



To: Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO
Subject: FY 09-12 Transportation Improvement Program

July 16, 2008

MPO Policy Board,

Looking through the proposed TIP for FY 09-12, many things come to mind.

- 1) Evidently, regional staff and decision-makers are trying to address current and projected automobile traffic problems. The goal, as it has been here and across the United States for several decades, seems to be to limit traffic congestion and provide convenient and seamless mobility throughout the region but especially in key commercial and employment areas.
- 2) Given the pressures and clear need for alternative transportation options and a better, more balanced transportation system, slightly more attention is being given to providing “alternative transportation” options along roadways. Combined with many of the road (automobile) projects are pedestrian and bicycle improvements or projects. *Studies* for advanced transit options are listed but not funded.
- 3) The alternative transportation projects are guided primarily by the proposed automobile projects, are *secondary* to the automobile projects throughout most of the TIP, and they are basically to give an option where one would hardly exist in current circumstances or following previous (U.S.) transportation planning paradigms that give only one option – driving.
- 4) We are at a unique time in the history of human civilization and the history of the world, in general. Interestingly, we are stimulating worldwide ecological changes that were not even conceived of 100 years ago, and we are facing critical transformations in our oil supply (the basis of much of our current transportation world) at the same time.

The 2000 World Petroleum Assessment (by the US Geologic Survey) identified that the United States, **with 4.5 percent of world population and 2.7 percent of its oil reserves (including ANWR), uses 26 percent of the world’s daily consumption of oil.**

As I repeat every chance I get, **according to climate experts, we need to reduce greenhouse gases to 60 to 80% below the 1990 level by 2050** to somewhat adequately deal with the global climate change issue we are facing. **I would like someone to tell me how the proposed TIP will come close to achieving that goal in *this* region.**

The proposed TIP follows essentially the same transportation planning paradigm of the last several decades. It looks to make automobile travel more convenient in the region, by improving mobility (widening roads, adding roads, and upgrading intersections) and encouraging automobile travel.

Despite the great need to make a huge reversal in our transportation behavior, the general populous is still behaviorally opposed to getting out of their cars and using other modes of transportation and it seems that this TIP is following in their footsteps rather than trying to guide people to a more visionary, forward thinking approach to life.

The great question is, are we going to now recognize (after too many years of negligence in the first place) that huge changes need to be made but then continue in the same patterns of the past, or are we going to take into account the true needs of the future, given the unique situation we are in, and provide ourselves with a better life in the future?

The proposed TIP is what it is – it is giving token accommodation to alternative transportation while providing great amounts of funding for ongoing development of our automobile transportation network. It is encouraging people to stay in their cars by trying to continuously make it easy and convenient for people to drive all around the area and the city.

This is an opportunity to reflect on the general direction of our many transportation decisions and our thinking with regard to this greatly important topic that shapes cities and the whole world, evidently.

We are making a U-turn in our transportation policy, planning, and behavior, correct?

We are addressing the critical issues of our time, correct?

We are transforming our region, at least, from an increasingly automobile dependent region to a place where people *will* use the bicycle, the bus, different rail systems, and their own two feet to get from place to place, correct?

I think not. I think we are following in the same pattern as previous transportation generations. I think we are looking to provide token accommodations for “other” modes of transportation. We are on essentially the same course we were on in 1990 and in 18 years we will be seeing the effects of this planning we are doing today.

Some cities are taking on the challenges of the time in admirable ways: **Bogota, Colombia; London; Paris; Portland, Oregon; Charlotte, North Carolina.**

I would like our region to be one of those leaders. But, I fear, looking at the proposed TIP and watching our transformation here in this arena, we are not.

Thank you for your time.

I hope you will all look to make the Charlottesville-Albemarle area a leader in the **transportation transformation we are called to create.**

Zachary Shahan
Executive Director