



Maryland Department of Transportation
The Secretary's Office

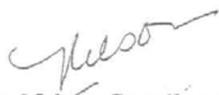
Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

Robert L. Fianagan
Secretary

James F. Ports, Jr.
Deputy Secretary

December 30, 2004


Mr. Nelson Castellanos
Division Administrator
FHWA Maryland Division
City Crescent Building
10 South Howard Street, Suite 2450
Baltimore MD-21201
Attention: Valencia Williams

Mr. Herman Shipman
Acting Regional Administrator, Region III
Federal Transit Administration
1760 Market Street, Suite 500
Philadelphia PA 19103
Attention: Gail McFadden-Roberts

RE: Non-metropolitan Area Consultative Process

Dear Messrs. Castellanos and Shipman:

MDOT is transmitting to you our Non-metropolitan Area Consultative Process. The public review and comment period closed on November 16, 2004. We received four letters and two calls/emails commenting on the proposed process. We incorporated those comments into the final process. Please refer to the two attachments that describe and document our Non-metropolitan Area Consultative Process. MDOT appreciates the guidance and advice you have given us in determining the final process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Kellie Gaver, Assistant Director of Planning and Programming at 410-865-1282 or by email at kgaver@mdot.state.md.us.

Sincerely,



Marsha J. Kaiser, Director
Office of Planning and Capital Programming

Maryland Department of Transportation's Proposed Non-metropolitan Area Consultative Process

BACKGROUND

The State must have a documented process or processes for non-metro official consultation. This consultation must be separate and discrete from the required "public involvement." The consultation process must provide non-metro officials with an opportunity to participate in both the Statewide Planning process and the development of the STIP. The state must seek and review comments regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process. Comments should be sought from non-metro local officials and other interested parties. The comment period must be at least 60 days. The initial assessment of effectiveness must take place within 2 years of the start of the consultation process; and, there must be a new assessment at least every 5 years after. States are directed to specifically seek comments from: the state association of counties, state municipal league, regional planning agencies, or even from non-metro officials.

MARYLAND LAW

The Annotated Code of Maryland Transportation Article Title 7 Mass Transit Subtitle 3. Transit Plans and Financing Sections 7-301 through 7-304 describes the process for coordination of transit plans with the local governing body, local legislative delegation, state agencies, Baltimore Metropolitan Council and private carriers. Title 8 Highways Part II. Long Range Highway Programs Sections 8-610 through 8-613.1 describes the process for coordinating highway plans and programs with the local governing body, local legislative delegation and municipalities.

THE STATE VISION

To provide transportation system that works for people and its fundamental mission is to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods across all transportation modes. The four main goals are: Efficiency – maximize the effectiveness of existing systems; Mobility - provide critical new system additions; Safety and Security – ensure customer and workforce safety and enhance system security; Productivity and Quality – improve program and project delivery.

Maryland Transportation Plan: The Maryland Transportation Plan is the Department's long-range policy blueprint for providing state transportation services and infrastructure over the next 20 years. It is updated at least every 3 years. Input is requested from local elected officials, the General Assembly, citizens, businesses, government agencies and community leaders.

MDOT STAFF COORDINATION

The following items are ways in which the Maryland Department of Transportation and its modal organizations coordinate with both rural and metropolitan areas around the State beginning at the staff level. These consultation activities can occur daily, weekly, or monthly and help to ensure that working relationships are established and maintained. These consultation activities are grassroots oriented where the interaction and information is first shared at the staff level and then shared up the chain of command.

Maryland Coordinating Committee for Human Service Transportation: This is a Governor's Committee that meets quarterly to discuss transportation issues. Representatives on the Committee include: MDOT & MTA staff, the MD Departments of Human Resources, Education, Aging, and Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as local transit providers.

Transportation Association of Maryland (TAM): TAM is a statewide advocacy organization of public, private and non-profit transit providers committed to improving mobility for Marylanders. TAM provides a variety of outreach efforts and also meets annually with General Assembly members. MTA is a principal member of TAM and participates in the various training, education and professional development programs offered by the organization.

