

# Report on TPB Scenario Study Outreach Activities and Feedback Summary

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## Introduction

This report is designed to serve as an overview of recent TPB staff outreach activities related to the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study, including a summary of feedback received from participants and staff observations made during outreach events. It is intended to provide for the TPB and related committees a sense of how citizens, planning professionals, and community leaders around the region are reacting to the conclusions of the Scenario Study and the issues and concerns audiences raise when the study is presented. Our hope is that this information will inform discussions about strategies for implementing the regional goals reflected in the Scenario Study.

## Scenario Study Outreach Efforts

### **Evolution of the Outreach Program**

Public presentations about the findings of the Scenario Study began in 2004 and an initial phase of outreach continued through early 2006. These presentations explained the link between the Scenario Study and ongoing COG/TPB regional visioning efforts, detailed the process of developing alternative land use and transportation scenarios, and summarized the results of the study. This initial phase of outreach was primarily informational in nature and did not explicitly attempt to solicit and capture feedback on the study. An example of a typical PowerPoint presentation handout from an outreach forum is attached as Appendix C.

In Summer 2006, TPB public involvement staff developed an interactive component to the outreach program that allows audiences to construct their own alternative scenarios in response to the regional challenges identified in the presentation. Participants gather in small groups and are given a map of the National Capital Region showing political boundaries, major transportation corridors, and regional “activity clusters”. The groups are also given colored dot stickers representing regional employment and household growth between 2010 and 2030, and asked to address one of four regional challenges that contribute to travel congestion through their placement of the dots and drawn-in transportation improvements. Participants are asked to think about the entire region, not just their particular slice of it, even if they don’t know much about other parts of the metropolitan area; they are also reassured that their maps are not going to be posted for TPB review and they don’t have to be perfect. A version of this activity had been introduced at the April 2006 Community Leadership Institute and was modified to be “taken on the road” to outreach events.

In addition to the interactive component, staff developed a discussion guide for obtaining feedback about the Scenario Study and began incorporating a 15-30 minute discussion period at the end of outreach events. At some events a questionnaire has also been circulated to audience members in lieu of or as a supplement to the facilitated discussion.

The questionnaire is attached as Appendix B. Both the map activity and the discussion period arose from a desire to not only spread information about the Scenario Study, but to also gather input about the study and gauge interest in and support of regional strategies for addressing transportation challenges.

In October 2006 staff embarked on an expanded wave of outreach events, with the goal of reaching a broad range of the region's citizens by Summer 2007. In the subsequent months, TPB staff presented information about the Scenario Study at nearly 20 different events around the region, including 10 that featured the map activity and discussion. A list of outreach events is attached to this report as Appendix A.

### **Audience**

While the outreach of the past few months has certainly not been comprehensive in its coverage of the region, the effort has reached a diverse range of citizens in the region's inner and outer jurisdictions. Although the primary audience for this outreach effort has been interested citizens, most of the events have included participation by planning professionals and elected officials, and staff has in fact made a few presentations in the last several months expressly for planning staff and/or advisory committees. These presentations have been geared more toward making connections with local officials and planners and raising awareness of regional efforts, though feedback about the scenarios and even about particular transportation projects has been offered at such events, and has been compiled along with the input from citizens. The attendance and active participation by local planners and elected officials at outreach events has been a welcome contribution to the outreach process and is much appreciated.

### **Outreach Goals**

Staff is hopeful that after attending such an event, a resident of the region might be able to say the following:

- *I understand how land use trends contribute to regional transportation challenges.*
- *I understand the role of the TPB and COG in facilitating regional dialogue, highlighting regional challenges, and producing long-term regional transportation plans.*
- *I have had the opportunity to express my own opinions about how regional transportation challenges should best be addressed, suggest transportation projects that I think should be regional priorities, and provide input on how such efforts can be more beneficial and responsive to local communities.*
- *I have gained a foundation of information that will allow me to apply a more regional perspective when thinking about specific development or transportation projects in my locality.*

The last point has been identified by TPB members as particularly important to their efforts to implement local strategies that advance regional goals – the idea being to increase the capacity of the region’s residents to participate constructively in civic dialogue about regional growth and local projects.

## Summary of Comments/Feedback

In summarizing participant feedback from the outreach of the last several months, we tried to avoid including in this report observations that could rightly be placed under a heading of “Well, duh!” For instance, the statement that “The region’s citizens are concerned about the effects of increased densities” may be true and may provide important context, but may not do much to advance dialogue about regional land use and transportation challenges among those already immersed in these issues. Accordingly, the observations below may be a bit lengthier but our hope is that they are also more meaningful.

### **Citizens’ Approach to Visioning**

#### *Visioning Versus Forecasting*

In approaching the map exercise, as well as overall discussion about regional strategies, many outreach participants struggle to get past the perceived constraints of reality, be they fiscal, political, or otherwise, and really engage in expressing their personal vision for a better Washington Region. In the map exercise in particular, many participants tend to try to reflect things they have heard on the news about BRAC or other land use influences, and end up focusing on *predicting* what 2030 will look like rather than *envisioning* what they think 2030 should look like. Such points raised at outreach meetings have included the following:

- Funding for transportation improvements is tight and there is no reason to think it won’t be even tighter in the future.
- There are too many governmental entities at too many levels with influence on land use and transportation planning decisions in this multi-state metropolitan area for any regional strategies to ever gain traction.
- It is too complicated to predict, let alone influence, the decisions companies make about where to locate and the decisions individuals make about where to live.

