

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

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**MINUTES OF THE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
January 19, 2011**

Members and Alternates Present

Monica Backmon, Prince William County
Melissa Barlow, FTA
Nat Bottigheimer, WMATA
Marc Elrich, Montgomery County
Gary Erenrich, Montgomery County, DOT
Lyn Erickson, MDOT
Edgar Gonzalez, Montgomery County Executive Branch
Rene'e Hamilton, VDOT
David Hayes, National Park Service
Cathy Hudgins, Fairfax Board of Supervisors
Sandra Jackson, FHWA
Julia Koster, NCPC
Carol Krimm, City of Frederick
Michael C. May, Prince William County
Phil Mendelson, DC Council
Garrett Moore, VDOT
Mark Rawlings, DC-DOT
Karina Ricks, DC-DOT
Rodney Roberts, City of Greenbelt
Paul Smith, Frederick County
Linda Smyth, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Reuben Snipper, City of Takoma Park
Kanti Srikanth, VDOT
Harriet Tregoning, DC Office of Planning
Todd M. Turner, City of Bowie
Victor Weissberg, Prince George's County
Patrick Wojahn, City of College Park
Christopher Zimmerman, Arlington County

MWCOG Staff and Others Present

Ron Kirby
Gerald Miller
Robert Griffiths
Nicholas Ramfos
Andrew Meese
John Swanson
Michael Farrell
Wendy Klancher
Sarah Crawford
Deb Kerson Bilek
Jane Posey
Dusan Vuksan
Debbie Leigh
Deborah Etheridge
Rex Hodgson
Daivamani Sivasailam
Dave Robertson COG/EO
Steve Kania COG/OPA
Lewis Miller COG/OPA
Alexis Verzosa City of Fairfax
Tina Slater CAC + Action Committee for Transit
Randy Carroll MDE
Bill Orleans Citizen
Betsy Massie PRTC
Judi Gold CM Bowser's Office
John B. Townsend AAA Mid-Atlantic
Harold Foster M-NCPPC/PG
Dan Malouff Arlington
Jennifer Fioretti Arlington
Greg McFarland NVTC
Bob Owolabi Fairfax County DOT
Sean Kennedy WMATA
Jim Maslanka Alexandria
Yolanda Takesian Kittleson & Assoc., Inc.
George Phillips Loudoun County, OTS
Taran Hutchinson MATOC
Eric Marx PRTC
Doris Chism PRTC

1. Public Comment on TPB Procedures and Activities

No members of the public chose to comment.

2. Approval of Minutes of December 15, 2010 Meeting

Mr. Zimmerman made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2010 TPB meeting. Ms. Smyth seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Report of the Technical Committee

Mr. Kellogg said the TPB Technical Committee met on January 7 and discussed four items on the TPB agenda. He said that the Committee was briefed on the Metrobus Priority Corridor Network Evaluation Study (Item 9), on MATOC's information sharing process during regional incidents and how MATOC helps end-users (Item 10), on key features of the new Version 2.3 Travel Demand Model (Item 11), and on the outline and preliminary budget for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for FY 2012 (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012) (Item 12).

Mr. Kellogg said the Committee also received briefings on the activities of the Freight Subcommittee, a staff review of the Transportation/Land-Use Connections Program, the development of inputs to the EPA Motor Vehicles Emissions Simulator (MOVES) Model, and a progress report on the TPB Regional Bus Priority Project funded through the TIGER grant program.

4. Report of the Citizens Advisory Committee

Ms. Budetti reviewed the 2010 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) End of the Year Report. She said one of the goals of the 2010 CAC was to push for the TPB to clearly identify regional transportation priorities. She said a priorities plan should build on the goals and visions that are already established in the TPB Vision. She said having a priorities plan would be helpful in building public consensus on efforts in the transportation area. She said the CAC is pleased that the TPB has responded positively to the CAC recommendation for the development of a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. She said that at the request of the CAC, the TPB held an interactive forum on May 26 called the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities. She said the CAC believes the conversation generated considerable enthusiasm and specific ideas about how a priorities plan might be developed.

Ms. Budetti said it has been a very humbling honor and pleasure to serve as the CAC Chair in 2010. She thanked the TPB and its staff for being patient and understanding, and respecting the interests of the committee.

Vice Chair Turner thanked Ms. Budetti for her service as Chair to the Committee on behalf of the entire Board and the leadership. He presented Ms. Budetti with a plaque in gratitude and recognition of her service.

Mr. Kirby thanked Ms. Budetti for her service and said she did a wonderful job chairing the

committee.

