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**Highlights from the
Joint Meeting of The**

**MANAGEMENT, OPERATIONS, AND INTELLIGENT
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (MOITS)
POLICY TASK FORCE
and
MOITS TECHNICAL TASK FORCE**

DATE: Tuesday, April 13, 2004

TIME: 1:00 PM

PLACE: COG, First Floor, Meeting Room 1

CHAIRS: Hon. David Snyder, City of Falls Church
and James Austrich, DDOT

ATTENDANCE:

James Austrich, DDOT
 Jocelyn Bauer, SAIC
 Brien Benson, George Mason University
 Ron Burns, MDOT
 Lora Byala, WMATA
 Raul Catangui, Synergy Alliances
 Tony Clarke, Edwards and Kelcey
 Jason Conley, Comcare Alliance
 Scott Cowherd, VDOT Central Office
 Doug Finlay, SpeedInfo
 Craig A. Franklin, Trichord Inc.
 Doug Hansen, Fairfax County DOT
 Michael Harris, PB Farradyne
 William Haynes, City of Alexandria
 Al Hillman, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
 Al Himes, Alexandria Transit
 Breck Jeffers, FHWA
 Keisha Jones, WMATA
 Jana Lynott, NVTC
 Alvin Marquess, MD SHA

Continued...

Eric Marx, Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission
Amy Tang McElwain, VDOT Northern Virginia
Frank Mirack, FHWA
Jean Yves Point-du-Jour, MSHA
Susan Sharp, WMATA
Alfie Steele, Montgomery County Ride-On
Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax
Bob Watson, Nextel Government Accounts

COG Staff:

Andrew Austin
Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese
Gerald Miller

ACTIONS:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Participants introduced themselves. Susan Sharp will be handling most ITS-related duties henceforward for WMATA. Speedinfo representatives will demonstrate their travel monitoring product immediately following this meeting. Minutes from the previous meeting were distributed.

2. Update on ITS Architecture Activities

New federal legislation has placed increased requirements upon metropolitan regions to produce and maintain a regional ITS architecture. We already have an ITS Architecture, approved by this committee in June of 2002. We will need to meet the new requirements by April 2005. The law does not say the MPO has to do the architecture, but no other organization is ready to do it. We will reconvene the ITS Architecture working group, get the participants familiar with the existing architecture and with the work scope, as well as the individual agency architectures and other regional architectures. The committee will then determine the exact steps needed to update the regional ITS architecture. A meeting should take place in late June 2004. The revised architecture should be approved by the MOITS in detail, while an executive summary should go to the TPB for approval. In the future small technical revisions to the architecture can be approved at the MOITS level without going to the TPB. A calendar was distributed. The bulk of the work has been done with the 2002 ITS architecture, but an update is needed. We need to freshen the technical architecture, look at standards, and create a maintenance plan. We hope to identify what agency(s) will maintain this architecture.

COG is advertising for a new staff person who will in a large part work on ITS Architecture.

Amy Tang McElwain wanted to know what we would be doing with the architecture, and what the maintenance strategy would be. Andrew Meese acknowledged the growing responsibilities for planning in this area, and emphasized that the architecture should encourage compatibility of various projects, not drive what those projects should be.

Andrew Meese was optimistic that we can meet the deadline for revision, since the amount of revision that needs to be done is not excessive. Volunteers to participate in this effort are welcome. The ITS Architecture working group will meet, tentatively, on Tuesday, June 29th. Andrew Meese will be contacting key people by e-mail to verify their availability.

3. Update on Traveler Information – 511 Activities

Scott Cowherd discussed VDOT's activities and its negotiations with Verizon Wireless. Four submittals have been received in response to the 511 RFP, and VDOT hopes to award the contract before Memorial Day.

4. Update on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Process and Funding

Homeland security issues in this region are dealt with by Emergency Preparedness Council and by the Chief Administrative Officers Committee under the COG Board. The Department of Homeland Security gave the region \$60 million in UASI funds in FY2003. The \$60 million for this region for FY 2003 has all been spoken for, by a senior policy group consisting of representatives of the Governors and the Mayor of the District of Columbia. FY04 funding is \$29 million. Planning, equipment, training, and exercises are eligible for UASI funds.

Regarding what is happening with the committed FY03 projects, especially training and exercise funds. The training funds were allocated entirely to first responders. The exercise program is more relevant to us, because it comes out of the recommendations in the RECP Annex. It is being run by the Department of Homeland Security. The lead person is contract employee named John Cosgrove, who is meeting with senior Emergency Management Agency and public safety personnel to start the process of planning these exercises. In June there will be a senior leaders seminar, followed up by more involved tabletop and full-scale exercises. We need to know whether these exercises will address transportation issues, and preliminary indications are that they will. Chairman Snyder should, on behalf of the MOITS, try to make sure that the issue of timely communication with the public during transportation-related emergencies is not neglected; that the exercises not concern themselves exclusively of how police and fire from different agencies will communicate with one another. Committee members are invited to talk to their jurisdiction's emergency management agency on a one-on-one basis if they have any concerns about the scenarios. Comments can also be sent to COG staff, who can compile them and make sure they reach John Cosgrove. The tabletop exercise, which may involve MOITS committee-level staff, will take place in December, 2004.

On the future funds issue, we agreed that it would be a good idea for this group to put together a proposal concerning what planning, training, exercises and equipment are needed. In March of 2002 we prepared such a list, which can serve as a good starting point. We would like to receive from you your input on particular activities that you think might be suitable for UASI funds, within the next 2-3 months.

Jana Lynott asked if there was any documentation on what sort of things would qualify for funds. Four funding categories are eligible, (planning, equipment, training, and exercises) and any proposal should address the August, 2002 points of agreement adopted by the Senior Policy Group. Regional, collaborative planning and training exercises qualify.

