

## Time to Act on Transportation Funding

Chronic funding shortfalls are eroding the region's ability to meet basic short-term transportation needs, according to a new study released by the Transportation Planning Board on February 18.

TPB Chairman Chris Zimmerman called upon regional leaders at the federal, state and local levels to boost funding levels.

"We are not talking about amenities here," he said. "We have a choice about what our very near future will look like."

The analysis, compiled in a brochure called "Time to Act," estimates that anticipated revenues over the next six years will be less than half what is needed just to meet basic priority needs.



The *Time to Act* brochure reports that the region needs to double anticipated revenues to meet priority transportation needs in the next six years.

Transportation revenues between 2005 and 2010 are expected to be \$12.2 billion, while total needs will be \$25.4 billion. The shortfall was identified at roughly \$13.2 billion over the next six years.

According to the analysis, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) needs more than \$12.2 billion during the next six



"This analysis addresses a situation of dire and urgent need," said TPB Chairman Christopher Zimmerman at a press conference on February 18 to release the *Time to Act* report. Pictured behind Mr. Zimmerman, left to right, are Richard White, WMATA; Marsha Kaiser, MDOT; TPB Vice Chair Michael Knapp of the Montgomery County Council; Dan Tangherlini, DDOT; Tom Farley, VDOT; and TPB Vice Chair Phil Mendelson of the D.C. Council.

## ICC Submitted for Long-Range Plan Amendments

Maryland's Intercounty Connector (ICC) is one of 10 significant projects submitted for this year's amendments to the region's long-range transportation plan and six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

At its meeting on April 21, the Transportation Planning Board will decide whether to approve the submitted projects for inclusion in the air quality conformity analysis that must accompany the 2004 amendments to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) and

## Time to Act *continued from page 1*

years just to fund vital preservation expenses, plus additional equipment and services to accommodate new riders.

"The Metro system is on the verge of failing in its ability to provide a safe, efficient system," said Richard White, WMATA CEO and General Manager at the press conference where the *Time to Act* report was released.

Regional transit and highway needs identified in the study include:

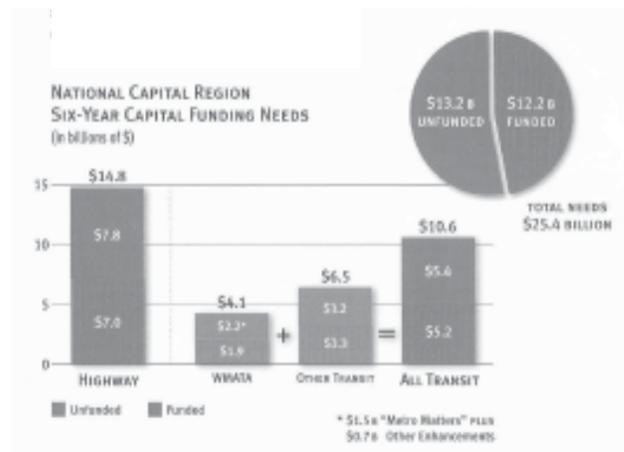
- Deferred bridge replacement and bridge and highway maintenance.
- New technology to monitor and optimize traffic flow and incident management.
- Widening of selected highway segments and construction of new interchanges and facilities.
- Improved sidewalk and bicycle facilities.
- Rehabilitation and maintenance of the region's Metrorail and Metrobus system.
- Increasing capacity of the MARC and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter rail services.
- Enhancing the region's local bus systems.

"The important thing to remember is that the projects outlined are not nice-to-haves, but must-haves," said TPB Second Vice Chair Michael Knapp who is a Montgomery County Councilmember. "We are unified as a body because these projects are critical."

TPB First Vice Chair Phil Mendelson emphasized air quality impacts. "If we're having difficulty meeting federal air quality standards now, that problem will continue and be even greater if we don't address these needs," he said.

The release of the study was meant to coincide with Congress' consideration of the reauthorization of federal transportation legislation, which occurs every six years. This year's federal reauthorization represents a key opportunity for the Washington region to boost funding levels.

But federal funding, even at its most optimistic levels, will not be enough to meet the shortfall. The *Time to Act* report noted that state and local



governments, whose budget processes are currently underway, should be called upon to increase funding for the region's critical needs. TPB leaders have emphasized that all levels of government—federal, state and local—must be engaged in a partnership to address this funding challenge.

