

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
October 15, 2014
Tracy Hadden Loh, CAC Chair

The CAC's October 9 meeting focused on a discussion of the current U.S. DOT Certification Review of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The CAC also discussed integrating the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan into the CLRP and other regional planning work.

Discussion with Federal Agency Representatives Regarding the TPB's Federal Certification Review

Melissa Barlow, of FTA staff, described the certification review process. She said that this meeting provided an opportunity for federal officials to speak with members of the CAC, Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA), and the public about the TPB's planning process and public participation. Sandra Jackson from FHWA was also present.

Answering questions from the FHWA and FTA, members of the CAC and the public discussed the challenges of public involvement in the regional process, including activities which the TPB was doing well and those that need improvement.

Participants identified two primary challenges facing the TPB in regards to public involvement and comment. The first challenge is that the TPB's multi-state and multi-jurisdictional process is large and complex, and it can be difficult to inform the public about how that process shapes the region. That said, they generally agreed that the TPB does a good job of communicating this complexity to residents that are informed about the process. The second challenge is that it is difficult to convert interest in transportation decision-making into action. One member said that getting the public involved in the process at the local level, where projects are developed and implemented, is challenging enough, but not nearly as challenging as it is to get the public involved in an abstract regional process.

Some members of the CAC said that they feel that the CAC can play a role in addressing those two challenges by providing a pathway for public input into the TPB process, and in particular, by raising awareness throughout the region about the CLRP, which, they said, needs to be demystified.

One member said that two things are necessary for high-quality input: TPB staff needs to get high quality information out to the public and there needs to be a way to process public input in a meaningful way. Responding to this second point, several members of the CAC encouraged TPB staff to work on demonstrating that public input and feedback is being heard and considered, and potentially having an impact. Not only does showing how the public's input can inform the process encourage new public participation, but it also makes it more likely that the public will continue to participate in the process. One member thought it was important to figure out how different types of non-traditional input, like comment received via social media, can be included decision-making. Some criticized the process, saying that it is not responsive to what people really think, especially on

issues like greenhouse gas emissions. One member expressed frustration that citizens feel their input can have a greater impact if speak out at the local level, where projects are actually developed. But because the TPB is more of a coordinating body, and they are not sure how their input is useful in the TPB process.

Several members identified the Community Leadership Institute as a valuable resource that explains and contextualizes the regional transportation planning process in a meaningful way. Others said that focus groups, conferences, and deliberative forums, which have been used by TPB staff in the past, can provide useful ways to obtain input and foster a regional understanding among civic leaders and citizens.

Members of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee and the public were also present. They commented on the importance of making TPB documentation available in a variety of languages and holding meetings across the region to provide information and collect feedback. One participant suggested that immigrants are usually focused on meeting their immediate needs, and may not necessarily consider the long-term issues related to planning. They encouraged the TPB to work with facilitators to explain how long-term planning can have an impact on immigrants. Another person mentioned that a successful public participation program empowers people to realize that their input can make a difference.

Discussion Regarding Activities to Integrate the RTPP in the Development of the CLRP and Other Regional Planning Work

The CAC discussed ways to link the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan with the CLRP and other planning activities. Most of the discussion focused on whether or not it would be useful for the region to compile an unconstrained list of unfunded transportation projects that are included in the approved plans of the region's state and local governments.

CAC Chair Loh noted that at the TPB meeting in September, Councilmember Jonathan Way from the City of Manassas asked staff to develop a list of the region's unfunded transportation projects. He noted that the draft CLRP Financial Plan says the region has many unfunded transportation needs, but it does specify what those needs are or how much they would cost. He observed that it is as important for the region to know what is not being funded as what is being funded. Mr. Way suggested that a master list should include a list of the projects that the TPB's states and local governments had approved in their long-range plans, along with cost information about the projects.

Some CAC members argued that such a list would be an essential resource for more meaningful regional planning. It would provide a starting point that would help the region document and analyze what is being planned, identify gaps, and promote strategic regional coordination. It would also help to more explicitly provide information connecting the state/local processes for identifying projects and the processes that the states use for selecting the projects for the CLRP.

Other participants at the meeting expressed skepticism about the development of such a list. They maintained that it would be a lot of work to compile and would be only marginally useful.

The committee also discussed the role of public involvement in developing such a master list of the region's planned, but unfunded, transportation projects. In particular, members discussed the opportunity for the TPB to use this information to engage the public in a regional discussion about issues and projects they care about, and what it would take to achieve funding and implementation.

After much discussion, the CAC passed a resolution (attached to this report) which says that as the TPB follows up on Mr. Ways' request to develop a list of unfunded transportation projects, the Board should use this information as an opportunity to conduct public involvement activities.

At the end of this discussion, TPB staff presented a draft "Call for Projects" document which staff has redesigned to be a four-page brochure that encourages area transportation agencies to submit projects that help further the region's progress in achieving the priorities in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan as well as a number of broader goals spelled out in other TPB policy documents and studies from the past several years. Although CAC members did not have time to substantively review the document, they did express strong support for the direction this document is taking. The committee will further discuss the Call for Projects at its November meeting.

Other Business

- DTP Director Kanti Srikanth briefed the committee on items on the TPB's upcoming October agenda.

ATTENDEES

CAC Meeting and Public Forum, October 9, 2014

Members Present

1. Tracy Hadden Loh, Chair (MD)
2. Andrea Hamre (VA)
3. Jeffrey Parnes (VA)
4. Lorena Rios (VA)
5. Tina Slater (MD)
6. Emmet Tydings (MD)
7. Jarrett Stoltzfus (MD)
8. John Epps (MD)

Members Not Present

1. Neha Bhatt (DC)
2. Cindy Petkac (DC)
3. Stephen Still (VA)
4. Veronica Davis (DC)
5. Zachary Smith (DC)

Alternates Present

- Gary Hodge (MD)
Thomas Sanchez (VA)
Karen Lewis Young (MD)
Cherian Eapen (MD)

Staff and Guests

- Kanti Srikanth, COG/DTP staff
Bob Griffiths, COG/DTP staff
John Swanson, COG/DTP staff
Ben Hampton, COG/DTP staff
Bryan Hayes, COG/DTP staff
Lamont Cobb, COG/DTP staff
Gloria Sweringa, AFA
Duc Tuong, Boat People S.O.S.
Dr. Thang Nguyen, Boat People S.O.S.
Bill Orleans, citizen

RESOLUTION
Approved by the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
October 9, 2014

Resolved:

- The CAC supports the request of TPB member Jonathan Way of the City of Manassas that staff compile a list of planned, but unfunded transportation capital projects from TPB member jurisdictions.
- The CAC further requests that the compilation of this list include a public participation component.