



A People's Guide to **TRANSPORTATION DECISION-MAKING** in the National Capital Region



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

A People's Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the National Capital Region

Updated: January 2024

ABOUT THE TPB

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is 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, 22 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: Marcela Moreno

Contributing Editors: Lyn Erickson, Cristina Finch, Rachel Beyerle, Jamie Bufkin, and John Swanson with support from ICF Incorporated, including Sherry Steine, Betsy Maymon, and Skyler Brown

Design: ICF Incorporated

Cover Photo Credits: Jay Mallin/Flickr (Capital bikeshare bikes); WMATA (Metro bus); Billy Wilson/Flickr (Market Street, Frederick, MD); Elvert Barnes Photography/Flickr (Wiehle-Reston Metro Station); Virginia Railway Express (VRE train); Getty Images (all other photos).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Samuel Brooks (DDOT), Mark Rawlings (DDOT), Tyson Byrne (MDOT), Kari Snyder (MDOT), Regina Moore (VDOT), and Amir Shahpar (VDOT) who reviewed the guide and provided editorial feedback during the drafting process.

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) operates its programs without regard to race, color, and national origin and 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) opera sus programas sin tener en cuenta la raza, el color, y el origen nacional y cumple con el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 y los estatutos y reglamentos relacionados que prohíben la discriminación en todos los programas y actividades. Para más información, presentar una queja relacionada con el Título VI, u obtener información en otro idioma, visite www.mwcog.org/nondiscrimination o llame al (202) 962-3300.

CONTENTS

Foreword	1
The Transportation Planning Board	2
Digging Deeper	10
Getting Involved	25
Frequently Asked Questions	28
Key Agencies and Offices Involved in Regional Transportation Planning	30
Glossary	32

Foreword



Who is in charge of making decisions about transportation in this region? How do all the projects in the different states and counties and cities get tied together? How can local community members have an impact?

There are no easy answers. Dozens of decisions are made for every transportation project. In the National Capital region, transportation decision-making involves agencies in the District of Columbia (DC), Maryland, Virginia, the federal government, and numerous local jurisdictions.

At the center of the decision-making process is the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board — the TPB — which is responsible, under federal law, for coordinating the planning and funding of investments in the region's transportation system.

Understanding the transportation planning process is not easy, but this People's Guide can help. The TPB designed this booklet to explain how and where transportation decisions are made in this region, the role the TPB plays in coordinating this process, and the ways in which local residents, businesses, and other community members can participate in transportation planning and funding decisions.

THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

The TPB is the organization that brings key decision-makers together to coordinate planning and funding for the region's transportation system.

The TPB was created in 1965 by the region's local and state governments to respond to federal highway legislation in 1962 that required the establishment of a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process in every urbanized area in the United States. Federal highway and transit legislation required the establishment of planning bodies, which later became known as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), when it became clear that the construction of major transportation projects through and around urban areas needed to be coordinated with local and state jurisdictions.

The TPB is one of over three hundred MPOs across America. According to federal law, an MPO must be designated in every urbanized area with a population over 50,000. The TPB is designated as this region's MPO by the governors of Virginia and Maryland and the mayor of Washington, DC, based upon an agreement among the local governments.

The TPB became associated with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in 1966. COG was established in 1957 by local cities and counties to deal with regional concerns

including growth, housing, environment, public health and safety — as well as transportation. Although the TPB is an independent body, its staff is provided by COG's Department of Transportation Planning.

The TPB's planning area covers DC and surrounding jurisdictions. In Maryland these jurisdictions include Frederick County, Montgomery County, Charles County, and Prince George's County, plus the cities of Bowie, College Park, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville, Laurel, and Takoma Park. In Virginia, the planning area includes Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Prince William County, plus the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

The TPB's membership is comprised of the key transportation decision-makers in the National Capital Region. The board includes local officials — mayors, city council members, county board members, and others — as well as representatives from the state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the state legislatures. The TPB also includes non-voting representatives from key federal agencies, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC).

TPB MEMBERS

District of Columbia

District Council
District Department of Transportation
District Department of Planning

Maryland

Charles County
Frederick County
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
City of Bowie
City of College Park
City of Frederick
City of Gaithersburg
City of Greenbelt
City of Laurel
City of Rockville
City of Takoma Park
Maryland General Assembly
Maryland Department of Transportation

Washington Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority

Virginia

Arlington County
Fairfax County
Loudoun County
Prince William County
City of Alexandria
City of Fairfax
City of Falls Church
City of Manassas
City of Manassas Park
Virginia General Assembly
Virginia Department of Transportation

*To see current TPB Board Members,
please visit [www.mwcog.org/
committees/members](http://www.mwcog.org/committees/members).*

WHAT DOES THE TPB DO?

The TPB performs a range of activities that promote an integrated approach to transportation development. The federal requirements compel the key transportation players in the region to work through the TPB process.

The TPB exercises its basic role as a coordinating agency in several ways:

1. THE TPB ENSURES COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL LAWS AND REQUIREMENTS.

Federal requirements inject consistency and coordination into regional transportation decision-making. The federally mandated metropolitan planning process requires all MPOs across the country to produce two basic documents—a regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan and a companion funding strategy called a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan is referred to as the National Capital Region Transportation Plan (NC RTP) or Visualize. To receive federal funding, transportation projects must be consistent with the NC RTP and included in the TIP. The NC RTP lays out priorities for major transportation investments over the coming 20 plus years, while the TIP reflects projects and programs that have dedicated funding during the coming four years.

Federal law also requires the TPB to show that the region will have adequate funds to build the projects listed in the NC RTP and the TIP. This requirement for financial constraint, originally established in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), is intended to make sure the different partners in the region's transportation system are realistically planning. The plan and program, therefore, are not wish lists. TPB conducts extensive analyses to determine and document

WHAT DOES THE TPB DO?



ENSURES

compliance with
federal laws and
requirements



COORDINATES

regional transportation
policy and planning



PROVIDES

technical resources
for decision-making

reasonably expected funding sources.

In addition, the TPB must make sure that the projects in its NCRTP and TIP, taken collectively, contribute to air quality improvement goals for the region. This is a requirement of the federal Clean Air Act. The TPB must also comply with federal laws, regulations, and policies stipulating that regional transportation plans must not disproportionately affect low-income or traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups in an adverse way.

2. THE TPB PROVIDES A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION POLICY FRAMEWORK AND A FORUM FOR COORDINATION.

While federal law and regulations drive much of the region's transportation planning activities, the TPB also serves as a forum for proactive policy coordination among local cities and counties, along with regional and state transportation agencies. The TPB's policy framework reflects key visioning and strategic planning documents that have been developed iteratively over decades. The policy framework starts with five key values the TPB and regional

transportation system strive to uphold, referred to as principles, and eight focus areas. Focus areas are goals TPB aims to accomplish. These principles and focus areas are supported by strategies and performance measures.

TPB's policy framework guides transportation planning in the National Capital Region. All projects, programs, and policies integrated into regional plans uphold the TPB Principles and support focus areas. The shared vision and strategies implemented collaboratively by all TPB members help to create livable and prosperous communities throughout the region.

To learn more about TPB's policy framework, visit www.mwcog.org/tpb-vision/.

3. THE TPB PROVIDES TECHNICAL RESOURCES FOR DECISION-MAKING.

Finally, the TPB is a technical resource. The TPB staff is continually working in close coordination with the staff from the local and state jurisdictions and transit agencies, as well as with outside consultants, to produce numerous studies and analyses.

Technical information and analysis are prepared on a variety of topics and are essential for the decisions made by the TPB itself and for the decisions of the jurisdictions in the region. The states, DC, and transit agencies use TPB data on a regular basis to plan and operate their services and facilities. A key topic the TPB covers is travel forecasting, with staff using computer programs (models) to predict future travel conditions. This information guides a variety of decisions, including assessing the impact of different transportation investments on mobility and air quality in the region.