5. Report of the Steering Committee

Mr. Kirby said the Steering Committee met on January 7 to review the TPB agenda. He reviewed items included in the letters packet, including a letter from the City of Greenbelt to the Federal Highway Administration regarding a study to look at widening the Baltimore-Washington Parkway between I-695 and New York Avenue; an announcement of the plan by Governor McDonnell, Governor O'Malley and Mayor Gray for implementing governance reform recommendations for WMATA; and a letter from the WMATA Riders Advisory Council asking for an opportunity to present its report to the TPB. He suggested receiving this latter presentation at the February TPB meeting. He suggested also receiving a presentation on the plan for implementing the governance reform recommendations that will be implemented by the three DOTs.

Vice Chair Turner said this would be a good topic of discussion for the February meeting and asked Mr. Kirby to add both items to the February agenda.

Mr. Kirby reviewed a memorandum detailing the debriefing TPB staff received from USDOT staff on the TIGER II application for a regional bike sharing program. He said there were 1,000 applications: 350 applications were highly recommended, 128 were advanced by US DOT reviewers, and 42 applications were funded. The TPB's application was among the 128 applications that went into the final round. He said US DOT staff explained the application was not funded due to factors not pertaining to the strength of the application or the support of US DOT for the concept of bike-sharing. He said that all 50 states and the District of Columbia have now received TIGER funding, potentially reducing geographic equity pressure for a possible TIGER III. He said the final item in the packet is the award letter for the TPB's regional value pricing grant.

Mr. Gonzalez thanked Mr. Kirby for following up with the US DOT on the TPB's TIGER II application. He asked about a TIGER III.

Mr. Kirby said the TPB would be ready for a TIGER III and added that US DOT staff encouraged interested parties to promote the notion of TIGER III.

Mr. Roberts asked if there was any way to affect the scope of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway study, such as expanding the study to include alternatives to widening the parkway.

Mr. Kirby said the study is just beginning and that now would be the time to provide that kind of input. He added that the TPB has been asked to support the technical work on the study. He commented that the language in the Congressional earmark calling for the study may dictate exactly what may be covered in the study.

Vice Chair Turner asked Mr. Roberts if he had received a response from FHWA regarding his request for a briefing at Greenbelt.

Mr. Roberts said he had not.

Ms. Ricks mentioned that the Baltimore-Washington Parkway study would need to appear in various STIPs and in the TIP. She added that the District is interested in understanding how an additional lane might impact traffic entering the District.

Mr. Roberts said he is glad to hear others are interested in the study.

Vice Chair Turner suggested that perhaps FHWA could present information to the TPB on the study.

Mr. Kirby said the TPB could request a briefing.

Vice Chair Turner asked if there was any objection to receiving a briefing on the study. Hearing none, he said he would consult with Chair Bowser on this issue.

6. Chair's Remarks

Vice Chair Turner said that Chair Bowser and Second Vice Chair Waters apologized for not attending the meeting. He added that he looks forward to working with each of the Board members and staff over the course of the year. He said there are challenges and opportunities ahead and the TPB can build upon what the Board has established as its important issues.

ACTION ITEMS

7. Approval of Funding and Transmittal Letter for the TPB's Membership in the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Mr. Kirby said this action will reaffirm the TPB's annual membership pledge to the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). He added that the TPB was a founding member of AMPO and that Mr. Mendelson has served on the AMPO Board for quite some time. He said AMPO represents almost 400 MPOs from around the county.

Mr. Mendelson made a motion to approve funding from the FY 2011 UPWP along with an associated transmittal letter for the TPB's 2011 membership in AMPO. Ms. Hudgins seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Turner said it is a benefit to the TPB to be part of AMPO.

The motion passed unanimously.

8. Approval of Appointments to the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for the Year 2011

Vice Chair Turner said the TPB will defer this item and that the TPB Officers are still reviewing some of the applications that have been submitted in order to have good geographic and other important representation on the CAC. He said this item will be on the February agenda.

INFORMATION ITEMS

9. Priority Corridor Network (PCN) Evaluation

Mr. Kennedy, a staff member of WMATA's Long Range Planning Department, delivered a briefing on the "Priority Corridor Network Evaluation." Referring to a PowerPoint presentation and the briefing summary document, he explained that the study was not about adding new service to new corridors, but about enhancing the existing service.

