

MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee

FROM: Andrew J. Meese, AICP
Principal Transportation Planner

DATE: January 26, 2007

SUBJECT: Congestion Management Process Requirements and Potential Activities

Introduction

SAFETEA-LU requires that metropolitan transportation planning processes include a Congestion Management Process (CMP). The new CMP is a reworking of the previous requirements for a Congestion Management System (CMS). Additionally, the March 2006 federal certification of the TPB metropolitan planning process included a recommendation that the region's CMS be enhanced. Federal CMP regulations and guidance have not yet been finalized, perhaps to be issued in the May 2007 time frame. Interim guidance is to base activities upon previous CMS requirements, except for the requirements specifically listed for CMP in the SAFETEA-LU legislation. Because of the need for the Constrained Long-Range Plan to be SAFETEA-LU-compliant this fall, it is necessary to begin now to address the CMP even in advance of the final regulations.

Pursuant to both the SAFETEA-LU requirements and the federal certification recommendation, this memorandum proposes activities to develop the regional CMP, building upon previous years' regional CMS activities. Feedback is invited from Technical Committee members and other stakeholders.

Basic Concept and Requirements

A CMP is required for metropolitan planning in areas of 200,000 or more population. No single occupant vehicle (SOV) capacity expanding project can receive federal funds unless it is part of a CMP. The federal definition of a CMS, the predecessor of the CMP, was as a systematic process for managing traffic congestion and provides information on transportation system performance. A CMS/CMP should include alternative strategies for alleviating congestion and enhancing the mobility of persons and good to levels that meet state and local needs. Recommended components of a CMS/CMP are a system for data collection and performance monitoring, a range of strategies for addressing congestion, performance measures or criteria for identifying when action is needed, and a system for prioritizing which congestion management strategies would be most effective.

The SAFETEA-LU legislation for the most part kept the CMS/CMP regulation. The main changes were to rename it to CMP, to emphasize that it was to be part of the planning process rather a separate activity, and to emphasize management of the existing infrastructure.

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The federal certification of the TPB planning process, dated March 2006, addressed CMS/CMP with the following recommendation:

The TPB should develop a comprehensive description of a regional Congestion Management System to demonstrate its application at critical stages of the metropolitan planning process, including the development of the CLRP, TIP, and the development of major projects and policies. The description should be part of the next update to the CLRP or a stand-alone document that is completed in one year from the issuance of this report. The description can build on key elements in place, including monitoring and evaluating alternatives to new capacity (such as for the Mixing Bowl Springfield Exchange and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge) and the range of congestion related strategies (such as the Commuter Connections Program).

Previous and Current CMS Activities

In the original ISTEA legislation, the CMS was one of six newly required management systems. States and MPOs began activities to address these new requirements, including both state and metropolitan CMS activities. Over time, changes were made to the federal management systems requirements, and only the CMS remained a requirement, and only in metropolitan transportation planning processes.

A mid-1990s CMS Task Force steered the scope and form of the Washington regional CMS, including performance measures and exemption criteria. These exemption criteria have advised whether proposed projects necessitate a CMS form in the Call for Projects (formerly Solicitation Document), resulting in a limited number of projects each year having been subjected to the CMS SOV requirement. Separate regional CMS reports were published in FY1995 and FY1996. Then a decision was made to fully incorporate the information into the CLRP rather than having a stand-alone document, for continuity between the CMS and CLRP.

Currently the TPB process has been addressing the CMS through data collection and analysis, through compilation of CMS/CMP information from implementing agencies associated with projects submitted to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and through consideration of management and operations strategies under the Management, Operations, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces. These are summarized and described in a section of the CLRP narrative.

Potential Enhanced CMP Activities

The requirements of both the federal certification recommendation and SAFETEA-LU compliance can be addressed with a number of new CMP activities. A two-phase approach is proposed.

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Phase I will occur from now until the next CLRP update in Fall 2007. This will be to develop an initial enhanced CMP to coincide and be a part of the revised CLRP, and help ensure that the new CLRP is SAFETEA-LU compliant. Phase I will entail use of existing information sources and reports such as recent aerial surveys (Skycomp), arterial travel monitoring, cordon counts, and information contained in the Regional Transportation Data Clearinghouse. This information will be better integrated at a number of points in the CLRP. Phase I is not anticipated to involve discussion of or use of new or different performance measures than those already reported in the source materials, nor to involve new data collection activities. Current information sources are robust and are anticipated to be satisfactory to ensure SAFETEA-LU compliance. The process will consider how best to address the initial CMP, whether as portions of the CLRP document or as a stand-alone document. Support for Phase I will be within the existing FY2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) tasks.

Phase II will begin in earnest with FY2008. The FY2008 UPWP includes a new, separate CMP task with dedicated funding. This will enable an expanded set of CMP tasks. The new tasks can also aid the CMP to be developed with the Fall 2007 CLRP, and will set the stage for fully enhanced ongoing CMPs in the future. Considerations may include mapping enhancements, new data collection, new performance measures, new Web interactive features, and how frequently to update the CMP.

Oversight and Advisory Committees

It is proposed that the TPB Technical Committee be the oversight committee for the CMP. The Technical Committee is in the best position to address the breadth of topics and activities that must be included in a CMP. The Technical Committee can also be advised by a number of the standing subcommittees who have knowledge about particular aspects of the CMP, though by purview none of these subcommittees looks at all necessary CMP aspects. For example, the Management, Operations, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Task Forces can advise on non-recurring congestion. The Travel Forecasting Subcommittee can advise in its roles on monitoring current transportation systems conditions (i.e., recurring congestion) as well as the forecasting of future system conditions. The Commuter Connections Subcommittee and the Travel Management Subcommittee can advise on analysis of congestion management alternative strategies. Other subcommittees may also have additional information. Although not planned at this time, there is the possibility of holding one or more special meetings or workshops, drawing a variety of stakeholders, on the CMP topic.

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Schedule

It is proposed to hold discussions on the CMP with the TPB Technical Committee approximately every other month. An overall initial proposed CMP development schedule is as follows:

Feb 2 Tech Committee Meeting	This introductory memo and discussion
Feb 2 – Apr 6	Phase I information compilation
Apr 6 Tech Committee Meeting	Outline and Update of CMP Phase I activities
Jun 1 Tech Committee Meeting	Update; first draft document*
Jul 1 – Sep 7	Funding from separate UPWP CMP task becomes available
Sep 7 Tech Committee Meeting	Update; second draft document*
Oct 5 Tech Committee Meeting	Final draft document for approval (with CLRP)
November and onward	Phase II activities

*It is to be determined, with the advice of the Technical Committee, whether a stand-alone CMP document will be necessary over and above CMP integration into the CLRP document.