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**TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT**

March 20, 2019

*Rob Jackson, CAC Chair*

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) met on Thursday, March 14. At the meeting the committee learned about Visualize 2045 and participated in a discussion about a recently completed evaluation of TPB participation activities.

**VISUALIZE 2045: AN OVERVIEW**

John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner, briefed the committee on Visualize 2045, the most recent update to the region's long-range transportation plan. He discussed the history of the plan, an overview of the constrained and unconstrained elements, and a report on public outreach that was part of the planning process.

The committee asked questions about and how the air-quality conformity analysis and the performance analysis were conducted. The committee also commented on the Maryland Traffic Relief Plan, access to Metro stations, and considerations of a Metro loop on the eastern edge of the region.

**EVALUATING THE TPB'S PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES**

Bryan Hayes, TPB Transportation Planner, provided a quick overview of a recent effort to evaluate the TPB's public participation activities from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018. He explained how an evaluation can be used to help inform outreach and engagement activities and make them more effective over time. He described the process that consultants at Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc. used to conduct the evaluation. Their report is based upon a review of past activities and practices, focus groups with stakeholders and participants, and an assessment of data on participation. He explained that the study was timely because the TPB just completed two years of extensive outreach for Visualize 2045. He explained that the evaluation will help TPB enhance its ongoing public involvement processes and inform new activities. He described recommendations from the evaluation study. He said that staff has started to discuss whether and how to make changes based upon these recommendations. As part of that conversation, he said that staff wanted to get some committee feedback on the recommendations.

**DISCUSSING PARTICIPATION EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

The meeting was broken up into small groups to discuss recommendations in the evaluation report. The discussions were held in two 20-minute sessions, so committee members had the chance to share their ideas in two separate groups.

An unfiltered summary of CAC members comments is provided below:

**Learn from Visualize 2045 to design outreach for the next long-range plan update.** Committee members discussed ways the TPB can use lessons from the past two year for the next long-range plan update in 2022.

- **Engage the public throughout the process.** For example, CAC members said that the survey for Visualize 2045 was informative and fun, and a version of it could be done again in the near future. These kinds of activities are easy ways to get people engaged.
- **Meet people where they are.** Committee members had suggestions for how to use existing gatherings of people to engage them in regional planning:
  - **Go to a wide range of events.** Members expressed concern that the Visualize 2045 outreach may have relied too much on farmers markets to conduct outreach for the survey. They suggested other community gatherings should be used to tap into the region's wide socio-economic diversity. In addition, the TPB might consider having a presence at major events, such as the annual car show or the Cherry Blossom Festival.
  - **Get invited to meetings of committees and civic groups.** Examples could include Advisory Neighborhood Commissions in DC or the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.
  - **Get included in transportation planning meetings conducted at the local and state levels.** For example, members suggested that TPB staff should set up a table at the meetings for the Maryland Traffic Relief Plan (TRP), which are currently underway.
- **Target more outreach to underrepresented populations.** Rather than casting a wide net and hoping to get more minorities, immigrants, and low-income participation, the TPB should target outreach to specific groups. For example, forums and/or focus groups could be organized specifically for faith-based groups or fraternal organizations.
- **Be aware of public confusion about different planning activities.** Committee members cautioned that it can be confusing for residents to understand the differences between planning activities at various levels of government. In addition, some noted that the public can become weary of being constantly asked to participate in "visioning" exercises that seem repetitive of activities conducted in the past and do not have a clear purpose.
- **Think about different horizons for planning outreach.** Committee members discussed the difficulty of getting people to think 25-30 years out. While understanding that federal rules require a long-term horizon, it might be helpful for outreach to encourage people to think about the future 10 years from now.
- **Look back at old predictions and plans.** People are always curious about what was planned several decades ago. What was realized, what was unanticipated, and what didn't happen? In laying the groundwork for the next plan update, we might use this retrospection to start a regional conversation about the impact of past plans, as well as to understand the inherent uncertainty in long-range-planning.

**Use communications to increase awareness.** Members suggested ways for improving the public's understanding of the TPB and regional transportation planning.

- **Build upon the branding of Visualize 2045.** Members suggested that simple, visual messages and graphics should more extensively used in the future.
- **Be compelling, tell stories.** Members suggested that TPB communications should tell stories that connect with the lives of real people. They highlighted the importance of grabbing a person's attention with catchy messages, the use of graphics and maps, etc.
- **Don't rely too heavily on social media.** Members cautioned that not everyone uses social media and the TPB should not forget the use of more traditional methods of outreach, including public service announcements on the radio, as well as printed brochures or fact sheets to hand out.
- **Tapping into different types of media.** Among other methods, members suggested using public access cable TV.

**Enhance the role and function of the CAC.** Members had a variety of ideas about how the CAC can be improved.

- **Clarify what the "A" means in CAC.** CAC members asked what it means for a committee to be "advisory"? One asked if the CAC is more of a sounding board or if it actually "advises" decision makers. In general, members said they were uncertain about how the CAC was supposed to influence the TPB process.
  - **Determine ways for the CAC to interact more with the TPB.** Committee members suggested that the three TPB officers might all be invited to attend at least one CAC meeting a year. Others suggested that the CAC should invite interested TPB members to meet with the committee on a quarterly basis.
  - **Empower CAC members to be better ambassadors of the TPB.** Members suggested that staff should encourage members to conduct more outreach with groups in their own communities by providing tools and training.
  - **Make the CAC report more compelling.** A member suggested that instead of having the CAC report be a distilled summary of committee comment, perhaps it could provide a rich tapestry of feedback by sample specific member quotes.
- **Hire more staff.** CAC members acknowledged that a more extensive role in outreach and communications will require more staff

## THE COMMITTEE ALSO DISCUSSED

- Lyn Erickson, TPB Plan Development & Program Coordination Director, reviewed the agenda for the June TPB meeting.
- Lyn Erickson also briefed the committee on the federal certification review that is currently underway. USDOT will be meeting with the CAC at the April meeting as part of that review process.

## ATTENDEES

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	<b>ALTERNATES</b>	<b>TPB STAFF AND GUESTS</b>
Rob Jackson, chair	Tahari Johnson	Lyn Erickson, TPB staff
Kalai Kandasamy	Jacqueline Manapsal	John Swanson, TPB staff
Daniel Papiernik	Audrey Derissaint-Nwaze	Bryan Hayes, TPB staff
Jeffrey Parnes	Tony Giancola	Abigail Zenner, TPB staff
Nancy Abeles	Elisa Walton	
Jeremy Martin		Bill Orleans, public
Ricky Tejada		
Jonathan Warner		
Karthik Balasubramanian		
Meredith Howell		
Katherine Kortum		
Theodore Wilhite		
Jasmine Young		