HOW DOES THE TPB ACCOMPLISH THESE THREE ROLES?

THE TPB'S NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The NC RTP is a regional transportation plan with projects and strategies that the TPB realistically anticipates can be implemented within the next 20 plus years. The federal government requires the plan to be updated every four years.

Putting together the NC RTP is a defining task for the TPB. It is the document that the TPB uses to meet a number of major federal requirements. The transportation plan is also a primary vehicle for implementing the TPB policy framework.

States and local partners submit lists of transportation projects for the TPB to include in the draft NC RTP. Federal requirements and TPB policies influence the types of projects that partners choose to pursue.

In developing the NC RTP, the TPB looks for consistency between the planned transportation system and the following principles:

THE TPB PRINCIPLES

Equity – Affordable and readily available multimodal travel options for everyone throughout the region that enable equitable access to jobs, housing, services, and other destinations. The TPB integrates equity into all principles, goals, and strategies.

Accessibility – All people who use the transportation system in the region should be granted physical and affordable access to multimodal travel. The TPB seeks a broad range of transportation options to maximize access for everyone.

Sustainability – Transportation infrastructure and programs should be financially, structurally, and environmentally sustainable. The TPB strives for efficient energy use, meets or exceeds environmental standards and protection, and preserves green space, public space, and historic and cultural resources.

Prosperity – The transportation network should support a diversified, stable, and competitive regional economy that offers a wide range of employment opportunities. The TPB promotes prosperity in each jurisdiction through balanced network growth and improvement.

Livability – Vibrant, healthy, and safe neighborhoods are the heart of the region's livability. The TPB creates partnerships within and between jurisdictions to provide access to resources and services key to community and individual well-being.



Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

- The NC RTP must be financially constrained to meet federal requirements. The plan may only include projects that the region can reasonably expect to afford to build, operate, and maintain. It is not a wish list.

This financial constraint was originally a requirement of ISTEA, a landmark federal law that gave new powers to all MPOs across the country, including the TPB. Financial constraint was an important means of empowering MPOs because it forced all the key players to make tough decisions as part of the regional planning and programming process.

- The NC RTP must conform to air quality improvement goals. Like financial constraint, air quality conformity is a federal requirement. TPB staff tests the draft NC RTP to ensure that the

projects in the plan, when considered collectively, contribute to the air quality improvement goals embodied in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Staff perform a series of tests with computer models that predict air pollution levels over the next 25 years. Once the TPB finds that the plan meets regional air quality goals, federal agencies certify that the plan is in conformity. In other words, the TPB ensures that the NC RTP conforms to air quality improvement goals.

In order to help the region meet air quality improvement goals, the TPB may adopt Transportation Emission Reduction Measures (TERMs), such as ridesharing and telecommuting programs, improved transit and bicycling facilities, clean fuel vehicle programs, or other actions.

AIR QUALITY PLANNING IN THE WASHINGTON REGION

The Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) is the entity certified, under the federal Clean Air Act, to prepare an air quality plan (called a State Implementation Plan or SIP) for the Washington region. MWAQC is certified by the mayor of Washington and the governors of Maryland and Virginia. It includes local elected officials, representatives of the state and DC air management and transportation agencies, state legislators and the chair of the TPB. Like the TPB, COG houses and provides staff for MWAQC.

Transportation is integral to air quality planning. The regional air quality plan includes a ceiling (an emissions budget) for emissions from mobile sources (vehicles), as well as emissions reduction requirements for other sources of air pollution, such as power plants. The TPB must show that its transportation plans will conform to the mobile source emissions ceilings for specific milestone years established in the regional air quality plan.

- The NC RTP must not have disproportionately high and adverse effects on low-income and traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups. According to Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as subsequent federal directives, federal programs may not discriminate against low-income or traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups. Because many transportation projects are federally funded, the TPB must ensure that the transportation system planned in the NC RTP does not have disproportionate and adverse impacts on these groups. These civil rights obligations apply to broad questions regarding who receives the benefits and burdens of federal investments, not just environmental impacts.

The TPB addresses federal equity concerns in a variety of ways. TPB staff conduct technical studies to measure the ways in which the transportation system of the future will serve members of traditionally disadvantaged population groups compared with the region. The TPB also conducts public outreach activities

that engage traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups and low-income communities in an ongoing dialogue about the impacts of transportation investments. The TPB established its Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) to make sure these concerns are heard. In 2021, Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) were adopted by COG as a regional planning concept to integrate equity more formally into investment decisions. EEAs are communities with high concentrations of low-income individuals or traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups. TPB uses EEAs as selection criteria for grant programs and project selection. In 2021 TPB also formally established equity as a fundamental principle used to inform all planning and decision making.

THE TPB'S TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The TIP includes all the regionally significant projects that the region's states and other jurisdictions have programmed — and the

TPB has approved for use of federal funding — in the next four years. Like the NC RTP, the TIP is subject to federal review and must meet air quality conformity requirements.

Many of the projects in the TIP are staged over several years. For example, a highway improvement project typically consists of a planning phase, an engineering phase, right-of-way acquisition, and construction. Each of these phases may last three or more years. While the entire project may be described in the NC RTP, in many instances only a portion of these activities is programmed in the four-year TIP. Each TIP includes many projects from earlier years, as well as new projects. The TIP is usually updated every two years.

THE TPB'S UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes all federally assisted state, regional, and local transportation planning activities (e.g., corridor studies, technical analyses, public engagement programs) conducted or facilitated by TPB staff. The TPB provides an updated UPWP every year to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to access federal planning funds.

WHAT ARE THE TPB'S FOCUS AREAS?

To help organize and coordinate regional transportation planning efforts, TPB identifies a short list of topics that are particularly important to focus on. The eight focus areas, or goals, include safety, maintenance, reliability, affordability and convenience, efficient system operations, environmental protection, resiliency, and livable and prosperous communities. Aligning plans and investments with these

goals helps to ensure the TPB supports an equitable transportation system that upholds the TPB principles.

HOW DOES THE TPB SUPPORT THESE GOALS?

The TPB supports its focus areas through a variety of strategies and initiatives:



Safety: The TPB collaborates with local authorities and agencies to implement safety measurements such as traffic management, infrastructure improvements, and public awareness campaigns to reduce accidents and enhance transportation safety.



Maintenance: The TPB allocates funds and resources to ensure that transportation infrastructure is well-maintained, which includes repairing roads, bridges, and public transit systems to prevent deterioration and ensure safe travel.



Reliability: The TPB works on enhancing the reliability of transportation services by optimizing schedules, improving transit connections, and reducing delays through planning and coordination.



Affordability and Convenience: By promoting cost-effective transportation options like public transit, carpooling, and cycling, the TPB helps make transportation more affordable and convenient for residents. This reduces the financial burden on individuals and promotes sustainable choices.



Efficient System Operations: The TPB implements strategies such as intelligent transportation systems, traffic signal coordination, and data-driven decision-making to improve the efficiency of transportation networks, reducing congestion and travel times.

**Environmental Protection:**

The TPB supports environmentally friendly-transportation solutions like electric vehicles, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to reduce emissions and minimize the environmental impact of transportation.