While constraints cannot ever be completely ignored, it is easy for discussions about the future of the region to get bogged down in a seemingly endless listing of the reasons why things can’t change. But without a compelling vision, there is no impetus to overcome constraints.

Planning exercises such as the Scenario Study which reduce or eliminate mental constraints can help identify components of a regional vision or consensus. As regional

planning bodies, COG and the TPB could potentially do more to facilitate such unconstrained planning activities.

### *Regional Consensus?*

Scenario Study outreach presentations have taken place in various locations, at various times of day, and under various circumstances – as part of existing agendas of councils and groups or as stand-alone events. One might expect an equally varied set of opinions to be expressed by audiences at these different occasions, but on the contrary a common set of themes and even sentiments recurred from one to the next. At the very least, this lent itself to easier generalization for the purposes of this report. It may also indicate, however, that the notion of regional consensus is not as elusive as often thought. Unfortunately, consensus on regional challenges was much more apparent than consensus on solutions. A section toward the end of this report considers the few issues on which there were substantial differences among parts of the region.

## **Identifying Factors Underlying the Land Use Trends that Contribute to Travel Congestion**

At each outreach event featuring a facilitated discussion about the Scenario Study, TPB staff normally led off the conversation by asking participants if the study looks at the right issues – are the four regional challenges we see as contributing to travel congestion problems the right challenges to be addressing? Audiences generally accepted that the four factors described in the presentation are primary contributors to travel congestion, but they typically wanted to probe further the underlying causes of the regional land use trends identified. These include not only the reasons people choose to live where they do, but reasons why certain land use policy decisions are made to facilitate or discourage those choices. It can be taken as a sign of the sophistication of the audiences around the region that participants quickly grasped the land use – transportation relationship and wished to go deeper into the dynamics present in the region.

### *Housing Affordability and Housing Preferences*

Especially in the context of discussing the jobs/housing imbalances in the region, participants in outreach forums cited housing affordability as a primary driver of land use

“Some of us cannot afford to live in the city. I didn’t choose to live 70 miles away in VA because I prefer it. I live there because I got priced out of neighborhoods here. Until the region can come up with some way to fix the disparity between where I can afford to live and where I can earn a living wage, a lot of us are going to have to commute to feed ourselves.”

– Reader comment posted on *Washington Post* columnist Marc Fisher’s blog and reprinted in the *Post* on 5/8/07.

patterns that contribute to regional travel congestion. Even if households and jobs are in close proximity, participants asked, how can we be sure that the people working at those

jobs can afford to live in those houses, or conversely, that the people living in those houses have the skills necessary for those jobs? Many individuals expressed frustration that new infill housing developments seem to be almost exclusively luxury units that are out of reach to civil servants such as teachers and public safety employees.

Some participants disputed the notion that decisions people make about where to live even have that much to do with proximity to place of work, especially as the number of two-earner households has increased and average job tenure has decreased. At more than one outreach forum, participants discussed at length the question of how much the trend

<p>“I purposefully chose, with a decrease in my salary, to work closer to my home than otherwise. I won’t move to be closer to my job; I will pick a job closer to my home.”</p> <p>– From a Participant Questionnaire; 3/22/07 Outreach Event in Reston, Va.</p>
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of families moving to outer suburbs is a reflection of location preferences or simply a matter of affordability.

Although discussions of housing affordability almost inevitably led to discussions about density and the impacts of residential development, there appears to be something close to consensus among citizens that the ideal solution is to have various housing types that appeal to people in different life stages represented

in each locale. This could allow couples to stay in the same general area when they have children, and allow older adults to stay in the same area when their children move out and they want smaller, more accessible living arrangements.

*Quality and Accessibility of Public Services*

In the discussions we have had around the region about residential land use patterns, it does not take long for participants to cite school quality, public safety, and the performance and reliability of other public services as key factors influencing developers’ choices of where to build and citizens’ choices of where to live. These issues surfaced most frequently in discussions about the “Region Undivided” scenario and the potential for encouraging both commercial and residential development on the eastern side of the region. Participants at forums around the region, including in jurisdictions on the eastern side of the metropolitan area, raised concerns about how realistic it is to expect even a small shift in growth to the east without significant improvements in public schools and crime levels. Many expressed pessimism about the ability to reverse historical trends that have led to the imbalances in public service quality and economic growth in the region.

Some participants also noted that the trend toward consolidation of services and community amenities into large schools, parks, government service centers, and shopping centers has led to longer trips. Similar to the point above about making a mixture of housing types available in a small area, they suggested that a renewed focus on the neighborhood as a unit, with more facilities at a neighborhood scale, could allow for more walking trips and shorter auto trips.

### *Municipal Fiscal Motivations*

At some outreach meetings, participants cited municipal balance sheet considerations as a significant reason for shortages of housing in some of the region's jurisdictions, contributing to the overall regional jobs-housing imbalance. Because of an assumption that residential development is more of a drain on municipal services in relation to tax revenues in comparison with commercial development, local governments may strive for robust job growth while neglecting the provision of adequate housing for those workers. The assumption, then, is that they will find another place to live in the metropolitan area, in all likelihood further out from the region's core and regional job centers. The scarcity of housing created also has the effect of sustaining high residential property values, which also helps a municipality's fiscal health and obviates the need for increases in property tax rates. Stopping short of advocating that their own local governments set aside these policies, many forum participants nonetheless identified the intra-regional competition for job growth as a challenge to dealing with growth in a regional way.

