

**Project Implementation Working Group
Fairfax County Division of Transportation
Legato Building, 4th Floor Conference Room
Fairfax, VA**

Minutes

Meeting Held on March 21, 2014, 10:00 a.m.

Participants:

Marty Nohe – Chairman, NVTA
Rick Canizales – Prince William County
John Mason – NVTA
Cynthia Porter Johnson – PRTC
Jim Maslanka – City of Alexandria
Allison Davis – WMATA
Richard West – Town of Dumfries
Helen Cuervo – VDOT
Rich Roisman – MWCOG/TPB
Claire Gron – NVTC
Jillian Linnell – NVTC
Kanti Srikanth – VDOT-NOVA
Dalia Leven – AECOM
David Roden – AECOM
Ron Kirkpatrick – Fairfax County Public Works
Karyn Moreland – Fairfax County DOT
Noelle Dominguez – Fairfax County DOT
Mike Longhi – NVTA
Christine Hoeffner – VRE
Bob Brown – Loudon County
Joe Kroboth – Loudon County
Jeanette Rishell – City of Manassas Park
Paul Stoddard – City of Falls Church
Wendy Block Sanford – City of Fairfax
Sandy Bushue – NVTA
Mary Hynes – Arlington County/NVTA
Kevin Mentz – HNTB Corporation
Maria Siviner – VDOT
Valerie Pardo – VDOT
Thomas Bruccoleri – Arlington
Calvin K. Grow – Town of Leesburg
Mark Duceman – Town of Herndon
Monica Backmon – Prince William County

I. Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Marty Nohe brought the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. The meeting began with participant introductions and opening remarks from Chairman Nohe. The January 10, 2014, and February 13, 2014, meeting minutes and amendments were approved.

II. Reports from Other Working Groups

Ms. Monica Backmon reported that the Financial Working Group met on March 6, 2014. A long-term benefit subcommittee was established by the Financial Working Group. The group is currently working on the MOA between the authority, DRPT, and VDOT and they are working with Mr. Mike Longhi to revise revenue estimates.

Mr. John Mason summarized the findings from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, which took place on March 12, 2014. The TAC agreed there is room for calibration of the calculations used for the Project Selection Model (PSM) but the timing of this exercise is beneficial because improvements can be made based on lessons learned, prior to when this tool is needed next year. The TAC recommended revising the map of nominated projects so it includes all projects in the pipeline to increase awareness of all ongoing projects, making the map more comprehensive.

Ms. Sandy Bushue noted that Loudon County has an exemplary map that is easily understood and could be useful when revising this map. Mr. Mason also stated that the TAC agreed the VDOT evaluation score posted on the Website should be presented with a thorough explanation of how that score was determined, and the PSM score should not be widely seen by the public to avoid any confusion about how that score was calculated. A summary of the TAC's findings will be distributed.

III. VDOT Project Selection Model (PSM) Discussion Summary

Mr. Kanti Srikanth provided an overview and recap of the VDOT Project Selection Model (PSM) and findings. He welcomed all feedback to improve upon the model. He recognized Mr. David Roden and Ms. Dalia Leven, consultants from AECOM, who were present to answer questions regarding the project methodology. Mr. Srikanth emphasized that the purpose of the PSM was to ensure selected projects are consistent with CTB priorities and the mandates and objectives of the study; to analyze regionally significant projects and projects that reduce congestion. He noted that the PSM is not imperative to this cycle since the number of projects nominated is within the resource limitations of the study. However, the PSM could be a useful tool for project selection in the future.

Chairman Nohe noted this was a good opportunity to form this exercise, explore findings, and determine learn lessons in a context where the outcome is less critical. Improvements can be implemented before the list of projects becomes more robust and the outcome of the evaluation is critical to determine which projects move forward to be rated.

Mr. Srikanth said the NVTA submitted 32 projects, and the CTB added 5 additional projects, for a total of 37 projects. Mr. Srikanth noted that all nominated projects met the Tier 1 criteria and are consistent with CTB priorities. He explained that the project selection scores are not the ratings; the scores are quantitative. He expressed that the study team is eager to see what correlation there is between these scores and the ratings. He requested feedback on the model regarding whether the best questions to determine the significance of a project have been asked and whether the scores are the best way to assign quantitative value.

Ms. Bushue asked if cost and cost benefit would be discussed. Mr. Srikanth explained that the study was designed to provide quantitative assessments of congestion reduction. The estimated congestion reduction can be expressed relative to the cost but the benefit goes beyond congestion reduction. He emphasized that there are other benefits to the region that this study does not highlight.

Chairman Nohe stated that this process is developed to give a specific analysis defined in the code. The code says the Authority must evaluate cost, but this is not the purpose of the model. When making decisions, the softer side of benefit will need to be defined as there is more to benefit than congestion reduction. While a project that will come to fruition in 15 years may have a higher score than a project that could come to fruition in 3 years, that 3-year window makes the lower scoring project more attractive to the commuters who will use that facility. Chairman Nohe noted that the NVTA will have to consider this in determining which projects to fund.

After Mr. Srikanth provided an overview of the Detailed Project Selection Scores, Mr. Bob Brown asked how congestion severity, person hours of delay, and congestion duration were determined. Mr. David Roden explained that the estimates for volume, congestion level, etc., were derived from the model 2020 forecast map distributed in February, which contains the four quantitative model results for every link in the region: high volume, congestion severity, congestion duration, and person hours of delay. Some measures were averaged and some other more subjective factors were also considered.

