

I. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

An Overview of the 2001 Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan

The 2001 Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan (BRTP) is a long-range transportation plan detailing projected development of the Baltimore region's transportation system. The Baltimore region includes the City of Annapolis, Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties, as seen in Figure I-1.

The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) is the entity designated by the Governor of Maryland as the Baltimore region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The BRTB, in its capacity as the MPO, serves a unique and strategic role as facilitator for the many transportation stakeholders in the region. The BRTB is charged with executing federal transportation and related air quality planning requirements in the Baltimore region. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) is an organization established to identify regional interests and to develop collaborative strategies, plans and programs which will improve the quality of life and economic vitality of the Baltimore region. The BMC employs a paid, professional planning staff, which serves as staff to the BRTB.

The 2001 BRTP is responsive to legislative mandates and regional concerns regarding identified transportation needs. The 2001 BRTP is a statement of the Baltimore region's long-range transportation planning objectives and actions. The 2001 BRTP provides an integrated response to the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA), the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992, and the 1997 Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiatives legislation (Smart Growth Initiatives).

The Need for a Regional Transportation Plan

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) mandate that each urbanized area with a base population of 50,000 or more must have an organized planning process that results in a transportation plan consistent with the planned development for the area. Any metropolitan region that fails to meet this requirement may be penalized by denial of federal capital and operating funds. The City of Annapolis, based on Census data, has the population to become a separate MPO in its own right, but the City has chosen to remain a member of the jurisdictions and state agencies represented under the BRTB.

TEA-21 requires that a long-range transportation plan consider seven planning factors:

- 1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.*
- 2) Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.*
- 3) Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.*
- 4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.*
- 5) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.*
- 6) Promote efficient system management and operation.*
- 7) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.*

Figure I-1

and all figures/maps in this document are available on the BMC webpage, <http://www.baltometro.org/mambo/content/view/399/322/>.

2001 Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan

Along with TEA-21's requirements, the 1990 CAAA compel urbanized areas to meet federal air quality standards. The CAAA require areas designated as nonattainment for air quality standards to update their current transportation plan every three years to ensure that the plan is in conformity with the applicable state air quality implementation plan. In order to remain eligible for federal transportation funding, a region must demonstrate that the projects in the long-range transportation plan collectively are in conformity with designated air quality goals. The air quality impacts of the long-range transportation plan's investment program must be evaluated via computer modeling. Projects must have reasonably assured funding in order to be factored into the conformity equation. This requirement is the source of the strict dollar cap on the projects a plan may contain.

In addition to these federal planning considerations, Maryland's Smart Growth Initiatives define specific priority funding areas (PFAs), with additional PFAs to be defined using local development criteria. Since October 1998, the State has required that proposed major capital projects be examined to determine whether they are within a PFA. The Smart Growth Initiatives provide for certain transportation exemptions and allows extraordinary circumstances to be considered, but all major state-funded infrastructure projects are examined for compliance with the Smart Growth Initiatives.

Timely adoption of the 2001 BRTP will preserve the uninterrupted flow of federal transportation funds into the region and ensure the region's ability to implement local and state transportation improvements. The development of the 2001 BRTP represents a concerted effort by the region's jurisdictions to analyze public expenditures by local, regional, and state agencies, on all forms of transportation.

How the 2001 Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan Was Developed

In general, the 2001 BRTP covers the transportation systems of the jurisdictions comprising the Baltimore metropolitan planning area as well as the state transportation system geographically situated within the metropolitan planning area. The 2001 BRTP considers the multimodal, interdependent nature of the region's transportation system, addressing highways, bus and rail transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and ground access to aviation and maritime facilities. Issues directly related to the region's overall future and residents' quality of life — land use, air quality, environmental concerns, and economic development — have been addressed and incorporated. The development of the 2001 BRTP included seven major planning tasks that are described more fully throughout this document. The tasks include:

Public Involvement

An extensive public outreach program was developed to include participation in all facets of the 2001 BRTP. This included input from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and other BRTB committees. A member of the CAC participated on the five-member Oversight Committee for the 2001 BRTP. The process included a broad distribution of informational publications, increased use of the Internet and use of print media to enhance public involvement in the overall process. A newsletter titled "Looking Ahead to 2025" was developed specifically to keep the public informed of progress and comment cards were distributed at each meeting to garner feedback. Between Fall 2000 and Summer 2001, nine Public Informational meetings were held throughout the region to allow the public to comment and be kept informed of major milestones.

Goals & Objectives

The BRTB reviewed the goals and supporting strategies prior to approving them as a framework for considering candidate projects and development of a Preferred Alternative. This process reflected increased emphasis on smart growth and environmental justice issues. The result included 4 guiding

principals and five goals. The four guiding principles include: 1) linking transportation to managing growth; 2) improving life in our communities; 3) increasing transportation choices; and 4) maintaining the current system. The five goals include: 1) regional process; 2) physical form/land use; 3) accessibility; 4) economic development; and 5) environmental quality.

Fiscal Capacity & Project Costs

The 2001 BRTB's affordability is a major issue, as the investment element must fall within the fiscal constraints identified in the analyses of the region's long-range financial capacity. A conservative approach to developing revenue forecasts was used based on analysis provided by the Maryland Department of Transportation. Project costs were developed using an accepted methodology with input from the State and local jurisdictions.

Socio-economic Data to 2025

Metropolitan Planning Regulations require that the latest planning assumptions available be used in the development of a long-range plan and that such a plan maintain a 20-year horizon. For these reasons the forecasts for population, households, and employment were updated and extended to 2025. Data is developed for small geographic areas called transportation analysis zones (TAZ) throughout the region.

Prioritization Process

Project prioritization is a two-dimensional process. A policy-level evaluation was conducted by the jurisdictions or State agencies submitting candidate projects that provided a justification based on how the candidate project supported the goals and objectives. The project submittals were then forwarded to the Maryland Department of Planning for a review of the projects' consistency with established Priority Funding Areas. The policy-level evaluation accounted for 60 percent of a projects' overall score. This was followed by a technical-level evaluation by staff based on approved criteria for each type of mode and included analysis from model output and subjective criteria. The technical-level evaluation accounted for 40 percent of the score. The results from policy and technical were combined and then weighted for an overall score.

Evaluation of Network Performance Measures

Once a list of projects had been identified and evaluated in the prioritization process, the BRTB considered the funds necessary for system preservation and operations and then began the task of crafting a first draft Preferred Alternative. This array of projects and strategies were presented to the public for their reaction to the mix of projects. Once responses to public comment had been completed and a final draft Preferred Alternative was developed, the package was evaluated against a set of performance measures, including such measures as: travel time, amount of delay, air quality conformity, transit ridership, and accessibility.

BRTB Approval and Documentation

Subsequent to the final public hearing the BRTB responded to comments and then approved the 2001 BRTB by Resolution at their October 23rd meeting. Copies of the document are sent to federal agencies for their review and approval as appropriate. The final document and accompanying appendices are then completed and printed for distribution.