

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202)962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

November 16, 2011

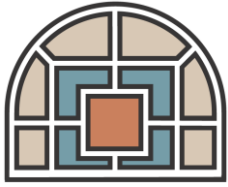
TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby
Director, Department of
Transportation Planning

RE: Additional Letters Sent/Received

The attached additional letters sent/received will be reviewed along with other letters sent/received under item #5 of the November 16th TPB agenda.

Attachment



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

September 21, 2011

Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Sean Connaughton
Secretary of Transportation
Virginia Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Re: I-95 HOT Lanes Project Environmental Assessment

Dear Secretary LaHood and Secretary Connaughton:

We have reviewed the Virginia Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration Environmental Assessment for the I-95 HOT Lanes Project. We find the document to be completely inadequate for evaluating the best approach to transportation issues in the I-95/I-395 Corridor and for evaluating whether or not to proceed with potential privatization of the lanes for up to 75 years.

Failure to Analyze Alternatives

The short Environmental Assessment fails to evaluate any alternatives other than the HOT lanes project terminating at Edsall Road and "No Build." In effect, the EA starts from the conclusion, that a Public-Private Transportation Act (PPTA) project as proposed by Fluor-Transurban is the only build alternative. The EA reflects how PPTA negotiations can undermine the need for full consideration of alternatives. In Section 1.2 (History), the EA lists the March 2004 submission by Fluor-Transurban and the December 2005 negotiations with the company leading to an EA that looks only at the Fluor-Transurban project. The mere submission of a highway proposal by a private company should not exempt VDOT from conducting a thorough analysis of transportation and land use alternatives, and should not be used to undermine the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The described history of the project is not entirely accurate when it refers to "environmental studies" conducted between 2006 and 2010. The FHWA and VDOT agreed to allow a "Categorical Exclusion" and therefore did not conduct an analysis of alternatives or of community and environmental impacts. A primary reason behind the Arlington County lawsuit was the shared concern by Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax that VDOT had not addressed many questions about the project including community and environmental impacts.

Alternatives That Need to Be Considered

The selection of a new terminus for the HOT lane project -- at Edsall Road instead of the 14th Street Bridge -- was arbitrary and politically motivated. A thorough and objective analysis of the transportation needs of the Corridor should include analysis of both a terminus at the eastern end of the 14th Street Bridge and the terminus selected by Secretary Connaughton at Edsall Road. In order to compare the two termini, the EA should fully evaluate the origins and destinations of commuters in the corridor to determine the relative demand to travel to jobs along 395 in Arlington, Alexandria, and the District of Columbia, as compared to the demand to exit I-95 to travel to jobs along the Capital Beltway. VDOT should consider the comparative effect of the two termini on both the general purpose lanes (particularly north of Edsall Road after toll payers reenter the General Purpose lanes) and on carpooling/slugging and bus/vanpool services.

Just as they should have done with the original HOT lanes proposal, VDOT should consider non-HOT lane build alternatives. These should include an extended and enhanced HOV and bus transit facility as well as improvements to Virginia Railway Express service. Given the additional funds available to VDOT as part of the nearly \$4 billion addition of funds to the Six-Year Plan, VDOT could publicly fund the extension of the HOV lanes to the south and expand/enhance HOV/bus capacity and service throughout the corridor. This approach should result in higher throughput of people during peak hours as compared to the HOT lanes proposal.

A combination of extended HOV lanes, investment in bus and carpool facilities and service, investment in VRE service, enhanced ride-matching technologies and approaches, and integration with land use could offer the most effective long-term approach that moves the most people through the corridor with lower overall vehicle miles traveled, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and fewer toxic air pollutants. In addition, a full consideration of alternatives would include evaluation of a return to HOV-4 from HOV-3 and a publicly owned toll road option.