Chairman Snyder recommended that we prioritize UASI-eligible projects within this committee. The next MOITS meeting will be May 4. The committee members should e-mail proposals for the kind of planning, training and exercise projects that members think would be valuable to Andrew Meese, by the end of April. Chairman Snyder suggested that the transportation sector was unlikely to get a large share of the UASI funds. However, if the transportation agencies can produce a list of priorities, the chances of obtaining funds will be improved. One possible category of project would be improved communications and coordination with public safety agencies.

5. Update on the Regional Emergency Evacuation Coordination (REETC) Annex of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and Follow-Up paper on Strengthening Communications and Coordination in the Transportation Sector

Chairman Snyder expressed approval of the Evacuation Annex, and hope that it would not be put on a shelf. The forms in the Annex should be adopted by the agencies as Standard Operating Procedures. The Annex has been approved by the EPC and by the public safety agencies, and will be approved tomorrow by the COG Board of Directors. At future meetings we should gauge to what degree the recommendations of the Annex are being incorporated into the Agency SOP's. The Annex notes some gaps or shortcomings that need to be addressed.

Key findings of the Annex were:

- a. Timely public communications are essential and can be highly effective
- b. The greatest potential for improvement of travel conditions is reduction of demand
- c. Incident ripple effects necessitate timely communications and coordinated actions.

Key recommendations were:

- a. Carry out regional emergency management coordination efforts on a continuing basis.
- b. Conduct coordinated regional public education campaign on emergency preparedness
- c. Ensure that timely information is provided to the public during incidents
- d. Strengthen emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector.

The Department of Homeland Security is dealing with the first recommendation. The Public Information Officers Committee is working on the second recommendation.

The EPC was looking at the third recommendation, timely communication to the public, though we may need to advise that effort.

For the fourth recommendation, to strengthen emergency communication and coordination within the transportation exercises, our experience in exercises and real-world incidents has been that it is too much to ask affected agency staff to handle regional communications and coordination on top of the actual emergency.

Four options for improving emergency communications and coordination are proposed in the Follow-Up Paper:

- a. Technical systems and database integration
- b. Procedural changes and training of existing staff
- c. Duty rotation of responsibility for regional communications among the major transportation agency staff
- d. Creation of a new regional transportation communications and coordination organization

Of the four options listed in the paper on strengthening communications, Alvin Marquess suggested that we pursue the first three, but not the fourth, which would be the creation of a new regional transportation communications and coordination organization. Rotating staffs will help staff at different agencies get to know one another and will improve the quality of communication. Mr. Marquess had some criticism of the current RICCS peer to peer paging system, which he found spotty, incomplete, and sometimes erroneous. The conference calls are helpful. Mr. Marquess suggested integrating the RICCS paging system into the MDOT paging system. Mr. Marquess suggested that a new agency would duplicate or interfere with State emergency management agency functions.

Andrew Meese agreed that we have had some failures with unstaffed, peer to peer communications. A regional communications staff could filter out irrelevant messages, and ensure that the right people got the right messages. State staff may have some difficulty coordinating communications outside their own State because they lack familiarity with out-of-State agencies, people, and procedures.

Another participant emphasized the importance of option two, training and procedural changes, and questioned whether costs of options three and four would really be comparable, given that a new organization usually involves considerable set-up costs. And existing agencies could use people who are already working.

Alex Verzosa noted that we have tried using existing staff to coordinate regional communications in an emergency and it hasn't worked, because the affected agency staffs are always too busy. Another problem is that staffs are always changing, and we need a mechanism to ensure that we know who the responsible staff are at each agency. One way around the problem is to add new staff at a new agency to deal with regional communications and coordination.

William Haynes questioned the ease of technical and database integration. Problems may well arise, especially between small and larger agencies which have different levels of staffing, budget, and expertise.

Craig Franklin added that we should have a provision for maintenance of data integration, or risk failure. Bad data is another possible problem. To address those risks, the operations staff people at different agencies should coordinate with each other, because they understand the limitations of the data. Andrew Meese remarked that technical people may suggest that the human side of the equation would be easier to solve, while operations people may suggest that the technical problems would be easier to resolve. We probably need to work on both sides of the problem.

Chairman Snyder pointed out that new federal legislation provides mandates and access to a great deal of money, as well as substantial increases in overall transportation funding. So if we can figure out what we want to do there is a good chance we can get funds to do it. We can think about this in terms of a proposal to use new re-authorization funds, without adversely affecting existing activities.

All the options have funding and staffing implications. We need to come up with a proposal soon if we intend to take advantage of new funding opportunities.

David Snyder posed to the group the question of how we can ensure that the problem of regional emergency transportation communications is solved.

Jim Austrich suggested that we get all the key, high-level people together to come to a decision.

Alfie Steele said that operations people tend to dislike option four, a new regional agency, because they see it as likely to interfere or diminish their control over incident management. But a new communications agency would not be involved in incident management.

Frank Mirack suggested that we introduce an element of competition by having each operations center submit a proposal to perform the functions of the proposed regional agency. We welcome documented comments and suggestions on how our goals can be accomplished more cheaply and effectively, but that responses were not likely to come back in time to meet our need to make recommendations by May 6.

David Snyder said that we cannot bring to the Emergency Preparedness Council yet another statement of the problem; we must present a solution to the problem. Lora Byala was concerned about the TPB agreeing with the recommended solution. David Snyder asked the group to provide their agencies recommendations for accomplishing the goals, based on these four options. [Discussions continued in the weeks subsequent to the meeting on these issues]

The next meeting of this committee will be on May 4th.

Those wishing to stay after the meeting were invited to listen to a presentation by SpeedInfo on its speed monitoring devices and associated traveler information distribution system.