"We all really have to work to impress upon the people who are right now making the decisions about how much funding is going to be available," said Chairman Zimmerman.

"While these are big dollar numbers, they are also numbers very much within reach of an economy the size of the National Capital Region," Zimmerman added.

To see the *Time to Act* brochure, go to [www.mwcog.org/transportation/](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/). n

## Upcoming March Agenda

The TPB's March 17 agenda will include:

- Approval of the FY2005 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the TPB's work program.
- Approval of the FY2005 Commuter Connections Work Program
- Briefing on project submissions and comments received to date for the 2004 CLRP amendments and FY2005-10 TIP. (The comment period has been extended through April 10.)
- Report on coordination planning recommendations for regional transportation evacuation/protective actions.
- Briefing on 2003 report of the TPB Access for All Advisory Committee n

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## ICC *continued from page 1*

the Fiscal Year 2005-2010 TIP.

Although the CLRP amendments and new TIP are scheduled to be considered for final approval this summer, the approval of the project submissions in April is considered an essential step in keeping the process on schedule.

Under federal law, any time the CLRP and TIP are amended, the TPB must first approve a “conformity determination” showing that forecasted emissions levels will conform to air quality improvement limits established in the region’s air quality plan.

At the TPB meeting on February 18, Ron Kirby, COG Director of Transportation Planning, emphasized that the air quality conformity analysis requires intensive staff effort. If the projects are changed later, the process could be delayed several months.

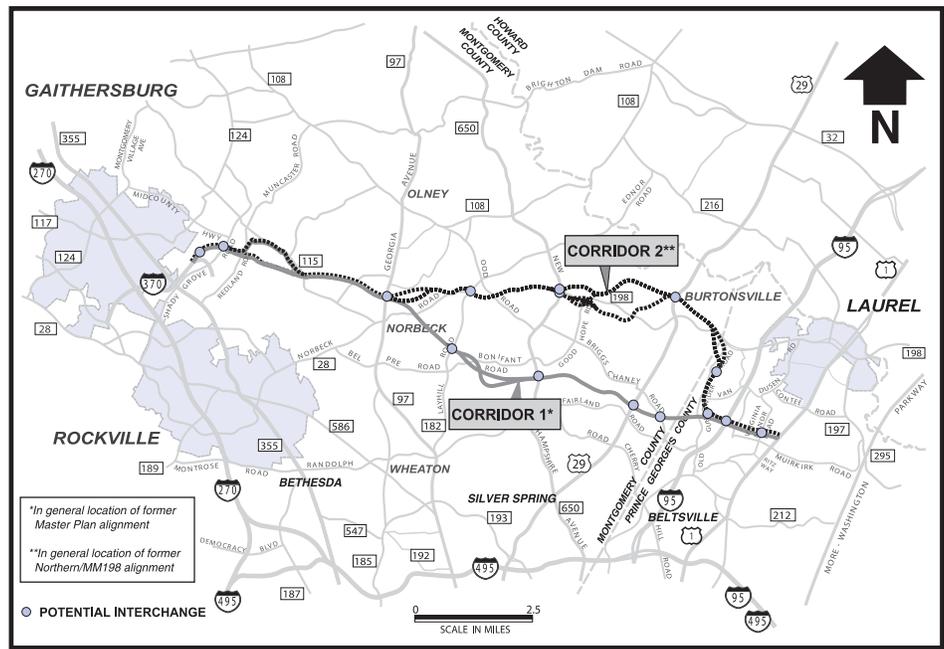
The CLRP/TIP project submissions, including the ICC, were released for public comment on February 12. The comment period has been extended through April 10, which is 11 days before the TPB is scheduled to vote on the submissions.

### *ICC debated for 50 years*

The Intercountry Connector would link I-270 near Gaithersburg with US 1 near Laurel, Maryland. The corridor is approximately 20 miles long.

The project is a portion of an outer beltway that was proposed in the 1950s by the National Capital Planning Commission. In 1968, Montgomery County dropped the outer beltway from its land use plans, but retained the ICC link between I-270 and I-95/US 1. The project has remained in the Montgomery County Master Plan.

In 1983 and 1997, the Maryland State Highway Administration issued Draft Environmental Impact Statements for the project and held public hearings, but no final decisions were reached. Former Governor Parris Glendening halted the ICC study in 1999 citing environmental concerns.



