

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

May 21, 2008

TO: Transportation Planning Board

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

RE: Letters Sent/Received Since the April 16th TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the April 16th TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Agenda #5 of the May 21th TPB agenda.

Attachments

May 16, 2008

Michael Knapp
Chair, Transportation Planning Board Scenarios Task Force
c/o Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 300
Washington DC 20002

Dear Mr. Knapp:

We are writing to provide comments on the Scenario Study currently underway by the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Scenarios Task Force. The findings of the TPB Scenario Study will be essential to meeting our local and regional emissions of conventional air pollutants, but perhaps will be even more critical to addressing the CO₂ goals we are trying to establish as a region. It seems reasonable to anticipate carbon caps and carbon pricing at some point in the near future and these scenarios could be significant in suggesting the options that will allow our region to thrive in an increasingly carbon-constrained economy.

These scenarios are also essential to guiding our investments in a transportation system that can support our anticipated growth, buffer our residents and businesses from rising energy costs, provide the choices and quality of life that our citizens desire, and avoid infrastructure investments that may be a poor match with our future needs. The Study will be a key planning tool for the District of Columbia as well as the many other jurisdictions in the region.

There are two main issues that have not yet been addressed although they have come up in several of the briefings/presentations given on this study – increasing energy prices and bicycle and pedestrian capacity in the region.

Increasing Energy Prices

The first issue is about the basic assumptions that underpin these scenarios. Currently, the scenarios assume that energy prices, particularly gasoline prices, will rise at the historic rate of inflation. That assumption is drastically out of line with

what most experts predict will happen, for the primary reason that global demand is accelerating at a record pace at a time when worldwide inventories are generally declining.

The latest Energy Information Administration data suggests that world-wide consumption will increase 37% by 2030, which puts demand at approximately 118 million barrels a day (note that daily oil consumption in 2006 was 86 million barrels.) The lion's share of new demand is coming from the developing world. China is on track to double consumption within 10 years, while India is expected to triple its oil usage in the same period to more than 5 million barrels a day.

A number of factors that would reduce supply are also in play. Many experts predict that we are within 10 – 15 years of reaching global peak oil production, if we have not already peaked. Oil-exporting countries are becoming increasingly likely to “hold back” oil from the international export markets, opting to keep it at home literally to fuel domestic growth or to increase their profits from higher prices.

Admittedly, MWCOG would be in uncharted territory in making any predictions about either future energy prices or the rate of trip generation or mode split that would result from various price scenarios. But even at this early stage, price is affecting driving behavior. For the first time in more than 20 years, Americans cut back on their driving in 2007. Total travel fell 0.4 percent to 3.00 trillion miles from 3.01 trillion miles in 2006. In December 2007, when U.S. retail gasoline averaged \$3.02 a gallon, travel fell 3.9 percent to 236.6 billion miles from 246.3 billion miles in December 2006. With gasoline prices still climbing, other data shows Americans are responding – not only are they driving less, but they are buying more fuel-efficient vehicles and utilizing more public transportation. Daily ridership on U.S. subways and public buses is at the highest level in more than 50 years.

TPB should consider collaborating with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the American Planning Association and with the most pre-eminent transportation researchers to help answer these questions, not just for our region, but for every other metropolitan planning organization who is doing long range transportation

planning. For example, the Southern California Area Governments (SCAG) has initially adjusted their energy assumptions to be **three times** the rate of historic inflation. Preliminary results of SCAG's scenarios work reveals that assumption falls woefully short of where energy prices have already gone. Across the country, gasoline prices have increased 40% since November 2005. It is recommended even if the precise price adjustment rate is not known, using an assumption that is known to be inaccurate will suggest transportation investments that may be wildly inappropriate for our region.

Bike and Pedestrian Capacity in the Region

Secondly, the scenarios may better reflect the tools and options jurisdictions have at their disposal to influence transportation and land use decisions if there was greater consideration given to walking and bicycling modes, and to the potential to change the mode choices of our existing residents. One of the real competitive advantages of our region is that there are so many mixed-use development centers that could accommodate a shift in travel mode to bike or walk with relative ease. A major opportunity for VMT and carbon reduction is the 40% of daily trips taken that are 3 miles or less. These trips have a high potential to be shifted into walk or bike trips in many regions. However, the existing modeling capability needs to be upgraded in order to fully account for bike and walk trips. Most conventional 4-step transportation models emphasize transit and car trips and largely ignore bike and walk trips. Some regions have used additional models for biking and walking and then used those model outputs as inputs to the 4-step model. This is particularly important in this region like as development is increasingly directed into mixed-use centers that could accommodate a shift in travel mode to bike or walk.

