



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

<b>County Board Agenda Item Meeting of December 13, 2008</b>
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**DATE:** December 5, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Amendment of the County Comprehensive Plan to Adopt a Demand and System Management Element of the Master Transportation Plan (MTP), including an updated Transportation Demand Management Policy

**C. M. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Amend the County Comprehensive Plan to add the document entitled “Master Transportation Plan Demand and System Management Element”, dated October 2008, to be included in the Amended MTP as all MTP Additions as defined in Attachment A to this Board Report; and,
2. Adopt the Transportation Demand Management Policies and Matrix which is included as Appendix A to the Master Transportation Plan Demand and System Management Element.

**ISSUES:** The proposed MTP Demand and System Management Element includes an update to the current Arlington Transportation Demand Management (“TDM”) Policy and TDM Matrix that was adopted by the County Board in 1993. Certain aspects of measures in the TDM Matrix of measures have been objected to by representatives of the local building development and management industries as being too open-ended in scope and potentially too costly. Revisions have been made to the Element to partially address these issues. In addition the originally advertised Demand and System Management Element draft included examples of “contingency” measures that are intended to be used only to address severe traffic congestion or environmental problems that were only to be applied by future County Board action to address worsening congestion or environmental concerns. Some of these measures may necessitate further authorization by the General Assembly. The Transportation Commission and Planning Commission have differing opinions regarding these measures. Staff agrees with the Transportation Commission recommendation and proposes that the contingency measures be removed from the Element.

**SUMMARY:** The proposed Demand and System Management Element of the MTP would establish Arlington’s first comprehensive plans for TDM and Transportation Systems Management (“TSM”) efforts. The 1993 Transportation Demand Management Policy is proposed to be updated and incorporated into this comprehensive Demand and System

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Management Element that specifies measures to manage travel on County transportation facilities and to shift travel demand from the usually dominant, single-occupant-vehicle (“SOV”) mode to a broad array of more efficient travel alternatives. The TDM measures proposed in the Element would be applied to all sectors of travel in Arlington and some existing buildings as well as new development. The majority of the TSM measures would be initiated by Arlington County with support from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and other area jurisdictions and agencies.

The Element has multiple revisions from the version that was approved by the County Board for advertisement. The most significant changes have been to the TDM Policy Matrix (Appendix A) which has been greatly streamlined and clarified. Some of those changes to the Matrix have required corresponding changes to explanatory language included in Appendix B. Only two substantial changes were made to the Implementation Actions in the Element, one measure calling for the encouragement of “dynamic carpools” was dropped at the Transportation Commission’s recommendation, and a single new action seeking the authority for establishment of TDM Compliance fines, was added. Other changes include the deletion of the Contingency Measures and a number of clarifying editorial changes.

**BACKGROUND:** In 1941, Arlington adopted its first long-range, Countywide transportation plan: Major Thoroughfares for Arlington, Virginia. Approximately 20 years later, a new thoroughfare plan was adopted, this time in concert with Arlington’s General Land Use Plan (“GLUP”). Thereafter, in the mid-1970s, Arlington’s long-range transportation plan became multimodal, with four elements adopted for bikeways, streets, transit and walkways. Ten years later, a new Countywide plan was developed, bringing together the streets, bikeways and walkways into one document in 1986. Between then and the current effort for a complete update, a new element was adopted for paratransit, and the portions of the 1986 plan for bikeways (now, bicycle) and walkways (now, pedestrians) were updated.

After the 1986 plan was adopted, the Transportation Commission led an effort to tie consideration of proposed development to the objectives and principles of the master plan. The County Board in 1990 endorsed a Traffic Impact Analysis (“TIA”) Policy, to guide when and how applicants would analyze the impact of their proposals and in 1993, the County Board adopted a Transportation Demand Management Policy to guide how applicants should ameliorate impacts, in general as well as in response to impacts identified in their specific TIAs.

In 2004, the Arlington County Board tasked County staff to undertake a complete revision of the County’s MTP. The public process was initiated with a community-transportation survey that generated responses from about 800 Arlington residents and a series of focus-group and public-forum sessions held in the fall of 2005. The information collected from the community was presented to the 24-member MTP Plenary Group which was comprised of representatives from several County advisory commissions, local partnerships, the Arlington Civic Federation and other community organizations. Over the course of a year-and-a-half of regular meetings, the MTP Plenary Group assisted the County staff and a consultant team with the development of the first draft of a new MTP. Three drafts of the proposed MTP revisions were presented for public

review between June 2006 and March 2007 at public forums, on the County's website and through more than 50 presentations made to advisory committees and civic groups.

In November and December of 2007, the County Board amended the MTP to adopt a Goals and Policies document and a MTP Map (known collectively as the "MTP Additions"). The new documents provided updated vision, objectives, goals and policies for the future of the Arlington transportation system, as well as identified key planned transportation facility and service additions including new streets, transit lines, intersection and roadway improvements, and bicycle/pedestrian trails. In July 2008, the County Board adopted the Bicycle and Pedestrian Elements to the Amended MTP.

