

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

July 20, 2011

Zach Dobelbower, 2011 CAC Chair

The CAC meeting on July 14 included a listening session on the public acceptability of road-use pricing and a briefing on the Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation.

Listening Session on the Public Acceptability of Road-Use Pricing

Earlier this year, the TPB, in partnership with the Brookings Institution, received a grant from the Federal Highway Administration to study the public acceptability of road-use pricing. The study's central activity, which will occur later this fall, will be a series of five deliberative forums with the general public to gauge support for various road-use pricing options and understand how opinions evolve after people have a chance to learn about and discuss different approaches to pricing. In preparation for those forums, staff is conducting a series of listening sessions, with groups like the CAC, to hear opinions about the issues that should be explored in the study, how the public should be engaged, and what voices need to be included in this regional discussion.

The session was conducted as a focus group and was preceded by a short presentation on some approaches that hypothetically could be used to implement to road-use pricing on a regional basis, including: 1) a network(s) of priced freeways, 2) a priced-zone system like London, or 3) a system-wide, mileage-based user fee system that might use GPS to charge vehicles. CAC members were asked to comment on the benefits and drawbacks of the approaches. Staff also asked the committee to comment on how the public should be engaged in this topic.

Regarding approaches to public engagement on the topic of road-use pricing, CAC member comments included the following:

- Specific pricing proposals have very different advantages and disadvantages. Having a general discussion about public attitudes toward pricing as a generic concept has limited utility. Staff needs to ask about specific proposals or scenarios in order to understand citizen attitudes.
- Presenters need to directly and specifically address concerns about privacy and other sensitivities. Before the discussion occurs, staff needs to make it clear that they are aware of these concerns and, if possible, have sought to mitigate them.
- The public forums should include an exercise that would place citizens in a decision-making role, essentially asking participants to make funding and revenue choices that could include road-use pricing.
- When talking about freeway pricing, one option for discussion should include maintaining at least one non-priced lane.
- The study should find a way to measure the commitment of participants to their position, especially in their support of pricing options; in some cases, people will claim to support a position, but may not follow through on that support.
- The role that private firms might play in managing and profiting from pricing projects could be a subject of concern.

Briefing and Discussion on the Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation (CMPOT)

Harold Foster, representing the Prince George's Office the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, briefed the committee on the CMPOT, including an explanation of how this planning activity is relevant to the regional interests of the CAC.

CAC members extensively discussed the role of transit-oriented development (TOD) as the key theme underpinning the CMPOT. Mr. Foster said that county officials, as well as the governor, have strongly supported TOD efforts. CAC members also discussed concerns about the displacement that can be caused by TOD. Participants also encouraged coordination with Charles County and suggested that the county offices might be relocated from Upper Marlboro to a transit-accessible location.

Other Business

- There were a number of questions at the CAC meeting regarding the proposed changes in the I-95 HOT lanes project (Item 8 on the TPB's July agenda), particularly the reduction in transit. Members expressed concern that the public was not generally aware that the scaled-back project would no longer contain the previously developed transit plan.
- The CAC was pleased to learn that the TPB had favorably received the committee's recommendation that the TPB develop a regional complete streets policy. The CAC looks forward to monitoring the development of this policy in the months to come.

ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, July 14, 2011

Members Present

1. Zach Dobelbower (DC), Chair
2. Maureen Budetti (VA)
3. Bill Easter (MD)
4. Harold Foster (DC)
5. Larry Martin (DC)
6. Allen Muchnick (VA)
7. Tina Slater (MD)
8. Emmet Tydings (MD)
9. Faith Wheeler (DC)
10. Brian Winterhalter (VA)

Members Not Present

1. Kelby Funn (MD)
2. Howard Levine (MD)

3. Stephen McCoy (DC)
4. Madeline McDuffy (VA)
5. Fred Walker (VA)

Alternates Present

Kimberley Kaplan (VA)

Staff and Guests

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
Deborah Bilek, COG/TPB staff
Gareth James, COG/TPB staff
Martha Ross, Brookings Institution
Bill Orleans, citizen