As advocates for regionalism and forums for discussion, COG and the TPB cannot be expected to wield significant influence on the policies of local governments related to the above issues, but we can potentially be a source of information for municipalities in learning about innovative solutions and the experiences of others around the region and the nation. COG already plays a role in addressing the housing affordability challenge from a regional perspective and helping to provide localities with useful tools. A potential outgrowth of the Scenario Study could be the identification of additional tools or toolkits that would be useful to our local jurisdiction members. Participants in the outreach forums consistently expressed frustration with the parochialism that frequently guides land use and transportation planning decisions and indicated support of efforts to address these challenges in a comprehensive, regional manner.

### **Reception of Scenario Study Results**

The Outreach Presentation and the Scenario Study itself focus on scenario results in the form of transportation-related indicators. These include Average Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), Peak-Hour Congestion, and Transit Mode Share. As transportation planners, we tend to rely on the assumption that audiences will view a reduction in travel congestion as a positive, worthwhile goal. However, we have found that this assumption is not universally shared. Comments about the significance of study results have fallen largely into two categories: The study results are not compelling or at least not compelling enough to merit the perceived cost to make them happen; or the scenario results might be compelling but only if accompanied by more information about their impacts on non-transportation indicators like environmental quality.

*Perceived Significance/Desirability of Scenario Results*

TPB Staff Presenters have been careful when presenting the scenario results to emphasize that reductions in congestion due to the scenarios are not absolute in relation to current conditions, but rather simply in relation to the projected 2030 baseline. This baseline reflects transportation improvements already in the 2005 Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and land use projections as indicated by the Round 6 Cooperative Forecasts, and projects a significant deterioration in travel conditions by 2030. In other words, in terms of travel congestion, the scenarios don't make things better; they just make them "less worse."

Several forum participants seemed to be discouraged by the scenarios' level of impact, and it led to some individuals saying that the scenarios consequently needed to be more aggressive with land use and transportation changes in order to achieve "real" results. Others concluded from the Scenario Study that attempts to shift land use are simply not worth it, with the benefit of less congestion failing to outweigh the costs, especially the perceived detrimental impact on areas that are the targets for increases in density. Still others disputed the notion that limiting travel congestion should even be viewed as a positive result, since it may just encourage longer auto trips and a vicious cycle of further sprawl. In response, however, some noted that the burden of congestion may fall inequitably around the region, especially if it limits the accessibility of lower-income residents to jobs and services.

Also of note is that during the map exercise, many groups found themselves addressing more of the regional challenges identified in the presentation in addition to the one they were assigned. For instance, a group assigned to address the challenge "Not enough future development will be transit-accessible" may end up also discussing the "East-West Divide" challenge or other challenges and placing growth dots and transportation infrastructure accordingly. Implicit in this pattern is a desire for comprehensive strategies that take into account multiple factors and regional causes of congestion. Some participants went as far as to specifically suggest that the Scenario Study consider one or more composite scenarios, and postulate that the overall impact on travel congestion of a comprehensive approach would be magnified, with the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.

*Non-Transportation Measures of Success*

Other forum participants responded to the assertion that land use shifts are "not worth it" by focusing on other potential benefits of the scenarios beyond those dealing with travel conditions. Several individuals, especially planning professionals from around the region, noted that there are likely significant environmental benefits that would result from one or more of the scenarios. These could include reductions in auto emissions with attendant air quality and climatologic benefits, or reductions in impermeable surfaces with attendant water quality benefits. These participants encouraged TPB staff to make the scenario planning activities about more than just transportation indicators, expanding it to include broader measures of quality of life in the region even to the point of doing a

comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of one or more scenarios. Doing so could help link transportation and growth to other issues people are passionate about, such as global warming.

In the same vein, some participants also suggested that it would be useful to have more information about the 2030 baseline itself and what it represents not only as far as worsening travel conditions but also deterioration of other quality of life indicators. In these ways, the results of scenarios that shift land use patterns and transportation investment might be more compelling to the public and justify the commitment of political and financial capital for scenario implementation.

### **Discussing the Impacts of Concentrated Development/Redevelopment**

Again, while it is not particularly revelatory to state that the region's citizens are concerned generally about the impacts of density, we have been pleased to find that the presentation of the Scenario Study and the map activity have spurred discussion that goes beyond typical reactions to the ideas of concentrating development and encouraging infill redevelopment. The amount of knee-jerk "NIMBYism" expressed at outreach events has actually been surprisingly low.

Questions and comments by audience members often got right to the heart of the issue – what are the trade-offs that occur with increased density, and are there ways to magnify the positives of density, both in terms of regional goals and local quality of life, while minimizing the negatives, especially in terms of the impact on public infrastructure and services? Whether in regard to infill or "greenfield" development, citizens throughout the region expressed skepticism about the ability of local governments to "do density right." This skepticism had two primary facets.

#### *Skepticism about the Developer/Local Government Relationship*

Many participants indicated that they think the relationship between developers and local governments is unhealthily skewed. They see developers as having too much influence and tendencies to disregard the need for efforts to mitigate the impacts of dense development or to make promises they cannot or will not keep. At the same time, they see local governments as lacking the tools or the will to ensure that those promises are kept. On more than one occasion, citizens talked with disdain about assumptions made by developers regarding the reduction in auto travel that can be expected in compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented developments, and planners expressed frustration about the lack of good information and tools with which they can evaluate the validity of such assumptions.