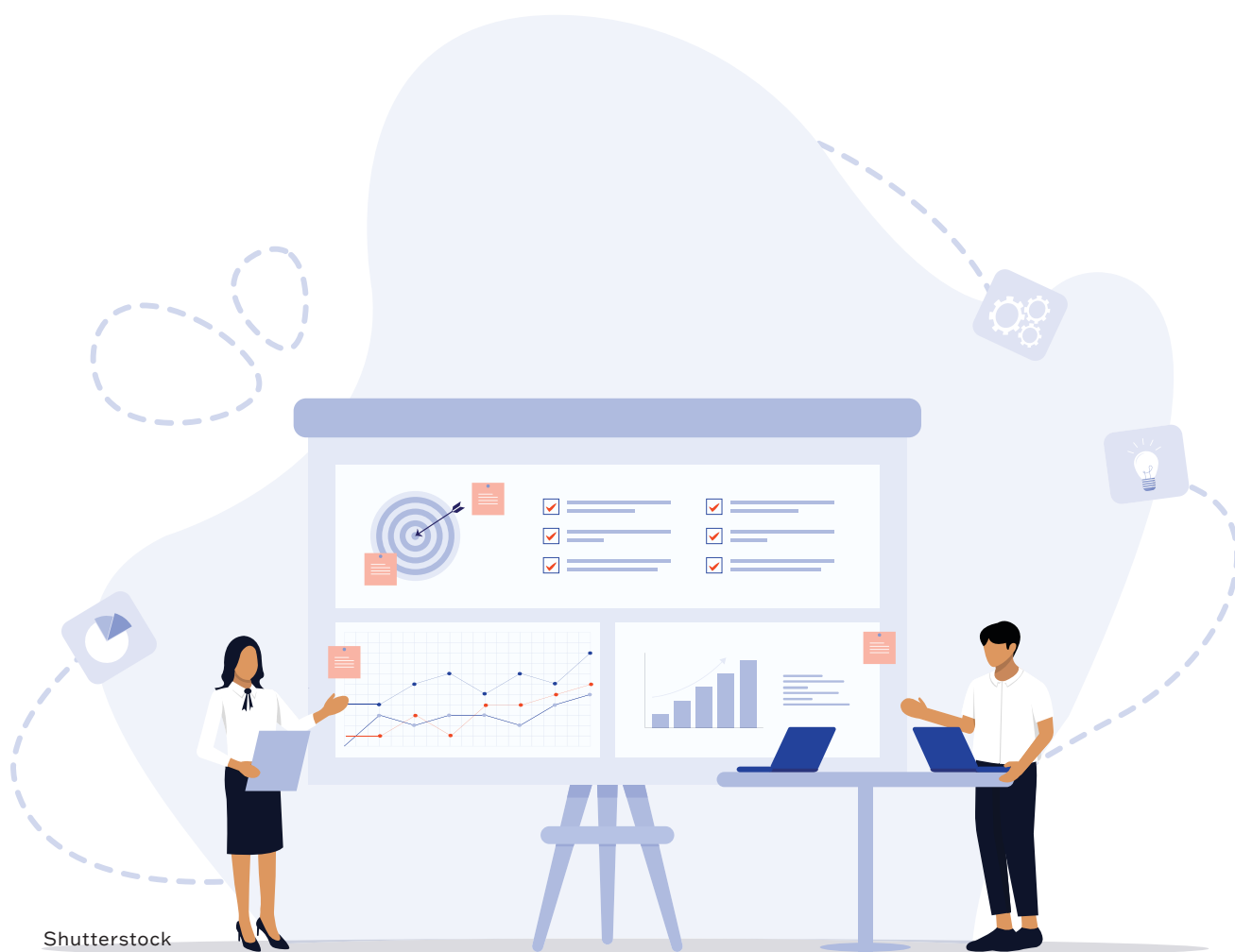
**Resiliency:**

The TPB focuses on enhancing the transportation system's resilience to withstand and recover from natural disasters and other disruptions, ensuring that transportation services remain available in times of crisis.

**Livable and Prosperous Communities:**

The TPB collaborates with local governments and stakeholders to design transportation systems that promote community livability and economic prosperity. This includes investments in infrastructure that enhance access to jobs, education, and cultural amenities.

By integrating these strategies into its planning and decision-making processes, the TPB strives to create a transportation system that not only addresses these goals but also aligns with the broader vision of building equitable, sustainable, and thriving communities.



Shutterstock



DIGGING DEEPER

WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS?

Within the National Capital Region, no single government or agency dominates transportation decision-making. Federal, state, and local government entities, as well as transit agencies and other bodies, all have important functions and roles in transportation investment decisions. Collectively, they represent a group of partners, each contributing a unique purpose and ability to influence the region's transportation system.

THE STATE DOTs AND OTHER STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES

State departments of transportation — known as DOTs — are largely responsible for building and maintaining our highway systems. They also support — and in some cases — are responsible for public transit, commuter rail, ride-sharing programs, and regional pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

A state DOT, which typically employs thousands of people, is led by the governor's appointee. The DOTs are the main recipients of federal Highway Trust Fund dollars and state transportation funds, which are distributed among all modes of transportation.

All DOTs are not alike. Here are some of the key features of the DOTs and other transportation agencies in DC, Maryland, and Virginia.



District of Columbia

Although DC is not a state, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is officially recognized by the federal government as a state DOT. DDOT

coordinates with FHWA to maintain and improve federal interstate highways that lie within the District's boundaries.

DDOT is also responsible for local transportation systems. DDOT plans, designs, constructs, and maintains the city's streets, alleys, sidewalks, bridges, traffic signals, and streetlights. It also coordinates the District's mass transit services, including the reduced fare program for students using the Metro system.



Maryland

Maryland's State Transportation Trust Fund is a unified and consolidated pot of money that provides Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) flexibility to mix and match funds for priority projects across the state regardless of transportation mode — including roads, public transit, aviation, and ports. MDOT encompasses several agencies responsible for different transportation modes, including the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA).

SHA is primarily responsible for planning, designing, building, and maintaining Maryland's interstate and state roads. Local roads and transit systems in Maryland are controlled and maintained by cities and counties (unlike Virginia where the state owns most of the local roadway network).

MTA is the public transportation arm of MDOT. Among other things, MTA operates and maintains the Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) service that runs trains connecting the District to Baltimore, Montgomery, and Frederick counties, and to West Virginia.

MTA also operates commuter buses in the Washington region and administers the state's funding and support for the Metro transit system. The state of Maryland, through the Transportation Trust Fund, provides all of Maryland's share of funding for the Washington Metro system (unlike Virginia where some contributions come from local governments).

Other MDOT agencies include the Maryland Aviation Administration, which owns and operates Baltimore Washington International (BWI) Thurgood Marshall Airport; the Maryland Transportation Authority, which is responsible for toll facilities; the Maryland Port Administration; and the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration.



Virginia

Compared to many state DOTs, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has a uniquely far-reaching level responsibility for public roads, bridges, and tunnels. Covering more than 56,000 lane-miles, VDOT owns the third largest state-maintained roadway network in the nation.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) provides technical and financial assistance to Virginia's public transit, ridesharing, and passenger rail operations. The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) is responsible for planning passenger and commuter rail. The Virginia Department of Aviation supports planning and funding for 66 public airports including Dulles International (IAD), Reagan National (DCA), and Manassas Regional (HEF) facilities.

The Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) guides VDOT, DRPT, and other state transportation agency investment plans and budgets, much like a corporate board of directors. The Secretary of

Transportation chairs the 17-member CTB, which also includes the VDOT commissioner, the DRPT director, and 14 people appointed by the governor. The terms of the appointed members overlap such that the Board always includes a mix of people selected by the previous governor and the current one.

THE METRO SYSTEM AND OTHER PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Metro system is one of the few public services in the Washington region that operates across state lines. The public transit agency that runs the Metro bus and rail systems is called the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

WMATA, known as Metro, was created in 1967 by an agreement among DC, Maryland, and Virginia to plan, finance, construct, and operate a comprehensive mass transit system for the metropolitan area. The board of directors that governs Metro includes elected and appointed officials from throughout the service area. The Metro system is funded by a mix of local, state, and federal programs. About half of Metro's funding comes from passenger fares and other revenues such as paid advertisements in stations and on buses. Costs not covered by federal programs or fare and other revenues need to be covered by counties and cities served by Metro. Unfortunately, Metro often lacks sufficient funding to cover operation and maintenance costs.

The Metrobus network includes regional routes that cross jurisdictional lines to serve major streets and high-density areas, and other routes that serve key destinations, high-ridership areas, and traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic and low-income communities. Most Metrobus routes also connect to Metrorail stations and other transit lines. Metrobus and Metrorail form

a comprehensive, regional mass transit system. In addition to DC, the Metro system includes Montgomery, Prince George's, Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church.