Failure to Analyze the Full Range of Impacts

In addition to failing to analyze a full range of alternatives, the EA fails to consider a range of potential impacts. Foremost among these are the impact on levels of carpooling/slugging and the relative effectiveness of different alternatives in addressing traffic from the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

The addition of thousands of single-occupant vehicles into the HOV lanes could so crowd the lanes that carpooling becomes less desirable. This crowding could be particularly severe north of the Springfield Interchange up to Edsall Road. Certainly, the financial interest of the private toll road owner/operator in revenues could supersede the interests of carpoolers (in the case of the Beltway HOT lane PPTA, Virginia taxpayers must pay the private toll road operator if more than a certain number of vehicles are carpools). Even the mere shift of a certain percentage of current sluggers/carpoolers to HOT/SOV vehicles could interrupt the current volume of slugging/carpooling and cause it to lose critical mass and functionality, even collapsing the system to the point that it would be hard to restore. The potential impact on slugging/carpooling has not been analyzed.

One of the most important issues facing the corridor is the traffic from BRAC, particularly at the Mark Center at Seminary Road and I-395 and at Fort Belvoir and the Engineering Proving Ground. Will the focus on HOT/SOV users lead to more vehicles, not fewer, in the corridor, and negative impacts on carpooling? Given that the Department of Defense agencies have significant authority to require and implement carpooling and transit use among its employees and given that the limited parking at the Mark Center is designed specifically to function in conjunction with high levels of carpooling and transit

use, the EA should study the impact of HOT lanes on BRAC related traffic and congestion and compare it to alternatives using enhanced HOV and transit service.

In looking at environmental impacts, particularly air quality, the limitation to just one build alternative means that the EA fails to consider the relative performance of alternatives in terms of per capita VMT, greenhouse gas emissions, and ozone, particulate and toxic air pollutants.

Failure to Evaluate the Potential Financial Terms and Public Policy Implications of a Private Toll Road Compared to other Alternatives

The EA fails to outline the draft terms of the contract between Fluor-Transurban and the Commonwealth of Virginia including the potential contribution by state taxpayers, the extent of government subsidized loans, potential toll rates, contributions (if any) to transit service, and allocation of future revenues to future transportation needs in the corridor. Nor does it evaluate the proposal's costs and benefits compared to other alternatives. The financial and cost information should be compared to the financials for the alternatives we have outlined above, including state investment in HOV and transit expansion and public ownership of the toll way. Both the costs and the benefits including person-throughput and air quality performance should be compared between the alternatives.

It is our understanding that the promised transit investments from the original HOT Lanes proposal have been stripped from the current proposal, but that is not mentioned in the EA, nor is there any discussion about the need to fund additional bus service.

Failure to Allow for Adequate Public Input

We are not aware that the public and key stakeholder groups in the non-profit and private sectors were consulted during the critical early phases of the EA, particularly in the scoping and selection of alternatives to be studied. By the time the EA is concluded and released, as it has been here, the value of public input is significantly undermined and the public lacks adequate information regarding alternatives and impacts.

Conclusion

The Environmental Assessment for the I-95 HOT Lanes Project is inadequate and should be redone to evaluate the full range of alternatives and impacts for the I-95 corridor and consider the full range of costs and benefits for alternative approaches. A decision involving \$1 billion or more in publicly subsidized spending and the transfer of public right of way to a private company to collect tolls for up to 75 years merits far more thorough analysis. We urge you to reject this Environmental Assessment.

Sincerely,



Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director

Cc: Federal Highway Administration
Council on Environmental Quality

Donald R. Gallehr
191 High Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
540-270-4979
dgallehr@gmu.edu

November 7, 2011

Ms. Lori Waters
Second Vice-Chair
Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Ms. Waters,

Those of us living in the Washington Metropolitan area remember the commute from hell we experienced during the January 26, 2011 snowstorm. People across the area waited until the last minute to leave from work, and as a result it took most of us 4-8 hours to get home, including some of us on the George Washington Memorial Parkway who were stuck in traffic for fourteen hours. As you know, several commuters even abandoned their vehicles along the roadways.

