

TPB Votes to Include ICC and Other Projects in Region's Transportation /Air Quality Analysis

The Transportation Planning Board on April 21 decided to include Maryland's Intercounty Connector (ICC) this year when it evaluates how the region's transportation plan will affect the area's air quality. The proposed highway would link Interstate 270 with Interstate 95 in suburban Maryland.

The vote on April 21 moves the ICC forward in the planning process. The votes in opposition were the three members of the Council of the District of Columbia, the Prince George's County Council and the cities of College Park, Greenbelt and Takoma Park.

Supporters of the ICC say the road is needed to relieve traffic congestion and ease travel across the northern part of the region.

"It is vital from a transportation, environmental and quality of life standpoint to fully understand the ICC," Marsha Kaiser of the Maryland Department of Transportation, said before the vote. She argued that the TPB should not hold the ICC to standards more stringent than other transportation projects like the Wilson Bridge

Maryland Senator John Giannetti, Jr. argued that the ICC would bring economic development to the entire state. "Right now, traffic on I-95 and

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Access for All Committee Issues New Recommendations



The TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee has issued its 2003 Report to the TPB, which includes recommendations on transit services for people with disabilities. Story on page 3.

Photo Courtesy of Easter Seals Project ACTION

New Steps to Strengthen Emergency Preparedness

Regional leaders are stepping up efforts to strengthen regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents.

At the April 21 TPB meeting, David Snyder, Falls Church City Council member, presented options and recommendations for making such improvements. These recommendations were developed in response to a request by the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC). As chair of the Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Task Forces, Mr. Snyder has been a leader on transportation

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Intercounty Connector

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295 is backed up every day... You can't get from Montgomery County to Baltimore," he said.

Citing a previous study, Maryland Delegate Carol Petzold said there would be 553 fewer traffic accidents in local neighborhoods if the ICC were built.

Opponents argue that Maryland's scarce transportation funds could be better spent on maintaining its existing roads and its share of the region's mass transit system. The Prince George's County Council opposed the TPB action because of fears the ICC would tend to push economic development and jobs away from that county and toward Montgomery County.

"I am very concerned that the mechanism proposed to fund this project is going to have a negative impact on other projects" said Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter.

Detailed environmental studies of the ICC are currently being conducted by the Maryland Department of Transportation. Results will be presented this summer.

The TPB will vote on including the ICC in the long range plan in the fall. For more information, including all public comments received on the ICC, go to www.mwcog.org/transportation. ■

Upcoming TPB Agenda

The TPB agenda on May 19 is expected to include:

- Approval of amendment to the FY 2004-09 TIP that is exempt from the air quality conformity requirement to include a feasibility study for improving mobility westbound in the I-66 corridor inside the Capital Beltway from Rosslyn to the Dulles Airport Access Road, as requested by the Virginia Department of Transportation.
- Approval of recommended actions to improve regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents.
- Status report on the TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.
- Briefing on the EPA 8-Hour ozone rule and non-attainment designations, and potential air quality conformity implications for the region.
- Briefing on the Transportation Research Board (TRB) review of the TPB modeling procedures. ■

Walkable Communities Workshops



The TPB hosted eight Walkable Communities workshops, May 5-7, in conjunction with the National Center for Bicycling and Walking. Each workshop featured a community tour in which participants identified obstacles to walking such as missing side-walks, hazardous intersections and dim lighting. The workshop pictured above at the Fort Totten Metro Station in D.C., was cosponsored by the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities.

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components of the region's emergency preparedness efforts.

The TPB will be asked to approve a resolution on May 19 that would endorse the recommendations. The resolution would direct the MOITS Task Forces and working groups to develop a schedule to ensure the expeditious implementation of the improvements over the next six months.

All the major transportation agencies have assigned high-level staff to this task. Technical improvements will include automated sharing of information on roadway conditions and traffic incidents. Operational improvements will ensure that duties are assigned within each transportation management center and that communication is rapid among operations staff. Major agencies will designate operations staff exclusively to monitor roadway and transit systems and be ready to initiate and shepherd regional communications and coordination during an incident.

These improvements will require additional money. The pending reauthorization of the federal surface transportation programs is expected to provide new funding and authority for regional incident management improvements. ■

Access for All Committee Issues Recommendations

By Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB Staff

The TPB's Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee has made four recommendations for the TPB to consider when updating the region's long-range transportation plan and six-year Transportation Improvement Program. The recommendations were included in the committee's 2003 Report, which was presented to the TPB on April 21 by AFA Committee Chair Kathy Porter, mayor of Takoma Park.

The Access for All committee includes community leaders representing low-income groups, minority groups, and persons with disabilities. The group is responsible for advising the TPB on issues and services important to communities typically not represented in the transportation planning process.

The first recommendation is to develop more effective communication of regional transit information. In particular, the AFA would like to see improved information on bus and rail for limited English proficiency groups. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has already implemented several of the AFA recommendations related to this topic, including a video for people with limited English proficiency on how to use the bus and rail system. WMATA plans to add a Spanish greeting as an option on their general information line.

The second recommendation is to prioritize regional and local transportation services for low-income persons. Bus services are vital for low-income people—and many people are not simply transit dependent, they are bus dependent. The AFA has continually emphasized that the needs of the regional bus system should not take a back seat as the region grapples with tight budgets. Pedestrian safety is another issue that the AFA has identified as disproportionately impacting low-income and minority populations.

The AFA has spent much of the last year developing a series of recommendations to improve transit services for people with disabilities. The TPB officially transmitted these recommendations to the WMATA Board in January 2004. The AFA supports encouraging persons with disabilities, with the right kind of assistance, to use the regular bus and rail system. However, MetroAccess, the curb-to-curb service for people with disabilities, continues to be the only way some people with disabilities can get to medical appointments, work and social events. The AFA stresses that a study should be conducted to identify ways to serve the greatest number of people on MetroAccess within the current budget. The study would be conducted in the same time frame and budget as WMATA's successful "mainstreaming" study completed in the summer of 2003.

The last AFA recommendation is to promote development around transit stations, but with concern and care for the surrounding communities. Like the TPB, the AFA has expressed concerns about the disparity in development between the eastern and western sides of the region. Concerns about the potential negative impacts of gentrification related to transit-oriented development, such as increased housing costs and displacement of existing residents and businesses, have been raised by the AFA, and the recommendation includes support for state and local policies that mitigate the negative impacts to the extent possible.

At its April 21, 2004 meeting, the TPB expressed strong interest and support for the AFA report and recommendations. The TPB asked that the committee further develop recommendations concerning bus transit dependency, fares, level of service and possible transit-oriented development policies and tools.

The AFA committee's 2003 report can be found at <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation> under "Featured Publications." ■

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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).

May 2004

- May 4 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- May 4 — 15th Annual Public Transit Forum (11 am)
- May 7 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- May 7 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- May 13 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- May 14 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- May 18 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- May 18 — Commuter Operations Subcommittee (noon)
- May 18 — Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- May 18 — Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (2 pm)
- May 19 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- May 20 — Access for All Advisory Committee (1 pm)
- May 21 — Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- May 25 — Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am)
- May 27 — Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)

June 2004

- June 1 — Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- June 3 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (1:00 pm)
- June 4 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- June 4 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- June 10 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- June 11 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- June 15 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- June 15 — Transportation Management Association (TMA) Advisory Group (noon)
- June 16 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- June 22 - Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) - *tentative*

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