

2004 END-OF-THE-YEAR REPORT

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) of The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Dennis Jaffe, CAC Chair

This report summarizes activities of the Citizens Advisory Committee in 2004.

Emergency Preparedness

The CAC in 2004 sought to highlight a number of concerns regarding emergency preparedness activities, particularly as they relate to the transportation sector.

Falls Church Councilmember David Snyder, chair of the TPB's Management, Operations, and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Task Force, attended three CAC meetings throughout the year. The committee truly appreciates Mr. Snyder's commitment to these issues and to the importance of citizen involvement.

Mr. Snyder in April described four key recommendations from the Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination (REETC) Annex of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan:

1. Carry out regional emergency management coordination efforts on a continuing basis.
2. Conduct a coordinated regional public education campaign on emergency preparedness.
3. Ensure that timely information is provided to the public during incidents.
4. Strengthen emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector.

The CAC expressed strong support for these recommendations and passed a resolution calling upon the TPB and its member jurisdictions to act expeditiously upon them.

In his presentation in April, Mr. Snyder particularly focused on Recommendation #4, regarding coordination and communications among jurisdictions. He said that this point was a continuing subject of discussion because regional leaders had not yet determined what kind of institutional arrangement—a new agency or an existing one— would best serve this important need.

CAC members expressed general consensus that regardless of what institutional arrangement was used, Recommendation #4 must be implemented as quickly as possible. There is no time to waste: Emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector need to be strengthened, and the CAC resolution included language to that effect:

“The CAC urges the TPB to give full consideration to different methods for strengthening communications and coordination, including the creation of a new regional transportation communications and coordination organization.”

In May, the CAC passed an additional resolution reminding the TPB that it must move expeditiously on these improvements. In that resolution, the CAC asked the TPB to provide monthly progress reports on the implementation of the improvements, which were scheduled for completion within six months.

In November, Councilmember Snyder returned to the CAC. He informed the committee that an existing agency, the Capital Wireless Integrated Network (CapWIN) would be designated to oversee the coordination and communications function. The CAC passed a resolution in strong support of this designation of CapWIN.

However, the CAC also expressed concern that the new “enhanced CapWIN” would not include emergency management agencies. In its resolution, the CAC included the following language to emphasize the role of emergency management agencies:

“The Committee urges the TPB to address the linkage of emergency management in the new coordinating structure, along with police, fire and transportation components.”

This issue merits the CAC’s continued attention toward helping establish an effective coordination and communications component in a regional emergency management system.

Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study

The CAC has a continuing and close interest in the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. In fact, the study originated from a 2000 CAC resolution that asked the TPB to perform an analysis of various transportation and land use scenarios.

CAC members have closely monitored and participated in the joint working group for the study. Over the years, members have repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining the momentum behind this project, and the need to frame and develop the analysis so that the study’s outputs will be as useful as possible.

In 2003, the CAC requested a “region undivided” scenario, which was incorporated into the study. That scenario would shift some of the future growth in jobs and housing to the eastern side of the region.

This year, the CAC decided to feature these important issues in the committee’s public outreach meetings to maximize meaningful dialogue on the impact of various scenarios. In May, the committee determined that a series of outreach meetings, lasting into 2005, should be planned to share the results of the study. The meetings will be designed to solicit feedback from different communities and constituencies on how the study has been developed and how future stages should be framed, including the study of potentially new transit and roads.

In September, TPB staff presented the CAC with a draft PowerPoint briefing for use at the public meetings, which will be titled “What if the Washington Region Grew Differently?” The presentation’s citizen-friendly format quickly conveys a number of complex issues that will be the subject of discussion during question and answer sessions.

Throughout the fall, TPB staff refined the presentation based on CAC feedback and other comments. The first outreach meetings were scheduled to be held in December in Fair Lakes, Virginia, and in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Based upon feedback from these meetings, the presentation will be further developed for meetings in 2005.

In mid-2005, the CAC will develop a short summary of feedback received during the outreach meetings.