#### *Skepticism about the Land Use/Transportation Connection*

The second aspect of this skepticism reflected citizens' understanding that many elements crucial to making density work are beyond the control of local planners and officials,

especially dealing with transportation. Citizens expressed frustration with what they perceive to be a lack of coordination between different levels of government in addressing land use and transportation for an area comprehensively so as to appropriately time development activity and infrastructure provision and make sure that impacts on existing residents are considered. Local planners and officials can do their best to ensure that the characteristics of a development project are appropriate for a community, but they are reliant upon transportation planners and providers, most often at the state and regional levels, to ensure that infrastructure and service are adequate and appropriate for the desired character of the land use. Likewise, transportation planners and officials may work to create a transportation network that serves a community well, but that network may fail if local land use decisions unexpectedly overwhelm it. Many participants were also emphatic in cautioning that land use strategies are no replacement for sensible transportation investment and should not be viewed as a panacea for eliminating congestion.

#### *Concerns about TOD and Transit Capacity*

Participants often talked about Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in similar terms, emphasizing the importance of timing and expectations. Several audience members said that they had no problem with TOD as a concept, but some said they opposed infill TOD because it will inevitably diminish transit service quality by overcrowding the system. Some said they opposed building new transit infrastructure as a rationale for further development because the demand created by the development will inevitably exceed the capacity created by the new infrastructure. One participant suggested further study of how much development can accompany new transit infrastructure without diminishing the overall level of service. A common theme was uncertainty that funding for expanding transit capacity would keep pace with a greater emphasis on TOD, leading to a situation where transit service is degraded to the point that people are forced back on to the roads.

#### *Concerns about Other Public Infrastructure*

Both citizens and public officials made comments at outreach meetings indicating their uncertainty about the ability of non-transportation infrastructure in localities to accommodate growth as well. Public services cited included utilities, schools, recreational facilities and open space. This was particularly true in inner suburban jurisdictions that see themselves as close to “build-out” stage, where it may be more difficult and more costly to build new schools, update utility infrastructure, and dedicate new open spaces in tandem with population growth from denser redevelopment. A councilmember in one such jurisdiction pointed out in particular the difficulty in finding large enough parcels of land for new schools that would meet modern standards for siting and design. Skepticism was also expressed about the ability of new development to bring in public revenue equal to the burden imposed on public services and infrastructure.

*General Attitude about the Inevitability of Growth*

Beyond the question of densification, several participants questioned the inevitability of growth in the region as a whole. Some disputed the projections, saying that a slowdown in growth is impending for various reasons. Others simply questioned the logic and feasibility of fitting that many more people in the region, wherever they actually end up. Individuals and in some cases entire groups expressed this challenge of growth assumptions by refusing to place all of the dot stickers they had been allocated, representing the projected 2010-2030 job and household growth. We let them know that this was certainly acceptable as part of the activity, but that they had to explain their reasons for doing so – especially whether their refusal to place all the dots represented a general dispute of the projections or a broad regional policy choice to markedly slow growth. In a lot of cases, participants who challenged the growth assumptions were refuted by fellow participants and effectively outnumbered when it came to reflecting a group consensus in the map activity.

In dealing with this subject, especially following the map activity, TPB staff tried to emphasize that the source of the growth projections is the Cooperative Forecasts, which use as a starting point local job growth projections, which have historically been accurate or even a bit low. Putting a damper on growth therefore implies one of two choices – accepting or even actively pursuing slower job growth, which runs counter to the traditional efforts of local governments and in particular their economic development departments, or choosing not to provide housing to balance the job growth that is expected, which the Scenario Study demonstrates would have significant negative consequences for regional travel congestion along with other negative impacts. Looking at the issue of regional growth from this perspective was in some cases quite revelatory for participants, and we have a sense that many left with a somewhat altered outlook on the regional context of local land use and transportation decisions.

“Just how much room is there for all of this growth?”

– Participant at 11/29/07  
Outreach Event in  
Rockville, Md.

In summary, most citizens who participated in our outreach meetings have not expressed outright opposition to increases in density, even in their immediate areas, but have expressed a lack of confidence in the ability of government to deal with it appropriately. They tend to view increased densities as necessitating *sacrifices* on the part of existing residents of an area or adjacent areas even though they recognize that density can have some benefits. A challenge might be to reframe the regional dialogue to be about the benefits or at least the trade-offs present, but that will require to some degree a restoration of trust. Planners and public officials similarly expressed frustration about their ability to coordinate growth planning among multiple levels of bureaucracy and political considerations.

## **Approaches to Transportation Investment**

We were pleased with the ability of the outreach program to get participants focused on transportation issues. Although we wanted to facilitate a broad discussion that touches on other challenges related to growth in the region, we were particularly interested in obtaining feedback that could be of use to the TPB in considering long range transportation plans and regional transportation goals and approaches for the future. Participant feedback included the following:

### *Circumferential Transportation Infrastructure*

A common theme among many participants in the outreach meetings was the identification of a need for more transportation infrastructure serving suburb-to-suburb trips that differ from the traditional outside-inside commute trips for which the transportation system is most oriented to accommodate. Solutions proposed by participants included both highway and transit corridors. Many proposed circumferential transit corridors (commonly referred to as “Purple Line” corridors), in some cases entirely circling the region in various alignments. Others proposed segments or entire loops of one or more additional “beltways”, including additional river crossings both northwest and south of the District of Columbia. Support for the Intercounty Connector as such a segment was by no means universal, however, especially in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties. Groups addressing the disconnect between employment and housing concentrations in the region often chose to concentrate more job growth in outer-tier counties and accordingly had a particular focus on suburb-to-suburb transportation needs. Many participants expressed nothing less than frustration and exasperation at the inability of decision-makers to improve circumferential infrastructure, though many acknowledged the difficulty in identifying appropriate corridors for such connections.

