VISUALIZE 2050

Visualize 2050
Planning and
Programming Process

# Travel and Tourism

Part 17 of 27

National Capital Region
**Transportation Planning Board**

*December 2025*

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# OVERVIEW OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM PLANNING

As a global destination, travel and tourism planning is essential for the National Capital Region. In 2023, Washington, DC, welcomed a record number of visitors as tourism rebounded from the coronavirus pandemic, with nearly 26 million people visiting DC, up from 22.1 million visitors in 2022 and exceeding pre-pandemic numbers from 2019 (25.1 million visitors). With a wealth of historical attractions, national monuments, and cultural and sporting venues, the National Capital Region continues to attract large numbers of domestic and international visitors.

Tourists travel to the region by personal vehicles, air, rail, and bus transit, sharing the interregional travel options with the region's residents and employees. The region's multimodal transportation system is accessed by three major interstates (I-95, I-66, and I-70/270), and three large commercial airports: Baltimore/Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport (BWI) in Maryland, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), and Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) in Virginia.

The region is also accessed by Amtrak and various intercity bus services which are primarily served by Union Station, the nation's second busiest intercity bus and rail station and the southern anchor of the Northeast Corridor, the busiest passenger rail corridor in the nation. It also has an extensive system of highways and express toll lanes, one of the nation's largest rail and bus transit systems (Metrorail, Metrobus, and other local and commuter rail and bus operators), and an extensive system of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and multi-use paths. Therefore, it is critical that the region's multimodal transportation system is efficient and accessible to meet the diverse needs of residents and out-of-town visitors.

This part of the Visualize 2050 process document will generally discuss the multimodal transportation planning process for how activities such as the 2017/18 Regional Travel Survey inform all the TPB's travel and tourism planning. This will be followed by the mode-specific process chapters in Parts 18-24 detailing the multimodal transportation planning process for roadway, bus transit, railway, bicycle/pedestrian/micromobility, transportation demand management, surface connections to air, and pipeline and waterways planning.

# THE TPB'S ROLE AND KEY STAFF

Travel and tourism planning activities are generally overseen by the TPB's Technical Committee and its various subcommittees including the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee, Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee, and other TPB subcommittees. Travel and tourism planning includes TPB staff that oversee transportation planning data and research, systems performance planning, and travel forecasting and emissions analysis. The key TPB staff that are involved with travel and tourism planning activities are listed in Table 17.1 below.

TABLE 17.1: KEY STAFF

| TPB Staff | Title | Role |
|---|---|---|
| **Kanti Srikanth** | Executive Director | Staff Director for the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) |
| **Timothy Canan** | Director, Planning Data and Research Program | Program Director |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Andrew Meese** | Director, Systems Performance Planning Program | Program Director |
| **Mark Moran** | Director, Travel Forecasting and Emissions Analysis | Program Director |
| **Eric Randall** | Principal Transportation Engineer | Program Manager |
| **Feng Xie** | Principal Transportation Engineer | Program Manager |
| **Kenneth Joh** | Principal Statistical Survey Analyst | Program Lead |
| **Pierre Gaunaurd** | Transportation Planner | Contributor |

# ROLE OF KEY PLANNING AGENCIES

Agencies involved in travel and tourism planning are represented on the TPB's Technical Committee and its various subcommittees including the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee, Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee, and others. Regional agencies represented on the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) that are involved with travel and tourism planning include the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). These agencies provide guidance and oversight on key travel and tourism planning activities included in the TPB's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) such as the Regional Travel Survey and other transportation survey efforts.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

All activities are coordinated and reviewed by TPB's Technical Committee and its various subcommittees including the TPB Travel Forecasting Subcommittee, Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee, and others. Surveys focusing on travel and tourism, such as the Voices of the Region Public Input Survey and the Regional Travel Survey, may include public engagement and outreach efforts to obtain input directly from residents, workers, public transit users, and regional stakeholders. In addition, key studies are shared with the Transportation Planning Board, the TPB Community Advisory Committee, and the TPB Access for All Advisory Committee. The public has an opportunity to comment on these studies and plans at every TPB meeting.

# REGIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY

The TPB's household travel survey, the Regional Travel Survey (RTS), collects detailed demographic and travel behavior information from randomly selected households in the National Capital Region.[1] Participants reported their travel behavior on a randomly assigned travel day including all travel modes. Conducted approximately every ten years since 1968, the RTS collects demographic and travel information from a randomly selected representative sample of households in the region and adjacent areas. It is the primary source of observed data used to estimate, calibrate, and validate the regional travel demand model, which is used for the travel forecasting and air quality conformity analysis of the National Capital Region Transportation Plan including Visualize 2050. The survey data are also used to analyze travel trends and for other key program activities that are relevant to travel and tourism planning.

The RTS was last conducted in 2017/2018, and planning is currently underway for the next survey.

The RTS included public engagement and outreach efforts, such as the postcard in Figure 17.1, to obtain input from low income and non-white community members. The survey oversampled parts of the region with a higher proportion of harder to reach households and included an outreach effort to increase Hispanic/Latino survey participation. In addition to providing information about observed travel behavior, the survey also collected demographic information, typical weekday travel, and activities that impact trip making such as online shopping and home delivery services.

**FIGURE 17.1: POSTCARD DISTRIBUTED DURING 2017/2018 REGIONAL TRAVEL SURVEY**



Following the 2017/2018 survey, TPB staff also used data from the survey to answer questions from regional stakeholders, including local governments and transit agencies, about travel in the region. Based on the questions received, staff took a deeper dive in the RTS and conducted an in-depth analysis which provided answers to many of these questions that provided insights such as telework and high-capacity transit, characteristics of peak and off-peak travel, and the interaction of the use of personal vehicles and transit. The information collected from the RTS has a direct impact on travel and tourism planning in the National Capital Region.[2]

# REGIONAL INTERCITY BUS AND RAIL TRAVEL STUDY AND REGIONAL AIR PASSENGER SURVEY

The TPB also conducts mode-specific studies that relate directly to tourists traveling to and from the National Capital Region. Two such studies are the Regional Intercity Bus and Rail Travel Study and the Regional Air Passenger Survey. Both were completed in 2024 and highlights from these

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[1] National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (January 21, 2021). *Regional Travel Survey (RTS).* https://www.mwcog.org/transportation/data-and-tools/household-travel-survey/

[2] National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (September 28, 2021). *Regional Travel Survey (RTS) In-Depth Analysis.* https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2022/04/22/regional-travel-survey-in-depth-analysis-featured-publications-regional-travel-survey/

studies have been included in Visualize 2050. More information about the Regional Intercity Bus and Rail Travel Study may be found in Part 19: Bus Transit Planning and Part 20: Railway Planning. The Regional Air Passenger Survey is described in detail in Part 23: Surface Connections to Air.

In general, the following Parts 18-24 detail the multimodal transportation planning process for roadway, bus transit, railway, bicycle/pedestrian/micromobility, transportation demand management, surface connections to air, and pipeline and waterways planning.