As far as I can tell, as a region we have yet to come up with a successful plan to prevent another commute from hell. The "Shelter in place" plan released by the Office of Personnel Management and to be approved by the Council of Governments would require federal workers to leave the office when they are told to go home or stay in the office until the roads are safe. While this is a start to solving the problem, we have to remember that there are countless other commuters on the roads who are not federal employees. So, I am proposing a plan that I am calling the Concentric Release Plan.

The basic concept that underlies this plan is very simple. The first step is to take a map that includes DC and its Virginia and Maryland suburbs—the areas that constitute our commute. The map will already have one circle around the city called the Capital Beltway. To this we need to add two concentric circles further out, and one closer in. In other words, in Virginia the circle furthest from DC would go through Woodbridge, Centreville, Chantilly, and Sterling. The next circle closer in would go through Lorton, Fairfax and Reston. The Beltway already goes through southern Alexandria, Annandale, and Tyson's Corner, and the circle closest to DC would go through Alexandria, Bailey's Crossroads, and Annandale. Of course, these circles would be extended into Maryland's suburbs as well.

The second step is for all districts to agree to follow the same plan—that during an emergency or a major snowstorm, one agency, such as the Council of Governments, would make the call for all commuters on when to leave work. For example, commuters who work no closer to DC than in

circle four (Woodbridge, Centreville, Chantilly, and Sterling) would leave work at 2:00 PM, commuters who work between circle four and three would leave at 2:30 PM, commuters who work between circle three and the Beltway would leave at 3:00, commuters who work between the Beltway and circle four would leave at 4:00, and commuters who work in DC would leave at 5:00. My guess is that because the roads would be largely cleared, commutes would take only slightly longer than usual to get home.

The third step is to actually have a practice drill during good weather to work out the bugs of this Concentric Release Plan. I think all of us took part in fire drills when we were in school, so participating in a few Concentric Release Plan drills would soon become a familiar practice.

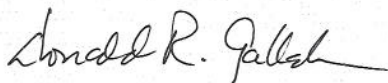
Subcategories of my plan would, of course, have to be worked out as well. For instance, I would like 18-wheelers and large, slow-moving trucks to stay off the roads during emergencies unless absolutely necessary. I would also like health workers at hospitals to stay the night or as long as necessary to be sure they are there if needed. And I would recommend that all parents have a neighbor, relative, or friend standing by who can take care of their children until they arrive home.

I've shared my Concentric Release Plan with several people including a number of my students at Mason, and while some liked it, others said there would be no way that all people would cooperate. "Some commuters," they said, "would leave whenever they like." I have to admit that I have to agree with them, and the basic question here is, "Because we cannot enforce such an evacuation plan, how do we get the majority of people to cooperate?"

I think the best model for this comes from the recycling world. Yes, when we began recycling over 30 years ago, lots of people just did not do it, and today some people still don't recycle glass, plastic, or cardboard. But lots of us now do. By keeping at it, by supporting recycling, by creating a culture of recycling, many of us now think of doing it whenever we empty a bottle, a plastic container, or a box.

With practice, we can create a mindset where we work together in emergencies and major snowstorms so that everyone gets home quickly and safely, and I'm hoping that the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments will lead the way with this plan.

Sincerely,



Donald R. Gallehr





November 9, 2011

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

On behalf of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), I am writing to ask that you support legislation that would extend the current transit/vanpool commuter tax benefit at \$230/month. As you know, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) raised the transit/vanpool benefit from \$120 to \$230/month through January 1, 2010 and the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 extends the \$230 benefit level through January 1, 2012.

However, if the legislation is not extended the transit/vanpool benefit will revert back to \$120/month (\$125 after an inflation adjustment). In the National Capital region roughly, 268,000 employees currently receive transit benefits and, at least, 113,000 of these Metro commuters receive more than \$120/month. These riders would see significant increases in their daily commuting costs if the transit benefit is reduced. During these economic times, such a loss of transit benefits would cause a hardship for many area commuters.

Without the added transit benefit, commuters may turn to their own vehicles or take fewer transit trips. As a result, we estimate that the reduction of transit benefits back to \$120/month could translate into a loss of 6 million Metrorail trips per year. In addition to the added congestion and detrimental environmental impacts, such a ridership decrease would result in a \$16 million passenger revenue loss on WMATA's already strained operating budget.