Mr. Kennedy described the priority corridor network (PCN) as a network of 23 corridors that carries roughly half of WMATA's daily bus ridership, about 250,000 people. He said that the TPB's 2030 travel demand model was used to evaluate two alternative visions for the PCN, one based upon service improvements and another based upon a combination of service and running way improvements. He described two options for incorporating bus priority treatments in the region. He said the preferred option is based on service and running way improvements, including 90 of the 235 miles of the PCN being converted to bus-only lanes and 'spot improvements' such as transit signal priority being carried out on the remaining 145 miles. This would require an additional 175 buses, resulting in an additional 190,000 trips per day. He stated that while this option would require some investment in the infrastructure, it would significantly reduce the capital and operating costs of the bus service. He summarized the additional benefits that would be realized by this option, citing increased bus speeds, reduced travel times, and some easing of Metrorail crowding issues. In terms of impacts, he said automobile vehicle hours would increase by around two percent, as motorists took more circuitous routes to avoid congestion on the PCN, but there would be no significant impact on regional VMT.

Mr. Kennedy went on to describe the implementation aspect of the PCN Evaluation. He said that TIGER funding is helping out tremendously in the short term, enabling transit signal priority and queue jump implementation to be carried out in 11 corridors across the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. He outlined potential next steps, including a series of improvements to certain 'hot spots' or 'cornerstones' of the network that were identified by correlating high bus frequencies with low bus speeds. Regarding constraints, he commented that planning funding is always an issue, and he expressed a desire to use more TPB technical assistance funds to turn these next steps into actual plans.

Vice Chairman Turner thanked Mr. Kennedy and invited TPB members to ask questions.

Mr. Elrich asked whether the study had considered the ability of jurisdictions such as Montgomery County to raise funds via special taxing districts.

Mr. Kennedy responded that while such districts have the potential to raise significant money, WMATA does not own the land around the stations, and it is for local officials to decide if this is an appropriate funding mechanism.

Mr. Elrich concurred, but said that the PCN is a regional issue and that it might be worth considering the adoption of a common taxing structure to build the necessary infrastructure, perhaps extending the common approach to parking policies such as a cap on spaces near Metro stations.

Mr. Zimmerman praised the study, stating that it represented an important contribution to the conversation about how to use the existing infrastructure to move more people around the region. He said that the important question was how to prevent the study from just gathering dust, which means determining who is in charge and who is going to take action to advance the plans to the implementation stage. He said that there would ideally be a comprehensive approach to implement the whole thing, but that at the very least, a couple of inter-jurisdictional projects should be identified and implemented. Addressing the Chair, he asked that the TPB add the matter to its 'to do list' for the coming year, to ensure that it moves forward.

Mr. Wojahn gave an enthusiastic response to the presentation, commenting that it was particularly timely for College Park due to the likely establishment of a working group with the University of Maryland to look at enhancing public transportation in and around the campus. He asked if it were possible to obtain more information about the selection of the PCN 'hot spots'.

Mr. Kennedy drew Mr. Wojahn's attention to a couple of slides in the hand-out of the presentation, including a bus speed map that was developed using data from the Automatic Vehicle Location System on the buses.

Mr. Wojahn said that he was particularly interested in the U.S. 1 corridor, and asked if the data would be available for parts of the PCN that were not included in the "hot spots."

Mr. Kennedy replied that he could provide all available data.

Ms. Hudgins described the study as a refreshing continuation of the discussion, but asked for it to consider what local providers are doing as well in order to make better use of WMATA services.

Ms. Ricks commented upon the timeliness of the study, remarking that the inputs into the Constrained Long Range Plan are at their conclusion right at this moment, and that dedicated peak hour bus lanes are a change of regional significance that need to be identified. She said that

if there is a regional desire to go ahead with implementing the plans in the study, there is a need to speak as a region to communicate an acceptance of lower levels of general traffic services in order to have dedicated bus lanes. She said that the District had chosen not to take on certain corridors that would result in serious degradation to general traffic services, but that the challenge is a good one and it is appropriate for the TPB to take it on.

Mr. Gonzalez described the study as a good step that is consistent with the goals of Montgomery County, but he said that it would be useful to calculate the marginal costs of the alternative options and the benefit/cost ratio of the different options. He said that two percent of several million vehicles could equate to a significant amount of money, and that emissions are not only VMT, as vehicles that spend more time stopped in traffic can have the same VMT but greater emissions. He also asked how many of the additional trips that WMATA buses would gain according to the models would, in fact, be taken from local bus systems in the region.

