

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board

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

SUBJECT: Overview of Presentation on the CLRP Aspirations Scenario Preliminary
Analysis Results

DATE: January 13, 2010

Introduction

The Transportation Planning Board last received a briefing on the key land use and transportation components of the CLRP Aspirations Scenario on December 17, 2008. The original schedule for this work was delayed because the TPB Scenario Task Force and TPB staff spent the majority of calendar year 2009 developing the Priority Bus Transit in the National Capital Region TIGER grant application which was submitted on September 15, 2009. Since this time, the CLRP Aspirations scenario has been further defined and coded into the regional travel demand model, and preliminary model results have been generated. This memorandum presents a brief background on the study, an overview of the results to be presented, and a schedule for the remainder of the study.

Background

The CLRP Aspirations Scenario was developed under the guidance of the Scenario Task Force to explore a combination of transportation and land use strategies and assess their impact on the transportation network in the year 2030. The land use strategies were informed by the TPB's Regional Accessibility and Mobility Scenario Study and guided by consultation with the COG Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee. Land use strategies include increasing the number of households in the region and moving jobs and households closer to one another and to high quality transit. The transportation strategies were rooted in the TPB's Regional Network of Variably Priced Lanes study and informed by consultation with the TPB's Regional Bus Subcommittee. Transportation strategies in the scenario include variably priced freeway lanes, bus rapid transit (BRT) and the use of managed lanes as BRT running-way.

Implementation of these strategies resulted in the development and modeling of a 1600 lane-mile network of variably priced, managed, toll lanes that also acts as running-way for a 500-mile network of bus rapid transit service. Both the priced and bus networks provide access to and connections between the regional activity centers, where jobs and households are concentrated.

Results to Be Presented

Preliminary results of the analysis will be presented on January 20, 2010, to the task force prior to the TPB meeting. These results will include regional totals showing the changes from 2008 to 2030 for measures of auto travel, congestion and use of alternative modes, including transit, HOV, bicycle and pedestrian trips. Included in the presentation will be a preliminary assessment of total implementation and operating costs and toll and farebox revenues, and a set of additional questions that can be examined in further investigations.

Preliminary analysis has resulted in the following notable results:

- Moving jobs and households closer together around high-quality transit results in a large increase in transit trips, and bicycle and pedestrian work trips.
- While in absolute numbers VMT increases in the scenario, VMT-per-capita does not show a significant change, and may actually decrease.
- Increases in average highway speeds and large reductions in measures of automobile congestion suggest that the scenario could show a decrease in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Assessment of GHGs is still pending.
- Annual toll revenues and transit fares from the scenario are on the same order of magnitude as the annualized costs (both operating and capital).

Further scenario analysis can explore the following questions:

- How does the toll lane “target speed” impact the transportation network?
- What would be the effect of reducing the number of new lane miles?
- What would be the impact of changes in transit service levels, such as headways, speeds and fares?

Schedule and Next Steps

From February to May, staff will perform further analysis, refinements, sensitivity testing and benefit-cost analysis of the scenario. Staff will regularly brief the TPB Technical Committee and the Scenario Task Force throughout this time. The final report for this study will be completed in June.

A detailed description the development of the CLRP Aspirations Scenario is attached.

Summary of CLRP Aspirations Scenario Development

Starting Point

The CLRP Aspirations Scenario was developed based upon the Round 7.2 Cooperative Land-Use Forecasts and the 2008 CLRP for 2030. This means that these land use forecasts and CLRP projects will be included in the base network against which the scenario is compared as well as in the scenario. Moreover, the Round 7.2 land use projections out to 2015 are also taken as given since many, if not all, development projects up to that date are either already on the ground or in the pipeline.

Developing the CLRP Aspirations Scenario

The purpose of the CLRP Aspirations scenario is to create an ambitious, yet realistic vision for land use growth and transportation service in the Washington region. More specifically, the scenario seeks to better align land use and transportation planning with the goals of the TPB Vision and of the previous RMAS initiative. These goals include creating “economically strong regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing, services, and recreation in a walkable environment”, “a web of multi-modal transportation connections which provide convenient access”, “a user-friendly, seamless system”, and a combination of land use and transportation options that result in the “reduction of per capita VMT.” In addition, the scenario seeks to maintain the principles of RMAS, such as capitalizing on existing transit infrastructure through transit-oriented development, addressing geographic imbalances in development, and reducing congestion and commute times by getting jobs and housing closer together. The scenario in its completed form is intended to achieve these goals to the extent possible by creating highly accessible and developed activity centers served by an extensive transit network.