The following recommendations are in regards to the "CLRP Aspirations" and "What Would it Take?" scenarios presented at the TPB meeting on April 16th.

CLRP Aspirations

- *Measures of Effectiveness.* Measures should also include pedestrian and bicycle access. Can land use density be added as a proxy measure for the feasibility of walking, cycling & transit use?
- *Menu of Options.* More options that impact the mode choice of the existing travel base (such as pricing, incentives, education, expanded service) should be examined. Can an estimate of the percentage of current motor vehicle trips expected to convert to alternative modes based on these strategies as well as some measure of the capacity of streets, trails, paths and sidewalks to absorb these trips be developed?
- *Building the Scenario:* In addition to supportive transit, we would like to see investment in bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Under pricing, can the impact of increased costs for gas or parking be tested?

“What Would it Take?” Scenario

Prioritizing Strategies. Interventions not included in the “U.S. Mid-Range Abatement Curve – 2030” from the McKinsey analysis that have the potential to convert short motor vehicle trips (under 2-3 miles) to walk/bike/transit trips should be considered. Short and mid-term strategies may include incentives (employer transit benefits and creative parking benefits), disincentives (parking costs, congestion, increased penalties for speeding and failing to yield the right-of-way), facilities/services (more bike-sharing, pedestrian-oriented signal timing, express bus service). Likewise, roadway pricing and parking pricing should be added as cost-effective strategies that are likely to generate revenues while reducing carbon emissions.

It may also be beneficial to combine these two scenarios prior to the implementation or “how to” stage of the Study’s process. This region has agreed to emissions goals, and it is most likely that jurisdictions will need to implement the land use and transportation projects “within reach” in addition to other intervention strategies to meet these goals.

We look forward to continued discussion on these scenarios and appreciate the COG and TPB efforts in this endeavor and are prepared to facilitate further conversations with national resources that may be able to assist us. We have the reputation of being one of the country's leading metropolitan planning organizations; this is a critical time for us to exercise that leadership.

Sincerely,



Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chair of Transportation Planning Board
Councilmember At-Large, Council of the District of Columbia



Harriet Tregoning
Director, District of Columbia Office of Planning



Emeka Moneme
Director, District of Columbia Department of Transportation



Chris Zimmerman
Member, Arlington (VA) County Board of Supervisors



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

cc: Ronald F. Kirby Director, MWCOG Department of Transportation Planning

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May 21, 2008

DRAFT

Charles M. Badger,
Deputy Director
Virginia Department of Rail
and Public Transportation
1313 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Mr. Badger:

Thank you for your letter of May 13, 2008, on the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) project application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for federal financial assistance under FRA's new Capital Assistance to States Intercity Passenger Rail Service Program. As described in your letter, this project will construct a 5.9-mile third mainline track between AF Interlocking in Alexandria and the Franconia-Springfield Amtrak/VRE Train Station. This new track capacity would provide for an immediate reduction in current train service delays by providing operational flexibility for current intercity passenger, commuter and freight rail traffic.

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has reviewed this project and believes that it will benefit the Washington regional rail network. The TPB is pleased to endorse this DRPT project for consideration by the FRA, and in accordance with TPB procedures, will include this project in the regional TIP.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson
Chair, National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

MATTHEW O. TUCKER
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
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May 13, 2008

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4201

Dear Mr. Mendelson:

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has submitted an application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for federal financial assistance under FRA's new Capital Assistance to States Intercity Passenger Rail Service Program. The project is located in the Washington D.C. urbanized area and like the Federal Transit Administration, the FRA requires projects selected to receive funding under this program to be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) prior to awarding a grant.

