

## Rising Construction Costs Add to Funding Challenges

While construction costs soar globally, governments in metropolitan Washington are finding themselves hard-pressed to raise revenue for transportation projects, according to a new report presented at the July 19 meeting of the Transportation Planning Board.

Arlee Reno of the firm Cambridge Systematics presented the financial information to the TPB. Cambridge Systematics is performing a financial analysis for this year's triennial update to the region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP). In

addition, Mr. Reno has prepared a progress report on the region's short-term funding needs, including a summary of financial actions that have been taken in the last three years and an update on remaining challenges.

Mr. Reno said that last year's SAFETEA-LU federal legislation did provide a significant boost in funding for the region's transportation system, but that the federal and other funding increases have

been offset by rapid inflation in construction costs due to increasing global demand on concrete, asphalt and other materials. In the last two years (2004-2006), construction costs have jumped about 28 percent. Construction costs rose just 17 percent over the previous eight years.

In 2004, the TPB released a report on short-term funding needs called "Time to Act." Since that report, regional leaders have increased funding for a number of immediate needs, including the Metro Matters program, which provided an urgent short-term infusion of funding for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Mr. Reno noted that WMATA's ongoing needs could be met through legislation (H.R. 3496) introduced in 2005 by Congressman Tom

In the last two years, construction costs have jumped 28 percent nationwide, compared to a 17-percent increase over the previous eight years.

## Highlighting Transportation Concerns of Low-Income Populations

Kathy Porter, chair of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) and Mayor of Takoma Park, presented a new report at the July 19 TPB meeting spotlighting the transportation issues faced by low-income populations in the Washington region.

The report is the result of research conducted by an AFA subcommittee on transportation



**Thirty percent of low-income people do not have access to a private automobile.**

Washington Regional Network  
for Livable Communities

## Rising Costs

*continued from page 1*

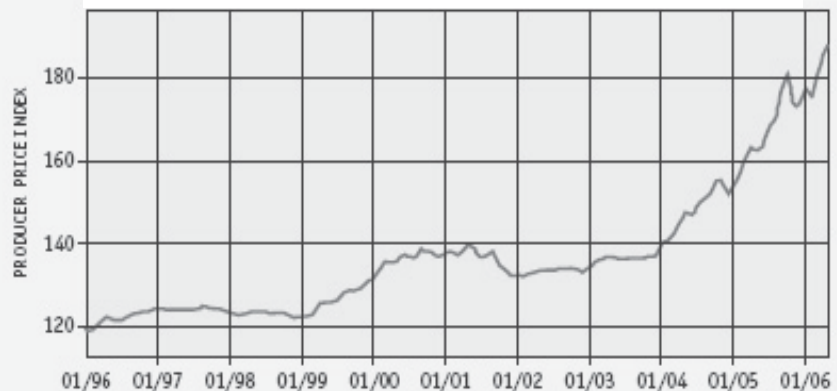
Davis. The bill would authorize \$1.5 billion in federal funding over 10 years, but would require an equivalent state or local match and would only apply to capital expenses. The bill passed the House in July and was sent to the Senate. The Council of the District of Columbia approved its share of a local match for the federal funding, although that approval was contingent upon similar actions in Maryland and Virginia, which have not yet approved the necessary matches.

The region's three jurisdictions collect gasoline tax revenues below the national average of 45.1 cents per gallon. In Virginia, gasoline taxes total 38 cents per gallon. In D.C., gas taxes are 40.9 cents per gallon, while in Maryland they total 41.9 cents per gallon. Although D.C., Maryland and Virginia have a fixed gas tax rate, neighboring states like West Virginia and North Carolina adjust part of their gas tax rate based on changes in fuel prices.

Virginia and Maryland are also part of a relatively small number of states in the nation that have not adopted any 'local option' taxes that give local governments the authority to dedicate a special sales, income, gasoline, or vehicle tax for specific transportation projects or programs. For example, a total of 28 states have a local option sales tax to be used for road projects, transit projects or a combination of both.