The scenario begins with past TPB studies, including the five transportation and land use scenarios of RMAS and the three scenarios of the Value Pricing Study. These two studies examined various “what ifs,” where a growth or policy possibility was studied for its effects on various transportation conditions. This new scenario takes these “what ifs” a step further by using the results of these studies to create a vision for the region that strives to meet the TPB’s goals.

The RMAS scenarios examined five different methods of bringing jobs closer to housing and thus reducing VMT: adding more households to the region, moving households from outer jurisdictions to inner jurisdictions, moving jobs from inner jurisdictions to outer jurisdictions, concentrating development around transit, and moving development from the western half of the region to the eastern half. The results illuminated particularly successful strategies, such as adding even more households to the region than was projected and directing them into regional activity centers, but did not achieve as great of a change in travel demand (particularly the reduction of VMT) as may have been expected. The Value Pricing Study resulted in three scenarios that showed that pricing existing and new capacity could provide a viable revenue source for new highway and transit capacity. The study also left room for further study of high quality transit operating on toll lanes in the region.

Based on the principles and lessons from these two studies, the CLRP Aspirations scenario has been built with three elements: a land use component, a pricing component, and a transit component, which have been developed concurrently. In order to maintain a realistic foundation, the CLRP Aspirations scenario is limited by two primary criteria: (1) proposed densities and growth shifts must be “within reach” in order to be considered for possible inclusion in the Cooperative Forecasts; (2) proposed transportation projects should be financially within reach by utilizing realistic funding sources, such as local and/or regional tax revenues, financial contributions from developers, revenue streams from pricing selected facilities, and possible new federal funding.

Land Use Component

In order to achieve the goals of the TPB vision and RMAS, the land use component of the CLRP Aspirations scenario focuses on strategic shifts in projected land use growth to concentrate both jobs and housing in activity centers and around existing or planned transit infrastructure.

However, as evidenced by RMAS, the amount of growth available to shift into existing activity centers is limited. In this study, the growth available for redistribution is limited by assuming that anything planned before 2015 is in the pipeline. This constraint requires a highly strategic framework for shifting growth that directly seeks to achieve the goals within the TPB Vision. This framework is comprised of a series of goal-oriented “rules” for shifting growth. All activity centers and transportation analysis zones (TAZs) with current/planned transit infrastructure receive the necessary amount of residential and employment growth to be (1) transit supportive, (2) walkable, and (3) mixed use. These areas are the scenario’s “receiving zones.”

(1) Transit Supportive:

All receiving zones have varying residential and employment density goals that reflect what is realistic given their current urban form, but that are high enough to support varying levels of transit service, from local bus service with 30 minute or more headways to rapid transit with 5 minute or less headways. These assessments are based on the best available research linking density and urban form to transit service.

(2) Walkable:

Similarly, all receiving zones have varying residential and employment density goals that reflect what is realistic given their current urban form, but that are high enough to meet regional criteria for walkability. This region has several models of walkable urban centers, each with varying levels of density and scale of development. Two models that can be used to frame different density goals for higher density activity centers and lower density activity centers are available: the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor, which has high densities of 20 du/acre or more and Old Town Alexandria, which has lower, but walkable densities of 7-10 du/acre.

(3) Mixed Use:

Lastly, all receiving zones have varying goals for jobs/housing balance that reflect what is realistic given their current urban form. Of the five different types of COG Regional Activity Centers (DC Core, Mixed Use, Employment Center, Suburban Employment Center, and Emerging Employment Center) only Mixed Use centers have a residential density requirement. The three types of employment centers have varying levels of density, but in some instances the

residential density can be very low, such as only one unit per acre. Therefore, the goal for these types of activity centers is to begin approaching a balance of housing, employment and services. For other centers where the current densities are higher, the goal was to create a truly balanced mix of uses, enabling a resident to walk to a myriad of destinations. A jobs/housing balance for the region was improved by using the strategy of the More Households RMAS scenario, in which additional households were added to the region's 2030 forecast. Jobs/housing balances were also maintained at the jurisdictional level to guide the inter-jurisdictional shifts of housing and jobs.

As stated in each of the above categories of goals, the density and jobs/housing goals for each receiving zone vary according to existing or planned conditions. It is clear that some activity centers that currently have lower densities cannot support the density of the DC Core or the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor, nor is there enough projected growth between 2015 and 2030 to bring the densities of the 58 regional activity centers to those levels. Therefore, the concept of the receiving zone was disaggregated further to represent the five types of activity centers and zones not in an activity center but with transit infrastructure (either metrorail/transitway or commuter rail), each with different, realistic density and jobs/housing balance goals.

