
2022 END-OF-YEAR REPORT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ashley Hutson, 2022 CAC Chair
Presented to the TPB, January 18, 2023

For the last 30 years, the TPB's Community Advisory Committee (CAC) has been providing "region-oriented citizen advice" to the TPB and has been promoting public involvement in the regional transportation planning process. As required by the TPB's Public Participation Plan, this report summarizes the committee's activities and interests in 2022.

Much of the committee's attention in 2022 was focused on the update of Visualize 2045, the region's long-range transportation plan, but we also provided input on a number of other key topics before the TPB. We were pleased to have opportunities throughout the year to interact with a variety of different players in the TPB process. These included a special meeting with the TPB officers in July and a similar session with representatives of the state DOTs in September.

COMMENTS ON VISUALIZE 2045

Throughout the year, the committee discussed the update of Visualize 2045, which was approved in the fall, and the preparations for the next plan update, due in 2024. Some key themes emerged in our discussions and comments:

- ***The Voices of the Region outreach effectively used a variety of tools.*** CAC Members complimented the TPB staff's use of different tools – a survey, focus groups, and QR code posters – for the Voices of the Region campaign that was the primary outreach effort for the plan update. They applauded the campaign's effectiveness in reaching different audiences and seeking different types of input, noting the special efforts to include communities of color and low-income communities. Members said that it would be particularly interesting and useful to repeat the public opinion survey in the near future, particularly once the pandemic is over.
- ***Discussions about visionary vs. realistic planning.*** At various stages of the year, CAC members spoke of a desire to see bolder and more visionary thinking in the TPB's long-range planning activities. Some members said that the region's goals – including climate goals and Vision Zero goals – can only be met with a more ambitious set of projects. In contrast, other participants spoke of the importance of making planning decisions based on realistic constraints, including the likelihood of funding and land-use requirements.
- ***Confusion about zero-based budgeting.*** Members asked for more information about the actual implications of the zero-based budgeting approach that will be used for the 2024 plan update. Specifically, they said it would be useful to better understand what would cause a project to be taken out of the plan and whether there would be opportunities to add new projects not currently in the plan.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LONG-RANGE PLAN OUTREACH

As the TPB ramps up plans for the next plan update, members provided these comments:

- ***Conduct outreach earlier in the process and release the outreach findings earlier.*** Members suggested that sharing information earlier could mean it will have more opportunity to actually influence the content of the plan while it is under development.
- ***Don't forget the importance of education as part of public involvement.*** For example, members said it is important to understand how the plan ties together state- and local-level processes. As another example, members suggested the TPB could help the public better understand how decisions about zoning and development, which often appear completely local, can affect transportation demand across a broad geographic area.
- ***Make sure to reach out to users of all modes, and don't forget the outer jurisdictions.*** CAC members noted that the response rates for the *Voices of the Region* activities were high, but responses from people who are more “road-oriented” were much lower. Members also acknowledged that it can be challenging to get input from people in the outer jurisdictions, but, they said, these perspectives deserve to be heard.
- ***Incorporate equity concerns in a variety of ways.*** Members said that while Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) in the long-range plan are an effective analytical tool, equity considerations can be more complex than the EEA analysis might suggest and therefore, an equity lens needed to be applied in a variety of ways. For example, CAC members noted that many low-income people in the region have no option but to drive and for them, tolls are a question of personal economics— and equity.
- ***Address the desire for enhanced connectivity throughout the region.*** Throughout the year, CAC members have expressed their desire for improvements in connectivity between jurisdictions and states. Members stressed that improvements in all modes are needed. Some said our current system is too DC-centric and called for improved circumferential connections between activity centers in outer parts of the region that do not go through the regional core. Others said that inter-state coordination is imperative for longer distance transit services and suggested that congestion on either side of the American Legion Bridge must be resolved. Members suggested that these interests could be a subject for public outreach for the next long-range plan update.
- ***Public outreach should go out into communities and collaborate with local partners.*** As fears surrounding pandemic conditions shrink, members suggested that TPB staff should seek opportunities to conduct outreach in-person throughout the region. One specific idea was that the TPB staff could set an annual goal of attending at least one community event in every TPB local jurisdiction. Members explained that leveraging external events, instead of organizing sessions specifically for the TPB, could increase participation and more efficiently utilize staff time.
- ***Recognize that it's hard to get people engaged in long-range planning.*** A number of participants said they understand the continuing challenges of region-oriented public participation. They observed that residents are much more inclined to get involved in project-level planning than in jurisdiction-wide long-range planning, which can feel distant and abstract.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE TPB AND AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

