

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Welcome and Approval of Minutes from the January 4, 2008 Technical Committee Meeting

Minutes were approved as written.

2. Update on Project Submissions for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2008 CLRP and FY 2009-2014 TIP

Mr. Kirby reviewed the CLRP and TIP project submissions for air quality analysis. He emphasized the need for accurate project cost estimates and said that in some cases more data was needed for transit network coding. Mr. Srikanth indicated that information for the Columbia Pike trolley should be available. Ms. Samarasinghe noted that there was not enough detail available for the Fairfax County bus enhancements. Ms. Posey said that TPB staff would need those details by February 20 in order to proceed with the coding as scheduled. Chair Rawlings asked if any comments had been received yet. Mr. Kirby said that no significant comments had been submitted on the projects.

3. Update on Draft Scope of Work for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the 2008 CLRP and FY 2009-2014 TIP

Mr. Clifford reviewed two items: the first was the draft Scope of Work which had been included in the mailout, and the second, which he distributed to the committee, was an excerpt from the January 24, 2008 Federal Register containing conformity amendments that implement provisions contained in SAFETEA-LU.

Mr. Clifford noted that the recently adopted conformity report for the 2007 CLRP is on COG's website, and that hard copies will be sent to the federal agencies as soon as possible.

Mr. Clifford said that the Scope of Work for the 2008 CLRP was presented to the TPB in January, and that it was out for public comment. The public comment period ends on February 15th, and the TPB is expected to adopt the scope at its February 20th meeting. He noted that the scope is very similar to last year's.

Mr. Clifford mentioned that a new final conformity rule had been published in the Federal Register. He referred to the one-page handout showing the cover page and summary of the new Rule. He pointed out that the Rule, streamlining provisions specified in SAFETEA-LU, would be effective on February 25th. He noted that the only impact on the Scope of Work would be an update to a reference of the date of the most recent amendment to the Rule.

4. Review of Draft 2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Miller reviewed the draft FY 2009 UPWP (July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009). He reviewed the overall budget estimates and commented that the final federal and state allocations of new FY 2009 funding from the DOTs may be slightly higher than the assumed current FY 2008 levels. He explained that after the final funding commitments

are received, the funds that exceed the assumed totals in the current budget can be allocated to specific projects and approved by a formal amendment. He said that the first draft of the document will be presented to the TPB at its February 20 meeting, and noted that the technical assistance programs for the DOTs and WMATA remain to be specified. He said that the TPB will be asked to adopt the program on March 19 and it will be submitted to FHWA and FTA for their approval by July 1.

Mr. Owolabi asked why there was no work activity shown to provide TPB staff support for coordination between the TPB and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and VDOT planning and programming activities. Mr. Kirby said that a separate work item was not necessary and that TPB staff would attend the monthly NVTA meetings and provide support as necessary under the basic work program planning and programming activities

Mr. Kirby reviewed the reasons for the proposed increase in the TLC program and the decrease in the Scenario planning effort. He said that the TPB Scenario Task Force reviewed and endorsed the proposed activities and budgets for these work activities on January 16. He highlighted the proposed modifications to the TLC program and the explained the scenario activities proposed for the remainder of FY 2008 and for FY 2009.

Mr. Clifford and Mr. Sivasailam distributed a revised Figure 7 which shows the interval for the freeway off-peak congestion monitoring as six years rather than five. Mr. Clifford explained that this would help minimize the conflicts with the peak monitoring every three years and that the results were not changing very much.

5. Briefing on Draft FY 2009 Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP)

Mr. Ramfos stated that the Fiscal Year 2009 draft Commuter Connections Work Program (CCWP) was in the agenda packet for today's meeting. He then gave a Power Point presentation with some background information on Commuter Connections, the benefits of Commuter Connections and an overview of what is new with the program and budget, and next steps for the CCWP.

He presented a comparison of the FY 2008 budget to the proposed FY 2009 budget and stated that there are some slight variations for some of the program areas. He said that there is about a 4% increase in the budget from FY 2008. The budget breakdown includes about 27% of the costs going to COG/TPB Staff & Overhead, 44% of the cost for private sector services, 17% of the costs are passed through to local jurisdiction TDM programs, and 12% of the costs for direct costs such as printing and postage. Over 70% of the CCWP dollars go to the private sector, local jurisdictions, or direct costs.

He also highlighted the new ideas and programs, including the development and implementation of Phase Three of the web-based TDM system. In the marketing section, a new Carpool Incentive Demonstration study has been added. During FY 2009 COG/TPB staff will coordinate with local jurisdictions to develop a regional Car Free Day campaign that will encourage residents to leave their cars behind or to take alternative forms of transportation such as public transit, carpools, vanpools, telecommuting, bicycling or walking.

Lastly, Mr. Ramfos reviewed the next review and approval steps for the document.

