

Meeting Notes

Joint Meeting Transportation Planning Board M&O/ITS Policy Task Force

DATE: Tuesday, November 12, 2002

TIME: 12:30 p.m.

PLACE: COG, 777 North Capitol Street, NE
First Floor, Room 1

CHAIR: Honorable David Snyder, City of Falls Church

And

TPB M&O/ITS Technical Task Force

CHAIR: Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax

VICE

CHAIRS: Kathleen Donodeo, Washington Metro Area Transit Authority
John Frankenhoff, D.C. Division of Transportation
Jean Yves Point-du-Jour, Maryland State Highway Administration

ATTENDANCE:

Jeffrey Arch, PB Farradyne
Brien Benson, George Mason University
Patricia Bush, Arlington County DPW-Traffic
Lora Byala, WMATA
Tom Culpepper, City of Alexandria
Kathy Franklin, Trichord, Inc.
Doug Hansen, Fairfax County DOT
Al Himes, Alexandria Transit
Jana Lynott, NVTC
Eric Marx, PRTC
Amy T. McElwain, VDOT
Frank Mirack, FHWA
Beck Pak, WMATA
Sharmila Samarasinghe, DPRT-VA
Honorable David Snyder, City of Falls Church, VA
Andy Szakos, Fairfax County DOT
Kenneth Todd, National Center for Bicycling and Walking

Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax
Bob Winick, Motion Maps LLC.

COG STAFF ATTENDANCE

Andrew Austin
Michael Farrell
Andrew Meese
Gerald Miller

Actions:

General introductions were made.

1. Discussion of the Northern Virginia Sales Tax Failure

Mr. Snyder remarked that in the light of the failure of the Northern Virginia sales tax initiative, the work of this committee will be even more important. Numerous tax proposals failed nationwide. Mr. Meese noted that of about thirty revenue ballot measures, approximately half failed and half were approved. The only pattern was that the many of the multi-modal ones failed and the uni-modal ones succeeded. Another possible cause of failure was voter concern the funds from a sales tax might not all stay in Northern Virginia.

Mr. Miller noted that funding would be a growing challenge, even to maintain existing facilities. Mr. Meese urged the group to stay focused on improving the efficiency of the existing system, and not focus on proposed capacity increases.

2. Update on Emergency Transportation Activities.

Mr. Snyder expressed concern that we still do not have the detailed playbook for emergency transportation procedures that the public expects. Resources and consultant support would be needed to produce such a playbook. Mr. Meese stated that the Emergency Transportation Work Group is a good structure and the right group of stakeholders to produce such a playbook. We have consultants identified who could be brought on board readily, as soon as funding can be obtained.

The burdens on transportation in any kind of emergency planning are considerable. Organizationally, transportation was ahead of some of the other Emergency Support Functions. The Emergency Transportation Work Group was to continue to meet monthly and discuss new scenarios, including those that will involve reaching out to other Emergency Support Functions.

3. Revised Schedule of Upcoming MOITS and Emergency Transportation Meetings

The next meetings the Emergency Transportation Work Group will be on December 4th, January 7th, and January 29th. There will be no meeting of the MOITS group in January, because it would conflict with TRB, and we would be better served with two meetings of the Emergency Transportation Work Group in January. The next MOITS meetings were to be on December 10th and February 11th.

4. Update on Traveler Information Activities.

Mr. Snyder expressed concern about the ending of SmarTraveler, and inquired about possible replacements. Trafficland.com has put up a self-sustaining web site showing traffic camera views. Mr. Meese agreed to put together information on what to do now that SmarTraveler was disappearing. Mr. Austin agreed to put up links page on the new COG web site.

Mr. Snyder suggested undertaking a post-mortem on SmarTraveler. Mr. Meese offered that the private sector revenues that were vital to the success of the project did not appear, nor did they appear in similar efforts anywhere in the country. Also, the contractor was dependent on the quantity and quality of data provided by the public sector, and the systems needed to provide that data were not available. Recent private sector proposals (from Trichord and Mobility Technologies) are better targeted at what is available at a reasonable cost. No voice operator customized information will be provided. It should be emphasized that no particular contractor has been chosen yet; any new contract would involve an open competition.