Many jurisdictions fund their own local bus services in addition to the Metrobus system. These include the District's Circulator, Montgomery County's Ride-On, the Fairfax County Connector, Prince George's The Bus, Arlington Transit (ART), Alexandria's DASH, Frederick's TransIT, and the City of Fairfax CUE. Loudoun County runs a commuter bus service while Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park operate commuter buses through the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). OmniRide also operates bus service in Prince William. MTA runs commuter bus services and MARC trains. The Virginia Railway Express (VRE), a partnership of PRTC and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), operates commuter trains in Virginia.

To learn more about regional public transportation, access the State of Public Transportation Report at www.mwcog.org/committees/regional-public-transportation-subcommittee/.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local governments in the region operate according to different rules in various places. Virginia's counties and cities have distinct functions and political systems than those in Maryland. All local governments are essential players in regional transportation. Here are some of the key roles they play:

Land-Use Planning

Local districts have primary responsibility for comprehensive land-use planning and zoning. Three characteristics of

land-use — density, location, and purpose — play a powerful role in determining the transportation facilities a community needs and can accommodate.

Comprehensive land-use plans include maps of existing and planned land uses along with forecasted numbers and locations of households and jobs. The transportation element of the comprehensive plan identifies the facilities that will be needed to accommodate current and future development, such as new or expanded roadways, bike and pedestrian connections, and transit services. Localities present funding proposals to state DOTs and the TPB to support the necessary projects identified in the comprehensive plan.

Land-use plans are implemented through zoning codes that stipulate the types of activities and physical design (or built environment) characteristics such as density of housing units or building heights within different neighborhoods, corridors, and other subareas of the county or city. In addition to regulating the location of growth through zoning, local governments use tools such as offering financial incentives (sometimes called proffers) for developments that exemplify the desired built environment. Local governments in Maryland have more extensive land-use powers than their Virginia counterparts.

Local Roads

Cities and county jurisdictions in Maryland, and cities in Virginia (including Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas, and Manassas Park), have control over local roads, streets, and transit systems. (Virginia's counties are a major exception, as noted below.) When a pothole needs to be fixed on a neighborhood street, that is usually the responsibility of one of these jurisdictions.



In most counties in Virginia, the state DOT is responsible for the construction and maintenance of most public streets and roads. In Northern Virginia, however, the state has granted Arlington County control over most of its streets and roads.

Funding

Local governments provide significant funding for transportation. This money comes from property and income taxes, and in some cases, sales taxes.

In Northern Virginia, these local funds are used to support transit services, including Metro, and for local streets and roads in the cities and in Arlington County. In Maryland, state and some local transportation dollars are used to fund local road systems and local transit. In DC, local taxes are used to support the Metro transit system and city roads.

LEGISLATURES, THE GOVERNORS, AND THE DC MAYOR

Who has the money? That is often the key question in understanding transportation decision-making. Part of the answer is found in Richmond and Annapolis where the state legislatures annually decide how much funding they will allocate to the National Capital Region.

A small portion of regional transportation funding comes from user fees and an even smaller portion from private sources. The biggest chunk of transportation funding for the National Capital Region comes from state and federal sources. These funds are allocated through the state budgeting process in the state legislatures. At the beginning of every annual legislative session, the governors of Maryland and Virginia submit proposed capital improvement budgets for transportation to their state legislatures. These budgets may include state tax revenue, other revenue sources (including funds obtained through the sale of bonds) and federal funds that have been apportioned to the states on a formula basis.

Using the governor's budget as a starting point, each state legislature (called the General Assembly in Maryland and Virginia) enacts a spending bill for transportation. Some transportation funding is allocated according to predetermined formulas. In other cases, projects are funded on an individual basis. As part of this process, legislators can promote funding for projects in their districts.

In DC, which functions a lot like a state, the mayor submits a budget to the DC Council that includes transportation funding. The Council, in turn, amends and approves a

spending bill. But unlike the states, the District must submit its proposed spending bill to the U.S. Congress for approval. Congress decides whether to incorporate all, some, or none of the District's spending legislation when it enacts the District's budget.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

While the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) does not directly own or operate roadways and transit systems, the federal government exerts a powerful influence over transportation funding and planning.

Federal Highway Trust Fund dollars are annually apportioned on a formula basis for both highways and transit to every state including DC, Maryland, and Virginia. In addition, congressional spending legislation (appropriations) often includes specially designated funds — called earmarks — for specific projects. Members of Congress and even the President can promote funding for special projects or programs in the region.

Federal laws and regulations ensure that national standards are applied in planning and constructing transportation projects. These regulations are primarily administered by two federal agencies, FHWA and FTA, both of which are housed at the USDOT. In large part, federal requirements drive the work of the TPB.

Because DC is not part of any state, the federal government maintains a unique level of control over the District's government, including its transportation decision-making. Under the Home Rule system of government adopted in 1973, Congress reviews all legislation passed by the DC Council before it can become law and retains authority over the District's budget, including transportation funding.

OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR PLAYERS

In addition to the agencies and jurisdictions mentioned earlier, a number of other organizations get involved in regional transportation decision making. Here are some of the other key players:

Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)

MWAA plans and manages all the facilities at the Reagan National Airport and Dulles International Airport. The authority's oversight includes ground access to the airports.

National Park Service (NPS)

A number of roads and other facilities in the National Capital Region are owned and managed by NPS, including the George Washington Memorial Parkway, parts of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, Suitland Parkway, and the Memorial Bridge. These facilities are financed through the Federal Lands Highway Program, which receives direct funding from Congress.

National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)

NCPC is a federal agency providing overall planning guidance for federal lands and buildings and related transportation issues throughout the national capital region.

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa)

NVTa is charged under Virginia legislation with developing a long-range transportation plan for Northern Virginia (TransAction), developing transportation priorities (Six-Year Program), and serving as an advocate for Northern Virginia's transportation needs. NVTa has 17 members, including local elected officials and state legislators. VDOT, DRPT, and one of the five largest towns are non-voting members. To date, NVTa has funded more than \$4 billion worth of multimodal projects.

KEY FEDERAL POLICY

TITLE VI CIVIL RIGHTS LAW – 1964

Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in all programs and activities receiving federal funding. TPB complies with Title VI and maintains a plan outlining nondiscrimination assurances and policies.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) – 1990

The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday life, including transportation and public accommodations. It is COG and TPB's policy to provide equal access for individuals with disabilities and those with limited English skills to all TPB activities.

CLEAN AIR ACT AMENDMENTS – 1990

According to this legislation, the projects in metropolitan transportation plans and programs must collectively conform to air quality improvement goals.

THE INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT (ISTEA) – 1991

Commonly called “Iced Tea,” this law made broad changes in the way transportation decisions are made, emphasizing balance of transportation modes, strengthening public involvement, and giving more power to metropolitan planning organizations like the TPB.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898: FEDERAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN MINORITY POPULATIONS AND LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS – 1994

This executive order required federal agencies to identify and address disproportionate environmental and health impacts on traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic and low-income population groups caused by federal actions.

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (TEA-21) – 1998

TEA-21 allocated funding to federal highway, highway safety, and transit programs and prioritized improving safety and protecting public health and the environment.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 14008: TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS AT HOME AND ABROAD – 2021

This executive order focuses federal policy and provides strategies and actions to address climate change. The actions include the Justice40 Initiative which mandates 40 percent of federal investments in climate and clean energy benefit disadvantaged communities.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA) – 2021

Also referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this law provides historic funding for projects across all modes of transportation, water infrastructure, power grid reliability, resiliency, electric vehicle infrastructure, and environmental justice. It also allows metropolitan planning organizations to expand the inclusion of housing consideration in transportation planning.

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)

NVTC coordinates public transit policies within Northern Virginia and appoints Virginia's representatives to the Metro board. NVTC serves Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. NVTC is also a co-owner of the VRE along with PRTC.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)

PRTC operates local transit in Prince William and Stafford counties, and in the cities of Fredericksburg, Manassas and Manassas Park. PRTC is a co-owner of the VRE along with NVTC.