The Maryland DOT has asked the TPB to include two potential alignments for the Intercountry Connector in the regional air quality conformity analysis. (Map courtesy of Maryland State Highway Administration.)

The project was given new life in 2002 with the election of Governor Robert Ehrlich. “Since Day One of the Ehrlich administration, we have been focused on restarting the Intercountry Connector,” the governor wrote in a statement on the MDOT website.

### *Lively discussions at TPB*

Last year’s CLRP update and the FY2004-09 TIP included the ICC as a project for study and for “hardship and protective” right-of-way acquisition, which permits land purchases to preserve potential alignments. This year’s proposed CLRP/TIP amendments would slate the project for construction, with a completion date of 2010.

The inclusion of the project for construction means it will be included in the regional emissions analysis needed for air quality conformity. The submission of the project for the CLRP/TIP must also include a financial statement showing that funding will be available for the project. Under federal law, the CLRP and TIP may only include projects for which funding is “reasonably expected to be available.”

In a lively discussion at the TPB meeting on February 18, board members and the public raised

*See Intercountry Connector on page 4*

some key issues related to the ICC project:

- **Timing.** Some TPB members expressed concern that the inclusion in the CLRP/TIP as a project for construction seems premature. They noted that the conformity analysis requires project specifications that are not yet determined, including alignment, number of lanes and number of interchanges.

Marsha Kaiser of MDOT responded that inclusion this year was important for keeping the project on schedule. She also noted that TPB staff will be modeling specifications for two alignments in the conformity analysis. Both alignments are under consideration in the federally required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. Supporters also noted that projects are frequently included in the CLRP before the EIS process is finished.

- **Financing Mechanism.** The ICC project will be partly funded through General Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds, which are repaid through future federal-aid transportation funding.

Several members expressed concern that GARVEE financing could squeeze out other important transportation projects in the future. Kathy Porter, mayor of Takoma Park, said that "because a decision is being made to dedicate future federal funds to this project, we are precluding, without public discussion of pros and cons or comparing one project to another, using that funding for other projects."

Ms. Kaiser responded that the project would use a very small amount of anticipated federal funds. "We believe it's a prudent way to pay for a very large project. In the long run it will save us money if we can bond finance it ahead, rather than having to build it over a 20-year time span." She said.

- **Economic implications.** Some members expressed concern that the project would adversely affect the economies of eastern parts of the region. MDOT has responded that information on such impacts will be provided through a forthcoming study by the University of Maryland.

- **Safety impacts.** Maryland Delegate Carol Petzold emphasized that this project will improve safety by taking traffic off two-lane

## **Citizens Advisory Committee Appointed**

The TPB appointed its 2004 Citizens Advisory Committee on February 18. The new committee chair is Dennis Jaffe of the District of Columbia. The new members are:

**District of Columbia:** Don Edwards, Harold Foster, Dennis Jaffe, Lee Schoenecker, Merle Van Horne, Lawrence Martin (alternate), Alphonso Coles (alternate)

**Suburban Maryland:** Ephrem Asebe, Nathaniel Bryant, Stephen Cafilisch, Mark Friis, Emmet Tydings

**Northern Virginia:** Stephen Cerny, Robert Chase, Michael LaJuene, Allen Muchnick, Stewart Schwartz

community roads. "To hold up the construction of the ICC is a statement to my neighborhood... that we don't care about their safety," she said.

- **Response to public comment.** The CLRP/TIP amendment schedule originally called for the TPB to vote on the project submissions at its March 17 meeting. Chairman Zimmerman and others at the February 18 meeting expressed doubts as to whether this schedule would provide adequate time for the preparation of responses to public comments. Because of these concerns about timing, and because additional information and clarifications have been received regarding the projects, the public comment period for the project submissions has been extended to April 10. The TPB is now scheduled to vote on the submissions at its April 21 meeting.

For a full listing of all the projects for this year's CLRP amendments and the FY 2005-10 TIP, see [www.mwcog.org/transportation](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation). n

## **Other February Items**

The TPB's February agenda also included:

- Review and release for public comment of draft FY2005 *Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP), which is the TPB's annual work program.
- Review and release for public comment of draft FY2005 *Commuter Connections Work Program*. n

## Much of the Region's Ozone Not Generated Locally

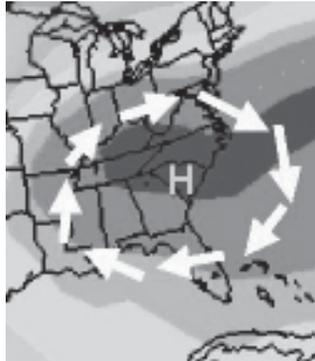
On our worst air quality days, well over half the measured ground-level ozone in the Washington region originates in upwind states, according to research conducted by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the University of Maryland.

