

visualize2045

A LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

APPENDIX I

Report on Phase 2 of Public Outreach: Public Forums and Open Houses

October 2018 **DRAFT**



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

REPORT ON PHASE 2 OF PUBLIC OUTREACH: PUBLIC FORUMS AND OPEN HOUSES

September 2018 **DRAFT**

ABOUT VISUALIZE 2045 & THE TPB

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. It identifies and analyzes all regionally significant transportation investments planned through 2045 to help decision makers and the public “visualize” the region’s future.

Visualize 2045 is developed by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for metropolitan Washington. It is responsible for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the metropolitan area. Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia, 24 local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies. The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

CREDITS

Editor: John Swanson

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

TITLE VI NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations prohibiting discrimination in all programs and activities. For more information, to file a Title VI related complaint, or to obtain information in another language, visit www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination or call (202) 962-3300.

El Consejo de Gobiernos del Área Metropolitana de Washington (COG) cumple con el Título VI de la Ley sobre los Derechos Civiles de 1964 y otras leyes y reglamentos en todos sus programas y actividades. Para obtener más información, someter un pleito relacionado al Título VI, u obtener información en otro idioma, visite www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination o llame al (202) 962-3300.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW	1
FORUM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION	1
Overview of the Forums	1
Forum Preparation and Implementation	3
Warm-up Activities	4
Post-it Note Exercise	4
Live Polling	5
THEMES FROM FORUM DISCUSSIONS	6
General Observations	6
Themes Related to the Seven Endorsed Initiatives	7
Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together	7
Expand Bus Rapid Transit Regionwide	8
Move More People on Metrorail	9
Provide More Telecommuting and Other Options for Commuting	10
Expand the Express Highway Network	11
Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit	12
Complete the National Capital Trail	13
ASSESSMENT OF THE FORUMS	13
OPEN HOUSES	14
NEXT STEPS	15

OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2018, the Transportation Planning Board conducted 12 public forums around the region in which more than 300 residents shared their hopes and concerns about the region's transportation future. At these events, discussion focused on how the region should move forward with implementing the seven initiatives that the TPB endorsed in December 2017 and January of 2018. In the fall, the TPB hosted three open houses to provide the public with an opportunity to learn about the contents of the draft plan.

This report documents how the forums were designed and implemented and provides a summary of the input received from participants. It also summarizes the open houses that concluded public outreach activities for Visualize 2045.

FORUM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region that is scheduled for final approval in October 2018. Public outreach has been integrated into the development of Visualize 2045 over a two-year period in calendar years 2017 and 2018.

Phase I Outreach, which was conducted in 2017, was designed to “cast a wide net” and obtain input from a large number of people about high-level concerns and interests. During Phase I, the following activities were accomplished or initiated:

- Branding and Identity (Winter-Spring 2017) – The name “Visualize 2045” and a graphic identity were selected.
- Website and Newsletter (Spring 2017 through Fall 2018) – An electronic newsletter and a new website were developed. These core communications vehicles have been used to regularly share information throughout the development of the plan.
- Public Input Survey (Summer-Fall 2017) – Staff conducted a survey to obtain information about public attitudes toward transportation in the region. The survey was intended to “take the pulse of the region” by getting a general sense of the public's transportation priorities, concerns and ideas. The survey also helped to acquaint residents with the TPB and with Visualize 2045. Two approaches were used to gather feedback: One method reached a geographically representative sample through a randomized mailing, and the other reached out to all residents of the region through public events, social media, and other communications. In total, more than 6,000 people completed the survey.

Phase II Outreach in 2018 was designed to “dig deeper” by engaging the public in discussion. Phase II activities include a series of public forums that were conducted in the spring of 2018 and open houses which are scheduled for the fall. The public forums are the primary subject of this report.

Overview of the Forums

When the TPB endorsed the seven initiatives at the end of 2017, it provided a unique opportunity for regional planners to engage the public in a discussion about the direction our transportation plans

should take. For the first time, the TPB decided that its long-range plan, in the form of “Visualize 2045,” would include unfunded aspirational initiatives – ideas we would like to fund, not simply the things that we are likely to fund. The open-endedness of this new aspirational element gave the TPB the chance to ask the public what direction that think we should take.

