



# TPB news

A Publication of the  
National Capital Region  
Transportation  
Planning  
Board

UPCOMING MEETINGS  
AND ITEMS OF  
INTEREST:

**TPB Meeting, June 17:**

- Approval of amendments to the TIP to include additional projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- Review of comments received and approval of Purple Line and I-395 project submissions for the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the CLRPP and TIP amendments
- Approval of projects for funding under the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

More information may be found at:  
[www.mwcog.org/](http://www.mwcog.org/)

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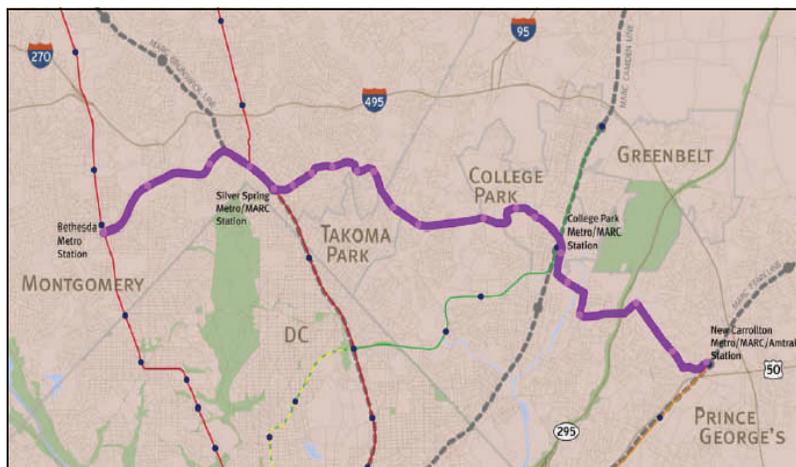
## PURPLE LINE AND I-395 RECONFIGURATION PROPOSED FOR CLRPP

Two proposed amendments to the region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRPP), announced at the May 20 TPB meeting, are already attracting attention and comment from TPB members and other stakeholders.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) notified the Board of its intent to request amendment of the CLRPP to reflect advancement of the "Purple Line" transit

corridor, while the District of Columbia Department of Transportation announced its pending request to amend the CLRPP and

*(Continued on page 2)*



The Proposed Purple Line Light Rail Corridor

Source: MDOT

## 2008 FREEWAY CONGESTION REPORT CARRIES SURPRISES

In what has become a triennial ritual, the TPB listened to findings of the 2008 aerial surveys monitoring the performance of the region's freeway system and lamented the congested state of the region's roads. But this year's report carried a twist: while congested highways still result in hundreds of lost hours each year for the average resident of the region, congestion levels and estimated miles of travel have decreased since the 2005 survey – the first time since the survey's initiation in 1993

that congestion has dropped.

The report, produced by TPB staff in conjunction with SkyComp, a private research firm, estimates that vehicle miles of travel (VMT) in the region fell by 3.1 percent from 2005 to 2008, a drop similar to national estimates for that time period. In his presentation to the TPB at its May 20 meeting, Transportation Planning Director Ron Kirby said that the drop could be due to a

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# PENDING CLRP UPDATES

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regional TIP to include proposed land development of an area above the I-395 corridor, and consequent reconfiguration of access and egress along the highway.

Both amendments were formally released for public comment at the May 14 meeting of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee, and are scheduled for consideration by the TPB at its June 17 meeting. But the proposals, in particular the Purple Line, are already provoking public comment as numerous citizens attended the May 20 TPB meeting to provide input.

## **Purple Line Light Rail Project in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, Maryland**

The proposed Purple Line has been present in regional and local plans for decades in at least some form, and public awareness of the project is already high, but the proposed amendment to the CLRP by MDOT represents a significant step forward in the project's history.

MDOT would amend the CLRP to include the proposed transit line that would connect downtown Bethesda with New Carrollton via Silver Spring and College Park, establishing a preferred route for the 16-mile facility as an above-ground light rail line. These decisions resulted from an Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement completed by the Maryland Mass Transit Administration, and are a precursor to submission of an application to the Federal Transit Administration for project funding. TPB action to include the full project in the CLRP is required in order for MDOT to obtain federal funds. The project is expected to cost \$1.68 billion.

Although the most significant change to the CLRP is the addition of the Silver Spring-to-New Carrollton portion of the proposed

route, public attention to the amendment appears focused more on the potential of the action to solidify plans of running the light-rail line adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail for portions of the route between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Citizens commenting at the May 20 TPB meeting expressed concerns that the transit line construction would irreversibly alter the natural character of the corridor.

Other commenters, however, said that concerns about the trail are outweighed by the potential benefits of the new transit connection, and noted that the corridor was preserved both to accommodate a recreational trail and to be available for future transit use.

Some TPB members asked MDOT for assurances that alternatives to the proposed alignment were fairly and adequately considered, while others informed the Board of the long-standing support of their respective local councils and boards for the Purple Line project.

Rodney Roberts, TPB member from Greenbelt, said he was concerned that the project would lead to "a little tiny space for a trail." "If you ask the people who use [the trail], it's a park for all intents and purposes, and in my opinion it's something that we need to preserve the way it is. I think there are other alternatives to using that right-of-way."