Tad Aburn of MDE gave a briefing on "ozone transport" at the TPB meeting on February 18. "Ozone transport" is the term used for ozone pollution that is carried considerable distances from one region to another.

Ozone is formed when two types of emissions—Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)—cook in the sun on hot summer days. The Washington region is in violation of national standards for ground-level ozone. Motor vehicles are a major source of NOx and VOC emissions, and the TPB is required to show that its long-range plan and six-year program contribute to the region's air quality improvement goals.

Mr. Aburn said that the study of ozone transport is "very much a finger-pointing exercise." Ozone transported into our region is later transported into other regions. However, he said that "we have relatively clean hands in Maryland" when it comes to producing emissions locally. The puzzle is figuring out why our ozone pollution levels are so high when the emissions produced in the region are comparatively low.

Mr. Aburn said that our region's unique meteorology is part of the problem. In the summer, a "Bermuda High" pressure sets up over the Carolinas. This pressure system circulates air clockwise, passing along the Ohio River valley which has very high power plant emissions, and then moving into our region.



The "Bermuda High" pressure system circulates air from the Ohio River valley into the Washington region. (Chart courtesy of MDE.)

This weather pattern means that locally generated emissions reductions in the Washington region are much less effective at improving air quality than in other regions of the country, such as Atlanta.

Mr. Aburn said that localized measures to reduce vehicle ("mobile source") emissions remain necessary because on some days, local mobile-source emissions drive the region's high ozone. He also cautioned that metropolitan planning organizations like the TPB should not expect changes in the federally mandated air quality "conformity process," which requires the TPB to show that the emissions produced under the region's long-range transportation plan and six-year program are within regional air quality limits. "The reality is that conformity, whether we like it or not, is here," he said.

But Mr. Aburn did suggest that the areas to the south and west should be subject to the same level of mobile source controls now required in the Washington region. "The playing field for mobile source controls should be leveled from Atlanta to Boston," he said.

To see the full presentation, go to [www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb/documents](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/tpb/documents). n

### TPB Alphabet Soup

<b>CAC</b>	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
<b>CLRP</b>	-	Constrained Long-Range Plan
<b>COG</b>	-	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
<b>DDOT</b>	-	District Department of Transportation
<b>EPA</b>	-	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<b>FHWA</b>	-	Federal Highway Administration
<b>FTA</b>	-	Federal Transit Administration
<b>MWAQC</b>	-	Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee
<b>MDE</b>	-	Maryland Department of the Environment
<b>MDOT</b>	-	Maryland Department of Transportation
<b>SIP</b>	-	State Implementation Plan for air quality
<b>TIP</b>	-	Transportation Improvement Program
<b>TPB</b>	-	Transportation Planning Board
<b>UPWP</b>	-	Unified Planning Work Program
<b>VDOT</b>	-	Virginia Department of Transportation
<b>WMATA</b>	-	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

# 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).

## March 2004

- March 5 – TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- March 5 – TPB Program Committee (noon)
- March 9 – Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy and Technical Task Forces Joint Meeting (12:30 pm)
- March 11 – TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (6 pm)
- March 12 – Joint Technical Working Group for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (noon)
- March 16 – Commuter Connections Subcommittee (10 am)
- March 16 – Commuter Operations Subcommittee (noon)
- March 16 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee (1 pm)
- March 16 – Commuter Connections Employer Outreach Ad-Hoc Group (2 pm)
- March 17 – Transportation Planning Board (noon)**
- March 19 – Travel Forecasting Subcommittee (9:30 am)
- March 23 – Travel Management Subcommittee (9 am) *tentative*
- March 24 – Aviation Technical Subcommittee (10:30 am)
- March 25 – Access for All Advisory Committee (noon)

## April 2004

- April 2 – TPB Technical Committee (9 am)
- April 2 – TPB Program Committee (noon)
- 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) *tentative*
- April 28 – Outreach Meeting on Light Rail in the District of Columbia, 7:00 - 8:30 pm, location to be determined. See [www.mwcog.org](http://www.mwcog.org) for details. Meeting sponsored by the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee**

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