Staff decided to conduct public forums that would be heavily focused on small-group discussions throughout the region. At these sessions, TPB staff representatives asked residents to “visualize” our transportation future with a focus on the seven initiatives that were endorsed. The primary purpose of the forums was to obtain information about how the public believes we might implement these ideas.

The TPB’s endorsed initiatives comprise the following topics:

- Regional land-use balance optimization
- Regionwide bus rapid transit and transitways
- Metrorail capacity improvements
- Employer-based travel demand management policies
- Regional express travel network
- Completion of the National Capital Trail
- Pedestrian and bicycle access to high-capacity transit.

To explain the seven endorsed initiatives, TPB staff developed an online presentation using a GIS story map. A story map uses text, maps, illustrations, and other graphics to explain and map complex data and information. The story map was used as a live presentation tool at the forums and was also made available on the Visualize 2045 website: visualize2045.org. The outreach team decided to avoid “information overload” at the forums, limiting the handout materials to a printed brochure that explained each of the seven initiatives.

The forums typically lasted two hours and followed a common format. Following opening presentations, participants used their mobile phones to answer questions about their travel patterns and their opinions about transportation. Using Poll Everywhere software, the participants’ answers were instantaneously tallied in graphs that were projected on a screen. This polling helped to provide a baseline for understanding who was in the room and warmed up participants for group discussions. The answers to the polls also provided the basis for identifying those initiatives that would be more extensively discussed in small groups.

The majority of time at the forums was devoted to group discussions at four tables where participants had the chance to share their experiences, hopes, and concerns. A facilitator was assigned to each table to lead discussion, while a scribe took notes. At three of the four tables, discussions focused on a single, specific initiative. At the fourth table, the four initiatives that were not covered at the other tables were discussed. Discussion periods were limited to 15-minute periods. At the end of each period, participants were asked to move to another table and another topic. Over the course of three 15-minute periods, everyone had the opportunity to provide comments at three tables on a variety of topics.

The qualitative feedback elicited from the forums has been summarized in the “findings” section of this report and will also be reflected in the public involvement chapter/appendix of the long-range plan document. In addition to providing this focused input, the forums served to raise public awareness of the TPB and the regional planning process.

Forum Preparation and Implementation

Of the 12 forums, nine were conducted in the evenings at various locations throughout the region. The other three forums included special sessions for the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee, as well as an online/virtual forum that was hosted via WebEx.

Forum	Venue	Date
Frederick, Maryland	Thomas Johnson High School	April 11, 2018
College Park, Maryland	College Park Airport Operations Building	April 18, 2018
La Plata, Maryland	Charles County Government Center	April 25, 2018
Rockville, Maryland	Montgomery County Executive Offices	April 26, 2018
Washington, DC	COG Offices	May 1, 2018
Arlington, Virginia	Central Library	May 2, 2018
Fairfax, Virginia	Providence Community Center	May 8, 2018
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee	COG Offices	May 10, 2018
Access for All Advisory Committee	COG Offices	May 10, 2018
Leesburg, Virginia	Loudoun County Government Center	May 16, 2018
Woodbridge, Virginia	Prince William County Government Center	May 23, 2018
Online Forum	N/A	June 6, 2018

In addition, comments and feedback were solicited online via visualize2045.org.

The TPB enlisted the help of a consultant, Johnson, Mirmiran and Thompson, Inc. (JMT), to assist with designing, planning, and implementing/facilitating the forums. JMT and their subconsultant, PRR, Inc., worked closely with TPB staff throughout all stages of the public forum process to ensure that all tasks were completed within the short timeframe allotted for hosting the forums and collecting feedback.

To promote the forums, TPB staff posted the dates and locations on the visualize2045.org website, sent email blasts to the Visualize 2045 distribution list, and posted forum information and reminders on the TPB Facebook and Twitter accounts. The TPB also leveraged contacts among elected officials and jurisdiction staff, as well as members of the CAC and AFA, to help promote the forums and the opportunity to participate.