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)

M-NCPPC is a bi-county agency responsible under state legislation for General Plan development for Prince George's and Montgomery counties, in addition to overseeing a bi-county park system. M-NCPPC essentially serves

as an umbrella organization over the two counties' planning boards and their planning departments.

INTEREST GROUPS

Interest groups are active in promoting their agendas at many diverse levels of transportation decision-making. Some groups are formed to support or oppose individual projects. For example, during the planning and development of I-66 in Northern Virginia in the 1960s and 70s, community members formed groups to fight the project or to support it.

Other groups are formed to support transportation modes, including bicycling, transit, and roads. Still other groups are concerned with transportation issues that relate to broader goals. Business groups, for example, support increased overall funding for transportation to spur economic development. Environmental groups want transportation options that will reduce reliance on automobile travel. The list of interest groups active in regional transportation decision-making is long and always changing.



HOW ARE PROJECTS DEVELOPED?

Let's take a step back and ask how transportation improvements are selected and developed before they are submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the NC RTP, the four-year TIP, and the UPWP. The TPB's regional policies and federal metropolitan planning requirements influence the types of projects that are developed and submitted by the states. However, project development typically occurs at the state and local levels.

DC, Maryland, and Virginia each controls its own funding stream and each has its own system for moving projects forward. Within each state, projects may be pursued for a variety of reasons and may have multiple sponsors.

Project development can be unpredictable. Projects sometimes get put on a fast track when elected officials or a group of people take a special interest in them. Some projects move forward when they are selected as preferred alternatives in studies. But in other cases, projects are delayed or dropped because funding is unavailable, because other alternatives emerge, or simply because they are controversial. Sometimes transportation improvements are listed for years in local comprehensive plans or state plans before any action is taken to get them funded.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES

A variety of plans, studies and other mechanisms are used to analyze issues and prioritize projects throughout the region. Issues may be identified through data or public input.

These are some basic ways in which solutions are identified:



Local Government Plans

Transportation projects are often first identified through local planning, which is performed by county or municipal governments. Local comprehensive plans usually include a transportation element identifying specific projects that a local government has determined will be needed over the period of the comprehensive plan — usually 20-25 years.

Project Identification at the State Level

Each of the state DOTs have methods for identifying projects needed to maintain the integrity of the transportation system, enhance safety, or improve mobility or accessibility. The states usually give highest priority to maintenance needs and structural deficiencies. Project recommendations are often based upon the state's regular technical analysis of pavements, bridges, congestion levels, or safety issues. The states propose other projects that are system enhancements including trails or landscaping, or projects to serve air quality improvement goals, such as park-and-ride lots or ridesharing programs. In other cases, the states recommend new capacity — new or widened roads or transit extensions. However, new capacity has become less frequent as the region's transportation system matures.

Stages in Project Identification, Planning and Programming

NON-FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

In addition to data, public feedback plays a large role in issues identification and proposing solutions through public meetings, public comments, continuously collected feedback, or organized community support through elected officials. Issues are studied through corridor and sub-area studies, local plans, state DOTs' needs.

STATE/METRO LONG RANGE PLANS

Virginia, Maryland, DC, and Metro each have a 20- or 25-year plan which identifies desired improvements and policies without funding constraints.

FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED

STATE, METRO, AND OTHER SIX-YEAR PROGRAMS

The state DOTs, Metro, and other agencies put together six-year programs of projects that are funded through federal, state and local appropriations.

TPB NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Based upon issues identified through a variety of sources, including the TPB's Vision and the states' long-range transportation plans, the states submit projects for the NC RTP, which is developed and approved by the TPB. The plan is financially constrained. Projects must appear in or align with the NC RTP in order to receive federal funding. All projects in the region's four-year TIP must also align with the plan.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

All projects must appear in the TIP to receive federal funding. The TIP is developed and approved by the TPB. The TIP is financially constrained.

Transit Plans and Studies

Metro regularly tracks the physical condition of all its assets (vehicles, systems technologies, tracks, and other infrastructure), ridership demand and travel patterns, and opportunities to improve the customer experience. Metro uses this data, stakeholder ideas, and public engagement to develop a capital plan that identifies all the projects and repair work likely to be needed in the next ten years. Like the state DOTs, Metro places a priority on system preservation, including replacement of rail cars and buses, escalator and elevator repair, and track maintenance. Metro also studies and identifies system enhancements through long-range system planning and other capacity and project plans. MTA, DRPT, DDOT, and local transit agencies also perform their own studies in addition to working with Metro.

Corridor and Sub-Area Studies

Major projects go through studies that look at a variety of transportation alternatives for transportation corridors or specific areas of the region. State agencies generally perform these studies in cooperation with the TPB and in accordance with federal procedures. Corridor studies may lead to new projects that address identified issues. The Virginia Interstate 66 and Maryland Interstate 270 projects represent corridors previously under study.

Needs Identification at the TPB

At the regional level, the TPB helps identify issues and solutions by monitoring current travel conditions and forecasting future travel demand. For example, in 2021, the TPB's Congestion Management Process identified the region's top ten worst highway bottlenecks.

The TPB is also studying climate change's impact on travel and is working with local jurisdictions to improve transportation

resilience planning and climate-ready decision-making. The TPB has been looking at key climate-related hazards such as extreme heat, precipitation, flooding, and winter conditions that may threaten transportation services and the well-being of travelers. TPB's Resilience Planning Program involves creating a Resiliency Study, webinar series and resource guide, Regional Transportation Resilience Work Group, a Vulnerability Assessment, and a Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan and interactive map to become a Climate Ready Region by 2030.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Each state has a long-range planning process that brings together project recommendations from local governments, the state DOTs, Metro, and other sources. A project does not have to appear in a state long-range plan to receive funding. However, the priorities established in these state plans often determine which projects get built.

Each state has its own procedure for developing transportation programs — lists of projects to be funded in the next six years. These short-range programs are dependent upon the legislative approval of transportation budgets.

At the beginning of every calendar year, the states and other agencies submit six-year lists of projects to the TPB for inclusion in the regional TIP. All these programming processes are continuously ongoing; a new cycle is getting started before the old programming cycle has even ended.



District of Columbia

DDOT maintains a multimodal long-range transportation plan, called moveDC. The plan outlines the department's transportation vision for the

WHAT ABOUT SMALL OR MINOR PROJECTS?

Minor improvement projects — side streets, sidewalks, and bus stops — can have a major impact on people's lives. Typically, these types of projects do not individually have to go through the official state and regional planning and programming processes.

Advocacy Tip: If you want to push for a small transportation improvement in your community, you should get in touch with a member of your city or county council or join forces with a neighborhood organization that is also interested in the project. You might also want to directly contact the departments of transportation or public works in your city or county to find out who would have responsibility for the project and how it might be implemented. A listing of these departments is provided on pages 30-31 of this guide.

next 25 years. This includes goals, policies, strategies, and performance measures to guide transportation decisions and investment.

Every year, DDOT assembles a Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

DDOT develops its CIP based upon a call for new projects and a review and update of commitments in the previous year's CIP. New projects are recommended from a variety of sources, including businesses, residents, neighborhoods, and community organizations. Projects also originate through the District government, including the DC Council, the Economic Development Office of the mayor, and the planners who work in the city's eight wards. DDOT uses several systematic methods to identify needs, including community outreach

forums, safety and asset management systems, and targeted outreach to stakeholder groups, such as the Business Improvement Districts (BID). The CIP includes both locally and federally funded capital projects.

The CIP undergoes a series of reviews and approvals. The city administrator reviews the CIP, along with other proposed capital and operating budgets for the District government, then passes it along to the mayor. After further review and revision, the mayor submits the six-year CIP to the DC Council.