In these challenging economic times, it is important to note that both employers and employees benefit from the pre-tax or subsidized commuter benefits provision. Employers benefit from reduced payroll taxes, and from the valuable employee recruitment and retention tool that this benefit provides. Employees benefit from reduced commuting costs at a time of financial uncertainty.

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

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*A District of Columbia,
Maryland and Virginia
Transit Partnership*

Senator Mikulski
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On behalf of the commuters of this region, as well as WMATA, I urge you to support an extension of the transit commuter benefits before current benefit levels expire on January 1, 2012. We appreciate your support in reaching this goal and thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cathy Hudgins".

Catherine Hudgins
Chair
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby, Director
Department of Transportation Planning

DATE: November 16, 2011

SUBJECT: Materials from the November 14, 2011 Kickoff of the Fall 2011 Street Smart Campaign

Attached is an excerpt of the materials used at the November 14 kickoff of this fall's Street Smart pedestrian and bicyclist safety outreach campaign. The event was held along Piney Branch Road in Silver Spring, Maryland. At a later date, the Board will receive a detailed briefing on the media activities and outcomes of the event and of the overall campaign, when this information has been fully compiled.

Attachments (3):

- Agenda of Speakers for the November 14 Kickoff
- Official Press Release
- Graphic of Traffic Fatalities in the Washington Region 1998 – 2010

One Region Moving Forward

Street Smart Pedestrian Safety Campaign Kick-off Event
Monday, November 14, 2011
2:00 p.m.

Jeff Dunckel,
Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Montgomery County

Isiah Leggett,
County Executive, Montgomery County

John Kuo
*Governor's Highway Safety Representative and
Administrator, Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration*

Art Holmes
Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Nat Bottigheimer
*Assistant General Manager for Planning and Joint Development,
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority*

Thomas Didone
Captain, Montgomery County Police Department

***Live Education and Enforcement of New Curb Markings along Piney Branch Road by the
Montgomery County Police Department and Street Smart Team Occurring Simultaneously with Event***

For Immediate Release
November 14, 2011

Contact: Emily Howard
202.289.2001

Safer Sidewalk = Smarter Streets

***“Street Smart”* Engineering Combines with Education and Enforcement to Save Pedestrian Lives**

Silver Spring, MD – Crossing busy streets at mid-block is as common as it is dangerous. Vulnerable pedestrians trying to save time place themselves and their children at risk when they abruptly step into travel lanes, often misjudging the speed of oncoming vehicles. Death and injury too often result because of this speed. Case and point—last year in Washington, D.C., while more pedestrian-related collisions occurred at intersections, none were fatal, whereas five pedestrian-related collisions that occurred “not at a crosswalk” resulted in fatalities.

To prevent such tragedies, Montgomery County and the Maryland Department of Transportation are installing unmistakably noticeable curb markings in high-pedestrian collision areas to warn walkers not to cross mid-block. The pilot program is the first to use curb markings in Maryland and is the latest in a series of ***“Street Smart”*** engineering improvements across the greater Washington, D.C. region to make the region’s roads more pedestrian-safe.

“Crossing at mid-block can be an impulsive decision – and the last one a pedestrian makes,” said Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett. “Saving a few seconds of time simply is not worth the potential catastrophe of being struck by an onrushing vehicle. The bright yellow and green curb markings remind walkers to think twice before crossing and direct them to safe crossing locations.”

Leggett was joined by Maryland Governor’s Highway Safety Representative John Kuo, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Assistant General Manager Nat Bottigheimer and other regional leaders in Silver Spring, Maryland to launch the fall ***“Street Smart”*** pedestrian safety campaign. The campaign urges drivers, walkers and bikers to look out for each other’s safety while regional law enforcement agencies step up their enforcement of pedestrian-safety oriented traffic laws.

