



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Item #  
May 29, 2008

**Staff Report: Growth Policy Studies Update**

Send date: May 22, 2008  
From: Dan Hardy, Acting Chief, Transportation Planning DKH  
Via: Karl Moritz, Chief, Research and Technology Division

**Recommendation:** Discussion item only

This memorandum provides a status report on the Growth Policy studies underway per County Council direction. The key discussion item for the Planning Board on May 22 is our preliminary staff analyses for those studies due to the County Council by August 1, 2008 (studies F3 through F8). The full listing of growth policy studies from Resolution 16-376 is included in Attachment A.

During the month of June, we will be presenting initial findings to the public on these studies in a variety of formats:

- An open house from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM on June 16, 2008 at the MRO auditorium to discuss the following transportation studies:
  - F3 – Alternatives to PAMR
  - F4 – Non-Auto Facilities
  - F8 – Public Agency Signoff
  - A proposal to raise the *de minimis* requirements for Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) to make cost-effective use of scarce staff resources
- A public seminar presenting observations, lessons learned, and next steps on study F6 – Design of Public Facilities, scheduled for 3:00 to 5:00 PM on June 25, 2008 at the MRO auditorium.
- A workshop cosponsored with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on study F9 – Sustainable Quality of Life Indicators Program, scheduled for June 25 and June 26, 2008.
- A Planning Board session tentatively scheduled for June 26, 2008 on study F7 – Transportation-Housing Affordability Index

We will hold a Planning Board worksession in July to review the staff draft recommendations on studies to be delivered to County Council by August 1.

## **SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TO DATE**

Resolution 16-376 specifies twelve separate studies as included in Attachment A. We have established an interagency technical team with the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and County Council staff for transportation-related studies.

The following paragraphs summarize the status of each of the studies F1 through F8 that are due to Council by September 1:

### **F1: Enhanced Intersection Data Collection**

The County Council has included the \$150K data collection effort in our FY 09 budget. We are also pursuing an MOU with SHA that will create a pilot program to better integrate intersection turning movement count data collection efforts between our agencies.

### **F2: Impact tax implementing regulations**

The Executive has submitted MCER 17-08, *Development Impact Tax for Transportation*, and MCER 19-08, *Development Impact Tax for Public Schools* to the County Council under Method 2.

### **F3: Alternatives to PAMR**

We have considered five alternative refinements to PAMR as outlined below:

- A version of the **Proportional Staging** concept described in the May 21, 2007 Board report that considers correction factors of some sort to account for the fact that master plan buildout is a continuously evolving definition (the “fatal flaw” in our 2007 review). Proportional staging remains the most understandable and logical technique to implement a staging plan once end-state conditions are defined, but **any proportional staging process still requires establishment of an acceptable end-state performance measure**. So our studies must continue to refine alternative performance measures, but once one is developed, proportional staging could be applied.
- PAMR with a more intuitive evaluation of **disaggregated Relative Transit Mobility**. One critique of the Relative Transit Mobility measure is that the aggregation of travel times considers the aggregation of journey-to-work travel times from any subject policy area to all other areas in the region (weighted by total trips by mode), rather than first considering relative transit access for specific origin-destination pairs prior to the weighting by total trips. By formula, this difference can result in different Relative Transit Mobility values. In summary, transit trips to work tend to be for slightly longer distance O-D pairs than auto trips. Therefore, the PAMR RTM value may be a little higher than the alternative calculation method. The philosophical question is whether or not “rewarding” the fact that longer-distance connections are made via transit is appropriate. Staff is developing year 2012 PAMR results using both methodologies. We expect that this may make a meaningful difference in the Relative Transit Mobility for

the Rural West Policy Area (with a relatively low number of trips served by three MARC stations), but a negligible difference for most other policy areas.