State Highway Administration Districts: The State's 23 counties are grouped into seven SHA Districts for construction and maintenance functions. A District Engineer leads each office and maintains very close contact with local elected officials and county representatives. Each District office also has maintenance, traffic, & construction engineers assigned to each County.

Regional Planning Coordination & Technical Assistance: MDOT's Office of Planning & Capital Programming in cooperation with SHA, MTA, MdTA & MAA provides multi-modal planning and coordination in both the metropolitan and the rural areas.

Highway Needs Inventory: MDOT – SHA maintains a financially unconstrained and unfunded list of highway needs per County. This list is updated on a 3-year cycle for each County in consultation with local elected officials and County representatives.

Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS): The Maryland Transit Administration provides technical and financial assistance to the State's 25 Locally Operated Transit Systems. The MTA works with each of the local transit systems to develop and fund annual projects and services.

Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP): The Maryland Transit Administration administers this federally funded program designed to provide training and technical assistance to transit operators in non-urbanized areas. RTAP provides scholarships for out-of-state training, a lending library and is currently developing a Driver Certification Program.

Potential* Rural Area Transportation Advisory Board: Develop an MDOT sponsored advisory board that would provide a forum to address rural area transportation concerns. This board would approach rural transportation interests in a comprehensive, multi-modal fashion and would provide an improved opportunity for rural areas to participate in the transportation planning process.

* The Rural Transportation Advisory Board could be:

- A group of 15-20 elected officials or their designee, representing each rural (non-metropolitan area) County (there are ten), along with the four semi-rural Counties containing MPOs.
- Group to meet annually or semi-annually, once before the CTP (July/August) and once in the winter/spring, or as needed.
- Purpose: to provide two-way communication between MDOT, the modes and rural area representatives, and to share information and receive critical input about transportation modal needs. This body could provide a forum whereby rural area concerns would be the primary focus and a sounding board would be provided to better bring issues to the attention of the leadership at MDOT.

ELECTED OFFICIAL COORDINATION

The following activities are more formal consultation opportunities with local and state elected officials, which are required by law. These consultative activities are oriented top-down.

Maryland Association of Counties & Maryland Municipal League: These two organizations meet annually and provide both formal and informal opportunities for local elected officials and County representatives in the State to share and discuss transportation needs. ***Propose: Send a cover letter asking for comments on the CTP, MTP, and rural consultation procedures.***

Secondary Program Priority Letter: State and local elected officials are encouraged to reach consensus on local priorities for the secondary highway system and to document these priorities in a letter to the State Highway Administrator. The priorities become candidates for funding and inclusion in the CTP. ***Propose: Send a proactive letter to request that each County provide priority letters to MDOT.***

Annual Consolidated Transportation Program Tour: In the Fall of every year the Secretary of Transportation and the Department's modal administrators visit each of the State's 23 counties and Baltimore City to present and solicit input on the Draft CTP from local elected officials, state legislators and citizens. Information obtained at these meetings is used in the development of the final CTP that is presented to the General Assembly for approval at the beginning of the 90-day legislative session in January. ***Propose: Add a sentence to the rural elected officials' letters requesting any comments on the draft CTP, MTP and rural consultation procedures.***

CONCLUSION

The current consultation process has proven itself effective to date. These refinements to the existing MDOT consultation process, in response to the US Department of Transportation's notification of final rulemaking, will further strengthen the level of coordination, interaction and responsiveness with local rural area staff and elected officials.

Proposed Non-metropolitan Area Consultative Process

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Staff Coordination

Maryland Coordinating Committee for Human Service Transportation	Transportation Association of Maryland (TAM)	State Highway Administration Districts	Regional Planning Coordination & Technical Assistance	Highway Needs Inventory	Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS)	Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP)	<u>Potential:</u> Rural Area Transportation Advisory Board
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Elected Official Coordination

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