

TPB Faces Key Vote on ICC and Other Projects

The Transportation Planning Board will vote April 21 on whether Maryland's Intercounty Connector (ICC), along with other projects, should move forward in the amendment process for the region's long-range transportation plan.

The last two TPB meetings have been dominated by discussion of the ICC, a proposed east-west road that would link I-270 near Gaithersburg with I-95/US 1 near Laurel.

The ICC is part of a package of 10 major projects submitted for inclusion in this year's amendments to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and the fiscal 2005-10 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). On April 21, the TPB will vote on whether these 10 projects should be included in the required air quality

analysis that is part of the amendment process.

Although the CLRP amendments and the TIP will be considered later this year for final approval, the approval in April of the project submissions for air quality analysis is an essential step in keeping

the amendment process on schedule. The air quality analysis requires intensive staff effort. If projects are later changed, the amendment

In order to receive federal funding, the ICC, like all projects, must be included in the region's Constrained Long-Range Plan.

process could be delayed several months.

The projects were released for public comment on February 12. By the end of March, the TPB had received more than 1,500 comments on the ICC. The comment period has been extended to April 10.

Since taking office in 2002, Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich has labeled the ICC his "number one transportation priority" and has put the project on a fast track. The project is on an "environmental streamlining" list of 13 projects receiving accelerated environmental reviews under an executive order by President Bush.

Governor Ehrlich hopes to break ground on the project before the end of his term in 2006. In order to receive federal funding, the ICC, like all projects, must be included in the CLRP and TIP. (The TIP is essentially a more detailed six-year subset of the CLRP.) The Maryland Department

May 7 is Bike to Work Day



May 7 is Bike to Work Day in the Washington region, according to a proclamation approved by the Transportation Planning Board. Celebrations will take place at 11 "pitstops" across the region, like the one pictured above at Freedom Plaza in DC. To register for Bike to Work Day, see www.waba.org.

of Transportation (MDOT) has said that including the project in the CLRP this year is key to keeping the project on schedule.

The Intercounty Connector was first proposed in the 1950s as part of an outer beltway. Although other segments of the outer beltway were dropped over the years, the ICC has remained in the Montgomery County Master Plan.

Procedural Issues at the TPB

At the TPB's March 17 meeting, a number of questions focused on procedural aspects of how the Intercounty Connector relates to the CLRP/TIP amendment process:

• ***Is the TPB being asked to approve something before its regional implications are known?***

Ron Kirby, COG Director of Transportation, explained that the TPB on April 21 will **not** be voting on whether to include the ICC and other projects in the CLRP and TIP. Rather, the board will vote on whether the submitted projects should be tested for air quality impacts.

If this air quality analysis finds that the regional emissions forecasts for the proposed CLRP and TIP (including the new projects) are in "conformity" with regional ceilings on transportation emissions, the TPB will vote later this year on whether to amend the CLRP and TIP to include the project submissions. The vote on final approval is currently scheduled for September.

MDOT has asked that two alignments be included in the TPB's air quality analysis. MDOT will select one alignment for inclusion in the final package of CLRP/TIP amendments that the TPB will vote on this fall.

• ***Doesn't the project have to reach a certain stage in the federally required environmental***

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Modern-Day Streetcars Coming Soon to a Neighborhood Near You?

A Public Meeting
Hosted by the TPB's
Citizens Advisory
Committee

Wed, April 28, 7:00-8:30 pm
Benjamin Orr Elem. School
2200 Minnesota Ave, SE
Washington



Come hear about plans to build light rail in the District of Columbia, including a starter line in Anacostia that is scheduled to be up and running by 2006. See www.mwcog.org or call John Swanson at 202-962-3295.

review process before it can go into the CLRP?

TPB members asked if the federally required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process had to be completed or had to reach a certain stage of completion before a project could be included in the CLRP. MDOT is performing the NEPA process.

Mr. Kirby responded that it is not necessary to complete the NEPA process for a project to be included in the CLRP. In fact, a final Environmental Impact Statement (the EIS is the primary document associated with the NEPA process) cannot be approved unless the project is included in the CLRP. He said that large projects often are included initially in the CLRP as "place holders" which later can be changed. For example, he noted that the Wilson Bridge project was originally included in the CLRP as a toll facility, which was later changed.

Mr. Kirby also emphasized that the CLRP is a 30-year document. For projects planned a decade or more from now, the NEPA process would not normally begin until much later.

• ***What's the difference between a project that is listed as a "study" in the CLRP/TIP and one that is slated for "construction"?***

Projects that are listed as "studies" in the CLRP are not subject to air quality analysis and financial constraint requirements.