The MTP Additions, Bicycle Element, Pedestrian Element and the previously-adopted MTP documents (known as the Existing MTP) now comprise the Amended MTP. (See Attachment A to this report for definitions of other terms used herein.) The Demand and System Management Element is one of four future MTP elements (also including Transit, Streets, and Parking and Curbspace Management) that are still to be adopted by the County Board to replace and add to previously-adopted corresponding MTP documents.

**DISCUSSION:** As part of the Comprehensive Plan, the MTP is Arlington's principal means of establishing planning policy for transportation matters. The MTP Additions were developed to incorporate the transportation policy directives established by the County Board in recent years. Moreover, the MTP Additions guide the implementation of a multimodal transportation system that will serve the future Arlington as envisioned by the County's GLUP. By the year 2030 Arlington's residential and employment populations are forecasted to grow about 25 to 30%. Arlington will experience increased travel demands not only from its own growth, but also from greater amounts of pass-through travel. The forecasted increased travel demands will challenge Arlington's transportation system unless measures are taken to manage travel times, shift more travel away from SOVs and achieve greater efficiency in traffic accommodation.

Some major portions of the MTP Demand and System Management Element include:

- The adopted MTP Goals and Policies established six primary transportation demand management-related policies for Arlington. Those policies and the proposed implementation actions provide guidance for how the County's TDM program should operate over the next 20-some years. The Demand and System Management Element specifies 20 actions to be undertaken to implement the County's TDM policies. Because the Appendix A policies are being adopted as part of the MTP, any future revision or amendments to the policies must be accomplished by the MTP amendment process.
- At the core of the existing TDM program is the Arlington County Commuter Services ("ACCS") program which assists thousands of employers, residents and other travelers in making travel choices. The proposed Demand and System Management Element aims to build upon those existing successful efforts by enlarging the ACCS program's scope to reach more travelers, provide additional means for travelers to access and pay for transit services and to become better integrated with other programs in the region.

- Several substantially new TDM initiatives are proposed in the advertised document including a biennial travel survey, and expanded applicability of the SmarTrip card. In addition six contingency measures are specified, such as parking taxes, financial incentives to local households that give up their cars or stop driving for commute trips, and subsidized transit passes, that could be applied through subsequent County Board action to address severe traffic congestion or environmental problems. While the biennial travel survey and SmarTrip card expansion remain key components of the Element, the contingency measures are not needed at this juncture and have been removed from the Element.
- The Element also updates and simplifies the County’s existing Transportation Demand Management Policy which includes a TDM Matrix of measures that are applied to new private and County developments approved through the site-plan and use-permit approval processes. The revised matrix includes only measures that are currently being applied to new developments during the site-plan approval process.
- A number of TDM-related performance measures are included in the proposed Element, including: maintaining peak-period vehicle miles traveled within 5% of the year 2005 levels, decreasing localized congestion (worse than level-of-service D) and increasing peak-period non-SOV mode share by one-half percentage point annually. Extended lack of progress on these performance measures could lead to implementation of some of the proposed contingency measures.
- The Demand and System Management Element is also aimed at improving the efficiency of the transportation system through the implementation of adopted TSM policy. Generally, the TSM measures called for in the document involve the implementation of engineered solutions and enhancements to communication that together would enable better vehicular flow both for regular daily travel and during emergency conditions. The Element seeks to build upon existing County initiatives such as optimizing traffic-signal timing, prioritization of transit vehicles and installation of closed-circuit-television cameras at key intersections, by expanding applications to more of the County. The County government would provide additional real-time information to travelers to help them choose the most efficient way.
- The Element also identifies a number of measures that Arlington County would undertake in cooperation with VDOT and other jurisdictions to help ensure efficient traffic flow both on a regular basis and in response to incidents or emergency conditions. Those measures include both infrastructure improvements such as dynamic-message signs and overhead-system detection on major roads, and planning efforts such as the development and dissemination of emergency-response plans.

**Issues:** Relative to most localities, Arlington has achieved a substantial mode share for alternatives to SOV travel. Nonetheless, with projections for continued extensive growth in the region between now and 2030, Arlington will need to be more successful in getting travelers to drive less often. While the MTP outlines multimodal improvements, their implementation is not guaranteed nor is it certain that a fully implemented plan will be sufficient to keep congestion to

a generally tolerable level. The advertised Demand and System Management Element outlined several possible contingency measures to strengthen group-riding and thereby reduce motor-vehicle travel. Examples of these contingency measures are: TDM for by-right development, parking taxes, and regional congestion pricing. Due to concerns expressed by the Transportation Commission and other reviewers, the version recommended for adoption no longer includes such contingency measures.