### *Accommodating Regional Cut-Through Traffic*

Many participants ascribed a major portion of the region’s transportation woes to traffic that neither originates nor terminates within the Washington Region but rather is forced to pass through it due to its location on the Northeast Corridor. Some called for transportation solutions that would reroute such traffic through the region in various ways, seeking in particular to avoid the Capital Beltway and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, with the U.S. 301 corridor being a popular target for upgrades. This tendency could be viewed as scapegoating by exercise participants and a desire to avoid consideration of the connection between the region’s travel congestion problems and its land use trends, but nonetheless expresses a valid concern about cut-through traffic on a regional scale. It may be useful to provide additional information to the public about the extent of the role such traffic plays in contributing to travel congestion in the region.

### *New/Alternative Transportation Modes*

Some individuals expressed a desire to broaden discussion about the region’s future transportation network beyond the traditional modes of rail and bus transit and the

automobile. On more than one occasion, participants incorporated into their own small-group scenarios increased use of ferries or water taxis on area waterways to alleviate road congestion. Other participants advocated aggressive pursuit at the regional level of alternative transit technologies such as monorail and even personal aircraft. Others emphasized the importance of preserving existing and securing additional dedicated rights-of-way to accommodate new infrastructure for current or future transportation modes.

#### *Emergency Preparedness*

Several forum participants in various locations emphasized the need for improvements to the transportation system in light of emergency preparedness needs, especially ease of evacuation of all or part of the metropolitan area. A handful of attendees advocated for regional focus on creating a transportation system that features parallel networks – if one link or one mode is rendered inoperable another link or mode would be able to accommodate the same travelers.

“It’s a big leap from . . . limited tourist-oriented [water transport] offerings to a full regional water transport service that locals could rely on to move around the region.”

– Steven Pearlstein writing about transportation on the region’s waterways in the *Washington Post*, 5/25/07

#### *Transit Service Priorities*

Many participants shared thoughts about specific aspects of the region’s transit network and their perception of the types of service emphasized or de-emphasized. Several expressed frustration about the quality and reach of the region’s commuter rail systems, and said they thought improvements in that area could have significant benefits in increasing accessibility and transportation choice in the region. Some audience members also said they thought the region’s bus systems are too focused on being feeder networks for rail stations and that more emphasis should be placed on connecting locations without rail service to each other to provide a transit alternative in such areas.

#### *Non-Peak Trips*

Although TPB research and study of regional travel patterns has increasingly focused on the phenomenon of congestion during non-peak times, the Scenario Study presentation and the thrust of the study itself is still focused on commutes from home to work and back. Both citizens and planners raised the issue of non-peak trips, especially trips for shopping and other activities on weekends, becoming an increasing part of the congestion picture in the region. Some suggested that using reductions in peak-period congestion as a measure of success may present an incomplete evaluation of a land use/transportation scenario.

*Variably-Priced Lanes/Toll Facilities*

Along with one audience that erupted in boos upon learning that the Intercounty Connector is included in the current CLRP, the only other Bronx cheers occurred in a few

“We need more mass transit, not Gucci HOT lanes for the plutocracy.”  
– From a Participant Questionnaire; 3/22/07 Outreach Event in Reston, Va.

locations at the mention of High-Occupancy/Toll (HOT) Lanes. Responses on this issue ranged from boos and indignant protest to ambivalence, and in some cases, vocal support. Many participants raised objections on the grounds of equity, calling HOT Lanes “Lexus Lanes” and saying that the region’s upper class should not be able to bypass congestion while others are forced to wait it out. While seeking to remain neutral, TPB presenters did attempt to answer questions about such facilities

and clarify some issues. In particular, it was apparent that for much of the public, consideration of the idea has not moved far beyond a negative gut reaction to the notion of paying for something that was previously free and already paid for by the public once through taxes. Discussion of possible benefits in the form of more extensive and/or more reliable transit service seemed to be new to most audiences and thought-provoking, but ultimately not persuasive.

*Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation*

Somewhat surprisingly, very few groups chose to draw bicycle and pedestrian facilities on their maps as part of the visioning activity. Some individuals did raise the issue, in many cases quite passionately, of the need for better accommodation of these modes around the region, especially in relation to land use changes. As densities increase, they pointed out, pedestrian and bicycle facilities become even more important, and are in fact crucial elements if impacts on traffic are to be minimized. Bringing mixed-use development to an area, in other words, doesn’t help unless people can walk from one use to the other. The fact that more groups did not indicate such accommodation as part of the map activity is probably more a reflection of scale, as it is difficult to draw sidewalks on a big map of the region. But it is also a reflection of how easy it can be to overlook small-scale improvements when looking at the region’s transportation needs, even though investment at that scale may be most crucial to achieving regional goals.