Mr. Reno laid out a number of candidate revenue sources, but he emphasized that there is no "one size fits all" solution for all agencies. For example, a number of states have variable

### Increased Road Construction Costs, 1996-2006



**Increased costs for road construction can be attributed to several factors, including rising costs for oil, asphalt, steel, and cement. The graph shows the change over the last decade in the Producer Price Index for Highway and Street Construction.**

rates for their fuel taxes that are indexed to fuel price increases. He also noted that specific projects are increasingly funded through tolling, pricing and other direct user fees. But he added that general revenue sources are still needed to fund maintenance, preservation and operations.

As a longer-term solution, Mr. Reno suggested that states might consider implementing fees on vehicle-miles-of-travel (VMT), which would charge drivers for the number of miles they travel. He said that additional analysis is needed to examine public acceptability and different ways in which a VMT fee system might work.

In addition to reporting on unfunded needs, Mr. Reno briefed the TPB on the financial analysis for the CLRP. Federal law requires the financial analysis to show that anticipated revenues over the coming decades will be roughly equivalent to expenditures. Mr. Reno said the CLRP financial analysis was still draft, but preliminary findings indicate that transportation revenues between 2007 and 2030 will be more than \$104 billion. Anticipated expenditures, reflecting projects included in the CLRP, are expected to exceed \$107 billion. The shortfall of approximately \$3 billion between 2007 and 2030 is attributed to unmet WMATA needs, which result in constraints on transit ridership in the out-years of the plan. ■

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## **Access for All Advisory Committee**

### **Subcommittee on Transportation Concerns of Low-Income Populations**

#### **Findings**

- The low-income communities in the Washington area are clustered on the eastern side of the region, and for every job created on the eastern side of the region, twenty are created on the western side.
- This regional imbalance contributes to rush-hour congestion and long commutes for workers living in the eastern side of the region.
- The land around the eastern Metrorail stations is highly accessible yet underutilized, offering great potential for new economic development.
- Shifting future job growth and household growth to the eastern side of the region would increase transit use and decrease driving and congestion across the whole region.
- Thirty-percent of low-income individuals do not have access to a private automobile and are therefore dependent on transit.
- Transportation plans tend to favor expensive, auto-oriented highway and rail projects rather than enhancing bus services and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Transit information targeted towards individuals with limited English skills is inadequate.

#### **Recommendations**

- Encourage increased density around rail transit stations in the region, while mitigating negative impacts of new development of low-income residents.
- Balance the job growth between the eastern and western sides of the region.
- Increase the quality of bus transit service, especially by improving bus stops.
  - Adopt uniform standards for safe and accessible bus stops and pathways to bus stops.
  - Prioritize bus stop improvements in areas with high concentrations of poverty and high levels of bus transit use.
  - Design transit stops and stations to accommodate the widest range of potential users, including people with disabilities and persons with limited English skills.

### **Low-Income** *continued from page 1*

barriers faced by low-income communities. This subcommittee, chaired by D.C. Ward 8 resident Brenda Richardson, formalized its findings and recommendations in the report, which was released last month.

Ms. Richardson presented an overview of the report's findings and recommendations to the board. The findings include issues with access to jobs and services, and transit dependency of the low-income population. The report recommends several steps toward resolving these issues. Findings and recommendations of the report are listed in the box above.

The report was well received by the board. "I want to applaud the work that's been done here," said Christopher Zimmerman, TPB member from

Arlington County.

One of the report's most immediate impacts was a proposal by Michelle Pourciau, TPB board member from the District of Columbia. "Buses are so important for us, but we don't have an organized way of talking about buses (at the TPB). When we look at the work of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee and how it's helped us prioritize projects in the Transportation Improvement Program and the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan, I think it's just natural for us to also have a bus transit subcommittee." Chairman Knapp agreed to consider the formation of such a subcommittee..

