WORK PLAN

High-Impact Complete Streets Access Improvements for Rail Station Areas in the Washington Region

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) Grant Program

April 25, 2013

Overview

The TPB received TCSP funding to identify strategic recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian access improvements using a complete streets approach that will complement housing and employment development close to rail stations with underutilized ridership capacity. The Washington region has over 100 rail stations with varying levels of development, including inner core stations surrounded by high density mixed use development, suburban commuter rail stations with nearby housing, and underutilized station areas with significant potential for both housing and employment development. The project will seek to moderate demand pressures on the transportation system by identifying improvements around stations that will encourage rail ridership in reverse-commute directions on trains that are currently operating with plenty of available capacity, or by selling the same seat twice in peak commute directions (where one group of commuters alights at a mixed-use suburban location and another group boards). The final product of the TCSP project will be an inventory of up to 25 rail stations with high promise for housing and employment development, and an accompanying list of high-impact transportation capital projects to improve complete streets access to these stations that could be quickly implemented.

Project Narrative

The 126 rail station areas in the National Capital Region are critical regional assets. The TPB's scenario planning over the last decade has emphasized the value of promoting development closer to transit station areas, locating jobs and housing closer together, and improving multimodal transportation options. The TPB has also found that local, small-scale, actions are often necessary to make these principles truly come to life. The TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program was established in 2006 to help jurisdictions plan small improvements – such as pedestrian facilities, safety and access improvements, or multimodal concepts for intersections or streets – to make activity centers function more effectively as vibrant, mixed-use places. Many of the planning efforts completed under the TLC Program have suggested capital improvements that would further the ability of all modes to support dense areas with both jobs and housing. However, the TLC Program has not had the resources to conduct a comprehensive study of all of the region's rail station areas to identify opportunities

for access improvements that could support additional development and best utilize the regional rail system.

The TPB received $160,000 in TCSP funding (matched by $40,000 in COG funds) to develop a list of small-scale, multimodal transportation projects, such as pedestrian/bicycle or other complete streets improvements, around rail stations with underutilized transit capacity. This inventory of improvements will provide local planners, local and state departments of transportation, and developers with a "go-to" list of small-scale, low-cost, high-impact transportation improvements that jurisdictions may reference when working with developers, preparing grant applications, or allocating local funding with the ultimate goal of increasing rail connectivity within the Washington region.

The TCSP project will build on previous planning efforts, particularly the "Metrorail Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvements Study," which the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) recently conducted. The study identified strategies to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access and connectivity in and around Metrorail stations. It also provides recommendations for a range of physical infrastructure improvements, as well as policies and programs to encourage multimodal trips.

The prioritized regional inventory developed through this project will promote the use of existing infrastructure to support and encourage a more balanced allocation of job and household growth that will benefit the entire region in numerous other ways – for example, by promoting robust economic development in all jurisdictions, inner and outer, east and west. The project will also emphasize the need to provide access for people of all income levels. The findings in a recent Brookings study "Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America," which measured the effectiveness of transit in helping workers reach jobs within their regions, demonstrates that it is not sufficient to have significant regional transit coverage. In order for the transit system to be effective, the transit network must provide connections to jobs for a population with varying levels of job skills.

The project will serve a variety of regional goals that are grounded in the *TPB Vision*, the region's transportation policy framework, and recently reaffirmed in MWCOG's *Region Forward* comprehensive policy plan. These goals include reducing auto dependency, supporting multi-modal travel options, and promoting the development of employment centers and housing in locations already served by transit. In particular, the project will seek to relieve demand pressures on the transportation system by focusing capital recommendations around stations with additional ridership potential, encouraging rail ridership in reverse-commute directions on trains that are currently operating with plenty of available capacity, or by selling the same seat twice in peak commute directions.

Tasks

Task 1: Employment and household analysis for rail station areas

COG/TPB staff will conduct employment and household analyses for all rail station areas in the Washington region. Staff will select metrics that provide information on current and projected employment data, project development potential, and current household demographics. The analysis zone is a ¾ mile radius around station areas. Data will be collected on current conditions (or the most recent year for which data is available) and for ten years into the future. Data sets include the Cooperative Forecast, COG's Strategic Investment Plan, the Metro Rider Survey, the Household Travel Survey, and the US Census. The data will provide a breakdown of the varying skill levels of jobs within ¾ mile of each station and household income. The purpose of this particular analysis is to create linkages between employment of varying skill levels and those reliant on transit to reach employment sites. The outcome of this task will be to create a list of all stations that can be sorted on multiple attributes: household demographics, employment attributes, and land use potential.

Task 1 Deliverable:

- A list of all 126 regional rail stations that can be sorted by demographic metric.

Task 2: Identify rail capacity

TPB staff will work with WMATA to identify existing and projected rail capacity in the Metrorail system. Staff will also coordinate with MARC and VRE staff to identify capacity on commuter rail. Staff will examine current ridership information at stations to identify stations that are currently drawing ridership that is lower than anticipated. Staff will review capacity information on the rail system and identify rail segments that are operating with excess capacity.

Task 2 Deliverable:

- A list of all stations that can be sorted by station capacity and proximal rail segment capacity.