MDOT representative Don Halligan noted the advantages of light-rail options, particularly the potential for added carrying capacity in the future, and said that the preferred alignment maximizes the investment. "There are other alternatives, but none of them are as good in terms of serving the mobility and access needs of the region."

TPB member Patrick Wojahn of College

*(Continued on page 4)*

## **Expected Project Costs**

*Purple Line Light Rail Project from Bethesda to New Carrollton:*  
**\$1.68 billion**

*Transportation Components of "Return to L'Enfant" Development and I-395 Corridor Changes:*  
**\$27 million**

Source: MDOT & DDOT

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIORITY BUS TRANSIT IN THE WASHINGTON REGION

The TPB, with the support of the Federal Transit Administration, is sponsoring a one-day conference on providing new transportation choices in the Washington Region through bus transit prioritization strategies.

The conference is to be held on Wednesday, June 24, at the Washington Plaza Hotel. It is designed to support the region's transportation planning efforts by bringing together key stakeholders to learn about options for prioritizing bus transit and building consensus for a regional priority bus network.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will provide the region with hundreds of millions of dollars in formula funding, as well as the opportunity to seek discretionary funding under a new multimodal program. The members and staff of the TPB Scenario Study Task Force are developing a plan for the first phase of a regional priority bus network, with the intention of seeking funding for this plan through the new discretionary multimodal program.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Northern Virginia Transportation

Authority (NVTA) both expressed support for the TPB's pursuit of funding through the ARRA program, and pledged to cooperate with the Scenario Study Task Force in putting together an application. At the May 20 TPB meeting, Transportation Planning Director Ron Kirby said that the Task Force would be adding extra meetings in order to meet the September 15, 2009 deadline for grant applications.

Participants at the June 24 conference will learn about the grant application effort as well as other plans and prospects for priority bus transit in the region, and examples of where similar projects have been implemented around the country. Then, stakeholder groups, transportation agency heads, and local officials will discuss strategies and potential challenges related to providing bus transit in the Washington Region.

Interest in the conference has been strong among invitees, and Scenario Study Task Force Chair Harriet Tregoning noted at the May 20 TPB meeting that Undersecretary for Transportation Roy Kienitz had tentatively committed to giving the keynote address. ♦

## STIMULUS FUNDS INCORPORATED INTO REGIONAL TIP

In a flurry of activity, the TPB at its May 20 meeting adopted six individual resolutions amending the region's FY 2009-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The amendments made modifications to the TIP as a result of an infusion of state and local transportation funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Many of the changes shift forward projects that were previously planned but lacking near-term funding.

Resolutions for approval by the TPB were submitted by Montgomery, Prince George's, Frederick, and Charles Counties in Maryland. In addition, the Virginia Department

of Transportation (VDOT) submitted a resolution on behalf of Fairfax County, and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) submitted a resolution encompassing the replacement of buses in the four TPB-member counties in Maryland.

The TPB passed all six resolutions unanimously. These amendments to the region's TIP do not require additional air quality conformity analysis.

For a complete list of projects included in the recent TIP amendments, along with other information about activities in the Washington Region related to ARRA, visit [www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/stimulus](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/stimulus). ♦

# PENDING CLRP UPDATES



## Proposed Changes to I-395 Corridor

### a. Reconfigure

southbound on-ramp from 3rd St. and northbound off-ramp to 2nd St.

### b. Close southbound off-ramp from I-395 to 400 block of 3rd St.

### c. Reconnect F St.

between 2nd & 3rd Streets for vehicular, bicycle & pedestrian traffic.

### d. Reconnect G St.

between 2nd and 3rd Streets for bicycle & pedestrian traffic

Source: DDOT

(Continued from page 2) Park gave his fellow Board members an indication of his mixed feelings about the project. “As a bicyclist, I support the building of trails, but I also support efforts to reduce traffic on our city streets. I think that the light rail alternative, in that it will have higher ridership than other options, will be a

more effective public transit facility and will do a more effective job of taking traffic off our streets and making things easier for bicyclists overall.”

## “Return to L’Enfant” Development and I-395 Corridor Changes in the District of Columbia

The District of Columbia’s “Return to L’Enfant” proposal has the potential to reshape the urban landscape as well as reconfigure a section of I-395. The proposal includes a planned unit development that

would be built on a platform on the air rights over I-395 between E Street and Massachusetts Avenue NW. The key transportation components of the development are described at left. DDOT has requested that the TPB initiate the process to amend the 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP to include these transportation components. The cost estimate for these transportation components is \$27 million.

