

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board Technical Committee

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

SUBJECT: Evaluation of the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Pilot Program,
and Proposed Amendment to the FY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program
(UPWP) to Implement the Second Year of the TLC Program

DATE: September 28, 2007

TPB staff briefed the Technical Committee at its September 7 meeting on the status of the evaluation of the pilot phase of the TLC Program, and its intent to provide recommendations for the next round of funding based on this pilot phase of the Program. TPB staff has since completed interviews with the awardees, consultants, and agency stakeholders who participated in the five location-specific projects conducted in pilot round of the TLC Program. Common themes from these interviews are summarized in this memorandum. Based on the evaluation findings and comments from the TLC lead consultant, Reconnecting America, staff plans to conduct the FY 2008 TLC Program in much the same manner, with recommendations for several minor changes to the program and amendments to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) detailed in this memorandum.

Current Status of the TLC Pilot Program

Five location-specific projects were included in the pilot phase of the TLC Program, as well as a sixth public presentation project. A brief summary of the presentation and the TLC Website and Regional Clearinghouse is provided below. Detailed information about the location-specific projects may be found on the TLC website under "Current Projects": <http://www.mwcog.org/tlc>.

- District of Columbia: Potomac Avenue Metro Station Scoping Study
- Langley Park/Takoma Park: Pedestrian Study
- St. Charles Urbanized Area: Urban Road Standards
- Fairfax County: Level of Service around Transit Oriented Development Study
- Prince William County: Base Realignment and Closure Impacts Scoping Study

Public Presentation on Density Issues

The sixth project initiated in the pilot phase of the TLC Program is a presentation explaining density and transit-oriented development in clear language. This presentation, "Density and the Washington, D.C., Region," is currently being revised by the TLC lead consultant in consultation with TPB staff and staff in Takoma Park and College Park. Once final, public meetings will be scheduled in these jurisdictions and the consultant will provide the presentation and conduct a discussion on local density issues. TPB staff anticipates providing future opportunities for this presentation in other interested jurisdictions across the region.

TLC Website and Regional Clearinghouse

The TLC Website was launched in June and provides national best practices on linking land-use and transportation issues. The website also features a database of relevant projects and initiatives around the region, which many local jurisdictions have reviewed for accuracy. TPB staff updated the website as the technical assistance projects conducted during the pilot phase of the TLC Program were completed.

Evaluation Comments Received about the TLC Program

The evaluation conducted on the pilot round of the TLC Program indicates that this program can serve a valuable function throughout the region. Because many jurisdictions are facing tightening budgets, small projects often remain unfunded. Many respondents expressed support for this type of small-project technical assistance. Common themes identified during the evaluation are summarized below.

- Bringing Key Partner Agencies and Stakeholders Together
Most of the respondents discussed the ability of the TLC Program to gather partner agencies and stakeholders together to discuss a common subject. Several respondents said that conversations with partners would likely not have occurred had they initiated their project in house. The process of participating in a regional technical assistance program encouraged them to think regionally and include a variety of local, state, and regional partners in the project. Similarly, by participating in the TLC Program, some respondents were better able to organize their in-house coordination by making sure there was representation at meetings from all relevant departments. Finally, respondents said that they learned the value of involving department and agency partners, as well as the public, in the project initiation phase of their normal programming efforts. All respondents agreed that they learned more about the programs and projects of partner agencies during the technical assistance project timeframe.

- Pros and Cons of the Short Project Timeframes and Limited Budgets
Because it was necessary to complete the projects before the end of FY 2007, most projects were completed in approximately six weeks. Many respondents felt that the short timeframe available for completion of the pilot round of the technical assistance projects was beneficial. Some said it helped focus the projects on one or two important tasks, and that the process could not afford to be delayed by attention to minor details. Because of this, some felt the short timeframe helped produce tailored, meaningful results for the

localities. Conversely, some respondents said a longer timeframe for project completion would allow for a more in-depth review of policies and procedures for a locality, as well as time and energy left to incorporate a regional flavor in the projects. Additionally, respondents added that it was difficult to coordinate the schedules of all partners during the short project time. They said more time would allow for more contacts to be made with partners and greater levels of participation in the project. Many of those interviewed felt that the products could be improved through increasing the amount of assistance provided to each technical assistance project. Some commented that increased funding per project would allow for more meaningful projects and more fully developed products and conclusions.

▪ TLC Project Application and Selection Process

Some respondents suggested that applications would be more compelling and projects would be better if the TPB encourages a jurisdiction to collaborate with agency partners in developing the application for technical assistance. Along the same lines, it would be helpful to all partners if the TPB could articulate why some projects receive priority over others; this could simply mean clarifying the goals of the program with respect to project selection. Additionally, many agency partners asked to receive early information about applications received during the FY 2008 call for projects, so that they may check with their departments to be sure that the right people are involved in each project. This would also entail agency partners sharing information about past and current projects so that the TPB may select TLC technical assistance projects using the best information available.

▪ Perspectives of TLC Consultants

Several consultants who were interviewed said they believed future consultants would benefit from an overview of the TLC Program before beginning the project. Many said they learned about the overall goals of the program as they were conducting the projects, and they felt that future products could be improved through an overview of TLC concepts. One solution to this issue that would benefit both awardees and consultants would be to develop a short document that clearly articulates TLC Program goals and the desired grant outcomes, which would also assist jurisdictions in developing clear, compelling applications. Consultants also commented on the timeliness of the gathering of materials. Because these projects were completed in such a short timeframe, the consultants encouraged TPB staff to ask localities to gather necessary project background information, data, and relevant materials from partners before the initial project meetings.