Engineering design changes are proven to significantly reduce pedestrian fatalities and injuries. Previous safety improvements installed along the Piney Branch Road corridor, ranked number one out of eight high-pedestrian collision corridors, contributed to a 63 percent decline in pedestrian collisions from 2009 to 2010.

As part of the *Street Smart* campaign, law enforcement agencies from across the region are stepping up their emphasis of traffic safety laws. This increased focus on pedestrians and bicyclists will continue throughout the fall and winter months to ensure safety and awareness on the road remain priorities for all walkers, riders and drivers.

About Street Smart

Sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the *Street Smart* public awareness and enforcement campaign is in its ninth year. Aimed at reducing the number of pedestrian and cyclist injuries and deaths in the Washington metropolitan area, the campaign uses creative radio and television advertising in English and Spanish to reach drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, while targeting them through outdoor and transit advertising on bus shelters and bus sides. In addition, law enforcement and local, county and state agencies will be distributing handouts and tip cards to further spread awareness and educate drivers and pedestrians. For more information about *Street Smart*, please visit www.bestreetsmart.net and twitter.com/COGStreetSmart.

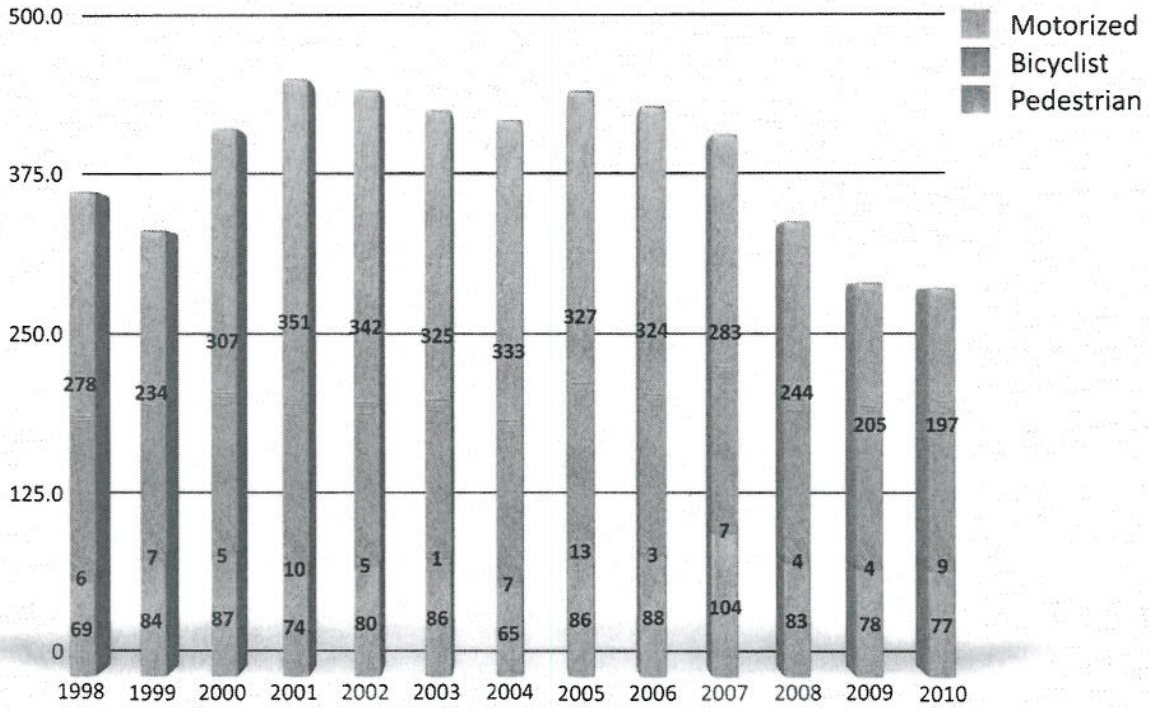
About the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)

The TPB is the regional transportation planning organization for the Washington region. It includes local governments, state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and members of the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies.

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One Region Moving Forward

Traffic Fatalities in the Washington Region, 1998 - 2010



Traffic Fatalities in the Washington Region, 2010

