



October 27, 2014

The Honorable Patrick Wojahn
Chairman, National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capital Street, N.E.; Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002-4201

Dear Chairman Wojahn:

This letter calls on the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) to take a leadership role in (1) discussing how the Washington Metropolitan Area will provide the money needed to address regional and local transportation system priorities, (2) identifying the appropriate funding structure for the region's many unfunded transportation needs, and (3) tracking progress towards obtainment of funding.

In 1998, the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) unanimously adopted a Vision to provide the policy framework for continuing transportation system planning and implementation in the Nation Capital Region. The TPB Vision incorporates the eight planning factors specified in the current federal regulations¹ and has served as the overall blueprint and policy direction for the Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) since the 2000 CLRP update. Transportation agencies are required to explicitly consider the Vision as a policy framework in their project and program submittal processes, and it continues to serve as the guiding document for new initiatives such as the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP).

Upon the Vision's adoption in 1998, the TPB unanimously decided to use it as their guide for regional transportation investments in the 21st Century. Seven of the eight policy goals have been incorporated into the regional planning process where progress toward these goals is assessed and reported on annually. It is time for the TPB to focus on the outlier; the goal that is difficult achieve, yet vitally important to the success of our region and the quality of the region. In 2004 the TPB issued the *Time to Act*² report, a call to action to address the serious funding shortfalls in transportation. *Time to Act* identified transportation needs, revenues, and funding shortfalls for the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and WMATA that required additional commitment from all levels of government: federal, state, regional, and local. As a result of this report, as well as the 2001 General Accounting Office report "Many Management Successes at WMATA, but Capital Planning Could Be Enhanced"³ and the Brookings Institution Report,

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
202/962-1234

By Metrorail:
Judiciary Square-Red Line
Gallery Place-Chinatown
Red, Green and
Yellow Lines

A District of Columbia
Maryland and Virginia
Transit Partnership

1 49 USC and 23 USC §134 (metropolitan) and §135 (statewide)

2 National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board MWCOG, "Time to Act", February 2004.

3 U.S. General Accounting Office, "Many Management Successes at WMATA, but Capital Planning Could Be Enhanced." GAO-01-744. (2001).

*Washington Metro: Deficits by Design*⁴, the TPB established a panel sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and the Federal City Council for the purpose of advancing the critical issue of having dedicated funding for WMATA.

The Blue Ribbon Panel published its report on Metro funding in January, 2005. Among the primary findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report were:

- There is and will continue to be an expanding shortfall of revenues available to address both capital needs and operational subsidies of the Metrorail and Metrobus systems.
- Federal needs require the federal government to significantly participate in addressing these shortfalls, particularly for capital maintenance and system enhancement.
- The Compact jurisdictions should mutually create and implement a single regional dedicated revenue source to address these shortfalls.
- The most viable dedicated revenue source that can be implemented on a regional basis is a sales tax.
- Federal and regional authorities should address alternate methods of funding the MetroAccess needs of the region.

Together with publication of the report, the Panel urged sponsoring organizations to advance their work by advocating on behalf of the Panel's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. They called on the region's leaders to take action to build a coalition to support a dedicated revenue source for WMATA. However, what was envisioned in 1998 with the adoption of the TPB's Vision, studied in the early 2000's by the GAO, the Brookings Institution, MWCOCG, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, Congress, and WMATA, and advocated for by representatives of each since then remains undone.

Since the recommendations put forth almost ten years ago, there has been little additional work either in advancing the recommendations or in continuing to create new ideas. Importantly, Goal 7:

The Washington metropolitan region will achieve an **enhanced funding mechanism(s) for regional and local transportation system priorities** that cannot be implemented with current and forecasted federal, state, and local funding⁵

remains unlinked to the regional planning process and presents a large gap in the fulfillment of the TPB Vision. Meanwhile, the region continues to grapple with mounting transportation problems in the face of increasingly limited funding dollars to combat the mobility-based threats to economic growth, sustainability, and livability. Funding limitations continue to hamper regional transportation

4 Robert Puentes, "Washington Metro: Deficits by Design", (Washington: Brookings Institution, June 2004).

5 The TPB Vision. Available at: <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/vision/>

planning initiatives that support the TPB Vision, Region Forward, and Economy Forward, and should Goal 7 continue to go unintended, it is unreasonable to assume that the current situation will change for the better.

For this reason, WMATA calls upon the TPB to take action. WMATA requests the TPB to recommit itself to advancing Goal 7 in the TPB Vision. This means that TPB should examine enhanced funding mechanisms and establish a policy recommendation on funding the region's transportation future. WMATA requests that the TPB take a leadership role in reigniting the torch on the discussion of how the region will achieve **enhanced funding mechanism(s) for regional and local transportation system priorities**, and identify the appropriate funding structure for the region's many unfunded transportation needs.

To ensure continuity of the conversation among regional leaders and to track progress toward the achievement of this goal, WMATA requests TPB staff incorporate a report of its status into the annual work program, and present findings to the Board.

We look forward to seeing a proposal on how this goal will be addressed in a regional forum and how the TPB will continue to work toward its achievement in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shyam Kannan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Shyam Kannan
Managing Director
Office of Planning