Mr. Rick Canizales questioned specifically how volume was determined. Mr. Roden explained that the volume calculated based on a modeling analysis for year 2020 that originated in the COG network. Mr. Srikanth stated that they established a baseline for the projected traffic volume, congestion level, and congestion severity using the 2020 forecast without the 37 projects included. Criteria numbers 3 (travel volume), 6 (congestion severity), 7 (congestion duration), and 8 (person-hours of delay) are all dependent on these baseline projections made using the 2020 model forecast.

Mr. Canizales questioned why NVTA-11 (U.S. 1 Widening and Relocation – Dumfries) and NVTA-12 (U.S. Widening – Fairfax) scored higher in congestion severity and congestion duration than NVTA-28 (Route 1 Widening – Prince William), which scored zeroes in these categories. NVTA-28 is an hourglass facility located between a section the county is completing and a section VDOT is completing, yet the scores for those facilities to the north and to the south are higher than the facility that creates the bottleneck and scores a higher volume. Mr. Srikanth understood this concern and explained that the numbers in Column 3 (travel volume) are point scores not travel volumes and that the traffic volume on Route 1 varies.

Mr. Brown suggested the need for more interaction between the PSM team and the PIWG to discuss the findings in greater detail, provide input, and possibly revise the form itself. Mr. Richard West also suggested verifying the methodology and developing an avenue for questioning results. Mr. Srikanth concurred with these suggestions and reiterated that feedback is needed to ensure the methodology is applied correctly.

Mr. Paul Stoddard asked if any of these projects are already in the CLRP and pointed out that we may already have the projects we are proposing in the base 2020 analysis. Further discussion suggested this could be a “fatal flaw” in the findings in that the model assumes the projects in the CLRP are completed. Chairman Nohe emphasized that projects are in the CLRP because they are needed, but they are included on the current list because they are needed sooner than the CLRP anticipates completion. He stated, as policymakers, we need to accomplish congestion relief faster and we need to ensure we understand how to address this when evaluating projects. Chairman Nohe also pointed out the need to consider that some projects are interdependent. If one project in the CLRP cannot move forward without another, then both projects would need to be removed, as part of the evaluation process.

Ms. Jeanette Rishell asked why NVTA-30 (Route 28 Widening – Prince William) was given a score of 50 in Criteria 11 (emergency mobility) while CTB-2 (Route 7 Widening) received a score of 100,

and whether consideration was given to commuters taking various routes off of Route 66. Ms. Dalia Leven stated that radial roads were defined as those roads that ease evacuation from the district and not necessarily the region. Therefore, Route 7 was counted as a full radial road and Route 28 was not considered to be radial.

While explaining how the travel time index is determined, Mr. Srikanth suggested that averaging both directions of travel dampens the overall travel time index calculations, which leads to a lower score. Thus, one improvement could be to focus on peak times since projects are often designed to address a specific problem at a peak time of day.

Mr. Stoddard asked if the congestion wasn't caused by the link you are improving, but it is a downstream issue that backs up into your project, how this is addressed. Mr. Canizales also questioned this and asked in the case where the improvement is a section of road that will open up two other sections of roads already being built, how this is taken into consideration. He also pointed out that despite the fact that his project already has congestion and the volume doubles in 2020, the model shows that there is no congestion.

Mr. Stoddard suggested tabling this discussion for a follow up work session between the PIWG and the study team and revisiting the board's motion of adopting the methodology of this PSM.

Mr. Joe Kroboth asked what information will be used to select projects and if the NVTA board will make decisions based solely on the VDOT model. Chairman Nohe said this evaluation was designed to narrow down the number of projects to under 40. These projects will undergo a more robust evaluation and the PSM will be an important tool for selecting projects in the future.

Mr. Ron Kirkpatrick stated that the interchanges seem to have a bias. Every interchange project will have an advantage over linear projects and this should be considered.

Mr. Brown suggested, since the purpose of the PSM is to select projects for VDOT, the PSM could be a function done by the NVTA staff. Ms. Helen Cuervo emphasized that the purpose of the model is to provide technical information and help clarify what projects are legally sound, have regional significance, and will reduce congestion.

Ms. Karyn Moreland questioned the usefulness of Criteria 10 (reduces vehicular trips) given only one project scored in that category. Chairman Nohe suggested that in future iterations, certain tier weights could be removed based on what we are evaluating.

Mr. Srikanth explained that the technical analysis of the selected projects is the next step. The initial set of ratings will be posted in June 2014. After further analysis, draft ratings will be released in October 2014, and final detailed ratings will be published in December 2014.

Mr. Jim Maslanka highlighted the need for a good "benefit" description to determine how to allocate dollars between jurisdictions. He also noted the importance of determining a rating for transit projects, and how to allocate between transit and roads.

Chairman Nohe stated it is probable that the committee that is derived from the PIWG will begin working on the draft 6-year plan based on the preliminary scores obtained in June 2014. After receiving comments and making revisions, the group can possibly adopt a final plan in February 2015.

Ms. Christine Hoeffner asked if the plan that gets adopted will focus on FY14 through FY16 period and not a full 6-year program. Mr. Canizales said that, initially, the 2 ½ year plan will be established and then a new calendar will be created that is more in synch with the TPB, CTB, and VDOT calendars. Chairman Nohe added that the goal is to operate on a calendar that is coordinated and parallel with the CTB but it will take some time to make this happen.

Mr. Canizales said he will begin creating a working calendar for the next meeting and suggested topics for the next meeting, including discussion of whether the NVT A rating criteria is applicable to a multi-year plan.

Mr. Mason notified the group that after thorough review, he recommends not proceeding with the Tiger Grant Program. Chairman Nohe and the group agreed.

IV. Next Meeting

Chairman Nohe stated that the timing of the next meeting is to be determined based on the outcome of legislative attempts to mandate the analysis of all projects, and will depend on the outcome of the state budget.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.