

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee September 21, 2005 Dennis Jaffe, CAC Chair

The CAC's monthly meeting on September 15 focused on the TPB's Federal Certification Review process.

Discussion with Federal Representatives on Federal Certification Review

Every three years, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conduct a certification review of the federally mandated metropolitan transportation planning process at the TPB. As part of this review, representatives of the federal agencies met with the CAC at their monthly meeting on September 15.

In discussing the TPB's public involvement activities with the federal representatives, CAC members offered a wide range of comments, including the following:

- ***The CAC is developing recommendations on improving information and analysis.*** Steve Caflisch, chair of the Working Group on CLRP/TIP Information and Accessibility, described some of the issues that are being addressed by his group. He said the group will be finalizing recommendations this fall. Among other things, these recommendations will call for improvements in project descriptions and project information. The group will also be promoting the development and earlier release of more analysis of the CLRP.
- ***The online public comment feature on the TPB website is a good example of a useful public involvement improvement.*** Last year, the CAC recommended website enhancements that would permit and encourage citizens to provide written comments online, which then could be read and sorted by other interested citizens and decision makers. Staff implemented these improvements in time for the comments on the 2005 CLRP amendments. The vast majority of comments for the 2004 CLRP were provided online. The CAC said they would like to see more such practical improvements.
- ***How can citizens affect decision making regarding projects?*** Some members suggested that TPB public outreach should provide more opportunity for citizens to shape specific projects. Other members suggested that it was too late to concentrate on projects at the time of their submission for the CLRP. Ron Kirby, Director of COG's Department of Transportation Planning, suggested that for citizens to be effective at the project level, they need to be involved in project planning at the corridor level— well before projects reach the TPB. Members emphasized that it is critical that more people be given enough advance notice in accessible language on opportunities that allow them to provide input. This notice should be provided early enough in the decision-making process so that there is at least a practical chance that the input could have impact.

- ***The TPB’s “what if” scenario study should be a major focus of public involvement.*** Members suggested that the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, which is examining long-term transportation and land-use scenarios, is the most appropriate vehicle for public participation at the TPB level. This study is looking at unfunded transportation improvements and potentially controversial land use changes. These types of change will require concerted political will and serious commitments in funding. The regional study provides an opportunity to move such visionary ideas forward.
- ***Some members are concerned about the “Response to Public Comment” document.*** At the end of a public comment period on the CLRP, TPB staff issues a document summarizing public comments that have been received and providing responses to those comments from the perspective of federal metropolitan transportation planning requirements. Members of the CAC have expressed concerns that in some cases, the staff summary of comments has not accurately characterized the comments that were received. Staff asked the CAC members to provide details on when this has occurred. More broadly, CAC members commented that perhaps the “Response to Comments” document could be made more useful as an opportunity to inform decision makers.
- ***Quality is often more important than quantity.*** Members agreed that it was not good enough to simply have more public involvement activities. Rather, public involvement should be planned and conducted thoughtfully, with sufficient follow-up and reflection on the comments that have been received.
- ***Education is an important component of public involvement.*** Members said they were concerned that public involvement activities should not give false impressions that the input received will directly influence decision-making. They broadly agreed that a primary goal of TPB public involvement should be educating citizens and community leaders on how and where transportation decisions are actually made, and how alternatives for long-term development might affect transportation patterns in the future.
- ***The CAC appointment process should be improved.*** The TPB appointments to the CAC are typically late, and the committee usually does not start its business until March. Members said this process should be expedited. Members also said that an outreach effort should be conducted to get a representative membership on the CAC.

CAC Working Groups

The committee had some quick updates on the two CAC working groups:

- The Working Group on CLRP/TIP Information and Analysis has developed a draft set of recommendations, which will be finalized over the coming month.
- Emmet Tydings, chair of the Working Group on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, spoke about the public forum that had been scheduled for September 20 in Oxon Hill. Mr. Tydings explained that the presentation for the forum had been modified from

earlier versions to provide more localized information that will be tailored according to the place where the presentation is given. The scenario study presentation will also be given at a forum on transit-oriented development (TOD) on September 28 in Loudoun County sponsored by the Dulles Area Transportation Alliance (DATA).

**“What If the Region Grew Differently?”
Public Forum on the TPB's Scenario Study
Oxon Hill, MD, September 20**

Approximately 70 people attended the CAC's outreach meeting in Oxon Hill on September 20. The meeting featured a presentation on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, with a focus on how the scenarios in the study would affect southern Prince George's County. Jill Locantore of the COG/TPB staff presented the briefing. The meeting was moderated by Al Dobbins of Maryland National Capital Park and Planning (Prince George's). Lyn Erickson from MDOT, Jim Raszewski from Prince George's Department of Public Works and Transportation, and John Swanson of the COG/TPB staff were on hand to answer questions.

Comments received during the meeting included the following:

- Strong support for rail over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, which is included in the scenario study.
- Support for a full circumferential transit arc through Prince George's County (linking the proposed Purple Line with the proposed Yellow Line across the Wilson Bridge).
- Concerns about whether Prince George's County is getting its fair share of transit.
- Questions about the implications of the shifts in growth that are being examined in the scenario study, such as "Won't more jobs mean more traffic?" Staff explained that according to the TPB's travel forecasts for the study, the growth in vehicle miles of travel (VMT) would actually be reduced when you bring jobs closer to where people live.
- Concerns about how projects that are examined in the study can actually be built, especially given the regional transportation funding squeeze.

Next week the presentation on the TPB scenario study will be shown at a forum on Transit-Oriented Development, sponsored by the Dulles Area Transportation Alliance (DATA). Jim Larsen, executive director of DATA and a member of the TPB's CAC, has requested the presentation. CAC member Jim Larsen, executive director of DATA, asked that the presentation be tailored to provide localized information related to the greater Dulles area.

ATTENDANCE
CAC Meeting, September 15, 2005

Members in attendance

1. Dennis Jaffe, Chair, DC
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
4. Stephen Caflisch, MD
5. Stephen Cerny, Vice Chair, VA
6. Harold Foster, DC
7. Jim Larsen, VA
8. Grace Malakoff, DC
9. Allen Muchnick, VA
10. Lee Schoenecker, DC
11. Emmet Tydings, Vice Chair, MD

Staff/Others

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
Gerald Miller, COG/TPB
Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB
Jill Locantore, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB
Harry Sanders, CAC working groups
Deborah Burns, FTA
Sandra Jackson, FHWA
Ben Rasmussen, Volpe Center
Elvin Crespo
Lyn Erickson, MDOT

Members not in attendance

1. Mike LaJuene, VA
2. Don Edwards, DC
3. Stewart Schwartz, VA