Mr. Kennedy replied that the impact on local bus systems would be fairly negligible, totaling around 8,000 trips for the whole region, as they tend to be longer haul trips that often cross jurisdictional boundaries. Regarding cost/benefit ratios, he said they were beyond the study's scope.

Mr. Bottigheimer asked Mr. Kirby if it would be possible to highlight which parts of the UPWP program could accommodate a more detailed assessment that would address the questions that have been raised and take the study to a more sharply pointed level of feasibility assessment.

Mr. Kirby said that money from technical assistance accounts could continue to be used if everyone has a mind to do it, and it is a good use of resources. He said that the evolving TPB priority planning process might also be used to help advance the PCN study as a set of regional priorities, and that this option would become clearer once the priorities plan scoping task force has completed its work.

Vice Chair Turner asked to know the extent to which the jurisdictional DOTs had been involved in the study to ensure they shared the same priorities.

Mr. Kennedy replied that the study had a technical advisory committee housed at COG, so all local DOTs were involved, although the 'hot spot' component had only been a WMATA project to date.

10. Briefing on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) Program

Mr. Hutchinson, MATOC Program Facilitator, spoke to a PowerPoint presentation about how MATOC staff collects incident information and shares that information with stakeholders. He said the role of MATOC staff is to maintain situational awareness for significant transportation incidents around the region by monitoring information feeds, traffic cameras, and public safety

scanners. He said staff then recommends actions to affected stakeholders for how to address an incident. He described the parameters that must be met for MATOC to become involved in handling an incident. He added that while there were about 2,000 incidents in the region in December, MATOC only becomes involved once an incident meets one of the set regional parameters.

Mr. Marx of the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) described from the perspective of an end user how information from MATOC enhances PRTC operations. He said PRTC is a suburban public transit agency providing several different types of service: OmniRide Express Bus Service, OmniLink local bus service, and OmniMatch ride-matching services. He said PRTC is also co-owner of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE). He said the information provided by MATOC is most useful for managing OmniRide operations. He said OmniRide serves about 13,000 customers per day and has over 200 scheduled bus trips per day, both peak direction and reverse service, with a fleet of 133 buses. He said that when PRTC receives MATOC alerts, PRTC staff assesses the potential impact on OmniRide service and what PRTC may have to do to minimize the impact of the incident on OmniRide customers. He said the MATOC notifications are consistent and thorough and allow PRTC to move quickly.

Ms. Chism of PRTC provided an example about how information generated by MATOC during an incident in October 2010 allowed PRTC to minimize impacts to the OmniRide service. She said the incident closed northbound I-95 during the evening rush, a period of time when OmniRide buses deadhead to the core jurisdictions to pick up customers traveling south. She said PRTC was able to reroute some buses and strategically use reserve buses. She said the timely information provided by MATOC allowed PRTC to respond to the incident by managing its afternoon service and only miss one of the 121 scheduled trips.

Mr. Marx described some enhancements to the MATOC program that would assist PRTC in better managing its service during incidents of regional significance, including more targeted notifications that take into account the types of agencies receiving the information and tracking significant upcoming events that could impact transportation flows. He said the MATOC Program helps PRTC provide service with consistency, allowing commuters to choose commuter transit service, thus reducing congestion and pollution in the region. He said the value of MATOC is that its staff focuses solely on managing information about regional incidents and are experts in this area.

Mr. Mendelson observed that MATOC seems to be doing a better job at providing information to stakeholders, but said that MATOC should be doing more than just providing information, that it should also be directing agencies to make certain decisions to manage regional traffic conditions.

Mr. Hutchinson responded that MATOC is providing that direction on a case by case basis. He described an event in the District where I-295 closed due to high water. He said MATOC staff told staff at MDOT and VDOT to provide information to motorists advising them not to use I-295. He said he believed the DOTs are aware of what MATOC is trying to accomplish and are receptive to MATOC staff recommendations.

Mr. Mendelson asked Mr. Hutchinson to provide more specific information about the types of recommendations MATOC staff provides agencies the next time he presents to the TPB. He asked for confirmation that there were indeed 2,000 accidents in the region in December.

Mr. Hutchinson said that is correct and that number comes from information generated by RITIS.

Mr. Mendelson asked how many of those incidents MATOC was involved in.

Mr. Hutchinson replied MATOC handled about 50 to 60 of those incidents. He added that about 50 or 60 additional incidents are large enough to be monitored by MATOC staff, but not large enough for MATOC staff to become involved.

Mr. Moore said it needs to be clear that the state DOTs have to act based on the legal code for each state. He added that VDOT wants to be cooperative, but cannot always take direction without first consulting with its code or decision-makers.