The project consultants developed distribution lists for each forum using website research. In total, consultant staff pulled together over 3,500 email addresses to send English and Spanish forum flyers to in each of the nine evening forums. Typical recipients included, but were not limited to:

- County and City leadership (mayors, clerks, council members) and department staff (Aging, Disability, Communications, Planning, Transportation, Social Services, etc.)
- Community, homeowner, and civic associations

- Advocacy and special interest groups (transportation, environmental, disability, aging, racial, cultural, social, ped/bike, etc.)
- Community and social institutions (libraries, senior centers, community centers, YMCAs, large churches, food pantries, etc.)
- Economic and business development group/departments
- Local news/media

Emails were sent 1-2 weeks ahead of each forum and again 1-3 days prior to the events as a reminder. The messages asked each recipient to forward the forum flyer and information to their distribution lists, post the event on their website, calendar, and/or social media accounts, and to print and post the flyers in their community hubs/places of business to help promote the events.

In addition, staff sent “Ambassador Kits” to the TPB, Technical Committee, and Citizens Advisory Committee members which provided ready-to-use messages – sample emails, tweets, etc. – that could be easily tailored and forwarded to organizations and individuals who may have been interested in attending or knowing about the forums.

Warm-up Activities

While the main vehicle for obtaining input was small-group discussion, a couple of activities at the forums were designed get attendees thinking about issues and opportunities. Input from those activities is summarized below.

POST-IT NOTE EXERCISE

Upon arrival at the evening forums, attendees were asked to write on post-it notes about what they currently like about transportation in the region and how they would like to see transportation in the region improved. The notes were then stuck on a wall for everyone to see, and common themes were tallied and documented in follow-up to each forum. Most respondents’ comments were locally oriented, but there were some regional commonalities:

What do you like about transportation in our region?

- Many participants favorably noted the region’s multi-modal transit options, like buses and Metro. They wrote that in many places, good alternatives to driving are available. But, some cautioned, these options are only viable when they are functioning reliably.
- Appreciation for the availability of pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure was noted in most jurisdictions.

How would you like to see transportation in our region improved?

- Comments frequently highlighted the need for more and better public transit, especially Metrorail. Other post-it notes called for improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure:
 - Metro – Comments called for more connections, more frequent trains, more weekend trains, and train improvements.
 - Pedestrian/Bicycle - Safer trails (on and off road), more options, and more trail connections were cited as improvements that participants wanted to see.
- Participants also wrote that they would like to see expanded bus schedules and they wanted buses to stay on schedule.

LIVE POLLING

After the opening presentations, staff conducted a quick poll of attendees. Using their mobile phones, participants answered seven questions that gauged who was in the audience and their transportation habits and experiences. Poll Everywhere software instantaneously tallied the participants' answers in graphs that were projected on a screen. The common/majority answers were:

1. *How did you get to tonight's meeting?*
"Drove alone" was the number one answer, while "carpooling" was second.
2. *From what you already know about these initiatives, which of them are you most interested in? (choose 2)*
"Bring jobs and housing closer together" was the first choice, followed by "Expand bus rapid transit regionwide."
3. *How do you usually travel to work or school?*
Again, "drive alone" was the most common response.
4. *How long does your one-way commute typically take?*
Over half said their one-way commute was less than 30 minutes.
5. *I am generally satisfied with the transportation options in my daily life.*
Overall, most participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel satisfied with the transportation options in their daily life.
6. *25 years from now, how will transportation options compare to today?*
Slightly more than half of participants felt that there will be more transportation options in 25 years.
7. *Which factors have the greatest influences on the travel choices you make every day? (choose 2)*
"Travel time" was the number one influence on participant's travel choices, followed closely by "Reliability."

THEMES FROM FORUM DISCUSSIONS

The forums focused on group discussions at tables where participants had the chance to share their experiences, hopes, and concerns. Each forum typically had four tables with discussions occurring concurrently. A facilitator at each table led discussion, while a scribe took notes.