The project involves the construction of a third track adjacent to existing CSX Transportation (CSXT) railroad tracks in the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County, Virginia. The project also includes the removal of a universal crossover at mile post 96.7 "RW" with a replacement constructed at mile post 97.2. We expect the construction of the proposed 5.9-mile third mainline track between AF Interlocking and Franconia-Springfield Amtrak/VRE Train Station (Franconia-Springfield Station) to provide for an immediate reduction in current train service delays by providing operational flexibility of train movements. It is anticipated that the proposed improvements will enable better service for current intercity passenger, commuter and freight rail traffic. These improvements also will produce an increase in the capacity of the rail line in corridor segment, by removing some of the bottlenecks, thus enabling it to more easily handle the desired increases in future train traffic as well.

The estimated cost of this project is \$26 million and that a federal share of 50% is requested for the project. The non-federal share for this project has been secured by our agency.

In as much as the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Washington, D.C.

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urbanized area and is responsible for the development of the regional TIP we ask that this project be endorsed by TPB and in accordance with TPB procedures, included in the regional TIP.

Please let me know if further information is required.

Sincerely,



Charles M. Badger
Deputy Director

Cc: Matthew O. Tucker



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

MAY 15 2008

Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

RE: District of Columbia Response to April 16, 2008 TPB Question on District Request to Re-designate a Portion of I-295

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter is in response to a question raised by TPB Vice-Chair Jenkins at the April 16, 2008 meeting of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) regarding the process for notifying navigation system companies when changes are made to the Interstate System.

Background

On April 16, 2008, the approved Resolution TPB R23-2008 to re-designate the portion of I-295 from Barney Circle to the 11th Street Bridge as an urban boulevard and a re-designate the portion of I-295 over the 11th Street Bridge to I-695. During the discussion, Vice-Chair Jenkins asked whether anyone contacts companies that make navigation systems and what are the impacts on folks traveling through the city using Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

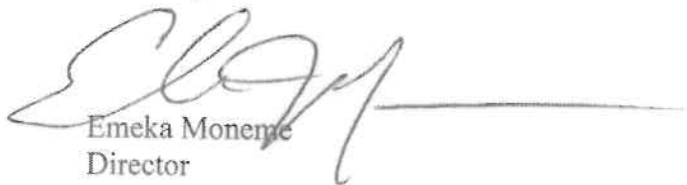
Process for Notifying Navigation System Companies

There is no requirement that companies that make navigation systems or street maps be notified of changes to the interstate system or of new construction projects. These companies are typically proactive in meeting with local agencies, keeping abreast of construction, and driving the region to find and incorporate changes. However, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) will be proactive in this matter and reach out to local mapping and GPS companies. In fact, it is common practice for DDOT to issue press releases for any projects that may affect the local traveling public and in some cases to utilize the media to reach out to an even broader population.

Next Steps

The District will submit a letter of request to re-designate a portion of I-295, with reference to TPB Resolution R23-2008, to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Administrator for approval. This letter will be signed by the DDOT Director and the Mayor. A similar request will also be submitted to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Special Committee on U. S. Route Numbers and Standing Committee on Highways requesting approval for changes to the interstate designations. All route marker and sign changes associated with this request will be accomplished as part of the construction of the 11th Street Bridges project. This project is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2009. Finally, in an effort to further inform the driving public, DDOT will provide project-related information through the DDOT website as well as using a separate 11th Street Bridge website.

Sincerely,



Emeka Moneme
Director



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Director

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May 13, 2008

Mr. Ronald Kirby
Director of Transportation Planning
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4239

Dear Mr. Kirby:

I am writing to follow up on our May 7th conversation regarding the Regional Clearinghouse Project being undertaken by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). I want to confirm that the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation has agreed to support the project and provide the requested \$11,000 in funding provided that MWCOG satisfies the following conditions:

- 1) MWCOG must conduct an analysis of other alternatives, including but not limited to Senior Navigator;
- 2) The analysis must detail the level of information and services being provided by the Regional Clearinghouse versus other alternatives;
- 3) The analysis of other alternatives must demonstrate how the Regional Clearinghouse will be completed faster, including all phases of implementation for the Regional Clearinghouse; and
- 4) The analysis must provide a detailed estimate of the start-up and long term operating commitments required by the Regional Clearinghouse and an explanation of how these costs are lower than other alternatives.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Corey Hill of my staff at 804-786-4443. I appreciate your efforts on the Regional Clearinghouse project and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,




Matthew O. Tucker
Director

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