

ITEM 9 - Information

June 17, 2015

Status Report on the Development of a Regional List of Unfunded Transportation Projects

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing.

Issues: None

Background: In response to a request from the TPB in September, TPB staff is currently developing a regional list of transportation projects which could not be included in the CLRP because funding has not been identified. The TPB jurisdictions and agencies have been requested to provide their lists of transportation projects and project cost estimates for inclusion in this list. The TPB will be briefed on the development of this list and will be presented with suggestions for how the list might be used for regional planning and analysis.



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Robert Griffiths
Director, Plan Development and Data Programs
Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Update on the Development of a Regional List of Unfunded Transportation Projects

DATE: June 11, 2015

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the TPB with an update on the development of a Regional List of Unfunded Transportation Projects and to recommend the establishment of a working group to develop a work scope for future analysis and other regional planning activities to utilize the list.

Background and Sources for List Development

In September 2014, the TPB asked staff to develop a compilation of the region's unfunded transportation projects. In October, the Citizens Advisory Committee passed a resolution supporting this request and asked that the list be made available for use in public outreach and other regional planning activities. In November, TPB staff reported that it would work with member jurisdictions to gather a list of projects that are in state, local, and regionally approved plans, but are not currently in the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

Solicitation of project inputs was issued to member jurisdictions via members of the TPB Technical Committee on February 3, 2015 with February 27 as the due date for project submissions. At the request of TPB Technical Committee members this deadline for the project submission was extended until the end of April.

As of April 30, more than 600 projects have been submitted by 14 state, local and regional agencies from their approved transportation plans. The primary transportation plans serving as the source for a majority of these projects are:

- The District of Columbia’s “moveDC” plan;
- The Joint Transportation Priorities Letters from Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties in Maryland;
- The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority’s “TransAction 2040” plan; and
- The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s “Momentum” and “Connect Greater Washington” plans.

Jurisdictions also submitted other projects derived from various other adopted comprehensive or master plans from the individual counties and cities.

In compiling the list of unfunded projects, TPB staff excluded those projects that are in the 2014 CLRP and that were submitted for the 2015 CLRP for construction, as projects in the CLRP have funding reasonably expected to be available.

Challenges in Developing the List

A number of challenges emerged in the development of the draft list including regional imbalances, difficulty in developing cost estimations, and inconsistencies regarding pedestrian/bicycle projects.

Earlier versions of the draft list showed far fewer projects in Maryland in comparison to the District of Columbia and Virginia because of the different ways member jurisdictions approached this exercise. The District and members in Virginia submitted all projects in their respective plans, while jurisdictions in Maryland largely submitted only those projects from their plans that had been designated as priorities in their annual “priority letters” submitted to the Maryland Department of Transportation. Thus, there are fundamental differences in the source documents and the types of unfunded projects that were submitted by the Maryland and Virginia jurisdictions creating an imbalance in the number of projects and the potential cost of the unfunded needs. To address this imbalance, TPB staff and MDOT staff decided to include all of the long-term unfunded projects in the Maryland SHA Highway Needs Inventory. The inclusion of these projects provides an unfunded project listing for Maryland jurisdictions more similar to those lists provided by the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

Developing cost information for projects has been another challenge. MDOT noted that the unfunded projects in the Maryland SHA Highway Needs Inventory did not have cost estimates attached to them. In addition, many of the unfunded project submissions received to-date from other jurisdictions did not have cost estimates attached to them. Staff suggested that rather than attach specific cost estimates to individual projects included in the Regional List of Unfunded Transportation Projects, staff could group projects of similar size/scale together and provide cost range groupings for those types of projects. Such groupings would more accurately reflect the reality of the uncertainties in project timing and level of effort that has been expended to date on some of these project concepts.

Finally, TPB staff grappled with the degree to which bicycle and pedestrian projects would be included on the list. As an expression of regional priorities, the projects in the TPB’s

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan have been added to the list. But each jurisdiction's individual submissions of bike/ped projects varied significantly both in the number of projects and the specificity provided regarding planned improvements. These imbalances remain in the current draft list.

For all the issues noted above, TPB staff will continue to refine the list of unfunded projects to seek greater consistency across jurisdictions in the representation of projects. However, we recognize the list is essentially in a permanent draft stage and therefore, we wish to emphasize that it should not be viewed as a final product, but as a resource for regional discussion and analysis.

Next Steps and Future Direction

Because of time constraints at the TPB's meeting on May 20, the scheduled status report on this project was deferred. At that meeting, however, TPB staff said they would seek guidance from the TPB Steering Committee to identify next steps in the determining how the list will be utilized.

At the Steering Committee meeting on June 5, staff presented an updated list and offered the following suggestions for possible uses in regional planning activities:

- ***Use the list to define overall unfunded needs.*** The list will represent a comprehensive and financially unconstrained inventory of the transportation projects that member jurisdictions would like to advance into the CLRP sometime in the future. In comparison with the projects already in the CLRP, this summary of information on unfunded needs will provide the TPB with information on the cost and scope of projects in the financially constrained CLRP relative to the inventory of all projects currently in the region's long range transportation plans.
- ***Conduct regional analysis using the list.*** The list provides the basic ingredients for a variety of regional analysis activities that could explore how the numerous projects that are being planned throughout our region work together – or don't – as a regional system. For example, the list can be used to develop scenarios built around regional objectives, such as maximizing effectiveness of the existing system or providing a range of modal options. Stakeholder groups and the public could be engaged in public discussions to help frame the scenarios. Analysis of the scenarios could be done using a variety of methods, ranging from sketch planning tools to the TPB's travel demand models.
- ***Identify subsets of highlighted projects.*** Regional planning activities, including staff analysis, stakeholder input and public outreach, can be used to identify smaller subsets of projects that the TPB might want to highlight. In particular, we may seek to identify a limited list of projects – perhaps 8-10 – that are particularly important from a regional perspective and would significantly advance achievement of the TPB's goals and priorities. For example, the performance analysis of the 2014 CLRP showed significantly increased congestion on both the region's highway and transit

networks. Using criteria established by the TPB from a regional perspective, it may be possible to identify a small subset of projects from the comprehensive inventory of unfunded projects that could significantly improve the performance of the regional transportation system in the longer term. Other types of smaller project lists might also be developed. For example, analysis could identify a list of high-impact, low-cost projects that would be easier to fund than big-ticket projects. Or as another approach, analysis could focus on identifying missing critical regional links between the projects and systems that are being planned at the local and state levels.

- ***Promote project implementation.*** Ultimately, planning activities related to this list could be used to spur action. For example, the TPB could host a regional forum to explore innovative approaches to generate new funding for a subset of significant projects identified to be priorities for this region. Other forms of outreach and education efforts could be conducted to focus attention on implementation and the need for funding.

The TPB Steering Committee discussed the options described above and determined the next step should be the establishment of a working group, chaired by a TPB member, to develop a scope and approach for future work. At the TPB meeting on June 17, TPB staff will seek concurrence of the Board to set up such a working group.