

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
December 17, 2014
Tracy Hadden Loh, CAC Chair

The CAC meeting on December 11 focused on public involvement. The meeting featured a focus-group discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the TPB's public involvement activities and an additional discussion on how the forthcoming "list of unfunded projects" might be used for future public participation activities.

Focus Group Discussion to Evaluate the TPB's Public Involvement Activities

The TPB's recently approved Participation Plan calls upon staff to annually conduct an evaluation that looks at the public participation activities of the past year and identify new tasks for the year ahead. As part of this evaluation, staff conducted a focus group-style discussion with the CAC. Bryan Hayes of TPB staff provided a briefing on the TPB's recent public involvement work. Dan Sonenklar of TPB staff facilitated a discussion with the committee regarding how well the TPB is meeting the five goals for public involvement that were established in the TPB's Participation Plan.

In order to get the conversation started, staff asked CAC members to write short comments on sticky notes about strengths and weaknesses related to the five goals. The members placed the sticky notes on poster paper on the wall.

Because time was limited, Mr. Sonenklar chose not to discuss strengths, but instead focused discussion on what CAC members see as weaknesses in the TPB's current participation activities. Member comments related to Participation Plan goals included the following points:

Goal 1: Communicate effectively with appropriate audiences

- The content in the *TPB Weekly Report* is very well-written, but it should be more broadly shared.
- The TPB should deliberately seek more "earned media."
- Readers should be allowed to comment online on *TPB Weekly Report* articles and other web-based publications.

Goal 2: Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities

- TPB committees and meetings can feel like an exclusive club.
- TPB members do not pay attention during the public comment periods at the beginning of every board meeting.
- The TPB should consider conducting a public comment period after every agenda item.
- The TPB should consider hosting at least one board meeting a year during the evening so people can attend without having to take off time from work.

- The TPB should not ask citizens to provide written copies of comments for oral statements made during public comment periods at the beginning of the meetings. That practice discourages people from speaking. Along the same lines, the TPB could encourage speakers to submit their statements a day in advance so that staff can make copies.

Goal 3: Gather input from diverse perspectives

- TPB staff should get out into communities more often, making presentations and conducting public forums.
- The TPB should more extensively use deliberative forums in which participants provide feedback through keypad voting and engage in small group discussions.
- TPB staff partner with other organizations throughout the region and tag on to their meetings.
- The TPB should find ways to more frequently meet and interact with staff of local jurisdictions and WMATA, and to more fully incorporate their work into regional planning activities.

Goal 4: Respond meaningfully to public comment and feedback

- TPB staff should more extensively use social media, including getting involved in local blogs.
- After receiving comments, the TPB should rearticulate those comments to show that they have been understood and to solicit additional feedback. The process should be more of a dialogue.

Goal 5: Promote a regional perspective

- The Regional Transportation Priorities Plan's process and final document did not live up to its potential in promoting true regional thinking.
- It is hard to promote a regional perspective because local and state governments do not want COG/TPB to meddle in their business.

After discussing weaknesses related to the five goals of the Participation Plan, members briefly discussed opportunities for improvement. Their comments included the following points:

- Do more webinars to share information about TPB work and regional planning.
- Use remote web connections to include people who cannot be physically present at COG.
- Live-stream the TPB meetings (and potentially other meetings) on the web so that people who are not at our meetings can keep informed of TPB business in real time.
- Seek inclusion from a wider diversity of interests, including real estate professionals and people from the outer jurisdictions.
- Strategically target leaders who represent key interests to participate in TPB activities.

Discussion Regarding Public Participation Opportunities Related to the Forthcoming List of Unfunded Transportation Projects

The committee continued a discussion regarding the new TPB activity to develop a regional list of projects that have been included in the approved plans of the TPB's member jurisdictions, but have not secured the funding commitments necessary for inclusion in the CLRP. Committee members agreed that this list should be used for public involvement activities. They discussed various options, including using the list to identify a short list of priority projects and identify missing links that are not included in the list. The committee plans to continue this discussion at their next meeting.

CAC Election and Appointment Process

According to the TPB Participation Plan, every year the CAC elects six individuals – two from each state – to serve on next year's committee. Following this election, the three new TPB officers for the upcoming year are asked to nominate nine individuals – three from each state – to complete the full roster of 15 members. Every year, the TPB approves a full slate of CAC members at its January meeting. At that meeting, the TPB chair appoints the CAC chair.

The CAC election for 2015 was conducted online during the first week of December. The committee selected the following six individuals: Veronica Davis and Tom Sanchez from D.C.; John Epps and Tina Slater from Maryland; and Stephen Still and Andrea Hamre from Virginia.

TPB staff solicited applications during November and December for individuals interested in a CAC appointment. The applications received will be forwarded to the new TPB officers following the December 17 board meeting. As noted above, the full slate of members for the 2015 CAC will be approved by the TPB on January 21. The last meeting of the 2014 CAC will be on January 15, 2015. The 2015 CAC will hold its first meeting on February 12.

ATTENDEES

CAC Meeting, December 11, 2014

Members Present

1. Tracy Hadden Loh, Chair (MD)
2. Veronica Davis (DC)
3. John Epps (MD)
4. Andrea Hamre (VA)
5. Jeffrey Parnes (VA)
6. Cindy Petkac (DC)
7. Lorena Rios (VA)
8. Tina Slater (MD)
9. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Members Not Present

1. Neha Bhatt (DC)
2. Zachary Smith (DC)
3. Stephen Still (VA)
4. Jarrett Stoltzfus (MD)

Alternates Present

- Gary Hodge (MD)
Tom Sanchez (VA)

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
Daniel Sonenklar, COG/DTP staff
Bill Sadler, Safe Routes to School Partnership
Bill Orleans, resident