

**REPORT**  
**TPB Citizens Advisory Committee**  
**June 19, 2013**  
**Stephen Still, 2013 CAC Chair**

The CAC meeting on June 13 included an update on the Regional Bus-On-Shoulder (BOS) Task Force, a briefing on the COG Activity Center Strategic Investment Plan, a focus group conversation on the pending update to the COG website, and an update on the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

**Briefing on the TPB Bus-On-Shoulder (BOS) Task Force**

Eric Randall of the TPB staff briefed the committee on the work of the task force, which was established by the TPB in July 2012 to identify promising locations in the region to operate buses on the shoulders of highways. The BOS Task Force met three times between October 2012 and April 2013, and is scheduled to finalize its draft report for presentation to the TPB in June. The task force looked at potential applications in the region, and also looked to other cities to understand best practice. Minneapolis has the most extensive BOS network.

Questions and comments from the CAC included the following:

- ***With a BOS system, do shoulders essentially become lanes?*** Staff answered that for buses, yes, the shoulders do act as lanes, but this is not true for cars or other traffic.
- ***What kinds of capital improvements would be needed to permit buses to run on shoulders?*** Mr. Randall noted that improvements are typically needed in resurfacing and remediation from erosion damage. He said that shoulders are typically 2-3 inches thick compared to a typical general purpose lane which is 7 inches thick. He said that shoulders are not typically widened.
- ***How many buses might be included in a BOS system?*** As an example, Mr. Randall answered that on I-66, which is being considered for bus on shoulder treatment, approximately 35 buses run every hour, which is equivalent to approximately 4,000 people.
- ***What kinds of changes in laws and regulations would be needed to allow bus on shoulder service to operate?*** Mr. Randall answered that a BOS operation would require the approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) if the road is part of the National Highway System (NHS).
- ***What BOS plans are under consideration in Maryland?*** Mr. Randall answered that there are no definite plans for BOS in Maryland, but leaders in Frederick County have expressed interested in BOS on I-270.

- ***Are there clear links between the TPB’s CLRP Aspirations Scenario and the work of the BOS Task Force?*** Mr. Kirby said that the bus rapid transit (BRT) system laid out in the Aspirations Scenario would not operate on shoulders. However, he did note that the draft material for the TPB’s Regional Transportation Priorities Plan includes “bus priority treatments” as one of its proposed strategies. Such treatments might include BOS.

## **Briefing on the COG Activity Center Strategic Investment Plan**

Sophie Mintier of COG staff provided an overview on the Activity Centers Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), an initiative that builds on the development of the new activity centers map, which was approved by the COG Board in January.

Committee members expressed enthusiastic support for this planning activity. The link between land use and transportation is critical and the CAC commended staff for capturing this essential planning link. The committee discussed the possibility of developing specific CAC recommendations regarding the draft plan as it moves forward.

CAC comments and questions included the following points:

- ***Support for the diversity of Activity Center types in the draft plan.*** Members said they appreciated the fact that the plan identified a variety of types of activity centers, and focused on making each of these places the best it could be. “All activity centers can’t and shouldn’t look like Tysons,” said one member.
- ***Questions regarding the investments that the plan will identify.*** Members asked whether the plan would identify specific investments that are needed in specific locations and whether investments would likely be funded through the public or private sectors. Ms. Mintier answered that the final plan will not make recommendations for specific activity centers, but would provide “type-level” recommendations. She also said that these types of investments might be either private or public sector.
- ***How is this work on Activity Centers integrated with other planning activities at COG and the TPB?*** In particular, members noted that the Activity Centers Strategic Investment Plan should be integrated with the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. Mr. Kirby assured the committee that coordination between the two planning activities was already underway.
- ***Discussion regarding affordability and equity.*** Members expressed appreciation that the plan was directly dealing with gentrification and was not simply seeking to capitalize upon market potential. In particular, members spoke about the need to preserve and expand affordable housing in activity centers.