**Differences among Parts of the Region**

Reactions to the Scenario Study presentation and participation in the map exercise have actually been remarkably similar across different parts of the region. Participants tend to focus their thought and discussion on their own areas, but the issues that come up and the concerns that are raised are largely the same – none of the summary points listed above can be said to have come exclusively from one part of the region or another. But there are a few ways in which attitudes and conversations have been different from one place to another, and some of these items of note are listed below.

### *Transportation as Investment to Induce Growth rather than Mitigation in Response to Growth*

In most of the locations we visited, participants thought of the land use/transportation relationship primarily in terms of transportation improvements being made to *accommodate* growth or *mitigate* its impacts. Participants in the map activity usually place the dots representing growth as a first step and then think about where to draw in transportation improvements as a subsequent step. However, in Prince George’s County, where development activity has in many cases been slower than desired or taken on different characteristics than citizens viewed as ideal, participants tended to talk about transportation improvements as a way of *inducing* desired growth and *encouraging* particular kinds of growth – especially growth in well-paying employment opportunities and diverse retail and commercial service offerings. They looked at expanding transportation infrastructure as truly an *investment* in the future of the area, with some even speaking in terms of *capitalizing* on a major asset the eastern side of the region currently has – more affordable land. In contrast, citizens in most of the rest of the region have come to view transportation improvements, especially transit infrastructure, as catalysts for further unwanted growth.

### *Protected Areas*

One notable difference among parts of the region that became apparent during the map activity was the treatment of various natural or protected areas around the region. While federal parklands are indicated on the maps, there were other areas that groups paid attention to and avoided placing growth within, in particular natural sites and open spaces in their own areas. So for instance, in Montgomery County, most groups that went through the map activity avoided placing any growth within an area they identified as the Agricultural Reserve. But at outreach events in other parts of the region growth dots ended up all over this area. The simple explanation of this is that residents of one of the region’s jurisdictions are interested in protecting certain areas close to them, but may not be aware of the existence and location of similar areas in other jurisdictions on the other side of the region. But it also is demonstrative of how it can seem easy enough to plan a region’s growth “from 30,000 feet” but when it becomes a matter of avoiding a multitude of areas around the region that have been designated or planned for no or minimal development, the challenge becomes much more difficult. And participants obviously felt very strongly about such protected areas close to where they live.

### *Boundary Issues*

A final difference that was apparent as we conducted this program around the region was the consideration of planning and development activity outside the TPB region. This was especially apparent in Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland, which border the Baltimore Metropolitan Council’s planning area. Participants in these areas sometimes expressed frustration with the fact that the presentation and map activity along with the planning reach of the TPB are largely

confined to the COG/TPB planning area, when they feel that development activity and job growth in Carroll, Howard, and Anne Arundel Counties could have tremendous impacts on traffic and development pressures in their areas. This reinforced the idea that some issues require looking beyond even the vast TPB area to gain an adequate understanding.

### **Implementation Measures – Discussing the TPB’s Role**

Following presentations of the Scenario Study results to various audiences, discussions often focused on the role the TPB intends to play in implementing any policy initiatives that stem from study findings. The primary purpose of this outreach effort was to obtain feedback that might provide direction for a next phase of the Scenario Study, as well as point to options for implementation measures that the TPB and COG could initiate in the meantime. Current and potential avenues for TPB effort that came up in outreach meetings included the following.

#### *Communicate a Cohesive Message about Regional Challenges Related to Growth*

COG and TPB members, other public officials, planning professionals, and even interested citizens concerned about the future of the region, have expressed during this process a desire for COG and the TPB to get the word out about growth and its implications. As regional planning bodies with well-established and historically accurate techniques for projecting growth and related indicators, COG and the TPB bring some credibility to the growth discussion that can help public officials, planners, and citizen advocates make the case for local implementation strategies that help address regional challenges. While there may be opportunities to do more, especially in reaching broader audiences through media such as the Web, the current outreach effort focused on the Scenario Study has been a large step forward in spreading a consistent message about regional growth.

#### *Advocate for More Funding for Transportation Improvements*

Most if not all participants expressed frustration about the availability of money for transportation improvements, and many not already familiar with the TPB and its advocacy for transportation funding asked what was being done at the regional level to secure more funds for this region’s transportation needs. One possible observation that could be made from the results of the map activity is this: In most cases, participants’ visions for a better future for the Washington Region involve more mobility and more connectivity, facilitated by much more transportation infrastructure. The most daunting challenge for elected officials has always been how to balance citizens’ desires with available resources and competing priorities, but it would not be too much of a stretch to conclude that part of the feedback from this outreach effort is a clear call for not only wiser but more transportation spending. As such, a renewed effort by the TPB in advocacy for more funding could be warranted.

*Achieve Regional Consensus on Needed Land Use and Transportation Strategies*

Achieving consensus about regional challenges is one thing, but achieving consensus about how to address those challenges is another thing entirely. There seems to be a latent desire among the public for a unified regional approach, at least inasmuch as participants complain about individual local jurisdictions failing to cooperate or even working at cross purposes when it comes to land use and transportation planning. It is still largely unclear what potential exists for regional consensus about implementation steps, but we see this outreach effort and this report as steps toward identifying possible areas of agreement and opportunities for regional initiatives.