The full report is available online at [www.mwco.org/transportation/documents/low\\_income\\_report.asp](http://www.mwco.org/transportation/documents/low_income_report.asp). ■

## Regional Bike/Ped Plan Gets TPB Approval

The TPB voted at its July 19 meeting to approve the region's first comprehensive, region-wide plan for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The plan is the first regional bicycle plan since 1995 and the first ever regional pedestrian plan. The plan is grounded in the 1998 TPB Vision which calls for an increase in the availability of walking and biking facilities as safe and convenient transportation options.

After a presentation by TPB staff person Michael Farrell, who explained various aspects of the plan and described examples of projects, the Board unanimously passed a motion to approve the plan. The new plan contains both projects with committed funding that are already in the region's Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), as well as unfunded projects contained in the bicycle and pedestrian plans of individual localities. While projects are



**The regional bike/ped plan would add 482 new miles of shared use trails and paths.**

not prioritized in the plan, it will serve as a guide for future project selection and implementation, including the continued periodic development of a "short-list" of bicycle and pedestrian projects classified as regional priorities.

Farrell noted that the context for approval of the plan includes a time of evolving federal guidance on provision of bicycle and pedestrian



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**The plan includes 247 new miles of bike lanes.**

facilities. Rather than being viewed as a discretionary extra, such accommodation is increasingly regarded as routine and necessary as part of a "complete street." Farrell cited the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge as a recent example. "This is being built with a very high quality pedestrian and bicycle facility—something that, for example, you don't see on the American Legion Bridge or some of the older projects within the region."

The plan includes some best practices guidance for implementing policy goals and designing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. This language was a focus of feedback and discussion leading up to the July 19 TPB meeting. Based on suggestions made by transportation planners in Arlington County and supported by Arlington County Board Member Chris Zimmerman, TPB staff proposed adding guidance to the best practices section regarding regional way-finding and signage for bicyclists and pedestrians. The final plan calls for the TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee to compile and report on national and international best practices regarding pedestrian and bicycle way-finding and signage, and subsequently explore the creation of guidelines for the Washington Region.

In addition to the changes regarding signage, TPB staff incorporated numerous comments on the plan that arose from members of the public, the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee, and transportation staff from around the region.

The complete list of projects included in the plan can be viewed in a searchable, online database that contains information about project stewardship and status. TPB Chairman Michael Knapp urged TPB members and staff to strive to keep the information in the database up-to-date. "There's nothing I find more embarrassing than to find information that was last updated five or six years ago on something that's supposed to be a current project."

Farrell noted that future projects can be added to the database as needed. "The database is a living document, while the plan is a snapshot in time."

TPB Member Kathy Porter, who served as chair of the committee that worked on the 2000 Greenways Report commended the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee for building off of the work that went in to the Greenways Report. "We were very hopeful in that committee that the report we put out wouldn't be the end of this process. I think this is a good next step." ■

## Upcoming TPB Agenda

The TPB's September 20 agenda will include the following items:

- **Briefing on the draft 2006 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and FY 2007-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and air quality conformity analysis.** These documents will be released for public comment at the Citizens Advisory Committee on September 14. The TPB is scheduled to approve the CLRP, TIP and conformity finding on October 20.
- **Briefing on regional management and operations strategies and performance measurement concepts.** John Mason, representing the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, will give a briefing on promising regional transportation system management and operations strategies and performance measurement concepts to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities, as called for in SAFETEA-LU.
- **Briefing on the TPB Access for All Advisory Committee Action-Oriented Comments on the 2006 CLRP.** Each year, the AFA committee reviews and comments on the long-range plan.

- **Status report on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study.** The Board will be briefed on the status of analysis and documentation activities for scenarios that have already been studied, and on proposed scenario development and analysis steps for the next year.

- **Briefing on a gap analysis to identify opportunities for implementing desired transportation and land use scenarios.** This is continuation of recent briefings at the TPB on alternate approaches for strengthening the linkages between transportation and land use planning. See "Looking at Potential Programs" on page 7.

