MEMORANDUM

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Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County

TO: Transportation Planning Board

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

DATE: July 21, 2004

SUBJECT: TPB Public Comments

       In February the project submissions for the Conformity Analysis of the 2004 CLRP and FY 2005-2010 TIP were released for public comment. Over the course of an extended comment period, more than 2,500 comments were received. In an effort to provide timely and convenient access to comments for Board members and the general public, TPB staff sorted, counted and scanned all comments and posted them on COG's web-site. Following the comment period, some concerns were expressed that TPB staff failed to separate form letters from individual, unique comments and that a lack of useful organization hindered viewing the numerous comments.

       TPB staff asked for suggestions on ways to better organize the website to facilitate viewing of large numbers of public comments. With guidance provided by the Citizen Advisory Committee, TPB staff is developing a new online public comment module. Persons submitting comments will be encouraged to use an enhanced form on COG's web-site. The form will allow users to indicate whether they are submitting comments on behalf of an individual, a business, a non-government organization, or a government body or representative. The form will also ask users to indicate the nature of their comments, e.g. "for," "against," or "other". This should minimize errors of mis-classification. In addition to a plain-text comment field, people will have an option to upload an electronic file in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format to be associated with their comments. Comments will be read and analyzed by TPB staff and then posted on the web. Comments will be listed by position and then by government, organizations, businesses and individuals. Visitors to the web-site will be able to sort comments by date, name or jurisdiction. TPB staff will also have the ability to create spreadsheets to analyze incoming comments.

       TPB staff will continue to accept comments submitted via mail, fax and email. These comments will be sorted, scanned and posted in batches on the same page but will not be included in the sortable comment lists. The new module will be functional by the September TPB meeting, in time for the expected release of the 2004 CLRP and FY 2005-1020 TIP.