Based upon the answers at each forum to polling question #2 above (“Which initiatives are you most interested in?”), staff at each forum selected single topics to be discussed at three of the tables. The fourth table combined the four remaining topics that were not covered in the other discussions. Across all the forums, the following three topics were most commonly the subject of single-topic discussions: Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together; Expand Bus Rapid Transit Regionwide; Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit.

Discussion periods were limited to 15-minute periods. At the end of each period, staff blew a horn and asked the participants to move to another table to discuss a different topic. Over the course of three 15-minute periods, everyone had the opportunity to provide comments at three tables on a variety of topics.

Over the course of a typical forum, three rounds of discussions were held at four tables. Some forums that were less well-attended featured fewer discussions and/or tables. Nonetheless, notes from all the sessions indicate that more than 120 separate discussions were held. Staff has summarized those discussion notes and grouped them into key themes.

General Observations

Across the discussions at all 12 forums, some overarching themes can be identified:

- ***The concepts are familiar.*** Participants quickly grasped the concepts underlying the seven initiatives and, in many cases, they indicated they have daily experience with them. They seemed to understand that to a large extent, the power of these ideas lies in their very practicality and familiarity.
- ***There are things we can do right now.*** Many participants expressed frustration that progress is not happening fast enough. In every session, people identified specific facilities that should be built, and they identified improvements, such as operational changes, that could be implemented relatively quickly.
- ***Good ideas can be combined for greater impact.*** Discussion groups invariably included suggestions related to other initiatives. For example, transit discussions often included ideas about pedestrian access improvements. Inherently, participants understood that the initiatives are most effectively implemented in combination with each other.
- ***Equity and balance are major concerns.*** Many participants expressed concern that some communities are being left behind. Some are worried about affordable housing and gentrification, and the acute transportation challenges that low-income people face. Others emphasized that we need to pay attention to the specific needs of all corners of region. For example, in some outlying locations, participants noted that telecommuting is not viable because broadband internet service is not available.

- ***We need to think more “outside the box.”*** At some sessions, participants were critical of the TPB’s seven initiatives, suggesting they were simply repackaged old ideas that were evidence of outmoded thinking. But among those participants who broadly supported the initiatives, there were calls for regional leaders to start thinking in a more visionary sense, by proactively anticipating a world in which technology and other changes will call for bold solutions.

Themes Related to the Seven Endorsed Initiatives

The following key points have been distilled from conversations at the forums related to specific initiatives. These findings identify what people would like to see in the future and what they are concerned about.

BRING JOBS AND HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER

People would like to see:

- ***Vibrant communities, more options for travel.*** Forum participants seemed to understand the intrinsic value of Activity Centers, describing a desire for a sense of community and economic opportunity. Participants also spoke fluidly about the transportation benefits of Activity Centers. They said that living and/or working in centers would provide more opportunities to walk and bike and to use transit.
- ***Diversity on many levels.*** In the future, many participants said, Activity Centers should provide a variety of options to a wide array of people for housing and employment. They expressed support for economic, ethnic, racial and generational diversity.
- ***Balanced growth within the region.*** At forums throughout the region, attendees said they would like to see a more balanced regional approach to growth. They called out the need for a better east-west balance, particularly with job growth. They said Activity Centers along corridors should be mutually supportive. And they recognized the need to coordinate growth across jurisdictional borders.

They are concerned about:

- ***Affordability was a frequently cited concern.*** Most discussions on this initiative began with the topic of affordability. Participants noted that new development near transit was often unaffordable for middle-class families, including teachers and first-responders. For established communities, some spoke about the insidious pressures of gentrification.
- ***Transportation connections are still missing.*** Participants noted that too many Activity Centers lack transportation options. Particularly in the outer jurisdictions they expressed concerns that in some cases, plans for high-capacity transit were not materializing. Some said that walking and biking within Activity Centers was unsafe or inconvenient.