By concentrating growth strategically in these different types of zones, the goals of the TPB Vision as well as the principles of RMAS are better achieved. Not only is much future growth directed into activity centers, but with the increased growth, the activity centers themselves are more walkable and amenable to greater, high quality transit infrastructure. Additionally, because growth is directed to areas with current transit infrastructure, great progress is made toward capitalizing on transit assets and concentrating increased development in the eastern portion of the region in order to address current development imbalances.

Transportation Component

The transportation component of the CLRP Aspirations scenario focuses on providing increased accessibility to the areas receiving the growth shifts described in the previous section: the regional core and activity centers. This accessibility is provided for transit riders, car-pools and those willing to pay tolls to drive low-occupant vehicles on variably priced lanes and facilities.

Activity centers and transit station areas have increased local transportation infrastructure to facilitate the shifted growth. It is assumed that local streets and circulator transit services would be funded by various sources, such as special tax districts, tax-increment financing or developer proffers.

The transportation component consists of two interconnected components: a network of variably priced highway lanes, and high-quality transit service. The transit services studied include commuter rail and transit-way projects as well as a regional network of bus rapid transit (BRT) operating on the network of variably priced highway lanes.

Pairing the priced lanes with BRT service provides the potential for great synergy: toll lanes function as dedicated right-of-way for the bus rapid transit vehicles, and toll revenue offsets the cost of BRT facilities and service. BRT services reduce the demand for the priced lanes,

allowing them to operate more smoothly and preventing congestion. Both the BRT and priced lanes should provide mode-shift incentives, providing congestion relief to the existing general purpose lanes.

Regional Network of Variably Priced Highway Lanes

In February, 2008, the TPB completed an 18-month study of networks of variably priced lanes for the Washington region. The study evaluated the demand and revenue forecasts for different combinations of pricing of newly constructed and existing lanes. One such network included new lanes on all freeways outside the District and selected urban arterials outside the Capital Beltway in addition to the tolling of selected existing facilities: US National Park Service Parkways and all freeways and river crossings in the District. This network resulted in large revenue forecasts that approached the estimated cost of constructing and operating the toll facilities.

This regional network of variably priced lanes is the basis for the CLRP Aspirations scenario. In future assessment of the scenario, the network will be modified to remove the dedicated interchanges between the priced and general purpose road networks that do not provide access to regional activity centers. This should result in a large reduction of the total construction costs of the toll network while focusing accessibility improvements on the regional activity centers.

Regional Bus Rapid Transit Network Operating on Toll Lanes

A high-quality network of bus rapid transit (BRT) service is layered onto to the regional network of priced lanes. This high-quality transit uses the priced lanes as its dedicated right-of-way, allowing for rail-like travel speeds and levels of service. The BRT network provides service to BRT stations in the regional activity centers as well as connections to Metrorail stations and existing park-and-ride lots via dedicated access ramps. The station areas are the focus areas for the increased density described above.

Bus transit operating on freeway lanes provides service to bus stations via dedicated access ramps. It is assumed that all non-urban stations include BRT design standards and technologies (off-board fare payment, level-boarding, multi-door access) to reduce the dwell time. This reduced dwell time, dedicated access and pseudo-dedicated right-of-way should result in an average BRT operating speed of approximately 45 mph where the transit service operates on freeway lanes.

Within the urban core, where few priced lanes are evaluated, the bus transit service operates in mixed traffic lanes along selected priority corridors as identified by WMATA in its Priority Corridor Network plan. Technologies and techniques such as transit signal priority, queue jump lanes and selective dedicated bus lanes are being considered for these Metrobus corridors. Along these corridors, an approximate average speed of 15 mph was assumed.

Bus stations are also provided to areas recommended by advisory groups (Regional Bus Subcommittee and Scenario Task Force) consulted in the development of this scenario. These locations include Fort Detrick (Frederick Co.), Westphalia (Prince George's Co), Fort Belvoir (Fairfax Co.) and Landmark (City of Alexandria).

Activity Center Circulators

For activity centers with little current or planned local bus service, circulator service is provided under the scenario to provide viable transit connections between the transportation zones receiving jobs and houses with the bus rapid transit stations.

Selected RMAS Projects

Finally, selected projects previously evaluated under RMAS are included in this scenario. These selected projects provide high quality transit service to activity centers not connected to the network of variably priced lanes and therefore not served by the BRT network to be evaluated. The included RMAS projects are:

- Purple Line Extension from Silver Spring to New Carrollton
- Georgia Avenue Transitway, from Glenmont to the Intercounty Connector (ICC)
- US 1 Transitway, from King Street Metrorail station to Potomac Mills via Fort Belvoir and Woodbridge.
- VRE Extension from Manassas to Haymarket, via “Innovation” and Gainesville.