- **Appointment of members of the Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force.** The TPB will appoint members to this task force that will develop a Human Service Transportation Coordinated Plan. See "TPB Moving Forward" on page 7 for details.

- **Approval of letter to the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) on the TPB position for allocating and distributing FTA formula funds available to the Washington urbanized area.** The TPB will be asked to approve a letter articulating its position on the distribution of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds to the portion of the Washington urbanized area within Stafford County. ■

### TPB Alphabet Soup

CAC	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
CLRP	-	Constrained Long-Range Plan
COG	-	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
DDOT	-	District Department of Transportation
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

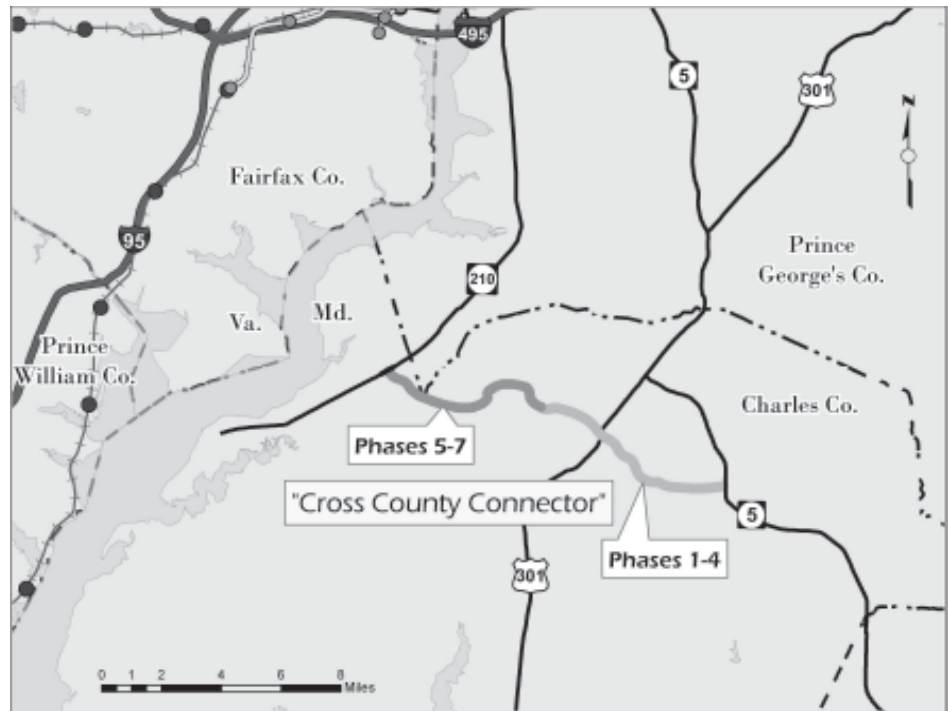
## Charles County Road Included in Draft 2006 Long-Range Plan

TPB members voted in July to include in the air quality analysis for this year's Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) a highway project in the St. Charles Urbanized Area in Charles County, Maryland.

The project entails the final three stages of construction of the Cross County Connector, which will serve as an east-west link between State Routes 5 and 210. Completion of the project, which will include a separated multi-use trail parallel to the roadway, is scheduled for 2009. More details on project specifics can be found in the July-August 2006 issue of *TPB News*.

Present at the July TPB meeting to speak for the project on behalf of Charles County were County Commissioner and TPB member Edith J. Patterson, along with TPB alternate Jason Groth and Melvin C. "Chuck" Beall, Jr., both of the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management. Ms. Patterson told TPB members, "this project has the full support of the Board of Commissioners for Charles County. It has been part of our comprehensive plan since 1987, and is a way to alleviate some of the traffic and congestion that exists in the county."