When a large project is listed as a “construction” project — which is what is being proposed for the ICC — it must include a financial plan showing that projected revenues can be “reasonably expected to be available.”

In addition, the inclusion of a project for construction in the CLRP means it must be coded and analyzed for air quality impacts. In order to be coded, a proposed project must be sufficiently specific. For example, road projects must include the number of interchanges, lanes, specifications on bus service, and other details. In the case of the ICC, Maryland DOT has asked that two alignments be coded and analyzed.

• **How many alternatives are tested in the TPB’s air quality analysis?**

Typically, all amendments for the CLRP/TIP are bundled and tested jointly. However, it is technically possible for an individual project to be analyzed separately, and in some cases this has been done in the past. Based on current plans, this year’s CLRP amendments, including the ICC, will be bundled for the air quality analysis.

The air quality analysis does not include a separate “no-build” analysis. Essentially, last year’s CLRP, upon which the 2004 amendments will be added, represents a baseline acting as a “no-build” alternative.

The Environmental Impact Statement for the ICC, which is separate from the CLRP/TIP amendment process, is required under federal law to include a “no-build” scenario.

Other key questions

Marsha Kaiser of MDOT responded to a number of questions that were raised at the TPB meeting on February 18. Ms. Kaiser’s letter to TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman can be found at www.mwcog.org/transportation. (See page 5 of the updated project submissions for the 2004 CLRP/FY 2005-10 TIP; Item 11 of the March 17 TPB meeting.)

A number of questions raised in public comments and discussed at the TPB meetings do not directly relate to the TPB’s responsibilities, but they do involve important regional concerns:

• **Funding priorities.** Several TPB members and project opponents continue to question whether

the ICC will soak up so much funding that other important projects will be precluded. In particular, members expressed concern about the proposed use of Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bond funding, which would be repaid through future federal-aid transportation funding. MDOT has responded that the GARVEE bond debt financing will amount to approximately 10-15 percent of MDOT’s annual federal apportionment, and will have a minimal impact on future funding opportunities.

• **Economic impacts.** Some members of the TPB and ICC opponents have expressed

By the end of March, the TPB had received more than 1,500 public comments on the Intercounty Connector. The comments can be viewed at www.mwcog.org/transportation/public/comments.asp.

concerns that the project will have a negative economic impact on eastern parts of the region, particularly Prince George’s County. Last year’s TPB Chairman Peter Shapiro has dubbed the ICC the “Prince George’s Bypass.” MDOT has responded that the University of Maryland is conducting a study of economic impacts that “will measure transportation-related factors affecting economic strength such as business travel costs, changes in business market, personal travel costs, access to employment and quality of life.”

• **Induced demand.** Critics are concerned the ICC will generate a significant amount of new travel that otherwise would not occur. TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman has asked how these “induced demand” effects will be examined in the ICC study process. MDOT has indicated that a panel of land use experts is looking at induced demand issues. Ron Kirby of COG indicated that the land use forecasts developed at COG will be adjusted by the planning directors of the region’s jurisdictions to reflect the two ICC alignments, and that the TPB’s travel models will use these land use

See **ICC** on page 4

inputs in addressing induced demand associated with the ICC.

• **Environmental, safety and various local impacts.**

Conflicting public comments received by the TPB have claimed the ICC will have both positive and negative impacts on a number of issues, which are not directly related to the TPB process. MDOT has responded that these issues will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the ICC is scheduled to be completed this fall. A final alternative will be selected later this fall. The final EIS is scheduled for approval in March 2005 with a "Record of Decision" next May. Construction is planned between 2006 and 2010. ■

Not the ICC:

Project Submissions That Haven't Gotten Attention

In addition to the ICC, nine other projects were submitted for the 2004 amendments to the CLRP and the FY2005-10 TIP.

- Add auxiliary lane to the reconstruction of MD 202. Change completion date from 2005 to 2015.
- Remove HOV lanes in reconstruction of MD 4.
- Change completion date from 2003 to 2010 for widening of Father Hurley/Ridge Rd from I-270 to MD27.
- Add eastbound auxiliary lane to widening of I-66 from US 29 to VA 234.
- Change project limits for widening US 50 in Virginia: Add a segment from Loudoun/Fairfax County line to VA 659 relocated. Completion date for project changed from 2020 to 2012.
- Change project limits for widening VA 123: Add a segment from Hooes Rd to Lee Chapel Rd. Completion date remains 2015.
- Change project limits for widening VA 234: Add a segment from Country Club Dr to Waterway Dr. Completion date remains 2006.
- Modify the Fairfax County Parkway to convert the existing 5th and 6th lanes to HOV from Sunrise Valley Dr. to the Dulles Toll Rd. Completion date is 2015.
- Add an additional lane in each direction to the construction project for the Battlefield Parkway from Kincaid Blvd to VA 7. Completion date for project changed from 2006 to 2009.