- **Job growth is key.** Employment growth in Activity Centers was a major concern for forum participants, although it was expressed differently in different places. Participants noted that job growth on the eastern side of the region and in outer jurisdictions was lagging. Some noted that office space has been overbuilt in inner suburbs. Others commented on the lack of diversity in the economic base of some communities. Some participants noted, for example, that Activity Centers seem to be excessively focused on retail.
- **Our auto-oriented culture is entrenched.** People at the forums cautioned that solo driving will be a major phenomenon for generations. Some said that today Americans frequently switch jobs and cannot plan their lives around transit. Low-density development is continuing to create demands for more roads, and transportation planners will not be able to keep up. In several cases, participants also noted that schools put pressures on our roads.
- **Cultural aversions to concentrated development.** Whether speaking for themselves or others, participants said that many people find concentrated development to be unappealing and impractical. Many families still need and want to live in single-family homes, some indicated. Some voiced the attitude that dense development is more appropriate for low-income or single people. Forum participants also expressed concerns that putting more people in denser locations will just result in more intense localized traffic. Others said that land use should not be the business of transportation planners.

EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT REGIONWIDE

People would like to see:

- **Dramatic extension of the transit network.** Participants in many sessions were enthusiastic about opportunities to use BRT to expand high-quality transit throughout the region. In each session, specific suggested routes were identified, such as Route 1 in Prince George's or Route 40 in Frederick. Participants also suggested connections to existing transit, as well as direct, single-trip services. They noted that BRT could be especially useful for low-income or transit-dependent communities.
- **Relatively quick and less expensive to implement.** Attendees at a number of forums supported BRT as a faster, cheaper option than rail. "Let's get started" was sentiment heard in a number of discussions, reflecting support for the general concept of BRT and a bit of impatience that it has not moved forward more quickly.
- **"Let's do it right."** Participants articulated the need for BRT to be reliable and high-quality. Many called for dedicated bus lanes. Others suggested using new technologies to ensure reliability. "I think it would be fantastic... if it's done right," was a typical comment.

They are concerned about:

- **BRT can seem to be suboptimal transit.** The most common negative comments reflected a sense of disappointment that the region would "settle" for BRT. Some participants noted that BRT would not be fast enough and it would not be permanent. Attendees said that many commuters have negative attitudes about buses that will be hard to change. Others were worried that the focus on BRT would divert attention from the needs of Metrorail.

- **Too easy to not do it right.** Some participants expressed skepticism that the region’s jurisdictions would end up implementing a more limited version of express bus service and label it “BRT.” Some warned that without dedicated lanes, it would not be worth it.
- **Best purpose for BRT is not clear.** While some forum participants suggested that BRT could be used for a wide variety of purposes, others said they were confused about how it would be best used. Was it better for low-density or higher-density locations? Interstate highways or arterials? Does it really need lots of bells and whistles, or is it essentially a low-cost alternative to rail? Discussions suggested the BRT concept could suffer if it is presented as an option for all unmet transit needs.
- **Community needs still need to be addressed.** Some attendees expressed concern that BRT could undermine important local bus services. Others noted that first- and last-mile connections to transit are necessary to make BRT— or any high-quality transit service— effective.
- **This is already an old solution.** At some forums, participants said that the region’s focus on BRT is evidence of out-of-date planning. Ride sharing services, like Uber and Lyft, are already negatively affecting transit ridership, they said, and the emergence of autonomous vehicles will soon make it largely obsolete.

MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL

People would like to see:

- **Affirmation of key elements in the initiative.** Participants articulated the important role that Metro plays in our region and expressed strong support for key elements of the initiative, particularly eight-car trains.
- **Promote synergistic impacts.** Many participants identified features of the other TPB initiatives that could have a positive impact on Metro’s core capacity. For example, discussions focused on land-use improvements and express bus services that could reduce pressure on the core.
- **Consider modified versions of the full initiative.** Some comments identified more modest improvements in core capacity that they said were more achievable in the short-term, such as terminating Silver Line service at Rosslyn instead of building a new Blue Line station.
- **Make short-term improvements.** Small group discussions on this initiative invariably identified operational and other short-term improvements, such as better lighting and signage. Participants at many sessions also called for adjustments or reductions in fares. Many said that the system is too expensive, especially when compared with driving.

