

'Metro Matters' Funding Provides Only Temporary Fix

Metro is facing a "slow bleed" in deteriorating service quality that will be only temporarily stanchied by the funding package known as "Metro Matters," according to Richard White, General Manager and CEO of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Mr. White described the



Without long-term funding solutions, crowding on Metro is expected to get progressively worse.

implications of the system's funding needs to the Transportation Planning Board on September 15.

"The ink will barely be dry on this agreement before we're back telling people we've got the same issues," said Mr. White. "Metro Matters helps rail crowding and bus crowding for only four years."

TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman, who is also a member of the WMATA board, told the TPB that Metro Matters was designed to avoid imminent disaster, but did not represent a long-term solution. The program addresses only the next six years and includes essential preservation

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Comment Period Begins for Transportation Plan

The TPB is soliciting comments on the proposed 2004 amendments to the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), and the fiscal 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), including an analysis of air quality impacts. The public comment period began on October 1 and ends on October 31. The TPB is scheduled to

vote on the amendments at the board meeting on November 17. Maryland's Intercounty Connector (ICC) is among the 10 major projects included in the CLRP amendments for this year.

The TPB is encouraging interested citizens to provide comments through the TPB website at www.mwco.org. All the comments submitted through the web can also be viewed on the website. For more information on the CLRP/TIP approval process, see page 5. ■

**CLRP/TIP
2004**

Disability Awareness Day



In honor of "National Disability Employment Awareness Month" the TPB and the Access For All Advisory Committee are working to raise awareness about the important role accessible transportation plays in getting people with disabilities to work. More on page 3.

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and maintenance, as well as some basic capital improvements such as new rail cars to meet the demands of new riders.

New cars are needed for Metro to run eight-car trains, which are the best hope for reducing crowding in the short-term, according to Zimmerman, who is a member of the Arlington County Board. The system currently runs six- and four-car trains, even during rush hours.

Metro Matters would also include the purchase of 185 new buses to alleviate crowding.

In order to buy 120 rail cars at a discount, the region's jurisdictions need to agree to fund Metro Matters by mid-October. If the contract is delayed, the cars will cost \$95 million more. In mid-September, approximately \$1.5 billion of the Metro Matters program remained unfunded, although state and local governments were expected to sign funding agreements in time to meet the shortfall.

A temporary solution

TPB Vice Chairman Phil Mendelson warned that the focus on short-term funding should not create the false impression that Metro Matters will take care of the system's problems.

"Some of us may be assuming that Metro Matters will meet the system's needs, but it won't," said Mr. Mendelson, who is a member of the District of Columbia Council.

The Metro Matters program is a scaled-back version of WMATA's 10-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP called for the purchase of 300 rail cars and 460 buses, compared to the 120 rail cars and 185 buses included in Metro Matters.

Fairfax County Supervisor Cathy Hudgins said that concerted leadership is needed to meet the system's long-term needs instead of simply applying band-aid solutions.

"Unfortunately, I don't think anyone is stepping up and saying, 'We want to do the full plan [the CIP]. Therefore, in a sense we're

TPB Releases Work Scope To Meet New Air Quality Rule

On September 15, the TPB released a draft scope of work on how it plans to meet the new air quality conformity requirements under the EPA's recent 8-hour ozone rule. The TPB is currently soliciting public comment on the 8-Hour Air Quality Conformity Assessment Draft Scope of Work and the project submissions for 2010, the new attainment year. The public comment period on these two items will expire on October 17, 2005. For more information, see www.mwcog.org

accepting the overcrowding," said Ms. Hudgins, who is also a WMATA board member.

Getting at the underlying problem

Mr. White emphasized a fact that has become a virtual mantra for the region's transit advocates: Unlike other major transit systems in the country, WMATA receives practically no dedicated funding. The system is therefore disproportionately dependent on state and local general fund revenues. Passengers pay a very high share of WMATA's operating costs—more the 50 percent versus a national average of 33 percent—according to Mr. White.

Responding to the system's long-term funding shortfall, the Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors on September 8 approved creation of a blue-ribbon panel of experts to recommend alternative sources of funding for WMATA. (The TPB operates as a body separate from the COG Board, although both boards are staffed by the Council of Governments.)

The 13-member panel is jointly sponsored by the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Federal City Council, as well as by COG.

Members of the panel were appointed on September 29. Rudolph Penner, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute will serve as chair.

The blue-ribbon panel is scheduled to issue a report in mid-December recommending alternative sources of revenue for WMATA. The panel consists of experts on economics, political science, public finance and regional transit. The group will examine WMATA's current and future financial needs as well as revenue sources used by transit systems in other parts of the country. ■

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TPB To Sponsor Disability Awareness Day on October 20

For Fairfax resident John Hudson, the short trip from work to the mall is much more dangerous than it should be. As Hudson guides his wheelchair across the street, overgrown grass and shrubs in the median engulf him, making him nearly invisible to the drivers hurriedly entering and exiting the Fair Oaks Mall parking lot. By law, cars should yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk, but since the drivers can't see Hudson, they keep zipping by and he keeps waiting.