*Use Transportation Dollars to Incentivize Desired Land Use Patterns*

In recent years when the TPB has considered possible options for addressing regional land use and transportation challenges, the discussion has tended to focus on how transportation investment can be targeted in such a way as to encourage certain land use patterns and discourage others, on the basis of their impact on regional challenges like travel congestion. One result of this discussion was the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program initiated by the TPB in January 2007. The TLC Program assists communities in improving transportation/land use coordination, through project-specific technical assistance and the sharing of information among regional leaders as they seek to make communities more vibrant and livable. Outreach presentations since January 2007 included mention of the TLC Program, and participants generally indicated support for a regional role in aiding and facilitating the kinds of projects the TLC Program seeks to promote.

*Develop Regional Tools to Assist Local Governments in Implementing Growth Strategies*

In addition to the TLC Program, is there assistance that COG and the TPB can provide to localities as they struggle to deal with the complex issues surrounding growth? It is clear from the feedback summarized above that the challenges are broad and include topics like housing affordability, provision of public services and amenities, and municipal

“We need analysis of implementation strategies, i.e. tax structures, public education, land use reforms, and [transportation agency] reforms”  
– From a Participant Questionnaire; 3/22/07 Outreach Event in Reston, Va.

financial constraints. The TLC Program Website already includes a regional clearinghouse for information about coordination of land use and transportation planning, and COG and the TPB have produced several other documents intended to serve as resources for local governments on these issues and others. One possibility at the regional level would be to focus on assembling these resources and others into a regional toolbox, along with identifying potential gaps in the region’s best practices knowledge.

*Expand and/or Refine Scenario Study Activities*

At a minimum, outreach audiences have provided many ideas for future Scenario Study activities. Based on this feedback, four different directions for further analysis have been identified:

- Drill Down to the Community and Project Level  
Even at early stages of the Scenario Study, members of the public have expressed a desire to use the study to “drill down” and analyze the local impacts of various transportation and land use scenarios. This could include better visualization of scenario impacts at the community level. Some individuals have also said they would be interested to see a sensitivity analysis that could indicate the effects of specific transportation projects on accessibility and congestion. Are there particular transportation projects that would make things worse? Are there others that seem to be absolutely crucial elements in making a land use scenario feasible in a community? A next step for the Scenario Study could include identification of places where small-scale circulation improvements are crucial to implementation of desired land use patterns, and funding of planning for these improvements through the TLC Program.
- Non-Transportation Measures of Success  
Audiences have shown a clear interest in learning about how alternative future land use and transportation scenarios would affect other quality of life indicators like air and water quality, and other livability measures. Some of this kind of analysis has already taken place as part of the Scenario Study, and it may simply be a matter of communicating these results to the public in an accessible way.
- More/Different Transportation Options  
The “Approaches to Transportation Investment” section above includes many comments and suggestions that could be incorporated into new or modified transportation scenarios. One frequent comment was that the Study needs to incorporate additional road infrastructure in one or more scenarios.
- Combine Elements of Multiple Scenarios  
Finally, many participants indicated that none of the scenarios presented were by themselves compelling visions for the future, but that a scenario that combined the strategies represented in each could be something behind which they could rally.

#### *Improve the Process for Arriving at Regional Transportation Priorities*

Another possible outcome of this outreach effort could be changes to the manner in which transportation projects are identified and prioritized in the region. Many of the comments and concerns expressed at outreach forums point to the idea of a regional prioritization process that would involve consideration of broader factors in evaluating transportation projects, including where a project fits in the context of addressing the regional challenges identified in the Scenario Study presentation. Several participants also said that improvements are necessary in how the public is consulted during the process of identifying transportation needs. An undercurrent to many of these comments was a deep cynicism about the willingness of transportation implementing agencies to take into account citizen wishes and visions for the future.

Ultimately, the TPB's strongest influence on the future of the Washington Region is through the CLRP. Many audience members picked up on that fact and asked how the CLRP process can be used to shape a future superior to one that awaits if current trends hold. This is without a doubt a significant challenge for the TPB, but it seems to be a challenge that people want the TPB to face in a serious manner.

*Improve Public Confidence in Land Use and Transportation Planning Efforts*

Based on the experience presenting the Scenario Study and facilitating discussions about land use and transportation planning around the region, it is apparent that there has been an erosion in public confidence in government to effectively manage growth. This worrisome trend has multiple causes and cannot be reversed overnight. But at the very least, our hope is that through the Scenario Study and related outreach activities, we have demonstrated that the region's leaders have an understanding of the complexity of the challenges facing the region and a genuine interest in getting input from the public on how to address them.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Calendar of Scenario Study Outreach Events

#### TPB “What If” Outreach Meetings

- Outreach Presentations in 2006:
  - March 14, Action Committee for Transit (ACT), Silver Spring, MD
  - April 24, Montgomery County League of Women Voters, Wheaton, MD
  - April 29, TPB Community Leadership Institute, COG Offices
  - October 24, Dulles Area Transportation Association, Loudoun County
  - October 28, TPB Community Leadership Institute, COG Offices
  - November 28, Bowie City Council Work Session, Bowie, MD
  - November 29, Montgomery County Executive Building, Rockville, MD

