

ITEM 7 - Action

April 20, 2005

Approval of Goals for a Regional System of Variably-Priced Lanes

Staff

Recommendation: Approve the enclosed Goals for a Regional System of Variably-Priced Lanes.

Issues: None

Background: At the January 19, 2005 meeting, the Board received a report on a set of goals for a regional system of variably-priced lanes as developed by the TPB Task Force on Value Pricing for Transportation. The goals were developed to help ensure that variably-priced lanes in the region work as a multi-modal system, and to address the special policy and operational issues raised by the multi-jurisdictional nature of this area.

The current chair of the task force is Ms Petzold. The members include Ms Sorenson, Ms Hudgins, Ms Kaiser, Mr. Knapp, Mr. Mendelson, Ms Pourciau, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Zimmerman.

In an April 6, 2005 letter to the TPB, Environmental Defense provided the following comment on the goals:

“Value Pricing Goals: Adopt with One Critical Change. Environmental Defense commends the Transportation Planning Board's Value Pricing Task Force on

adopting *Goals for a Regional System of Variably-Priced Lanes*, shown as Attachment 2 to this letter. With one change, we urge timely ratification of these goals by the full TPB and the application of these goals as TPB considers modifications to the CLRP: the last emphasized sentence of goal #11, which we believe should be replaced with the statement, "Toll lane projects should be designed to generate dedicated revenues supporting operation of enhanced public transportation services in the tolled corridor."

Goals for a Regional System of Variably-Priced Lanes

TPB Task Force on Value Pricing for Transportation

As the Washington region moves forward with plans to develop variably-priced lanes, it is anticipated that a system of variably-priced lanes will be implemented in phases, likely with one corridor or segment at a time. The following goals can help guide the regional development of variably-priced lanes that work together as a multi-modal system, while addressing the special policy and operational issues raised by the multi-jurisdictional nature of this area.

1. Operations, enforcement, reciprocity, technology, and toll-setting policies should be coordinated to ensure seamless connections between jurisdictional boundaries. The region should explore options for accommodating different eligibility requirements in different parts of the system of variably-priced lanes without inconvenience to the users.
2. The variably-priced lanes should be managed so that reasonably free-flowing conditions are maintained.
3. Electronic toll collection devices should be integrated and interoperable among the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, and should work with other multi-state electronic toll collection systems, such as E-Z PassSM.
4. To ensure safety and to maintain speeds of variably-priced lanes on high-speed facilities, one lane with a wide shoulder consistent with applicable FHWA guidelines should be provided at a minimum. Optimally, two lanes should be provided in each direction (or two lanes in the peak direction by means of reversible lanes) where possible.
5. Given the significant peak-hour congestion in the Washington area, transit bus service should be an integral part of a system of variably-priced lanes, beginning with project planning and design, in order to move the maximum number of people, not just the maximum number of vehicles.
6. Transit buses should have reasonably free-flowing and direct access to variably-priced lanes from major activity centers, key rail stations, and park-and-ride lots, so that transit buses do not have to cross several congested general purpose lanes.

7. Transit buses using the variably-priced lanes should have clearly designated and accessible stops at activity centers or park-and-ride lots, and signal priority or dedicated bus lanes to ensure efficient access to and from activity centers.
8. The region urges that the Congress and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recognize variably-priced lanes as fixed guideway miles so that federal transit funding does not decrease as a result of implementing variably-priced lanes.
9. The Washington region currently has approximately 200 miles of HOV lanes and a significant number of carpoolers, vanpoolers and other HOV-eligible vehicles. If the introduction of variably-priced lanes changes the eligibility policies for use of existing HOV facilities, transitional policies and sunset provisions should be set and clearly stated for all the users.
10. As individual phases of a system of variably-priced lanes are implemented, users of the lanes should be able to make connections throughout the region with minimal inconvenience or disruption.
11. Toll revenues from variably-priced lane projects may finance construction, service debt, and pay for operation and maintenance of the priced lanes. Should toll lanes operate at a revenue surplus, consideration should be given to enhancing transit services.