Task 3: Identify up to 25 most opportune station areas

COG/TPB staff will merge the deliverables from Tasks 1 and 2, and analyze the data to determine a short list of station areas that show opportunities to enhance or create connections between low income households and employment sites, as well as demonstrate the potential for capitalizing on excess rail capacity in the reverse commute direction. Staff will refine the list of station areas and identify up to 25 locations that would most benefit from complete streets improvements.

Subtask 3.1: Meet with jurisdiction and agency stakeholders. TPB staff will convene jurisdiction and agency stakeholders and present for discussion a list of 25 rail station areas that meet the criteria above. TPB staff will discuss the relative importance of various

metrics (Task 1), capacity levels on various rail lines (Task 2), and how the metrics and capacity interplay to yield information about station areas. The goal of the meeting will be for TPB staff to learn from stakeholders about factors not identified in the data.

Task 3 Deliverables:

- Summary and other documentation from stakeholder meeting.
- A list of up to 25 rail stations selected from the empirical data collected in Tasks 1 and 2. The list will take into account regional parity (DC-MD-VA), station area diversity (core, suburban, commuter), and station area characteristics (developed, not developed, redevelopment potential).

Task 4: Identify high-impact complete streets access improvements

COG/TPB will procure the services of a consultant to conduct Task 4, with guidance from TPB staff. The consultant will conduct a detailed analysis of challenges and barriers to access for each of the 25 station areas identified in Task 3. The result of this analysis will be a list of improvements that would greatly enhance access to the station areas.

Subtask 4.1: Procure consultant assistance to identify and catalog access improvements. Through a competitive process, the TPB will procure consultant assistance to conduct this task.

Subtask 4.2: Review existing plans and studies. The consultant will review local, regional, and state plans and studies to develop a list of access improvements already identified at these levels. Included in this list is the WMATA "Metrorail Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Improvement Study".

Subtask 4.3: Conduct field work. The consultant will identify gaps in pedestrian and bicycle access to and from station areas for those stations have not recently been analyzed through other studies.

Subtask 4.4: Create a list of barriers to access for each of the station areas. This list will demonstrate the types and prevalence of barriers to access across the rail system.

Subtask 4.5: Create a list of access improvements that address access challenges. The consultant will create a sortable list of projects that address barriers to access at each of the 25 station areas. Project information should include, at the least: size (length), estimated cost, type (sidewalk, trail, apron), ADA, location.

Task 4 Deliverables:

- A list of barriers to access for the subset of station areas developed in Task 3.
- A comprehensive list of access improvements to the subset of station areas developed in Task 3.

Task 5: Develop a regional inventory of projects

TPB staff will work with the consultant to prioritize the list of projects identified in Task 4 by the ability of the project to enhance access to station areas, as well as how access to certain stations will enhance mobility throughout the rail system. Staff and the consultant will merge station demographic information from Task 3 with the list of projects identified in Task 4 to determine which projects can have the greatest impact on mobility for selected demographics, regional access to employment sites (current and future), and provide access to stations and rail lines with excess capacity, such as those operating on the reverse commute. Ideally, this list will highlight projects that are critical to provide access to stations with excess rail capacity and enhance connections of vulnerable populations to employment.

Subtask 5.1: Develop a regional inventory of prioritized projects. TPB staff and the consultant will develop an empirically sorted list of projects that considers demographic and rail capacity data to highlight any critical projects that enhance regional mobility for vulnerable populations and/or complement excess rail capacity.

Subtask 5.2: Meet with stakeholders. TPB staff and the consultant will present the list of projects developed in Subtask 5.1 and solicit feedback on the projects and ranking.

Task 5 Deliverables:

- Summary and other documentation from stakeholder meeting.
- A list of access improvements ranked by ability to serve vulnerable populations, enhance mobility to employment opportunities, and moderate demand pressure on the rail system, as well as on cost-effectiveness.

Budget

Task 1: Identify opportune station areas	$40,000
Task 2: Identify rail capacity	$40,000
Task 3: Identify up to 25 most opportune station areas	$30,000
Task 4: Identify high-impact complete streets access improvements	$60,000
Task 5: Develop a regional inventory of projects	$30,000
Total	$200,000

2012 Transportation, Community, and Systems Preservation (TCSP) Grant
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Work Schedule - April 2013

Task	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13	Dec-13	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14
1. Conduct employment and household analysis for rail station areas															
a/b. Select data sets for household and employment analysis															
c. Collect/analyze data															
d. Review land use around stations															
e. Compile data															
2. Identify rail capacity															
a/c. Analyze rail capacity data for stations and rail segments															
d. Look across rail network for opportunities to create connections															
3. Identify up to 25 rail station areas for further analysis							S								
a. Select most compelling data attributes from 1a/b															
b. Rank list of all stations by attribute															
c. Review ranked list and select stations															
4. Identify high-impact complete streets access improvements															
Develop RFP															
Solicit proposals															
Select consultant and initiate contract															
a-c. Review existing data and conduct field work															
d/e. Identify challenges/barriers to stations access															
f. Create a list of projects that address challenges and barriers															
5. Develop a regional inventory of projects														S	
a. Review list of projects with demographic data															
b. Meet with stakeholders to refine list related to real-world constraints															

S = Stakeholder Meeting