▪ The TLC Website and Regional Clearinghouse

Many respondents had visited the TLC website and Regional Clearinghouse. While they generally found it to be a useful tool, some offered some suggestions for improvement to the site. One comment mentioned that additional search functionality for the whole site, like an index or keyword search, would be useful. Several respondents suggested updating the website on progress against a timeline for the technical assistance program during each round of funding. After each round of funding, it would be helpful to track each of the completed TLC projects and provide follow-up information as aspects of the projects are implemented. One participant said it would be helpful to include jurisdiction

staff contact information with each project so staff from other jurisdictions who are interested in the project or process could contact them with questions.

- Regional Applicability and Benefits

Many respondents commented on the regional applicability of the projects in which they were involved. Several commented that the products resulting from some of the technical assistance grants would be valuable to jurisdictions across the region facing similar issues. Other respondents discussed the regional appeal of having a database of current projects that address local issues from a regional perspective. Some respondents said the TLC Program represents an important regional program that will produce a valuable library of resources for the region as the TPB completes more technical assistance projects. A respondent from Charles County said their project demonstrated that a small, outer jurisdiction can get a lot out of the regional TLC Program. While Charles County would likely have completed this project in house within several years, they were able to use the TLC Program to quickly develop urban roadway standards that fit seamlessly into a current planning process. While many respondents said the projects generally had regional value, they felt some of the projects could have included language that strengthened the regional applicability of the projects and suggested that in future rounds, TPB staff should request that the regional component be more prominent.

FY 2008 Phase of the TLC Program

Based on the responses obtained during the evaluation and input from various TPB committees, staff has prepared several recommendations for the TPB to consider for the FY 2008 phase of the TLC Program. The TPB will be briefed at its October 17 meeting on the completed evaluation of the pilot round of the TLC Program and on the following draft staff recommendations for the next phase of the TLC Program. The TPB will be asked on October 17 to approve the attached amendments to the FY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program to implement the TLC Program for FY 2008.

TPB staff recommends the following refinements for the FY 2008 round of the TLC Technical Assistance Program:

- *Increase the number of projects.* The evaluations demonstrated a regional need for small projects that fill a gap in a process created by local funding limitations or that jumpstart a planning process and reduce time spent on a larger effort. For these reasons, TPB staff recommends supporting at least six location-specific projects under the Technical Assistance Program in FY 2008. An additional technical assistance project or projects will be possible due to the reduced costs of maintaining and updating the TLC Regional Clearinghouse website.
- *Encourage applicants to work with agency partners during the application stage.* Many interviewees believed that the project processes and deliverables could have been more effective if the applicant had developed the TLC project application in collaboration with other departments in their jurisdictions and partner transportation agencies potentially affected through the proposed project. TPB staff recommends that the application be

amended to include information about collaboration efforts during the development of the TLC application. Therefore, the application template will be revised to inquire about coordination with other entities in the application process.

- *Extend project timeframe.* Many participants interviewed said they felt their projects would have benefited from more time, potentially allowing the consultants to focus on key issues in greater detail. The FY 2008 call for projects will occur earlier in the fiscal year, allowing for project timeframes of about 10 weeks. This extended timeframe will allow for more in-depth analysis of issues, while keeping the projects focused and on the “front burner”, an attribute many participants felt was valuable.

TPB staff will revise the application used for the FY 2007 pilot round to include the recommendations above for the FY 2008 program. This application will be released in late October with a deadline of January 15, 2008. All applicants who previously applied are welcome to apply again. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to work with TPB staff in developing their applications. As during the FY 2007 pilot round, the TPB Technical Committee will be briefed on the call for projects and on the applications received. TPB staff will work with the TPB officers to develop a recommended list of projects for approval by the TPB at its February 20, 2008 meeting. TPB staff hopes to commence work on the projects in March 2008.

1. PLAN SUPPORT

H. TRANSPORTATION/LAND USE CONNECTION (TLC) PROGRAM

SAFETEA-LU stresses the importance of coordination between land use and transportation planning. This work activity was implemented as a pilot in November 2006. It created a clearinghouse to document national best practices as well as local and state experiences with land use and transportation coordination, and offered short-term technical assistance through consultant teams to local jurisdictions to advance their coordination activities. The technical assistance provided to a locality will be specified on a task order basis for the consultant teams and will be limited to \$20,000 per project.

~~This is a budget placeholder with a similar funding level as in FY 2007. In July 2007, after the demand for technical assistance is known and the efficacy of the pilot can be evaluated, it is anticipated that the work scope and budget will be revised.~~

In August and September 2007, the pilot round of the TLC Technical Assistance program was evaluated. The results were presented to the TPB and the Technical Committee in October 2007. Staff recommended that that the FY 2008 round of the TLC Technical Assistance Program be conducted in the same manner as the FY 2007 pilot round, with the following refinements:

- Fund at least six projects at a level of up to \$20,000 each. Reduced funding needs for the TLC Regional Clearinghouse and website relative to FY 2007 will allow for supporting an increased number of technical assistance projects.
- Provide staff support for five TLC Technical Assistance Projects to be conducted as part of the VDOT Multimodal Grant Program and for other projects where additional funding is provided by state or local agencies.
- Maintain and update the TLC Regional Clearinghouse website.
- Improve the FY 2007 application procedures in response to suggestions received from the evaluation of the FY 2007 pilot program.

Oversight:	TPB Technical Committee
Cost Estimate:	\$255,000
Products:	<u>Continuous revision and updating of the web-based clearinghouse of information on <u>national best practices</u> and experiences throughout the region, and technical assistance provided by consultant teams to localities that request services to advance their land use and transportation planning activities.</u>

Schedule:	Technical assistance September 2007-June 2008
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