The DC Council convenes a Committee of the Whole Public Briefing to review the mayor's fiscal year proposed budget and financial plan, which includes the six-year CIP. The DC Council holds this hearing as a public hearing to review the CIP, which it can amend. The Council, acting as a state legislature, must approve the CIP as part of the District budget. But unlike the states, the District of Columbia must go through one more step in developing its six-year transportation program — Congressional approval. After a review process, Congress enacts the District's budget as part of the federal appropriations process.

DC submits projects to the TPB for the National Capital Region's TIP in two stages. DDOT first submits a list of projects from the draft CIP for inclusion in the air quality analysis that the TPB is required to perform under federal law. Once the new CIP has been fully approved, the federally funded and regionally significant projects and programs are submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional TIP.



Maryland

MDOT is responsible for developing the Maryland Transportation Plan which establishes policy goals for state transportation services and infrastructure over the next 20 years. The Maryland

Transportation Plan is a starting point for the development of strategic plans, programs, and projects by MDOT's different agencies.

MDOT also develops a draft six-year Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) annually.

The starting point in developing the CTP is the previous year's program, but planners at MDOT also must be sure the projects in the CTP reflect local needs and priorities. MDOT asks each county and its state legislators to identify local transportation priorities and officially transmit them to the state in the form of the counties' annual Priority Letters. Planners at MDOT compare local priorities with the previous year's CTP. They also identify systems preservation needs — such as road resurfacing projects — through technical evaluation. In determining what can and cannot be funded, MDOT planners examine the previous year's CTP to determine how costs and revenues have changed.

The draft CTP is sent to the governor for review and then released to the public. The Maryland secretary of transportation and other MDOT officials go on the road to get feedback on the draft CTP. In a process commonly called the Annual Tour (or the Roadshow), MDOT officials visit each county and present the draft six-year program. The public is invited to make comments and ask questions at these presentations.

After considering the input received from local and county officials during the Annual Tour, MDOT revises the CTP and submits it to the governor. The Governor annually submits the State Report on Transportation to the Maryland General Assembly. This report, consisting of the long-range Maryland Transportation Plan and a draft finalized version of the six-year CTP, forms the basis for the governor's annual transportation funding request, which the

General Assembly must approve. Maryland law does not permit the General Assembly to add projects to the governor's funding request, although the legislature may delete projects or funding.

Maryland submits projects to the TPB for the National Capital Region's TIP in two stages. Using the draft finalized CTP, MDOT first submits a list of projects for inclusion in the air quality analysis that the TPB is required to perform under federal law. After final approval by the General Assembly, MDOT submits detailed and final project information for the TIP.



Virginia has several long-range planning efforts that contribute to TPB's investment decisions. A comprehensive statewide transportation plan called VTrans provides policy guidance for plans and decisions about all transportation modes. Developed by the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment and adopted by the CTB, VTrans lays out long-term guiding principles and goals and pinpoints short-term (ten-year) transportation needs associated with congestion, safety, accessibility to jobs, and other priorities.

Building upon VTrans, VDOT develops a State Highway Plan that recommends specific roadway improvements and multimodal projects needed during the coming 20 years. VDOT uses a prioritization process for the Highway Plan that applies specific criteria to identify funding priorities. DRPT has a similar statewide plan that identifies public transportation investment needs and priorities consistent with VTrans. Finally, NVTA has its own long-range transportation plan called TransAction.

The priorities in VDOT, DRPT, and NVTA plans, serve as the basis for Virginia's project submissions to the TPB's National Capital Region TIP.



The CTB, working with the staff of VDOT and DRPT, annually develops their Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP).

The CTB conducts public meetings in each of VDOT's nine districts, including Northern Virginia. At these fall forums, VDOT and DRPT present the public with a list of potential projects — and anticipated costs — that might be included in the new SYIP. This list of candidate projects typically includes projects that have already started, projects that were delayed in previous years, and projects that are deemed to be local or regional priorities. The CTB develops a draft SYIP based upon public feedback, projected funding available (federal and state), and needs identified through technical analysis. At this point in the process, the draft SYIP is reconciled in broad terms to anticipated revenues and costs. The SYIP allocates money for

transportation studies and projects that are proposed for implementation (including engineering and right-of-way acquisition) and construction in the next six fiscal years.

Based on the budget framework provided by the Virginia General Assembly, VDOT and DRPT staff, in coordination with the CTB, develop a final draft SYIP. The General Assembly approves the transportation budget through the two-year (biennial) Appropriation Act, which contains all statewide funding and allocates funding for broad transportation categories. Funding for the first two years of the SYIP is based upon the two-year Appropriation Act approved by the General Assembly. The funds for the remaining four years of the SYIP are based upon revenue forecasts. A draft SYIP is released for public comment before final approval from the CTB.

Virginia submits projects to the TPB for the National Capital Region TIP in two stages. Using a draft version of the SYIP, Virginia submits a list of projects for inclusion in the air quality analysis that the TPB is required to perform under federal law. After final CTB approval, VDOT and DRPT submit detailed and final project information for the TIP.

Metro

Metro's CIP is a six-year program that aligns high-priority needs from the ten-year capital plan with reasonably expected funding sources and Metro's annual ability to implement projects. Metro develops this CIP with the input of the agency's member jurisdictions and region-wide public outreach efforts. Projects in the CIP use funding from the federal government and from state and local jurisdictions to keep the system in a state of good repair, rehabilitate and modernize system

technology or infrastructure, and expand or improve the system to address customer needs.

Every year, as part of the annual budget process, Metro's general manager submits a proposed six-year CIP to the Metro Board of Directors. After approval, the projects in this CIP are then submitted for inclusion in the National Capital Region TIP, which is approved by the TPB.

Other Project Programming

Other agencies, such as NPS, and some counties and cities develop projects using federal funds outside the state or Metro programming processes.

Regardless of what programming process they go through, all regionally significant projects must be submitted to the TPB for inclusion in the regional TIP and NC RTP.



WHAT'S NEXT?

PROJECT-LEVEL PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION

Of course, the story does not end here. Completing a transportation project requires several phases, which can last several years.

The sponsoring agencies are responsible for project-level planning and analysis, and for obtaining community input, which helps define the projects. The role of the TPB during planning is typically to review the regional system as a whole and to evaluate how all the components work together, not to make project-level decisions.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all projects using federal dollars to have some level of environmental analysis. Some examples of the types of these analyses include Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Categorical Exclusions (CE). The scope of the analysis is determined at the beginning of the project.

For major projects, sponsors are required to perform an EIS which evaluates all feasible alternatives. The study examines the costs

and benefits of various alternatives, and how effectively the different options would get the job done. It also measures other social, economic, or environmental impacts. Federal law requires adequate public involvement opportunities. The EIS process ends with a Record of Decision (ROD), the federal approval for the selected alternative that will be carried forward to the next phases of project development.

The official federal approval of a selected alternative typically concludes the project planning phase. At this point, the project enters the design phase (also called the preliminary engineering phase), which includes development of construction plans, environmental re-evaluation (if appropriate) and permit applications. This is followed by the right-of-way acquisition phase, in which project implementers purchase right-of-way. Finally, when the project is ready to be built or implemented, the project sponsors award a contract, and it can proceed to the construction phase.



Getty Images



Joe Flood/Flickr

GETTING INVOLVED

Learn more and stay updated on TPB news and activities by subscribing to e-newsletters, news releases, meeting materials, and public comment notices. To subscribe, visit <https://www.mwcog.org/subscribe/>.

Connect with TPB on social media. Visit us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/natcapregtpb) at facebook.com/natcapregtpb and [X](https://twitter.com/natcapregtpb) (Twitter) at @natcapregtpb.

Attend or view a TPB monthly meeting. The meeting schedule, materials, meeting recordings, and live stream are available at www.mwcog.org/tpbmtg/.

Express yourself for the record during the public comment period at TPB board meetings. To participate, email TPBComment@mwkog.org or call the COG Reception Desk and ask about TPB board meetings.
COG Reception Desk: (202) 962-3200
TDD #: (202) 962-3213

WHAT IS THE PEOPLE'S ROLE IN TRANSPORTATION DECISION-MAKING?

