year of the TIP.

Over the years we’ve added more details, but in some ways more can be less, in that adding more columns can be confusing. We should eliminate the annual cost figure, because it’s not really meaningful.

Mr. Muchnick suggested that the TPB forward this list to the Secretaries of Transportation. It was also suggested that the list be distributed down to the local level. Of course, the locals are represented on the TPB. Mr. Shaffer notes that he uses the list as a support to local and federal funding applications. Mr. Farrell said that he was not sure to whom the letter should be sent at the local level, and the mechanics and politics of talking to many people is more delicate than sending it the Secretaries of Transportation. Mr. Meese noted that in some ways this would amount to the TPB asking the locals to fund their own projects, which they had nominated.

The list is an information item for the list. The TPB will receive the recommendation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee.

Prince William County had a project funded from the December 2006 list, but not from the December 2007 list.

5. Other TPB Program Updates

- Update on the Bicycle Route-Finding Project

TPB and Commuter Connections Staff are still working out numerous data issues for this project.

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Database

The database is working, but the projects are out of date.

6. Danish Bicycle Facilities

Mr. Jackson spoke to a presentation on Scandinavian bicycle facilities.

7. COG Board Resolution on Pedestrian Safety and Follow-Up Work Program

Mr. Farrell distributed the text of a COG Board Resolution on Pedestrian Safety R32-08, which grew out of recommendations from a workshop that took place on April 29. Recommendations included:

- Enhanced motorist and pedestrian safety education, including the Street Smart program
- Enhanced enforcement, included dedicated traffic enforcement units
- Walkable communities was a major theme
 - Pedestrian-safe speeds
 - Ample pedestrian facilities
 - Better designed bus stops and transit
 - Consistent application of ADA Best Practices
 - Development of multimodal and pedestrian performance measures for all land use and transport projects
- Expansion of the TPB's Transportation-Land Use Connections Program, a planning assistance program.
- COG called upon the State of Virginia to change Virginia law from "Yield to Pedestrians" in the crosswalk to "Stop for Pedestrians".

The COG Board also called upon TPB staff to create some follow-up actions. However, we have to consider the limits of the TPB work program, as well as limits to the knowledge and expertise of TPB staff. We want to avoid second-guessing local planning staff. Any actions must be consistent with the advisory role of the TPB, and with any existing plans and laws.

The TPB Vision, from 1998, has quite a bit of language encouraging pedestrian safety and access. It calls for a safer, more accessible transportation system for pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with special needs. It calls for development to be concentrated in walkable, mixed-use activity centers, and it calls for all new transportation projects to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Beyond the TPB Vision, we have some version of Complete Streets, or language encouraging bicycle and pedestrian facilities, in most of our member jurisdictions. Not many MPO's have adopted "Complete Streets" policies, and the ones we look at have adopted fairly weak language. For example, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area says that members "shall consider" Complete Streets with a plethora of exceptions.

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We also have Complete Streets requirements, which are not yet law, and may not become law, but which are being considered in both the House and the Senate in essentially identical form. Complete Streets, under these bills, would require that the needs of all users be accommodated in all phases of transportation planning and development. MPO's would be required to adopt Complete Streets policies which would apply to all new roads, operations, maintenance, and reconstruction. It would apply only to federally funded projects. Projects should fit the context of the community. Exceptions include facilities where pedestrians are prohibited, cost excessively disproportionate to need or probable use, or if other documented factors indicate a lack of need either now or in the future. The States should follow DOT Guidance on accommodating bicycle and pedestrian travel, which are the descendant of the original Oregon Bill, a very successful bill. The Senate and House bills also provide for certification, whereby MPO's certify that the projects in the regional plan adhere to Complete Streets policies.

A follow-up program could include the following items:

- Continue and enhance Street Smart and the Transportation Land Use Connections Program
- Brief the TPB on Best Practices and Examples of Complete Streets in the Region
- Incorporate Complete Streets language into the long-range transportation plan
- Hold professional seminars on best practices
- Identify multimodal performance measures for land use and transportation projects. The TPB could adopt a resolution urging its members to use those performance measures.
- The TPB could choose to adopt Complete Streets language similar to what is currently being considered by Congress. However, since Complete Streets is not yet a federal requirement, some TPB members may be reluctant to add it.

It might be possible to have agencies self-certify their own projects as complying with Complete Streets. However, it can be a struggle to get adequate information on projects for the TIP already. If we add an additional requirement, especially one not required by federal law, some agencies may not comply.

Mr. Gilliland asked what the process is by which projects in the TIP are approved. How can it be assured that projects in the TIP conform to the TPB's Vision, for example? Mr. Farrell replied that the TPB tends to adopt whatever projects its member jurisdictions submit. The only really hard constraints are conformity with federal air quality requirements, and funding limits. Projects cannot be included in the TIP if they will cause the region to exceed its air quality limits, as predicted by our Air Quality model. Projects also cannot be included in the TIP if funding is not "reasonably anticipated" to be available. Funding sources and amounts must be identified. The TPB Vision is advisory; it is not any kind of mandatory requirement that comes from the top down.

8. Multimodal Performance Measures

Mr. Sebastian said that multimodal performance measures are needed, in order to evaluate the success of Complete Streets policies. Current measures seem fairly subjective. We need a better model.

Mr. Farrell noted that we had run out of time and invited anyone who needed to leave to do so.

Mr. Marcus noted that even for transit-oriented development, performance reviews require the developer to accommodate motor vehicle travel above all else.

Mr. Farrell noted that Mr. Marcus was working on multimodal performance measures for the Institute for Transportation Engineers. Mr. Farrell asked Mr. Marcus if he could tell the group how his project was progressing. Mr. Marcus replied that it was nearly complete.

Mr. Farrell asked when ITE is likely to adopt this document. We have numerous statements of policy such as the TPB Vision, but the application of those statements seems to be falling short. A COG Board Member asked how we could be sure that the outcome of our efforts is not just another statement of principles that will have limited effect on the real world?

Mr. Marcus said that walkable communities are cheaper to build, because the streets are narrower.

Intersections can be rated for pedestrian safety, and requirements can be set. In a transit area, the developer can be allowed to buy down auto infrastructure requirements by providing multimodal facilities.

Mr. Meese asked what kind of performance measures can be used on a regional level, as opposed to a project or intersection level. We need both kinds of measures. Ms. Cort remarked that much of what goes on is driven at the local level, and requirements to maintain automobile level of service.

Mr. Marcus will return to the Subcommittee at a later date with a more developed presentation.

9. Adjourned