They are concerned about:

- **Apparent intractability of the funding shortfall.** Participants frequently expressed frustration about what they perceived to be a lack of leadership to more conclusively solve the Metro system’s funding shortfall. Many observed that this is clearly an urgent problem and it has been apparent for quite a while.

- **Reversing negative public attitudes.** Many participants said that a prolonged period of bad publicity has affected public opinion about Metro. Those negative attitudes will be hard to reverse, they said.
- **Too much focus on the core.** Particularly in the outer jurisdictions, forum attendees expressed concern that their transit needs are being ignored because of the unrelenting focus on Metro. Some called for increased attention on commuter rail and express buses. Others said the region should focus on circumferential rail, such as continuation of the Purple Line into Virginia.

PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR COMMUTING

People would like to see:

- **Increased worker satisfaction and productivity.** Participants highlighted the personal advantages of telework, including reducing the stress of driving and using transit. They spoke less about the positive effects of telework on regionwide congestion.
- **Government incentives and/or requirements.** At a number of forums, participants called for tax incentives to encourage telecommuting. Others suggested local governments establish rules requiring offices over a certain size to have designated Transportation Demand Management staff to handle employee transportation issues.
- **More options for federal workers.** At many forums, participants said that our region's largest employer, the federal government, should take the lead in providing telework options.
- **Broadband improvements.** In outer jurisdictions, forum attendees emphasized that reliable internet access is still not the norm in many rural areas of our region. This is a major impediment for teleworking.
- **Changes in implementation and promotion.** Participants offered a variety of suggestions for how businesses can implement telework policies effectively. They said that more education is needed and that change is often slow, especially among older supervisors.

They are concerned about:

- **Federal policies rolling back telework.** At several forums, participants expressed concern that recently the federal government has become more restrictive with telework policies.
- **Telecommuting won't work for many jobs.** Many participants commented that teleworking is largely focused on professional office jobs, and policy makers must be sensitive to the fact that it will not work for many employees. Others expressed fears about losing a sense of collaboration and team work if teleworking is implemented too widely.
- **Impact on communities.** Some attendees suggested that we may need to design communities differently if a significant percentage of the population is working from home. Some noted that office space already has been overbuilt in some places in the region.

- **Potential to exacerbate congestion.** Some forum participants expressed skepticism about the initiative’s promise to reduce car trips and cut congestion. They feared that more people working at home would result in more discretionary trips throughout the day. Some also said that a concurrent increase in teleworking and the emergence of autonomous vehicles will create a world in which vehicles are circulating on the roads on a more pervasive basis.

EXPAND THE EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK

People would like to see:

- **Effective and efficient demand management.** Participants at a number of sessions spoke positively about the express lanes that are already in place in the region, saying they are providing options that are less congested and they increasingly are accepted by the public. Some spoke positively about the revenue that toll roads generate.
- **New road capacity.** At a number of forums, participants listed road improvements they would like to see, and they understood that such projects are much more likely to happen if they are tolled.
- **Operational enhancements.** Attendees offered specific suggestions for making toll roads more user-friendly and reliable. Suggested ideas included better coordination of EZ passes and improved signage. Some noted that new technologies, particularly associated with the emergence of autonomous vehicles, should be coordinated with express lane technologies.
- **Combined with high-quality transit.** Participants at several forums emphasized the opportunities for new transit that will be offered by express lanes, including congestion-free travel lanes and new revenues that can be directed to transit.