Several concerns have been raised by members of Arlington's development community regarding the measures specified in the updated TDM Policy and Matrix. In particular, the developers have expressed an interest in simplifying the TDM requirements into a formula that could be applied to new development on a per-square-foot or per-dwelling-unit basis. Their primary interest is to achieve greater certainty regarding transportation requirements and costs early in their project development process. Concerns were also expressed about the size and duration of the required annual financial contributions to Arlington's overall TDM program.

Many changes have been made to the Appendix A section to what had been authorized for advertisement by the County Board on October 22, 2008. County staff has modified the TDM Matrix to make it simpler and to provide additional certainty for site-plan applicants. However, staff considers that the matrix needs to retain significant flexibility in order to create the most-appropriate TDM plan for each specific development. Revisions have also been made to enhance the distinction between basic transportation infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks, street lights and on-street parking typically required of new development during the site-plan approval process, and the measures specified in the Transportation Management Plans ("TMP"s). The measures in the TMPs are focused specifically on managing the travel demands of the users of the property being developed and should be individually crafted. Also, in addition to the deletion of the Contingency Measures section, the advertised document was modified in several places to focus and clarify the specified TDM and TSM implementation actions. Thus the redlined version of the Element contained in attachment A to this Report indicates the revisions to Element since October 22, 2008.

### **Community Process:**

Arlington County staff has worked closely with the Arlington Transportation Commission to draft and update the proposed element. Staff has also reviewed the draft with the Long Range Planning Committee of the Arlington Planning Commission. Since authorization of advertisement of the draft document, County staff has also met several times with the Economic Development Commission, National Association of Industrial and Office Properties ("NAIOP") and Northern Virginia Building Industry Association ("NVBIA") to discuss and address their concerns. Representatives of the Northern Virginia Apartment Association ("NVAA") and Arlington Chamber of Commerce were also included in the meetings. Drafts of the element have also been posted on Arlington County's MTP webpage for public review and included proposals for the following actions: implementing TDM with by-right development, exploration of a parking tax, consideration of incentives for subsidies aimed at reducing auto ownership, and subsidies to discourage auto ownership.

Transportation Commission: The Transportation Commission had a public hearing on the item at its November 24 meeting. Two representatives of the NVBIA and NAIOP praised the dialogue

that they had in recent weeks with County staff; however, they request a one-month deferral to permit more time for review. The Commission reviewed the document and recommended several revisions to TDM and TSM implementation actions, as well as some editorial changes throughout the document. Most significantly, the Commission voted unanimously for the removal of the Contingency Measures section of the document. The Commission was concerned that the Contingency Measures are currently unnecessary and their inclusion would indicate a level of County support that may not exist at this time and suggested that the contingencies could be better dealt with if their need becomes more apparent. Staff agrees that it is likely premature to include the Contingency Measures in the Element when no clear time frame exists as to if or when they made be needed, therefore, staff is recommending that the Contingency Measures be removed from the final plan

Planning Commission: The Planning Commission had a public hearing on the Demand and System Management Element on December 3, 2008. The commissioners had many questions regarding the TDM Matrix and its costs to developers as well as how TDM plans are enforced. The Commission supported retention of the Contingency Measures in the Element and voted in favor of both adoption of the Demand and System Management Element and the revised TDM Policies and Matrix.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Adopting an amendment to the Existing Plan by adding thereto a new Demand and System Management Element will impose no immediate financial commitments on the County. However, many of the proposed implementation actions in the proposed Element call for the establishment, operation and maintenance of higher levels of transportation facilities and services. Also, the updated Transportation Demand Management Policy (Appendices A and B) will lead to higher levels of commitment by private-sector development, and greater contributions to support and enhance ACCS. Implementation of the MTP will require the County to determine to what extent, to which purposes and on what schedule it will commit its own revenues as well as those non-local funds that it may control. Such decisions will be made by the Arlington County Board as part of future operating and capital budget deliberations.

**Attachment A: Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Terminology to Board Report for  
December 13, 2008 County Board Meeting**

**Name:**

**Consists of:**

*Existing MTP*

- Master Transit Plan (adopted in 1976),
- Master Transportation Plan – Part I (1986),
- Paratransit Element (1989), and
- All supplements and amendments since they were adopted by the County Board as reflected in the five-year updates, or otherwise.

*MTP Additions*

- MTP Goals and Policies Summary, adopted November 2007
- MTP Map, adopted December 2007
- Bicycle Element, adopted July 2008
- Pedestrian Element, adopted July 2008

*Amended MTP*

- *Existing MTP* and the *MTP Additions*

The *MTP Additions* will have precedence in instances of conflicts or inconsistencies with the *Existing MTP*.

*Future MTP*

- *MTP Additions* and the proposed future plan elements:
  - Demand and System Management Element
  - Transit Element
  - Parking and Curbspace Management Element
  - Streets Element