

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Scenario Study Task Force

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

SUBJECT: Status of the TPB Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program and
Alternatives for the Future

DATE: December 13, 2007

Current Status of the TLC Program

The pilot phase of the TLC program, which was included in the TPB's FY07 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), resulted in:

- The launch of a TLC Program website that includes national best practices information and a regional project database;
- The completion of five location-specific technical assistance projects by consultants contracted by the TPB; and
- The development of a public presentation about issues related to density and infill redevelopment that will be available for use around the region.

In addition, the TPB received \$100,000 through the Virginia Multimodal Grants Program to complete five additional location-specific technical assistance projects for Northern Virginia jurisdictions; these projects are getting underway and are scheduled to be completed by spring of 2008.

At its October 17, 2007 meeting, the TPB approved language in the FY08 UPWP that extends the TLC Program at the same budget level (\$255,000) with some minor modifications to the allocation of funds and the number of technical assistance projects to be completed in the FY08 round. Under this amended UPWP program element, the TPB will contract with consultants for the completion of at least six location-specific technical assistance projects of a value of up to \$20,000 each.

Given that the technical assistance projects in the pilot (FY07) round of the TLC Program were completed in June 2008, and the evaluation of the program was completed in September 2008, the TPB did not choose to significantly alter the program when it amended the FY08 UPWP on October 17, 2007. The FY09 UPWP, however, presents an opportunity for the TPB to modify

and/or expand the TLC Program should it choose to do so. The Scenario Study Task Force has an opportunity to provide recommendations for the full Board to consider as it determines the future course for the program.

The TLC Program and the Scenario Study

From its inception the TLC Program has been linked to the Scenario Study, and reflects a desire by many observers and stewards of the study on the TPB and related committees to move from “what if” to “how to”. The Washington Region is already nationally known for successes in concentrating mixed-use development in regional activity centers, especially those served by transit, though many additional opportunities exist around the region, and hurdles still remain in addressing community-level challenges. The TLC Program represents a way for the TPB to assist local jurisdictions in implementing this strategy, which the Scenario Study indicates could have regional benefits in reducing congestion.

Although there are other possibilities for implementation steps arising from the Scenario Study, the TLC Program is presently the most significant tool available to the TPB in addressing the “how to” challenges. If future Scenario Study activities identify specific areas or transportation needs that are regional priorities, or provide more focused regional land use and transportation policy recommendations, the TLC Program could be further refined as a tool for implementing those priorities and policy recommendations.

Options for the TLC Program in FY09

While the nature of the TLC Program for FY08 will be very similar to the pilot round, it would be possible to move the program in a somewhat different direction beginning in FY09. Of course, one possibility is to leave the program as is, especially given that the pilot round was quite successful and well received. However, several members of the TPB as well as members of the public and the CAC have expressed a desire for the TLC Program to expand and set more ambitious goals.

Other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) across the country have implemented programs similar to the TPB’s TLC Program, and the knowledge from these examples provided much guidance during the development of the TLC pilot phase. These cases from other metropolitan areas may also suggest ways in which the TPB’s program could be refined and/or expanded to meet future needs and regional goals identified through the Scenario Study. Accordingly, the review of practices by other MPOs that was conducted during the development of the TLC Program in summer 2006 has recently been updated by staff with any new information that could be obtained. For the purposes of this overview, “similar programs” included any program administered by an MPO that features a regional selection process and funds transportation projects which encourage regionally desired land use patterns.

Based on the experience to date with the TPB’s TLC Program, information about similar programs in other metropolitan areas, and knowledge of the unique circumstances present in the

Washington area (particularly in regard to allocation of capital funds), staff has developed the following slate of options for modifications to the TLC Program in FY09.

1. Preserve the program's current structure while encouraging outside funding for modest expansion.

This option would continue the TLC Program as an effort that funds technical assistance for planning projects, based on relatively broad criteria. It would also continue efforts by the TPB to solicit funding for TLC planning projects in addition to maintaining or possibly expanding the funding included in the UPWP. The \$100,000 received from the Virginia Multimodal Grant Program is an example of the kind of opportunity that would continue to be pursued.

There are two sub-options within this alternative, having to do with how any additional funding, either internal or external, would be allocated:

- 1a. Use additional funding to complete more projects of the same scale (up to \$20,000)
- 1b. Use additional funding to allow for projects larger in scale (more than \$20,000)

2. Enhance the current program to provide greater focus on implementation activities, including recommending implementation priorities following each planning project, and developing an implementation "toolkit" to address key implementation issues.

This option would add to the end of each round of technical assistance projects a step in which priority implementation steps would be recommended. These action steps could include further planning study needs, additional stakeholder collaboration, recommended land use or other local policy changes, and/or transportation investment priorities. TPB staff would track implementation of these actions with the local TLC project contact in a more formal follow-up process than under the current program. Any transportation capital projects recommended as priorities would have to be brought into the regional plans via the traditional project selection processes in each jurisdiction.

Resources could be committed under this option for the preparation of an implementation "toolkit" to address such key implementation challenges as designing policies to bring development to activity centers (particularly affordable housing), and to address the different perspectives on density and congestion at the regional and local levels. Such an effort would build on the "Density Presentation" project of the TLC pilot phase, through which a public presentation on issues related to density and infill development was created for use in local jurisdictions where desired.

3. Make identification of priority capital projects an explicit aim of the TLC planning projects and advocate at the regional level for completion of these projects.

This option would make prioritization of capital projects at the regional level a specific goal of the TLC Program. A regional priority list of projects would be produced, similar

to the regional bicycle/pedestrian project priority list, along with some mechanism for moving these projects into the regional plan and toward implementation. This would be similar to programs in the Atlanta and Philadelphia metropolitan areas.

In the case of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), localities apply to have certain small areas (of a scale similar to the regional activity centers identified in the Washington Region) accepted into the program based on the conditions and needs in those areas. MPO staff then work with planners in the areas to identify planning needs and subsequently fund specific planning projects. The planning projects are geared toward identification of capital needs, which are then given priority in the regional TIP. This also enables easier tracking of the impact the program has in an area over time.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) in the Philadelphia area has an application process that involves specific planning projects, but the areas in which the projects are located must meet certain criteria establishing need. The DVRPC program is focused primarily on redevelopment of blighted areas through collaborative land-use and transportation planning. Capital needs identified through planning projects in the DVRPC program are also given special priority for funding.

In other metropolitan areas, such as San Francisco and Dallas/Fort Worth, this option is taken a step further. These metropolitan areas receive sub-allocated federal funds through the Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) programs and directly fund planning *and* capital projects through TLC-like programs. Such programs can be used to address specific challenges identified through the Scenario Study and related outreach – San Francisco’s program, for example, has Affordable Housing and Transit-Oriented Development elements.

Feedback Requested from the Scenario Study Task Force

Scoping the future of the TLC Program raises questions of both scale and method. The program could continue in the same relatively modest form, providing planning assistance to a limited number of projects that could gradually grow if more resources become available. At the most ambitious level, the program could become a vehicle for completing both planning and capital projects, with detailed selection criteria and dedicated funding sources. In the middle would be an enhanced version of the current program that would continue to focus on planning projects, but would also identify and monitor implementation actions going forward, and develop toolkits designed to address key implementation challenges.

Based on feedback from this task force and other TPB committees, staff will develop a proposed TLC Program element for the FY09 UPWP.