They are concerned about:

- **Objections to road widening.** Participants at some forums expressed broad objections to all road widenings, noting concerns about generating induced demand and displacing bottlenecks to other locations. Some specifically criticized recent measures, such as the new Traffic Relief Plan in Maryland or the I-66 HOT lanes in Virginia.
- **Lack of interjurisdictional/inter-state coordination.** Even some participants who supported the concept of express lanes said they were concerned that facilities did not seem to be coordinated between jurisdictions and particularly, across state lines.
- **Focusing on the affluent.** At a number of forums, participants used the term “Lexus lanes” to criticize the preferential treatment that express lanes provide to those who can afford to pay.
- **Transit will get left behind.** Participants at some sessions were cynical about whether express lanes will actually provide significant improvements in transit. Some doubted that toll revenues would be adequate enough for meaningful transit improvements or that decision makers would ultimately direct revenue to transit at all.
- **Bad personal experiences.** Some attendees expressed frustration with toll road experiences. They said that on a daily basis, it was difficult to know whether or not express lanes were

worth using. Some said the current lanes did not offer enough benefit to warrant the significant cost.

IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

People would like to see:

- ***Build on recent successes.*** Many participants said the region has become much friendlier to walking and biking in recent years. But, some noted, more work needs to be done, especially in the outer edges of the region and in low-income communities. Participants called for walking and biking to be better integrated into local planning. Some suggested that private development funding should be tapped more extensively.
- ***Prioritize specific projects and locations.*** Participants suggested a variety of methods for prioritizing ped/bike access to transit, such as focusing on locations with high crash rates or identifying key gaps in existing sidewalk networks. Many participants suggested specific projects and locations. For example, participants at the Fairfax forum called for better connections between Tysons and neighboring communities.
- ***Suggested types of improvements.*** Attendees listed numerous types of improvements they would like to see, such as pedestrian bridges, protected bike lanes, and traffic calming measures. Many highlighted the importance of enhancements such as better lighting and signage. Some noted the importance of ensuring that facilities can accommodate a variety of users, particularly seniors and people with disabilities. Some called for a separation on multi-use paths between pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ***Cultural shift.*** In a variety of ways, many participants said they looked forward to a continued shift in how walking and biking are viewed. They said that more education is needed to encourage respect for non-motorized transportation- and to encourage more people to walk and bike. Some said that employers should be encourage or required to support bicycling and walking.

They are concerned about:

- ***Walking and biking are still not adequately promoted.*** Some forum participants said that despite recent improvements, local and state governments still are not doing enough to promote walking and biking. Participants said that such improvements should be better funded. Others said that improvements around transit are often accompanied by capacity improvements for vehicles, but not necessarily for walking and biking.
- ***Perceived divisions between bicyclists and pedestrians.*** At several forums, participants expressed concern about growing animosity between walkers and bikers. Some criticized bicyclists for being discourteous to pedestrians. A number of attendees also complained about dockless bicycles, which they said frequently create obstacles on sidewalks and eyesores in parks.
- ***Don't forget about vulnerable populations.*** At a number of forums, participants emphasized that pedestrian access to bus transit is major problem, and the region should not only focus

on access to rail. Other attendees reminded decision makers not to forget about the needs of people with disabilities.

- ***Bicycling and walking are still too dangerous.*** A number of participants highlighted concerns about the continuing dangers of walking and biking. Some even suggested that with ongoing safety challenges, it was irresponsible to promote non-motorized transportation.

COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL

People would like to see:

- ***A connected regional trail system.*** Participants at several forums envisioned a network of high-quality, inter-connected trails throughout the region. In some cases, they identified specific paths and trails that should be included in such a system.
- ***Better maintenance, enhancements.*** Attendees identified key features, particularly better lighting, that are needed to make trails available and attractive to a variety of users. Others highlighted the importance of trail maintenance.
- ***Separated bikeways.*** Citing concerns about safety, some participants emphasized that bike lanes need to be separated from vehicular traffic and from pedestrians as well. Participants also suggested that more access points to trails were needed.
- ***Trails extensively used for transportation, not just recreation.*** Trail supporters emphasized that trails in the future should become widely accepted as ways to get to work and to school, and not simply viewed as recreational facilities. Some forum participants spoke about the need to get employers to promote bicycling and trail use, including a suggestion to create incentives for commuters to use trails.