Mr. Mokhtari asked why there were more dollars budgeted for the Car Free Day than Bike To Work Day. Mr. Ramfos explained that the Bike To Work Day event was much

more established and that additional dollars for start-up purposes would be needed for the first few years to promote the Car Free Day event in September.

Mr. Owolabi asked if the congestion rankings could also be referred to with the carpool ranking chart. Mr. Ramfos said that this could be accommodated for the presentation to the TPB and also stated that in terms of congestion, our region ranks 2nd after the Los Angeles region, however we are tied with the Atlanta and San Francisco regions. Mr. Owolabi also asked how the cost effectiveness for various measures compare to the Commuter Connections measures. Mr. Ramfos said that in looking at the gamut of emission reduction measures, there is no direct comparison to other measures, however the evaluation results from the demand management measures show that the measures are very cost effective. Mr. Sivasailam also said that EPA publishes the cost effectiveness of many of the emission reduction measures and demand management strategies are usually shown as low cost measures.

Ms. Samarasinghe asked about the carpool incentive demonstration project and whether this was tied in to NuRide. Mr. Ramfos stated that the project will be to study the feasibility of the incentive being implemented in a corridor or corridors in the region. There are a number of providers and programs that will be reviewed as options, including NuRide and if it was recommended, then the project would move forward.

Chair Rawlings asked Mr. Ramfos to explain the drop in the budget for the Operations Center from FY 2008 to FY 2009. Mr. Ramfos stated that the costs for the development of the TDM software system would be lower in FY 2009. Mr. Rawlings requested that this information be shared with the TPB.

6. Briefing on Applications Received for the Transportation/Land Use Connection (TLC) Program

Referring to the handout memorandum, Mr. Swanson said that the TPB received 21 applications in response to the FY2008 solicitation for technical assistance projects under the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) program. He said that staff was recommending that 11 projects should be funded at a level of \$20,000 each in technical assistance. After providing some background information on the program, he described the qualitative process for developing the staff recommendations and he briefly described each recommended project. He noted that MDOT had agreed to make available \$100,000 from their technical assistance funds in the UPWP, which meant that five more projects were being recommended for Maryland than was previously anticipated. He said that later that day, the Steering Committee would be asked to approve the recommendations and the TPB would be asked to approve them on February 20.

Ms. Samarasinghe asked if staff had considered developing a quantitative evaluation process for selecting projects.

Mr. Swanson answered that the evaluators did use a questionnaire to provide some consistency in the review process. However, he said that staff believes it is important to select a cross section of projects that provide a balance among jurisdictions and represent different types of products that serve different needs. The necessary flexibility would be difficult to achieve with a numerical scoring system.

Ms. Erickson said that MDOT was particularly interested in promoting transit-oriented development (TOD) through the TLC program and she expressed some concern that some of the projects were not as focused on TOD as MDOT might have wanted. She noted that MDOT had little time to review the recommendations, and while she said that

MDOT was agreeing to the recommendations, they would like more time for review in the future.

Mr. Srikanth asked for a clarification of what the TPB would be asked to approve on February 20.

Mr. Kirby said the TPB would be asked to approve the 11 recommended projects and also to approve an amendment to the UPWP to use \$100,000 from the MDOT Technical Assistance funds to fund five of the TLC projects in Maryland.

Mr. Mokhtari asked if the pedestrian crossing project in Frederick had a land use component.

Mr. Thomas said that the City of Frederick is undergoing significant redevelopment activity and the pedestrian crossing was intricately linked to that new development.

Mr. Owolabi said he did not think that a quantitative ranking system for project selection would be beneficial. He said he believed the program needs to maintain flexibility to respond to different needs in different ways.

Mr. Graye questioned whether \$20,000 per project would be adequate.

Mr. Kirby said that more flexibility would be built into the funding amounts in the next round, with the opportunity for up to \$60,000 per project. He noted the importance of quick response in the program.

7. Briefing on the Regional Bus Subcommittee's Status Report on the Bus Systems in the National Capital Region

Mr. Hamre, chair of the Regional Bus Subcommittee, presented the Committee with an updated version of the Status Report on the Region's Bus Systems. Since the last meeting, the presentation was updated with a new color scheme, and graphics and photographs illustrating major points in the presentation. A handout version of the presentation was distributed to the Committee.

Mr. Srikanth suggested that two slides showing graphics of increasing bus ridership and increasing bus operating costs were confusing, and suggested rephrasing text on the slides to not be misleading. Mr. Kirby suggested replacing the graphics with bullet points. Mr. Hamre suggested that those bullet points could be accompanied by graphics illustrating the concepts, such as fuel pumps, etc.

Mr. Foster inquired about the source of the data for the graphs on slides 9 and 10. Mr. Miller replied that the data sources are listed in the accompanying report.