Make your voice heard! Your input is integral to good planning rooted in our community and its needs. TPB is dedicated to including an equity perspective so that all planning work acknowledges and accommodates different contexts, experiences, and abilities.

There are many ways for you to become better informed and more involved. Here are some of the possibilities:

- Get informed. Follow transportation issues in the media. Search the internet for information about projects and plans. Subscribe to transportation-related mailing or email lists to receive newsletters and regular updates.

You can subscribe to TPB News e-newsletters, news releases, meeting materials, and public comment notices at <https://www.mwcog.org/subscribe/>.

- Get out there. Attend public meetings on projects or plans. These sessions are often posted on the websites or social media channels of local and state agencies, and also advertised in local papers.
- Talk with decision makers. Contact elected officials or the staff at transportation agencies to request information about projects or plans. Find out how residents, businesses, and other stakeholders can get involved.
- Work with your neighbors. Contact your neighborhood or civic association to see if their members are interested in a particular transportation issue and if they plan to take any action.
- Join or form a group. Join an organized group that is promoting a specific

transportation project or is advocating broad policy changes regarding transportation investments in your community or across the region.

- Volunteer to serve. Participate in a regional transportation study. Or volunteer to serve as a member of a standing committee, such as the TPB's Community Advisory Committee (CAC).
- Express yourself for the record. Local residents, businesses, civic groups, and other stakeholders have the opportunity to make statements and provide public comment at a number of venues, including formal public hearings and information-sharing meetings on projects and plans. In addition, most local governments and planning commissions, including the TPB, have public comment periods on their agendas.

*The TPB has a public comment period at the beginning of each board meeting. TPB meetings begin at 12 noon on the third Wednesday of each month (except August). To sign up, email TPBComment@mwcog.org or call the COG Reception Desk. The TPB website is <https://www.mwcog.org/tpb/>.
COG Reception Desk: (202) 962-3200
TDD #: (202) 962-3213*

- Put it in writing. Send a letter or submit a written statement to key decision makers. The websites for key agencies are listed at the back of this guide.

You can submit a written statement to the TPB through e-mail to TPBPublicComment@mwcog.org or by regular mail (Transportation Planning Board, MWCOG, 777 N. Capitol St., NE, Washington, DC 20002). Letters are made available to all TPB members and become part of the permanent record.

- Stay connected. Follow TPB social media channels and keep up to date with news and involvement opportunities.

You can find TPB on [Facebook](#) and [X](#) (Twitter) @NatCapRegTPB.

THE TPB COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The CAC is the main standing body for providing public input into the deliberations of the Transportation Planning Board. The TPB established the CAC in 1993, partly in response to the citizen involvement requirements of ISTEA of 1991. According to the TPB's Participation Plan, the CAC's mission statement calls upon the committee to promote public involvement in regional transportation planning and provide independent, region-oriented advice to the TPB.

The CAC has 24 members representing TPB member jurisdictions. The group represents a diverse array of backgrounds, interests, and perspectives. These volunteers serve on the CAC for a two-year term. The CAC meets every month, except August, to discuss local and regional concerns, and to review many of the substantive issues that will be on the TPB agenda. The CAC chair will give a report at the TPB meeting the following week.

Over the years, the CAC has focused on key regional transportation issues, such as roadway safety or environmental concerns and has offered comments to the TPB reflecting the diverse viewpoints represented on the committee. In recent years, the CAC has encouraged regional decision makers to improve the coordination between transportation and land-use planning. The CAC has also urged the TPB to develop more user-friendly public information and outreach activities.

The committee assists with TPB outreach meetings held throughout the year in locations ranging from Anacostia to Manassas.

For more information, visit mwccog.org/cac or contact the COG reception desk and ask about the TPB Community Advisory Committee.

COG Reception Desk: (202) 962-3200

TDD #: (202) 962-3213

THE TPB ACCESS FOR ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The AFA advises the TPB on transportation issues that are important to traditionally disadvantaged racial and ethnic population groups, low-income communities, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and older adults. It includes representatives of interest groups and community leaders from throughout the region. A member of the TPB chairs the committee.

Since its founding in 2001, the AFA has raised concerns that may not receive adequate attention in other transportation planning efforts. For example, the committee has worked to promote better transit information for populations with limited English skills. More recently, the group has focused on the concerns of people with disabilities and has made recommendations regarding their access to transportation services. The committee has also sought to raise awareness about transit-oriented development and gentrification, pedestrian and bike safety, and the need for adequate funding for local bus services on which low-income people are particularly dependent. The committee provides comments on the NC RTP.

The AFA meets every other month, with additional subcommittee meetings throughout the year. The TPB appoints committee members. For more information, visit mwccog.org/tpbafa or contact the COG reception desk and ask about the TPB Access for All Committee.

COG Reception Desk: (202) 962-3200

TDD #: (202) 962-3213

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHERE DOES MONEY FOR TRANSPORTATION COME FROM?

Most of the funds for transportation projects come from state sources, primarily from gasoline and diesel taxes, with some additional vehicle fees (registration fees, excise taxes, etc.). User fees — gas taxes and transit fares — are paid by consumers, including both private individuals and commercial vehicle owners, and help fund transportation projects.

Local government transportation funding comes from property taxes, and in some cases, sales taxes. Revenues are frequently collected at one level of government and transferred to another before being expended on transportation. Private sources of funding include payments or direct construction by real estate developers or other private interests. Tolls are also a source of revenue for new projects.

Federal funding is provided through grants and funding programs. There are two types of federal grants: noncompetitive formula grants where funding is based on a pre-established formula and competitive discretionary grants awarded through an application process. These funds are often for specific purposes aligned with federal priorities, such as electric vehicle infrastructure or highway bridge rehabilitation.



HOW DOES THE TPB FORECAST FUTURE TRAVEL PATTERNS?

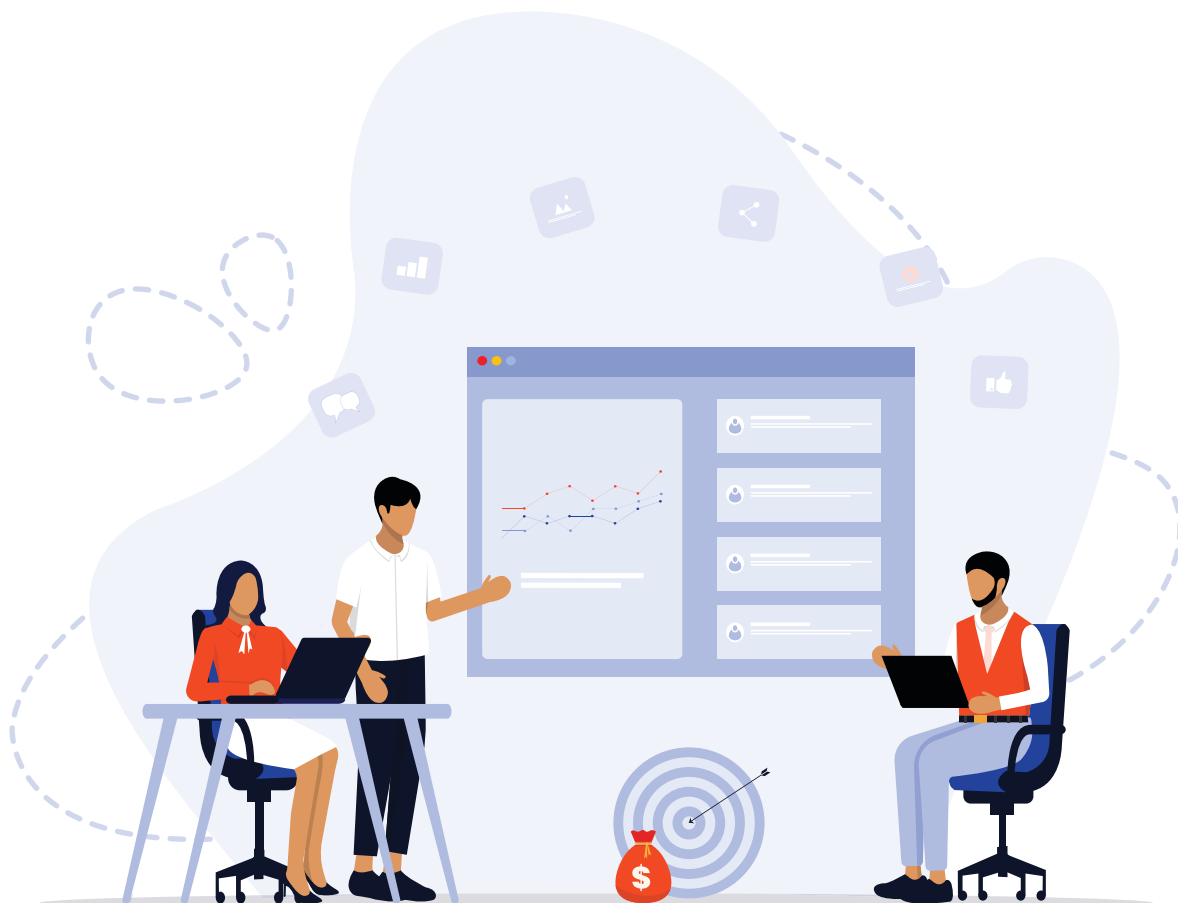
Using complex computer programs (models), TPB staff estimates how the planned transportation system will affect travel in the region. This process, which is called travel demand modeling, uses data inputs including forecasts of job and population growth, and engineering assumptions about the ability of roads and transit to handle anticipated travel. For example, a model can estimate how much a newly widened highway, changes in transit fares, or shifted land-use patterns will affect congestion levels — both on the affected corridor and throughout the region.