To raise awareness of the transportation challenges faced by Hudson and other people with disabilities, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and its Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee is sponsoring a Disability Awareness Day on October 20, 2004.

To highlight the typical workday commute of a disabled person, several travel teams—each



Bobby Coward finds that curb ramps can be hard to navigate if they are not aligned.

including a person with a disability, a member of the TPB, and in some cases a member of the media—will trek to a press conference at the Metropolitan

Washington Council of Governments (COG). The press conference is

scheduled for 10:30 a.m., immediately prior to the monthly TPB meeting at noon.

"The Washington region has a complex, multi-jurisdictional and multi-modal transportation system," notes TPB Chair Christopher Zimmerman. "Much has been done to improve access to the region's transit system and pedestrian environment for people with disabilities, but there is still more to do."

For example, inconveniences such as sidewalks blocked off due to construction



projects and a lack of audible crossing signals make it difficult for AFA Committee member Dr. Bud Keith to get around his Arlington neighborhood. Dr. Keith, a retired Federal employee with a visual disability, says intersections like Fairfax Drive and Glebe Road are "bad for anyone to cross" because of the intense growth in the area and corresponding increase in traffic.

"When it comes to competition for dollars, sidewalks and pedestrians aren't sexy," says

Hudson, who is also a member of the AFA Committee and is Program Manager for Disability Services in Fairfax County.

When building and maintaining thoroughfares, Hudson urges transportation planners to consider sidewalks along with roads. "They will fix a pothole quicker than a curb ramp," he notes.

Transportation is a barrier for people with disabilities in gaining employment. According to a 2004 National Organization on Disability (NOD)/Harris national survey, persons with disabilities are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation as persons without disabilities. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Washington region the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is twice that of the general population. "Reliable and dependable employees need reliable and dependable transportation," Hudson says.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, enacted in 1990, mandates that public transit facilities be accessible to people with disabilities, and much has been done in the National Capital region to improve accessibility. More than 90 percent of the region's buses are wheelchair accessible, and



Bumpy strips at Metrorail stations warn Bud Keith that the platform edge is near.

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Disability Awareness

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in Silver Spring's newly redeveloped downtown, audible signals assist people crossing Georgia Avenue.

Surveying the Ballston Metro Station in Arlington, Dr. Keith observes that the elevators and escalators are in good working order and that the station platform has bumpy strips, called truncated domes, warning that the edge is near. The lighting is poor, however, making

travel difficult for people with partial sight.

The Access for All Press Conference on Disabilities Awareness will be held Wednesday, October 20 at 10:30 a.m. in the COG Board Room.

Across the river at Metro Center—one of the rail system's hubs—both of the elevators between the platform and

mezzanine are in the midst of a 10-week upgrade and are out of service. During this time, the station is inaccessible to individuals traveling in the direction of Glenmont who are unable to use the stairs or escalators. Out of 83 Metro stations, 54 have bumpy warning strips, but 29 do not.

AFA Chair Kathy Porter points out that these accessibility features benefit many people, including children, older adults, parents pushing strollers, people with rolling luggage, and bicyclists, in addition to people with disabilities. To achieve greater accessibility across the region, the AFA committee is urging TPB member agencies and jurisdictions to improve the reliability and dependability of accessibility features on transit and public sidewalks.

"The region needs to work together to create a transit and pedestrian system that provides access for all," Porter says.

Co-sponsors of the October 20th Disability Awareness Day include Easter Seals Project ACTION, American Council of the Blind, Community Transportation Association of America and Center for Workers with Disabilities. For more information, visit

www.mwcog.org. ■

Upcoming October Agenda

The TPB's October agenda is expected to include:

- Approval of a resolution recognizing the importance of accessible and dependable transit service, sidewalks and safe pedestrian crossings *for people with disabilities*.
- Approval of a resolution declaring funding must be identified to meet preservation, rehabilitation and capacity expansion *needs of the Metrorail and Metrobus system*.
- Review of comments received and approval of 2010 project submissions and scope of work for the *8-hour air quality conformity assessment* for the 2004 CLRP and FY2005-10 TIP.
- Briefing on upgrades to the TPB *travel demand model and emissions post-processor* used for the draft air quality conformity assessment for the 2004 CLRP and FY2005-10 TIP.
- Briefing on the *draft air quality conformity determination* for the 2004 CLRP and FY2005-10 TIP.
- Briefing on presentation on the *Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study* to be used for the Citizens Advisory Committee outreach meetings. ■