- **PAMR without Relative Transit Mobility**, but rather with the establishment of Relative Arterial Mobility standards defined by groups of policy areas using some other mechanism. This type of approach was used in the late 1980s when policy area roadway congestion standards were set by considering several different transit service parameters. We believe that system is undesirable as it does not address transit access or mobility measures, is subject to arbitrary designation, and provides a framework that makes it difficult to move from one group designation to another. We are exploring an alternative concept that considers density (by Policy Area or TAZ) to define groups with the philosophy that good transit service should be planned for in response to density, rather than vice-versa. This alternative concept would need to incorporate a measure of existing and programmed transit service operations into the assessment of transit adequacy.
- **Regional Accessibility Indices**, the number of jobs/housing units accessible in fixed travel time budgets from each policy area. We find that accessibility indices are excellent technical measures for evaluating the relative performance of alternative land use/transportation scenarios or gauging time-series data trends. It is also a measure for which land use changes are often an effective strategy. However, this measure suffers the same flaw as proportional staging; there is no easy way to define and communicate an absolute standard of adequacy (i.e., having 500,000 jobs within 45 minutes is acceptable but having only 450,000 jobs is not....). We recommend continuing to pursue accessibility as a measure of sustainability, but not as a staging tool.
- **Mandatory Trip Reduction** in lieu of PAMR (and perhaps LATR). This proposal is elegantly simple; take the alternative review method already available in MSPAs (including payment of a higher transportation impact tax and provision of programs to achieve a 50% reduction in peak period vehicle trips generated) and make it mandatory. The primary concerns with this proposal, for which we need stakeholder input, are:
  - Whether it would tend to encourage or discourage desired development, and
  - Whether the effects of the 50% “unmitigated” traffic on adjacent (or “parent”) policy areas are sufficiently addressed through the current PAMR process.

A secondary concern relates to the amount of interagency staff effort needed to monitor Traffic Mitigation Agreements over the long haul.

#### **F4 – Non-Auto Facilities**

We recommend a three-step approach to addressing the provision of Non-Auto Facilities such as sidewalks in exchange for vehicle trip generation credits.

- Establish a cost-per-peak-hour-vehicle-trip value based on the estimated cost to provide traditional transportation capacity. Our research has indicated that a wide range of values might be proposed, from as low as \$2,000 per trip to as high as \$50,000 per trip.

- Establish the menu of eligible facilities, and price the vehicle trip credits so that, to the extent possible, each type of facility would have a similar cost of construction per trip credit. This approach would help guide applicants toward solutions that best fit the needs in the vicinity of their development site, rather than toward alternatives that are clearly the most affordable. We are proposing expanding the list of candidate facilities to better encourage a wide range of pedestrian and transit solutions, including:
  - Bus layover spaces (within transit centers)
  - Crosswalks
  - On-road bicycle lanes
  - Park-and-ride lots
  - Park trails
  - Pedestrian overpasses/underpasses
  - Streetlights
  - Transit “queue jumper” construction
  - Transitway/busway construction
  - Utility undergrounding in urban areas
- Develop a list of candidate sites for the eligible facilities to help applicants identify specific mitigation proposals.

#### **F5 – Development Activity Status Report**

We will develop this informational report for the Planning Board worksession in July.

#### **F6 – Design of Public Facilities**

We held an initial public seminar facilitated by Roger Lewis and the urban design staff on March 26 and have held four staff seminars since then. A second public seminar is scheduled for June 25 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM in the MRO auditorium.

#### **F7 – Transportation-Housing Affordability Index**

We will present initial findings to the Planning Board on June 26.

#### **F8 – Public Agency Signoff**

We are developing a process flowchart showing the relationship between an applicant, our staff, DPWT, and DPS for a variety of transportation impact mitigation strategies. Primary elements of this flowchart include expected design details, review timeframes, and approval processes necessary to guide mitigation strategies successfully from inception to completion over the several year period that typically occurs between development application and occupancy.

Studies F9 through F12 have later due dates and staff will continue to provide periodic updates to the Planning Board. Studies F12a (a comprehensive parking management study) and F12b (options for Local Area Transportation Review tests) have been removed from our work program due to funding constraints.

For delivery to the Council on or before February 1, 2008:

- **F1 Enhanced Intersection Data Collection:** The Planning Board must include in its recommended FY2009 budget a request for additional funds to expand its database of current traffic counts to allow a more comprehensive analysis of congestion conditions and verify developer-provided traffic counts.

For delivery to the Council on or before July 1, 2008:

- **F2 Impact tax implementing regulations** The Executive must submit revised implementing regulations for the transportation and school impact taxes to the Council under Method (2).

For delivery to the Council on or before August 1, 2008:

- **F3 Alternatives to PAMR:** The Planning Board, with the aid of the Executive, must evaluate alternatives to Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) as a policy area level transportation test. As part of this study, the Planning Board must evaluate alternative methods to calculate the key components of PAMR, relative arterial mobility and relative transit mobility, and options to replace PAMR and LATR in Metro station policy areas with a broad requirement for trip mitigation from new development.
- **F4: Guidelines for Non-Auto Facilities:** The Planning Board, with the aid of the Executive, must evaluate its guidelines for trip credits for non-automobile facilities, including the text and chart that appears on pages 26-29 of its *Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines*. In reviewing these credits and acceptable facilities, the Board must consider factors such as the likelihood of the action reducing peak hour auto trips and the approximate construction costs of each action, to allow some equivalency between actions. The Board must also evaluate its procedures to monitor the construction of facilities for which credits are given. The Board must submit any revisions of these trip credit guidelines to the Council for its review
- **F5 Development Activity Status Report:** The Planning Board must prepare a status report of development activity that has occurred since this Growth Policy took effect. The Board must report, to the extent that it is able, on the effect of Growth Policy and impact tax changes on development activity in Clarksburg relative to nearby areas inside and outside the County.
- **F6 Design of Public Facilities:** The Planning Board, with the aid of the Executive, must convene a "design summit" of public agencies involved in the design and development of public facilities and the review of private land development to develop a consensus and commitment to design excellence as a core value in all public and private projects and focus on how to improve design of public facilities and private development through various means, including better coordination among agencies.
- **F7 Transportation-Housing Affordability Index:** The Planning Board must conduct the necessary research and analysis to develop a transportation-housing affordability index for the County. The Board must develop the index as part of its FY08 work on a *Housing Policy Element of the General Plan* unless it concludes that the index is better developed as part of *F9 Sustainable Quality of Life Indicators*.
- **F8 Public agency signoff:** The Planning Board, after consulting Executive staff, must evaluate and submit a recommendation to the Council for any necessary changes to current law or policy

regarding the point or points in the development process when an agreement between an applicant and a public agency is required for an additional facility or program which would be a condition of development approval.

For delivery to the Council on or before October 1, 2008:

- **F9 Impact Tax Issues:** The County Executive, with the aid of the Planning Board and the Board of Education, must address impact tax issues noted in the long-term infrastructure financing recommendations in the Planning Board's *2007-2009 Growth Policy*, including further refinement of land use categories and consideration of charging impact taxes for additional public facilities or purposes or charging "linkage" fees to non-residential development for affordable housing. The Executive and the interagency working group must review credits granted under the impact tax and develop recommendations to retain, modify, or repeal the law's credit provisions.
- **F10 Sustainability Quality of Life Indicators Program:** The Planning Board, with the aid of the Executive and with broad public participation, must develop a set of sustainable quality of life indicators, addressing issues of environment, social equity, and economy. These indicators must be suitable to guide land use and other public policy decision-making, including capital programming and design of public facilities. An initial set of tracking indicators must be prepared in time to inform the 2009-2011 Growth Policy review.


To be included in the 2009-2011 Growth Policy:

- **F11 Biennial Growth Policy Report:** In accordance with County Code §33A-15, the Planning Board must submit its recommended Growth Policy to the County Council by June 1 of each odd-numbered year. Beginning in 2009, this biennial growth policy must include: an analysis of current and future pace and pattern of growth in the County and the factors affecting demand for public facilities in established communities; an update on the County's success in meeting a set of indicators as developed under F10; an implementation status report for each master plan and sector plan, including a review of how planned development is proceeding and whether the public actions/facilities in the plan are occurring in a timely way; the contents of the biennial Highway Mobility Report; and a comprehensive list of priority facilities that are recommended for addition to the Capital Improvements Program. The report may also recommend other public actions needed to achieve master plan objectives or improve the County's performance on its adopted indicators. The Board must also include recommendations for changing policy area boundaries to be consistent with adopted master plans or sector plans or changes to municipal boundaries.
- **F12 Special Studies:** The Planning Board must prepare the following studies to be included in the 2009-2011 Growth Policy:
  - **F12a:** With the aid of the Executive, a comprehensive parking management study, which must include recommendations to improve the use of parking as a travel demand management tool, particularly in Metro station policy areas.
  - **F12b:** With the aid of the Executive, a study of options to revise the local area transportation tests, including using proximity to various levels of transit service and pedestrian connectivity as a basis for mitigation requirements; developing a multi-modal quality of service requirement to provide a more seamless integration of pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto modes; considering feasible revisions of or alternatives to the

Critical Lane Volume method to measure intersection congestion; the duration of Transportation Mitigation Agreements; and identifying more pedestrian and transit-oriented urban areas, in addition to Metro Station Policy Areas, which may be eligible for different standards. The Planning Board must convene a technical working group, consisting of staff from the Planning Commission, the Department of Public Works and Transportation, the State Highway Administration, transportation consultants, and interest groups such as the Action Committee for Transit and Coalition for Smart Growth, to work with an independent consultant to consider and test various proposals and practices in other jurisdictions and recommend appropriate changes in approaches, standards, and measures used in the Growth Policy.

- **F12c:** A study of options to increase efficiency in allocating development capacity, including trading capacity among private developers.
- **F12d:** A study of the County's job-housing balance, including implications for housing affordability and traffic congestion.

This is a correct copy of Council action.



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Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council