## Focus Group Session on Update to the COG Website

Mr. Austin, of TPB staff, and Mr. Behr, of American Eagle, conducted a focus group discussion seeking feedback from CAC members on the current COG website ([www.mwcog.org](http://www.mwcog.org)). Mr. Austin reported that the COG website is being updated and revamped and that COG, in conjunction with the consultant American Eagle, is in the process of gathering information in order to develop recommendations and best practices that will inform that update.

The CAC held a productive 30-minute conversation, and identified the following areas where the website could be improved to serve the needs of the committee:

- ***Make TPB more prominent.*** CAC members largely felt that the current COG website is overloaded with information. Members reported feeling “lost,” and that it can be difficult to find the specific information. Members suggested that the TPB should have its own portal on the new website so that its prominence is elevated. CAC members largely agreed that a portal-based approach to the site’s design makes sense.
- ***Internal CAC communication.*** Some TPB members suggested that the new website could provide an opportunity for members to privately communicate with each other as a group, which might include an open forum with the ability to start discussion threads online. Whereas some CAC members thought email provided this opportunity, others thought that such a tool would enhance participation in the committee outside of committee meetings.
- ***Consider grouping of information.*** CAC members discussed ways to convey information about COG, and concluded that a theme-based method is most appropriate for the user. One CAC member advocated to consider different options for a content management system, and to select a content management system that is able to manage a large library of documents.
- ***Current COG website is a good example for other COGs, but could still be improved.*** CAC members largely agreed that the COG website is one of the better industry websites of its kind. Members also recognized that nature of the website is that it must contain a large amount of information, and that some of the information on the existing site includes “dead links” and stale content. Members suggested that staff and American Eagle review other successful and similar industry websites, such as Transport for London (<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/>), and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (<http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/>) for examples on balancing visual space and information.
- ***Maintain archived information.*** One CAC member commented that all archived information should remain available on the new website so that users can find historic information easily.

- *Consider access from mobile devices.* CAC members recognized that many people view the COG website from mobile devices as well as desktop computers, and advocated for making the new site accessible from a variety of media.

### **Update on the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**

Mr. Kirby provided a briefing on the progress of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP). He said that a detailed outline of the draft plan will be presented to the TPB at its June 19 meeting, that a draft plan will be presented to the TPB at its July 17 meeting, and that the TPB would be presented with the final draft plan at its September 18 meeting. CAC members discussed ways to formally comment on the RTPP, and asked Mr. Kirby for the most effective way to provide feedback to the TPB in advance of the TPB’s final vote on the draft plan in September. Mr. Kirby responded that the CAC will have the opportunity to review the draft plan at its July 11 meeting, and suggested that the best way to present TPB with comments on the plan would be present comments at the July 17 meeting.

The CAC will have further interim discussions on the best means to provide feedback in the compressed timeframe.

### **Other Issues**

- Ms. Bilek, of TPB staff, provided an update on Public Involvement Activities. She mentioned that the graduates of the Spring CLI were recognized at the May 15 TPB meeting, and that planning is underway for a CLI Alumni Network event, which will be held on July 30.
- Mr. Kirby provided an update on the June 19 TPB agenda.

## **ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, June 13, 2013**

### **Members Present**

1. Steve Still, Chair, (VA)
2. Neha Bhatt (DC)
3. Justin Clarke (MD)
4. John Epps (MD)
5. Tracy Haddon Loh (DC)
6. Allen Muchnick (VA)
7. Emily Oaksford (DC)
8. Jeff Parnes (VA)
9. Lorena Rios (VA)
10. Emmet Tydings (MD)

### **Alternates Present**

- Rosemarie Helen Savio (DC)
- Jeff Slavin (MD)
- Jarrett Stoltzfus (MD)

### **Members Not Present**

- Veronica Davis (DC)
- Cherian Eapen (MD)
- Patrick Gough (DC)
- David Skiles (VA)
- Tina Slater (MD)

### **Staff and Guests**

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
- Deb Kerson Bilek, COG/TPB staff
- Eric Randall, COG/TPB staff
- Sophie Mintier, COG/TPB staff
- Andy Austin, COG/TPB staff
- Andy Behr, American Eagle
- Ben Hampton, COG/TPB staff
- Bryan Hayes, COG/TPB staff
- Bill Orleans, citizen