Commuter Connections Work Program Approved

The Commuter Connections work program, approved by the TPB on March 17, contains a variety of transportation demand management services:

- **Employer Outreach** assists employers voluntarily implement programs for teleworking, carpooling, bicycling or other alternative travel modes.
- The **Guaranteed Ride Home** program provides up to four free rides per year in a taxi or rental car for commuters in the event of an unexpected emergency or unscheduled overtime.
- The Commuter Connections **Operations Center** provides information and ride-matching services



Fifteen percent of the region's workers telecommutes one or more days a week. Surveys show that more would like to.

through its phone line (1-800-745-RIDE) and website www.commuterconnections.org.

- The **Telework Resource Center** helps businesses and individuals find ways to facilitate working at home or at satellite locations.
- **Integrated Ridesharing** products include better rideshare information through software improvements and the installation of electronic traveler information kiosks.
- **Mass Marketing** is a continuous, year-round media branding campaign.

The work program is funded at \$4.979 million. The program is estimated to have reduced almost 100,000 daily vehicle trips each year. Overall, the program costs 15 cents for each trip reduced and one cent for each vehicle mile of travel reduced. To see the work program, go to www.mwcog.org. ■



Vanpool and carpool matching has been a Commuter Connections service since 1974.

TPB Work Program Approved

The Transportation Planning Board on March 17 approved its work program for fiscal year 2005. The TPB is required to annually approve this document, known as the Unified Planning Work Program, in order to receive federal funding for transportation planning.

The program is funded at \$7.9 million. The elements in the program are 80 percent federally funded, 10 percent state and 10 percent local. The total funding level is 2.9 percent less than fiscal 2004. The budget is relatively conservative because Congress has not yet reauthorized the federal surface transportation programs and future funding remains uncertain. This year's decrease largely came out of the Household Travel Survey planning efforts. Staff is currently designing the methodology for the survey, which will begin in fiscal year 2005 if funding is identified.

The work program includes a number of activities to enhance the TPB's travel forecasting capabilities. Among these activities is a new study of Metro's Park and Ride lots, which will be performed with carryover funding from the previous year's work program. To see the full work program, go to www.mwco.org/transportation. ■

TPB Alphabet Soup	
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
MWAQC	- Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
MDOT	- Maryland Department of Transportation
SIP	- State Implementation Plan- air quality
TIP	- Transportation Improvement Program
TPB	- Transportation Planning Board
UPWP	- Unified Planning Work Program
VDOT	- Virginia Department of Transportation
WMATA	- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Safety Campaign Begins



Think of the Impact You Could Make.

Family and friends are important to all of us.
Drive safely – and share the road with pedestrians.

It could save your life...
or change it forever.

A public safety program of the Division of Caltrans, Maryland and Virginia.

The TPB's Street Smart pedestrian/bicycle safety campaign will launch a new round of advertizing in April with radio spots, posters at transit stations and bus backs, and other outreach.

Upcoming April Agenda

The TPB's April 21 agenda will include:

- **Review** of comments received and **approval** of project submissions for inclusion in the air quality conformity assessment for the 2004 Constrained Long-Range Plan and FY2005-10 Transportation Improvement Program.
- **Approval** of the scope of work for the air quality conformity assessment for the 2004 CLRP and FY2005-10 TIP.
- **Report** on transportation recommendations of the Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination Annex.
- **Briefing** on 2003 report of the TPB Access for All Advisory Committee. ■

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).

April 2004

- April 2 — TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- April 2 — TPB Program Committee (noon)
- April 5 — Press Conference: Kicking Off the 2004 Street Smart Campaign, 2 pm
Event will be held outside in the 4200 block of Wilson Boulevard in Arlington (Ballston).
- April 6 — Regional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Marketing Group (10 am)
- April 7 — Telecommuting Ad-Hoc Group (10 am)
- April 13 — Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- April 15 — TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- April 16 — Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- April 20 — Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- April 21 — Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- April 27 — Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am)
- April 28 — **Outreach Meeting on Light Rail in the District of Columbia, 7:00 - 8:30 pm, Benjamin Orr Elementary School, 2200 Minnesota Ave, Se, Washington.**
See www.mwcog.org. Meeting sponsored by the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

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 (noon)
- May 21 — Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9 am)
- May 25 — Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am)
- May 27 — Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)

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