

2014 CAC Final Report

Introduction

In 2014 the Federal Highway Administration certification process reminded us all of the importance of public participation in regional transportation planning, but also highlighted how challenging it is to incorporate this participation meaningfully into an already complex process in our unique tri-state region. The Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is one of the most substantive and productive conduits available to the TPB to receive and act on public input. As required by the TPB's Participation Plan, which was updated this year, this report summarizes and reflects on the CAC's activities in 2014.

The 2014 CAC was a dedicated group, passionate about strengthening our region's transportation infrastructure and eager to engage with the TPB. At the beginning of the calendar year, the committee identified several priorities for 2014:

- Tracking implementation of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)
- Engaging our region in understanding and articulating the vital role of the federal government in funding surface transportation infrastructure
- Evaluating and updating the TPB's Participation Plan

Accomplishments

Follow-up on the RTPP was the top priority of the CAC in 2014, and we achieved this. After the RTPP was approved in January, the CAC emphasized to the TPB the importance of promoting implementation of the plan by tracking progress and specifically promoting a stronger connection between the CLRP and the RTPP. Staff developed a performance analysis of the 2014 CLRP that drew upon CTPP objectives and goals, on which the CAC was briefed and provided feedback.

The federal surface transportation funding authorization, known as MAP-21, expired in September of 2014. While this authorization has been extended in the short-term, the CAC called the TPB's attention to the importance of developing a set of principles for our Congressional delegation to use in their advocacy efforts for increased federal funding for the region's top priority projects, and more significant federal investment in modernizing the nation's infrastructure. The TPB has agreed to form a working group to carry out this work in 2015.

As part of the federal certification process for the TPB, the CAC met with representatives from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to evaluate the TPB's public involvement activities. The CAC provided substantive input to this process that helped to shape the updated TPB Participation Plan.

The CAC also recognized the potential significance of TPB member Jonathan Way's request to staff at the October meeting to develop a list of unfunded transportation projects throughout our region. The CAC endorsed this request in November and monitored the progress of the initiative in December. The CAC discussed the need to identify "regional" projects of "greater than local" significance, develop criteria for evaluating their merits for further consideration, and the potential for engaging the federal government in a pilot project demonstrating public participation in the process.

In 2014, the CAC was energetic and productive. The committee followed through on priorities and seized opportunities to provide meaningful public input. Throughout the year, the CAC enjoyed a highly productive working relationship with all TPB/COG staff. Senior staff members, including the Director of Transportation, Kanti Srikanth, routinely made themselves available at monthly CAC meetings, to respond to questions, provide current updates and share insights on the regional planning process.

Missed Opportunities

The CAC believes that we as a region can do even better at evaluating our region's progress towards the RTPP. In addition, there are concrete steps that member jurisdictions can take to "think regionally, act locally." The RTPP authentically reflects our region's diverse needs, and articulates these needs as planning principles. The CAC believes that every member jurisdiction of the TPB should be able to adopt the RTPP as a planning document. The AC recommends that TPB staff conduct outreach on the RTPP and make presentations to member jurisdictions to make the case for its adoption and publicize it around the region.

In 2013, the TPB adopted Complete Streets and Green Streets policy templates, which included a commitment to track adoption of these policies throughout the region. We did not follow up on these commitments in 2014.

Recommendations for 2015

The TPB should not be reluctant to use the CAC meaningfully as a partner in regional planning. This means allowing CAC members to represent the public in working groups on all topics, including climate change, federal surface transportation reauthorization, and funding for transit.

In a similar vein, the 2014 CAC urges members of the 2015 CAC to be proactive about interacting with individual TPB members, not just engaging them at the monthly TPB meetings.

Conclusions

The 2014, the CAC concluded by identifying some potential topics of interest for the 2015 CAC, including:

- Providing public input in the evaluation of unfunded regional projects for future funding consideration
- Linking the unfunded project inventory with the RTPP
- Participating in the TPB's federal surface transportation reauthorization working group
- Participating in the multi-sector Greenhouse Gas Working Group
- GIS inventory of bicycle facilities
- GIS safety data
- Providing input to the next TPB household travel survey, on issues such as new mobility options and changes to commuter benefits, and advice on gathering input from the research community and general public
- Affordable housing and transportation – how are do our planning processes link these, and are there ways we can improve?
- Technology and data on how people move – how can our region leverage new data sources about revealed mode preferences and route choices in our planning processes?