HOW DOES THE TPB FORECAST FUTURE VEHICLE EMISSIONS LEVELS?

Like travel demand, future emissions levels are estimated using computer models. Using the data generated by the TPB travel demand modeling described above, TPB staff estimate the number of emissions from motor vehicles, measured in tons per day, that will be produced in future years. Air quality models incorporate a number of factors including the number and types of vehicles that will be on the road, the speeds at which they will travel, and the effects of technological improvements in vehicles and fuels.

HOW DOES COG FORECAST EMPLOYMENT, POPULATION, AND HOUSEHOLDS?

The Cooperative Forecasting Program at the COG uses common assumptions about future growth and development — including local land-use plans — to forecast jobs, households, and population. The program combines regional data, which are based upon national economic trends and regional demographics, with local projections of population, households, and employment. These local projections are based on data about real estate development, market conditions, adopted land-use plans, and planned transportation improvements. The Cooperative Forecasting Program is used extensively by the TPB staff in modeling travel demand and emissions.



Shutterstock

KEY AGENCIES AND OFFICES INVOLVED IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Listings reflect the membership of the Transportation Planning Board and the TPB Technical Committee.

REGIONAL

Maryland-National Capital Park
& Planning Commission
<https://www.mncppc.org/>

Metropolitan Washington
Airports Authority
<https://www.mwaa.com/>

National Capital Planning
Commission
<https://www.ncpc.gov/>

Washington Metropolitan
Area Transportation Authority
(WMATA)
<https://wmata.com/>

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Council of the District
of Columbia
<https://dccouncil.gov/>

DC Office of Planning
<https://planning.dc.gov/>

District Department of Energy
& Environment
<https://doee.dc.gov/>

District Department
of Transportation
<https://ddot.dc.gov/>

MARYLAND

Charles County Board
of Commissioners
<https://www.charlescountymd.gov/government/board-of-charles-county-commissioners>

City of Bowie
<https://cityofbowie.org/>

City of College Park
<https://collegeparkmd.gov/>

City of Frederick
<https://www.cityoffrederickmd.gov/>

City of Frederick Planning
Department
<https://www.cityoffrederickmd.gov/221/Planning>

City of Greenbelt
<https://www.greenbeltmd.gov/>

City of Laurel Department
of Public Works
<https://www.cityoflaurel.org/dpw>

City of Rockville
<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/>

Frederick County Community
Development Division
<https://frederickcountymd.gov/>

Federick County Council
<https://frederickcountymd.gov/591/County-Council>

Gaithersburg City Council
<https://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/government/mayor-city-council>

Maryland Department
of Transportation
<https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>

Maryland General Assembly
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Information/Text/about_mga

Montgomery County Councils
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/>

Montgomery County
Department of Transportation
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot/index.html>

Prince George's County
<https://princegeorgescountymd.gov/>

Prince George's County
Department of Public Works
and Transportation
<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/public-works-transportation>

Takoma Park City Council
<https://takomaparkmd.gov/government/city-council/>

KEY AGENCIES AND OFFICES INVOLVED IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

VIRGINIA

Alexandria City Council
www.alexandriava.gov

Arlington County
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Home>

Arlington County Board
<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/County-Board>

City of Manassas Park
<https://www.manassasparkva.gov/>

Fairfax City Council
<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/>

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/>

Fairfax County Department of Transportation
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/>

Falls Church City Council
<https://fallschurchva.gov/384/City-Council>

Fauquier County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/board-of-supervisors>

Fauquier County Department of Community Development
<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments-a-g/community-development>

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.loudoun.gov/86/Board-of-Supervisors>

Loudoun County Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure
<https://www.loudoun.gov/128/Transportation-Capital-Infrastructure>

Manassas City Council
https://www.manassasva.gov/connect/mayor_and_council/index.php

Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
<https://thenovaauthority.org/>

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
<https://novatransit.org/>

Potomac & Rappahannock Transportation Commission
<https://www.spotsylvania.va.us/1303/Potomac-and-Rappahannock-Transportation->

Prince William County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.pwcva.gov/departments/board-county-supervisors>

Virginia Department of Transportation
<https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/>

Virginia General Assembly
<https://viriniageneralassembly.gov/>

Virginia Railway Express
<https://www.vre.org/>

FEDERAL

Federal Highway Administration
<https://highways.dot.gov/>

Federal Transit Administration
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/>

National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1465/index.htm>

GLOSSARY

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	15
AFA	Access for All Advisory Committee	7
BID	Business Improvement District	20
BWI	Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport	11
CAC	Community Advisory Committee	26
CE	Categorical Exclusions.....	24
CIP	Capital Improvement Program.....	20
COG	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	3
CTB	Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board	11
CTP	Consolidated Transportation Program	21
DCA	Reagan National Airport.....	11
DDOT	District of Columbia Department of Transportation	10
DOT	Department of Transportation.....	10
DRPT	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation	11
EA	Environmental Assessments.....	24
EEA	Equity Emphasis Area	7
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	24
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	8
FTA	Federal Transit Administration	8
HEF	Manassas Regional Airport.....	11
IAD	Dulles International Airport.....	11
IJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021	15
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991	3
MARC	Maryland Rail Commuter trains	10
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation	10
M-NCPPC	Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission	16
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization	2
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration	10
MWAA	Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority	2
MWAQC	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee	7
NCPC	National Capital Planning Commission	2
NC RTP	National Capital Region Transportation Plan.....	3
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act	24
NPS	National Park Service.....	14
NVTA	Northern Virginia Transportation Authority	14
NVTC	Northern Virginia Transportation Commission	12
PRTC	Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission	12
ROD	Record of Decision	24
SHA	Maryland State Highway Administration	10
SIP	State Implementation Plan (air quality)	7
SYIP	Six-Year Improvement Program	22
TERMs	Transportation Emissions Reductions Measures	6
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program	3
TPB	National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board	1
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program	8
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation	14
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation	11
VPRA	Virginia Passenger Rail Authority	11
VRE	Virginia Railway Express	12
WMATA (Metro)	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority	2



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002
mwcog.org/tpb