Mr. Kirby commented that Mr. Hamre's oral presentation included some strong points that were not included in the slides, and recommended that those points be added to the slides. He also stated that the presentation raised the issue of finding additional funding, but did not specifically mention from whom the funding might come. Mr. Hamre offered that slides showing the balance of the bus systems funding sources (Federal, state, local, fares, etc.) could be added to the presentation. Mr. Srikanth suggested that such information was too detailed, and that the funding of bus systems is very complicated. Mr. Kirby agreed, suggesting that the financial needs remain qualitative.

Mr. A. Smith said that the presentation was well done and showed a good assessment of the needs faced by bus transit systems. He added that the issues for 2008 are the following: budget, cost controls, efficiency.

Mr. Mokhtari suggested that the mission was to increase ridership, and to promote bus transit, including new planning and pushing the bar higher. Mr. Hamre stated that the regional bus study identified a plan for expansion in the region, and the function of the subcommittee is to move that plan forward. Mr. Mokhtari concurred, including that new routes and regional routes should be the next focus.

Mr. Owolabi stated that the text on the final slide was too generic. He recommended including evaluation of the roll of bus transit in the project review process. Mr. Kirby suggested the presentation could make a “full court press” for bus services.

Mr. Kirby then suggested that Fairfax County, with the NVTVA, has proposed to add an extensive increase in bus transit service to the 2008 CLRP. This service has been made possible by new funding streams and taxes in Northern Virginia. He suggested that this success story be added to the presentation.

Ms. Samarasinghe inquired as to why the charts illustrating growth in bus ridership and costs also includes cost and ridership of the Metrorail system. Mr. Hamre said that the inclusion of Metrorail adds a basis for comparison. Mr. Yaffe suggested that it allows regional decision makers to realize that transit is not just rail. It also illustrates the relative importance of bus transit to the region’s transit system. Ms. Samarasinghe inquired why commuter rail was not included. Mr. Miller stated that commuter rail ridership is very small compared to the Metrorail and regional bus ridership levels.

Mr. Griffiths suggested using a shorter period of time for the trend charts, citing his Travel Trends report which uses 6 year trends. Mr. Kirby suggested that the presentation could include one slide showing short-term growth trends from Mr. Griffiths’ presentation.

8. Briefing on the Draft TPB Regional Value Pricing Study Report

Mr. Kirby distributed a handout of the presentation to the Committee on the latest updates to the regional value pricing study.

Mr. Srikanth suggested that transit impacts revenues as well as costs. Therefore, including transit should influence the financial feasibility of these networks. He suggested that the term “feasibility” might be removed from the cost/revenues slide. Mr. Kirby reminded the Committee that the Virginia policy is HOV-3 free, but that in the District and in Maryland all must pay, and that this policy decreases the revenues on the Virginia portion of the priced network. Mr. Griffiths suggested that the study might wish to answer the question “What is the price of the Virginia HOV-free policy?”

Mr. Ramfos inquired about a cost analysis for the enhanced bus service added to the transit scenarios. Mr. Eichler stated that both costs and revenues for the transit networks had been calculated, but were not included in this version of the presentation.

Mr. A. Smith inquired as to the process by which individual highways and arterials were selected to receive new value priced lanes. Mr. Kirby replied that the TPB Task Force on Value Pricing for Transportation determined the starting-point scenario, which included two new lanes in each direction on the freeways in the region, and one new

lane in each direction on major arterials outside of the beltway. He explained that the task force decided to start with a large network and then pare it back.

Mr. Srikanth asked as to whether Scenario C has the lowest tolls, wondering about affordability of the toll lanes. Mr. Kirby stated that the average tolls were not assessed for the scenarios. Mr. Griffiths suggested that a weighted average could be used.

Mr. Moss inquired about slides not in the presentation, for example a description of Scenario AP. Mr. Eichler stated that indeed a few slides were missing from the presentation, and that the presentation would be complete before being presented to the TPB. Mr. Moss also wondered if the study would be presented to the TPB in February. Mr. Kirby said that the next update would be given to the Task Force at their February 27 meeting, and that another briefing would be presented to the Technical Committee in March before being presented to the TPB.

Mr. Moss suggested that the presentation needs next steps and conclusions. Mr. Kirby stated that those are currently in progress and will be added to the presentation before the March Tech Committee meeting.

Finally, Ms. Samarasinghe suggested that the names of the scenarios were confusing, and that a better naming system should be put in place. Mr. Kirby said that he had originally hoped to only carry one scenario through the analysis, but the task force had requested that all three be fully analyzed. As such, it is difficult to determine which scenario is which.

9. Briefing on Draft Report on Regional Travel Trends Report

Delayed to March.

11. Other Business

Mr. Srikanth mentioned to the Committee that VDOT would be holding a Programming Workshop for CLRP & TIP projects for VDOT and County Transportation staff on how to comply with the MPO process sometime in April, date to be announced.

12. Adjourn