#### 2007 Events

- Tuesday, January 2, 8:00- 9:00 am  
The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce  
Parking and Transportation Committee (monthly meeting)  
Requested by Chamber CEO Ginanne Italiano.  
(Presentation by Darren Smith and John Swanson with Q&A; no interactive component.)
- Wednesday, January 3, 2:00 – 3:30 pm  
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission–Montgomery Co.  
Presentation for the Community Planning Staff  
MNCPPC Silver Spring Office  
Requested by Sandra Tallant, Planner Coordinator, Community-Based Planning Division,  
M-NCPPC.  
(Presentation by Darren Smith and John Swanson with Q&A; no interactive component.)
- Tuesday, January 30, 7:00 pm  
Joint Meeting of the Citizen Advisory Boards for the Montgomery County Regional  
Service Centers  
Montgomery County Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe St, Rockville  
Organized by Natalie Cantor, Director, Mid-County Regional Center  
(TK Welp, a participant at our April Community Leadership Institute, put us in touch with  
Natalie Cantor, who expressed an interest in organizing this event and inviting the county  
executive and CAO.)
- Tuesday, February 13, 11:00 am  
Montgomery County Council meeting  
(Requested by Mike Knapp and other council members. Presentation by Ron Kirby with  
Q&A; no interactive component.)
- Wednesday, February 28, 7:00 – 9:00 pm  
Stand-Alone Event Sponsored by the Democratic Central Committee of Prince George’s  
County  
4725 Silver Hill Road  
Suitland, MD 20746  
(Organized and requested by Terry Speigner, a participant in the April Community  
Leadership Institute)

- Thursday, March 1, 1:30  
National Capital Planning Commission  
(Requested by Julia Koster. Just a presentation by Ron Kirby with Q&A; no interactive component.)
- Wednesday, March 7, 1:30 – 3:30 pm  
Leadership Alexandria: Transportation Day  
Board Room of McLaughlin Investments  
1421 Prince Street, Suite 400  
Alexandria, Va. 22314.  
Contact: Bob McCoy  
(This event was postponed from Feb 14 due to snow. Nancy Belmont, a participant at our April Community Leadership Institute, recommended us for this session. It was closed to the general public.)
- Thursday, March 22, 7:00 – 9:00 pm  
Stand-Alone Event Sponsored by the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations  
Sunrise Valley Elementary -- School Cafeteria  
10824 Cross School Road  
Reston, VA 20191  
Organized by Merrily Pierce, Supervisor Hudgins' office, and John Jennison, Federation President  
(Hosted by TPB Chair Cathy Hudgins and the Federation.)
- Tuesday, April 17, 7:00 – 9:00 pm  
Stand-Alone Event Sponsored by the Alexandria Federation of Civic Associations, Old Town Civic Association, Upper King Street, and *In My Opinion*  
Nannie J. Lee Center Exhibit Hall  
1108 Jefferson Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Requested and organized by Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, member of MWAQC and RMAS-JTWG
- Monday, May 14, 8:30 – 10:00 am  
Frederick Area Committee on Transportation (FACT)  
Winchester Hall  
12 East Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
Arranged by Bob Smariga, a participant at our April 2006 Community Leadership Institute
- Wednesday, May 23, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm  
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission–Prince George's County.  
Presentation for Long-Range Planning Staff  
M-NCPPC Upper Marlboro Office  
Arranged by John Mataya  
(Presentation by Darren Smith and John Swanson with Q&A; no interactive component.)
- Saturday, June 2, 10 am – 12 pm  
Montgomery County East County Citizens Advisory Board: Transportation Forum  
(Presentation by John Swanson with Q&A. Forum included presentations by County Council Chair Marilyn Praisner, DPWT (Art Holmes) and SHA.
- Monday, June 18, 9:15 – 10:15 am  
Prince William County Mobility Committee

County Planning Office  
5 County Complex Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22192  
Requested by Ray Utz  
(Presentations on the Cooperative Forecasts by Greg Goodwin and on the Scenario Study by Darren Smith with Q&A; no interactive component.)

- Saturday, June 23, 9 am – 2 pm  
TPB Community Leadership Institute  
COG Training Center  
777 North Capitol St., NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(Scenario Study presentations and the mapping activity were one component of the CLI Saturday program)

#### **Participating TPB Staff**

Interactive presentations have been conducted by John Swanson, Darren Smith, and Sarah Crawford. Ron Kirby, Bob Griffiths, Wendy Klancher, and former staff member Jill Locantore have also presented information about the Scenario Study to various groups since 2005. Beth Newman assisted in the compilation of citizen feedback for this report.



**Appendix B: Scenario Study Outreach Questionnaire****QUESTIONNAIRE****“WHAT IF THE WASHINGTON REGION GREW DIFFERENTLY?”*****LAND USE Macro Issues:***

The TPB study is based on a few key regional challenges—The increasing distances between jobs and housing, the east-west regional divide, and the need to use the land around transit stations more efficiently.

- Are these the right challenges to be thinking about?
- Are any key challenges missing?

***LAND USE Micro Issues:***

- If the land use scenarios examined in the study were actually implemented, how would that affect where you live and work?

***TRANSPORTATION Macro Issues:***

The study has looked at various packages of new transit and is currently in the process of studying express toll lanes.

- How do you think the transportation focus of the region needs to change to accommodate future growth?

***TRANSPORTATION Micro Issues:***

- What specific transportation projects (especially in your area) do you think are crucial right now or in the future to accommodate growth?



**Appendix C: Scenario Study Outreach Typical PowerPoint Handout**

Following is an example of the PowerPoint presentation used at Scenario Study outreach events. This particular presentation was used at an event in Alexandria on April 17, 2007. In addition to variations in a few slides that are localized to each area and condensed versions for events with time constraints, other modifications have been to the presentation over time. This example represents the most recent version of the presentation for a full program that includes the interactive component.