11. Briefing on the Version 2.3 Travel Demand Model

Mr. Milone provided a briefing on the Version 2.3 Travel Demand Model, which will serve as a replacement to the currently adopted Version 2.2 model that has been in use since March 2008. Referring to a PowerPoint Presentation and to a handout, he summarized the improvements to the new model. He said that it was developed using the 2007-2008 Household Travel Survey, which is the most recent survey data available, and that it has a more detailed zone system than the Version 2.2 model.

Mr. Milone summarized additional technical refinements to the model, including better treatment of transit and pedestrian modes. He explained how the model operates, and referred to a graphical representation for how the process works. He mentioned that the model reflects other calibration information, such as traffic counts, transit onboard surveys, and highway speed data. He also stated that the new model would better represent both motorized and non-motorized travel for all purposes, as well as time of day of travel.

Mr. Milone said that the model will be released for testing to the Travel Forecasting Subcommittee in February, that testing will occur from March through October, and that draft model results will then be presented to the TPB Technical Committee. He said that the model would be considered for TPB approval in November, along with the air quality conformity determination of the 2011 CLRP.

Mr. Zimmerman cited the map of the modeled area on slide 12 of the presentation. He said he understood why Carroll County is included in the modeled area, and asked why the City of Baltimore or Baltimore County is not included.

Mr. Milone said that the modeled area projected in the presentation is the same as the existing modeled area. He said that there have been many discussions concerning whether or not to include Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and acknowledged that there are arguments that support and that go against including it. He mentioned that representatives from Maryland advised against including Baltimore County and City as part of the regional network.

Mr. Zimmerman said that he thinks that Baltimore City and County likely have an impact on the regional transportation patterns.

Ms. Erickson commented that the Baltimore model is used for the same purposes as the TPB model.

Mr. Milone said that there is an overlap in the study areas, and that technical coordination and interaction occurs frequently.

Mr. Kirby added that travel from Baltimore City and County is represented as “external travel” in the model, so these travel patterns are included in the model.

Mr. Zimmerman expressed a sense of encouragement by the fine-grain detail and additional zones that have been added to the model. He said that this has the potential to enhance analysis of data.

Ms. Tregoning asked about the kinds of results that will come out of the Version 2.3 model, and how these results would compare with the existing model.

Mr. Milone replied that, in general, the results will be more finely detailed. He also said that the new model will be able to provide non-motorized information for non-work purposes, and will be able to provide more specific information from the highway assignment.

Ms. Tregoning said that commuter rail trips typically involve additional travel modes either at the front and/or at the back end, and asked if this would be reflected in the model.

Mr. Milone confirmed that such assignments would be made with the new model. He emphasized that the model will be able to execute transit assignments and assign transit trips to a transit network, which was not a capability that exists in previous versions of the model.

Mr. Smith, building on Mr. Zimmerman’s earlier comment, said that some traffic issues in the region might require a modeled area that is bigger than what currently exists. He referenced Interstate 81, which carries traffic from the north, but is not represented in the modeled area. He also mentioned the convergence of Interstate 270 and Interstate 70 in Frederick, which carries traffic from Baltimore.

Vice Chair Turner thanked Mr. Milone for the presentation and said he looked forward to further information on the model.

12. Review of Outline and Preliminary Budget for FY 2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Kirby, referring to the mailout, summarized the timeframe for finalizing the FY 2012 UPWP. He said that the new UPWP would go into effect at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1, and that the draft version would be brought before the TPB in February, and a final version would be brought to the TPB for approval in March.

Mr. Kirby said that there is considerable uncertainty concerning the budget, noting that funding is dependent on the FY2011 federal appropriations, which are as yet undetermined. Consequently, he said that the UPWP uses the same level of funding as this year until more definitive budget information is available.

Mr. Kirby summarized the work items in the outline, indicating that there is little change from last year. He said that there are some changes within the work items, which he said he mentioned earlier in response to Mr. Bottigheimer. He pointed out that, beginning July 1, the Version 2.3 travel demand model would be available for analytical work, which will provide a real opportunity at the beginning of the fiscal year. He concluded by stating that a complete draft version of the UPWP will be available at the February 16 TPB meeting.

13. Other Business

Vice Chair Turner thanked the members of the TPB, and reminded that the next meeting is scheduled for February 16. He stated said that the next Regional Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force meeting would also be held on February 16, beginning at 10am.

14. Adjourn

Vice Chair Turner adjourned the meeting at 2:10pm.