They are concerned about:

- ***The National Capital Trail is too narrowly defined.*** Particularly outside the regional core, it seemed that participants could not directly relate to the limited geography of the National Capital Trail that was identified in the TPB's endorsed initiatives. In some cases, they wondered why specific trails in their jurisdiction had been left out.

ASSESSMENT OF THE FORUMS

The forums accomplished their primary purpose of gathering qualitative input to inform future implementation activities related to the TPB's endorsed initiatives. The summary of key themes, which is provided in this report, reflects more than 100 thoughtful discussions that explored the underlying motivations, hopes, and anxieties of a broad range of residents from throughout the region.

More than 300 people attended the sessions and satisfaction was high. Evaluation forms completed at the end of each event gave high marks to the program's content and outcomes. Staff also received positive feedback on an anecdotal basis during and after the forums. Participants, who in

some cases arrived at the sessions with a sense of skepticism, seemed to generally “feel heard” by the time the meetings concluded. There were, not surprisingly, some exceptions to these generally positive attitudes.

A continuing challenge in organizing these types of sessions is trying to ensure organizers are reaching people who may not be typically active in transportation planning activities. To a large extent, the attendees at the sessions were already active in planning in their communities and in some cases, they were participants in the TPB process. Further, the demographic makeup of the forum participants did not fully reflect the region’s racial and ethnic diversity, despite attempts to reach minority communities in advertising the forums.

A special forum conducted for the TPB’s Access for All Advisory Committee was included in the program of forums in an attempt to be sure the perspectives of disadvantaged communities were included in this outreach effort. In the future, TPB workshops and forums may seek to tap into established groups and meetings to ensure that particular voices are heard. Focus groups, in which participants are paid, may also be conducted to augment the input that is received and make sure that key voices are not left out.

Because staff anticipated that attendance at the forums would likely be disproportionately comprised of people who are already active in the planning process, these events were only one part of a larger effort to conduct outreach for Visualize 2045. Indeed, the survey conducted during Phase I outreach activities, which is described in the introduction of this report, was specifically designed to be more broadly inclusive by reaching a large number of people who would not be expected to attend public meetings. For future updates of the TPB’s long-range plan, public outreach is again likely to employ a variety of techniques to try to maximize input from a variety of voices and communities.

OPEN HOUSES

To wrap up outreach activities, the TPB held three open houses in September 2018 as part of the final public comment period for Visualize 2045. These sessions, which were open between 4:00 and 7:00 p.m., were hosted at the following locations and dates:

- September 12, Upcounty Regional Services Center, Germantown, Maryland
- September 13, Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, District of Columbia
- September 17, Virginia Department of Transportation District Offices

The open houses featured 22 display boards on easels with content derived from the draft elements of the plan. Subject-matter experts from the TPB staff and the TPB’s member governments were on-hand at the events to talk with the region’s residents in informal, one-on-one conversations. Participants included unaffiliated residents, advocacy group representatives, other active stakeholders, and elected officials.

Conversations at the open houses were wide-ranging. Some participants came to discuss specific projects, while others wanted to learn about the plan’s regional analysis and forecasts. Still other attendees came to share their ideas about emerging challenges and future planning activities. The event in the District of Columbia was combined with the monthly meeting of the TPB’s Citizens Advisory Committee, which gave committee members the opportunity to discuss the open house format and provide input on the Visualize 2045 outreach efforts overall.

In all, more than 100 people attended these events to learn about and discuss the full range of content in Visualize 2045, including major planned improvements, the systems performance analysis, the financial plan, and aspirational elements. While the open houses were primarily designed to share information with the public, the sessions turned out to be a useful way for TPB staff, elected officials, and jurisdiction staff to observe and better understand how residents will react to the ideas and contents in the draft plan. These observations will help the TPB and its staff position itself for future planning activities and outreach efforts.

NEXT STEPS

Following a final 30-day public comment period, the TPB is scheduled to approve Visualize 2045 on October 17, 2018. Future outreach efforts conducted by the TPB are expected to focus on implementation of the seven endorsed initiatives.