Although the project appears to have broad support, one TPB member expressed disappointment in DDOT’s process for sharing timely information about the project. “I’m particularly concerned that we’re not receiving information ahead of time or being included in this process,” said JoAnne Sorenson of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), noting that a requested traffic analysis document had not been provided in advance of the May 20 TPB meeting. ♦

## Bids and Solicitations

For current COG solicitations available for bid/proposals, please visit “Doing Business with COG:” [www.mwcog.org/doingbusiness/cogbid/](http://www.mwcog.org/doingbusiness/cogbid/) ♦

## OTHER MAY AGENDA ITEMS

In addition to the items covered in this newsletter, the TPB’s May 20 agenda included the following items:

- Status report on the Draft 2009 CLRP and the FY 2010-2015 TIP, and the related Air Quality Conformity Assessment.
- Briefing on additional findings from the 2007/2008 Regional Household Travel Survey.

- Notice of a proposed Draft Scope of Work for an Air Quality Conformity Assessment to the 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP, to incorporate the Purple Line and I-395 projects described in the cover story.

Information and materials for the monthly TPB meeting are posted on the TPB website one week prior to the meeting: [www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb). ♦

# FREEWAY CONGESTION DECLINES

*(Continued from page 1)*

number of factors, particularly a period of unprecedented high gas prices along with the onset of the economic downturn.

As a result of the overall reduction in travel, along with improvements made by transportation agencies to some of the region's choke points, lane miles of congestion in the peak travel periods decreased an estimated 24% from 2005. There are still several trouble spots where congestion is severe for much of the morning and evening rush. The most congested location in the region, according to the report, is Southbound I-395 during the evening peak, between Fourth Street SW in the District of Columbia and the US 1 Interchange in Virginia – a stretch that includes the 14th Street Bridge.

Kirby said that while the report documents some reductions in traffic delays since 2005, congestion in the region remains a serious challenge. “[Congestion] didn't drop through the floor; it went back to pretty much

where we were in 2002.”

TPB member Chris Zimmerman of Arlington County drew attention to how the relatively small (3.1%) drop in VMT led to a significant drop in congestion of almost 25%. “This illustrates . . . the increasing costs of congestion at the margin, which works in both directions. If you get a fairly small shift of drivers, some drivers, out of cars onto transit, onto bicycles, whatever else, you get a fairly significant reduction in congestion.” He said that projects like the TPB Regional Priority Bus Network, also on the May 20 agenda, could lead to large improvements in congestion even if only somewhat successful in attracting ridership.

“It's not only alternative methods of travel, but different location of job opportunities so that people don't have to drive as far to get to work and other destinations,” added Lori Waters, TPB member from Loudoun County. ♦

## UPCOMING JUNE AGENDA ITEMS

The TPB's June 17 agenda is expected to include the following items:

- Approval of additional amendments to the FY 2009-2014 TIP to include projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).
- Review of comments received and approval of the Purple Line Light Rail and I-395 Reconfiguration/Air-Rights Development project submissions for inclusion in the Air Quality Conformity Assessment for amendments to the 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP.
- Approval of Scope of Work and Budget for an Air Quality Conformity Assessment for the proposed amendments to the 2009 CLRP and FY 2010-2015 TIP described above.
- Approval of projects for funding under the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

- Briefing on the Draft 2009 CLRP and the FY 2010-2015 TIP, and the related Air Quality Conformity Assessment
- Update on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) Program
- Briefing on developing the freight component of the 2010 Update of the CLRP
- Update on the June 17 Scenario Task Force Meeting, the development of a Regional Priority Bus Transit Project, and the June 24 TPB Conference: “Opportunities For Priority Bus Transit in the Washington Region”

Information and materials for the monthly TPB meeting are posted on the TPB website one week prior to the meeting: [www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb). ♦

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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., N.E. (Enter from 1st St., N.E.).

## June 2009

- 3 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10 am)
- 5 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 5 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 9 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 11 Public Forum on the Draft TIP (6 pm)
- 16 Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee (10 am)
- 16 Regional TDM Marketing Group (noon)
- 17 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10:30 am)
- 17 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 18 Transportation Safety Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 23 One-Day Conference: Opportunities for Priority Bus Transit in the Washington Region (8 am - Washington Plaza Hotel)
- 26 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 26 TPB Steering Committee (noon)

## July 2009

- 1 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10 am)
- 8 Car Free Day Steering Committee (10am)
- 9 Freight Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 9 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 14 Employer Outreach Committee (10 am)
- 14 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 14 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 15 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10:30 am)
- 15 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 17 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 21 Travel Management Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 21 Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 22 Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force (noon)
- 23 Access for All Advisory Committee (2pm)
- 23 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- 28 Regional Bus Subcommittee (noon)

## August 2009

No meetings currently scheduled

## September 2009

- 4 TPB Technical Committee (9am)
- 4 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 8 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force and Technical Subcommittee Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 9 Bike to Work Day Steering Committee (10 am)
- 9 Car Free Day Steering Committee (11:30 am)
- 10 Freight Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 10 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 15 Regional TDM Marketing Group (10 am)
- 15 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 15 Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 15 Commuter Connections Ridematching Committee (2 pm)
- 16 TPB Scenario Study Task Force (10:30 am)
- 16 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 18 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 23 Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force (noon)
- 24 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)

This document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact John Swanson at [jswanson@mwkog.org](mailto:jswanson@mwkog.org), (202) 962-3295 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD). Allow seven working days for preparation of material.

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