Public Comment on the TPB Website

The CAC tackled a very practical public participation challenge in 2004: the use of the TPB website for public comment.

This spring, the TPB staff for the first time posted all public comments regarding the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) amendment process on the COG/TPB website. Although the committee welcomed this new use of the Web, several members observed that the arrangement of the website made it difficult to sort through the comments. Committee members worked with staff to determine how the site could be turned into a more useful public involvement tool.

CAC members recommended website enhancements that would encourage citizens to enter comments directly online. Based on CAC suggestions, the following improvements were made in time for the final approval of the 2004 CLRP:

- Comments can be entered directly into the website, and are indexed, allowing subsequent users to sort these comments according to name, organization, jurisdiction, and position on key issues (pro/con/other).
- People submitting comments via the website are able to attach a previously formatted document (such as a pdf) to their comment.
- As before, comments that are *not* received through the website, including e-mails, letters, faxes, etc., are still posted as pdf documents.

Nearly all the public comments on the 2004 CLRP (approximately 1,200) were submitted online and the website improvements have been well received.

The CAC hopes to continue working with staff on other similar improvements.

Public Meeting in Southeast District of Columbia “Modern-Day Streetcars: Coming Soon to a Neighborhood Near You?”

The CAC held a public meeting on April 28 on the four light rail lines that are planned for the District of Columbia, with particular emphasis on the Anacostia demonstration line, which is scheduled to be in operation by 2006. Greg Walker of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority was the main presenter, along with DC Councilmember and TPB Vice Chair Phil Mendelson and DDOT’s Alex Eckmann. Approximately 20 people attended.

This meeting was a continuation of a series of meetings held in 2003, in which the CAC sought to highlight transportation projects which attract strong local interest but also have significant regional implications. However, for the remainder of 2004, and into 2005, the CAC has chosen to focus its outreach activities on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, as noted above.

Comments Regarding Documentation of the CLRP and Planning Analysis

The CAC continues to be interested in effective documentation and dissemination of the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), including analysis resulting from the plan. In 2002, the CAC suggested that future CLRP documents should be condensed in an executive summary. The committee is pleased that based on this recommendation, staff produced a citizen-friendly brochure on the 2003 CLRP. This brochure included a CD containing the full 175-page CLRP document. This brochure represents a major improvement.

In the future, the CAC would like to see more information from the CLRP disseminated earlier and more widely. In particular, members believe that more analysis from the previous year’s CLRP should be made available to TPB members before the Board votes on annual amendments or updates to the CLRP. CAC members believe this information and analysis should be better integrated into the decision-making process.

CAC Organizational Issues

Finally, the CAC would like to highlight some organizational issues:

- ***Timely CAC appointments.*** In 2004, the TPB’s appointments to the committee were not made until the March TPB meeting. This late start meant the committee was not able to really get down to business until its April meeting.
- ***The number of CAC public meetings.*** The TPB’s Public Involvement Process requires the CAC to hold six of its meetings outside the COG offices. In recent years, this requirement has meant the committee has attempted to hold six outreach meetings in addition to its regular monthly meetings. Some members are concerned that this is too many meetings. In 2005, the committee will explore alternative approaches to scheduling meetings.

**2004 MONTHLY MEETING ATTENDANCE
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE TPB**

Appointments for 2004 were made after the January and February CAC meetings.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Sep	Oct	Nov*	Dec
<i>District of Columbia</i>									
Dennis Jaffe	X	X	X				X	X	X
Don Edwards	X	X	X	X		X			X
Harold Foster	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Lee Schoenecker	X		X	X	X	X	X		X
Merle Van Horne		X	X		X	X		X	X
<i>Maryland</i>									
Ephrem Asebe	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Nathaniel Bryant			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Stephen Caflisch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mark Friis	X	X	X		X	X			
Emmet Tydings	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
<i>Virginia</i>									
Stephen Cerny	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Bob Chase	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Michael LaJuene	X		X	X	X	X	X		
Allen Muchnick	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stewart Schwartz	X	X	X		X		X	X	X

*The previously scheduled meeting date for November was changed.