The delegation from Charles County also responded to concerns raised by other TPB members about the project, some of which had been expressed at the Board's previous meeting in June. Questions posed by TPB members, as well as statements submitted as public comments at the July TPB meeting, focused on the potential environmental impacts of the project, especially on nearby Mattawoman Creek. During the public comment period, Chris



Carney with the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club asserted that "there is not yet an objective assessment of impacts that the Cross County Connector would have on the adjacent Mattawoman Creek."

Groth told the TPB that the issue of impacts to Mattawoman Creek would be addressed during the process of obtaining permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of the Environment. Beall noted that the project underwent environmental review in the mid-90s, and that although full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review was not required because the project will not receive federal funds, the county chose at that point to parallel NEPA guidelines and more recently to supplement the past review document with additional material in accordance with current NEPA requirements.

After supplemental reviews and permits are issued by the relevant federal and state agencies, the project will be the subject of a public hearing tentatively planned for this fall. ■

## Looking at Potential Programs to Link Transportation & Land Use

The TPB continues to consider how to further encourage coordinated transportation and land use planning in the Washington Region, deciding at its July meeting to revisit the issue in September following a staff analysis of regional progress and needs.

Over the past few months, board members have been briefed by TPB staff on strategies used in other regions of the country, including the use of grant programs to fund small-scale transportation improvements that encourage or facilitate desired land use patterns and help relieve travel congestion. For more information on the experience in other regions and the options being considered by the TPB, see the May and July-August 2006 issues of *TPB News*.

At the July TPB meeting, several Board members expressed a desire to get more information about how area jurisdictions are already working toward regional goals. Many jurisdictions have studied opportunities for transit-oriented development and undertaken initiatives to improve pedestrian conditions and transit accessibility in areas that are focal points for development.

Some TPB members also reiterated concerns raised at the June meeting about funding issues. "My biggest concern is that the idea here is to take . . . what little money we get to help fix our roads now and dedicate it towards a project to encourage land use types in order to pursue a goal that we do not even know the feasibility of reaching," said Mick Staton, a TPB member representing Loudoun County.

TPB Chairman Michael Knapp said his hope was to put forward a more detailed framework for members to consider based on feedback received over the past few months, and allow for adequate discussion of major issues including funding and project selection criteria. "There's nothing being scheduled for a vote imminently; this month's discussion is more to make sure we've got all the pieces that need to be addressed before we get to a point of any major decision."

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Ron Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning, said that he would provide the TPB at its September meeting with further staff analysis to identify not yet addressed challenges to implementation of desired transportation/land use scenarios. ■

## TPB Moving Forward With New Human Services Role

On July 19, the TPB approved a proposal to establish a task force to develop a Coordinated Plan for Human Service Transportation for the region. This plan, which is required under last year's federal surface transportation act (SAFETEA-LU), must include priorities and projects for three Federal Transit Administration programs: 1) Formula Program for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310); 2) Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program (Section 5316); and 3) New Freedom Program (Section 5317).

SAFETEA-LU also requires that a recipient be designated by the governor and mayor to administer Section 5316 and 5317 project grants. At its July 19 meeting, the TPB authorized the TPB chairman to submit a formal request to the governors and the mayor that the TPB be designated as the recipient to administer these grants. ■

# 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).

## September 2006

- 8 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 8 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 12 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 13 Bike to Work Day Steering Committee (10 am)
- 14 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 15 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 19 Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- 19 Commuter Connections Subcommittee (noon)
- 19 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 19 Commuter Connection Ridematching Committee (2 pm)
- 20 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- 22 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 28 Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- 28 TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

## October 2006

- 6 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 6 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 10 Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- 12 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 13 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- 17 Employer Outreach Committee (10 am)
- 18 Transportation Planning Board (noon)**

## November 2006

- 3 TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- 3 TPB Steering Committee (noon)
- 8 Bike to Work Day Steering Committee (10 am)
- 9 TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- 10 Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
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- 17 Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- 21 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- 28 Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am)
- 30 TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

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