Mr. Meese suggested setting up a subcommittee to discuss traveler information issues. Mr. Verzosa suggested reviving the 511 subcommittee. Mr. Meese replied that there were a lot of overlapping issues, such as sharing information between agencies, which is the concern of the RITIS project, and information-sharing with private companies and with the general public, so a lot of different people would need to be involved. There was some discussion as to whether a separate subcommittee was needed, given that there would likely be heavy overlap with the membership of this MOITS group. Such a subcommittee would have two tasks: an immediate action plan for the period after December 19 when SmarTraveler expires, and a long-term plan for handling traveler information. Mr. Meese offered to nominate a committee. A mission or statement of purpose for this technical committee should be created.

The central problem is to collect the data in real time and disseminate it to drivers. We should tell people how they can get information now, and show people what could be provided with more funding. Listservs were suggested as a low-cost, high-benefit tool for distributing information. There is a need, though, for staff to monitor the transportation system, and getting that information distributed. The staff cost can be considerable.

- Mr. Meese was to work on creating a technical subcommittee to address traveler information.
- The cost of traveler information services is likely to be large, on the order of \$40 million.

5. Appointment of Nominating Committee for 2003 MOITS Technical Task Force Officers

Every year the MOITS Technical Task Force votes for a Chair and three Vice-Chairs, usually one each from D.C., Maryland and Virginia, and one from a regional agency, which hitherto has been WMATA. The term will be calendar year 2003. Mr. Verzosa has served for two years, so it was the turn of the District of Columbia as Chair. The officers have to be public sector employees. Mr. Verzosa agreed to head a nominating committee.

6. Results of Recent Conferences

- **Homeland Security Regional Leaders Seminar**
The seminar took place on Oct. 29 and 30th at the Hyatt in Washington, and featured many senior people. It was a success in that it brought regional leaders to agree that regional coordination and cooperation is needed. Monitoring the status of the regional transportation system emerged as a critical point in some of the exercises. It was agreed at the seminar that new funding was needed, and that more such exercises should be carried out annually.
- **Regional Incident Management and Homeland Security Conference**
DDOT put this conference together; it was held at the D.C. Armory. Traditionally focused on response to accidents, but this year it added the theme of Emergency Preparedness. Police, fire, transit, and some federal officials were there, and issues of coordination between those agencies and transportation were discussed.
It was hoped that through ongoing activities such as this we can attract funds needed to fill the gaps. When the federal homeland security agency issues are resolved, some additional funding may become available. If we have momentum and stakeholders assembled, we will have a better chance for funding. We should also solicit the support of the State EMAs.

7. Discussion of Proposal for a Regional Red-light Running Enforcement Symposium

Maryland had a successful conference on this subject. A steering committee organized by the Transportation Technology Center at the University of Maryland has already met with the goal of organizing a Red-light Running symposium for the Washington region. The time frame would be March through April of 2003.

Mr. Meese asked for feedback from the group on the content of such a symposium, and the desirability of having one, given the multi-state character of the Washington region. The laws are not the same across the region. Mr. Meese suggested that one alternative might be to organize a special MOITS meeting to hear about the results of the Maryland Symposium. Mr. Miller suggested that we focus on technical issues and not on laws. Alex suggested that another goal could be to educate the public on how automated red-light running cameras work, and show that it is not being done to trap motorists. Alternatives to cameras, such as design and signal timing, be examined. The Traffic Signals Working Group was to meet on November 22, and can take up this issue.

On a related issue, a Mid-Atlantic Conference on Intersection Safety sponsored by ITE and some of the regional transportation agencies was in the early planning phases. COG may become a co-sponsor of this event. It will probably be held in the summer of 2003, somewhere in Maryland.

8. Notice of Upcoming MOITS Professional Capacity Building Opportunities

The Professional Capacity working group met on November 7. There are two classes upcoming; one will be on transit AVL, taught by John Collura of Virginia Tech, scheduled on Friday, April 4th all day at the Virginia Tech Falls Church Campus. At the same location Brian Smith of the University of Virginia will teach a class on the use of GIS in Transportation Management, on Wednesday, February 5. An additional course under discussion would be a two-day course on public policy and transportation safety, to be held sometime in May.

Alex urged task force members to suggest additional topics for courses.

Mr. Benson and Ms. McElwain discussed a proposed research project to be carried out by George Mason University. The project will consist of five tasks designed to promote integration of intelligent transportation systems technologies in the Washington region. A handout provided details.

9. Other Business

On November 18 the Transit Operators Emergency Working Group met. The group received a proposal to combine their efforts with those of the regional bus study. It was decided instead to hold the meetings back-to-back. The November 22 Traffic Signals and Operations Working Group was to meet at Virginia Tech.

10. Adjourned.