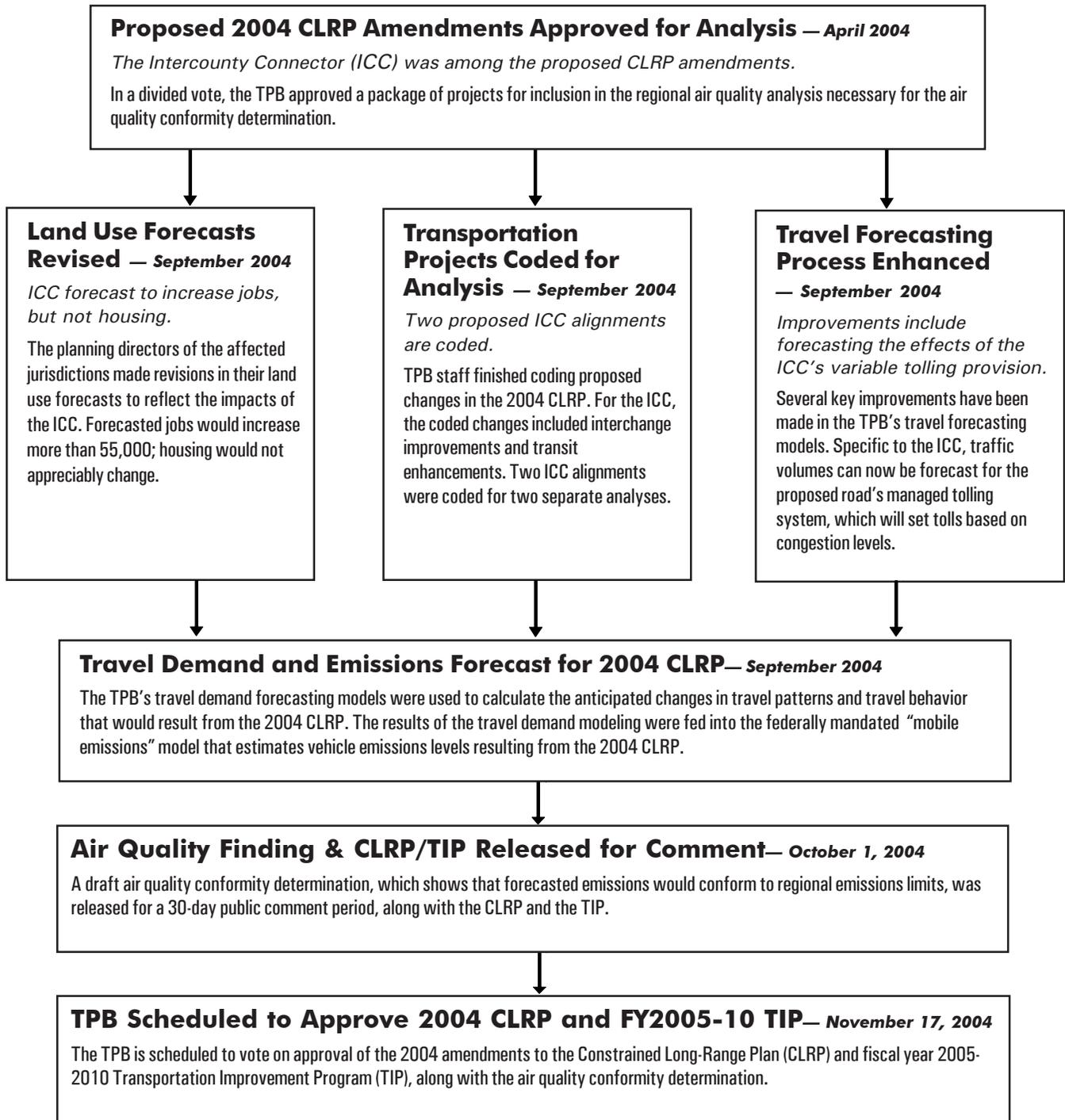
TPB Alphabet Soup

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|--------------|---|------------------------------------------------|
| CAC | - | Citizens Advisory Committee |
| CLRP | - | Constrained Long-Range Plan |
| COG | - | Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments |
| DDOT | - | District Department of Transportation |
| EPA | - | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| FHWA | - | Federal Highway Administration |
| FTA | - | Federal Transit Administration |
| MDOT | - | Maryland Department of Transportation |
| TIP | - | Transportation Improvement Program |
| TPB | - | Transportation Planning Board |
| VDOT | - | Virginia Department of Transportation |
| WMATA | - | Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority |

2004 CLRP/TIP Development Process

Maryland's Intercounty Connector is one of 10 major projects submitted for inclusion in this year's amendments to the region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and fiscal year 2005-10 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Under federal law, any time the CLRP and TIP are amended, the TPB must first approve an air quality "conformity determination" showing that forecasted emissions levels will conform to air quality limits established in the region's air quality improvement plan.

The chart below shows this year's process for determining air quality conformity and for approving the CLRP and TIP.



Calendar of Events

Dates and times subject to change. All meetings are at COG unless otherwise indicated. If you are in need of special assistance to participate in meetings, please call (202) 962-3315 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Bicycle racks are located in the parking garage at 777 N. Capitol St., NE (Enter from 1st Street).

October

- 1 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 1 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 5 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 6 Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 12 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 14 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 15 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 19 Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- 19 Guaranteed Ride Home Ad-Hoc Group (noon)
- 20 "Access for All" Press Conference for Disability Awareness Day (10:30 am)
- 20 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 26 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) *Tentative*

November

- 5 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 5 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 9 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 11 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 12 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 16 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- 16 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 17 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 18 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- 18 Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)
- 19 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 23 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am)

December

- 3 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 3 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 7 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 9 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 10 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 14 Commuter Operations Center Subcommittee (10 am)
- 14 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 15 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

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