CAC members had the chance in 2022 to strengthen their relationships with TPB board members, as well as key agency staff. The CAC invited the three TPB officers – Chair Pam Sebesky (Manassas, VA), Vice Chair Reuben Collins (Charles County, MD), and Vice Chair Christina Henderson (District of Columbia) – to meet with the committee at their July meeting. In September, the committee hosted representatives from the state DOTs for a similar exchange of ideas. Both these sessions featured full group discussions followed by state-based breakouts, which gave all participants – CAC and TPB members alike – the chance to discuss regional transportation issues that pertain to their own states.

The CAC hopes these kinds of exchanges will continue in 2023. At various times during the year, members have expressed the sense that input from the CAC is not heard or appreciated by the TPB, and we believe more frequent exchanges with decision-makers can help to address these concerns.

COMMENTS ABOUT THE TPB'S PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

In October and December, the CAC met with staff from Foursquare Consulting who were conducting an external evaluation of the TPB's public participation activities. This evaluation will help inform future TPB outreach and will be used in the upcoming federal certification review of the TPB's planning process, which will be conducted in March of 2023.

CAC comments about public involvement included the following:

- ***Appreciation for recent outreach.*** CAC members complimented the wide range of virtual engagement opportunities that the TPB used for the update to Visualize 2045, including the special efforts that staff took to include communities of color and low-income individuals.
- ***Appreciation for TPB staff support.*** Members acknowledged the extensive staff support provided to the committee and encouraged the TPB to maintain this level of support in the future.
- ***Mixed feelings about whether the TPB is truly interested in public input.*** Members expressed mixed feelings about whether the TPB is truly interested in public input. Some noted that the TPB has put considerable effort into conducting surveys and other outreach. But others said it feels like the TPB is simply fulfilling federal requirements through its outreach efforts. Others noted that it is hard to see how public input is affecting the policies and planning of the TPB.
- ***Virtual engagement has generally worked, but it's challenging...*** Committee members were generally complimentary of the switch to virtual meetings during the pandemic and the staff's efforts to keep the committee as engaged as possible, but some said it is becoming increasingly hard to keep members feeling connected in a meaningful way. Many noted the decrease in CAC attendance.
- ***Concern that the CAC is not heard.*** Members also expressed concerns that CAC input is not heard and/or has little impact. Some noted that TPB members rarely ask questions or offer comments in response to the CAC monthly report. Others expressed frustration that the committee's input – and community feedback more generally – seems to have little impact on regional planning.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED IN 2022

In addition to the items described above, the CAC discussed a range of topics throughout the year, including:

- Forum on the FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program
- TPB Resiliency Study
- Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Update in the Cooperative Land-Use Forecasts
- Regional Safety Planning Activities
- 2022 State of the Commute Survey

For all these topics, committee members provided observations and comments, and engaged the presenters in Q&A sessions. These discussions were reported to the TPB in the monthly CAC report.

MARKING 30 YEARS

The CAC held its first meeting 30 years ago in December of 1992. Since that time, the committee has played an important role in questioning and commenting on regional-level transportation issues. The 2022 CAC hopes this important role will continue in the years ahead.

MEMBERS 2021-2022 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Name	Jurisdiction	State
Ashley Huston, Chair	City of Manassas	VA
Nancy Abeles	Montgomery County	MD
Ra Amin	DC Ward 5	DC
Michael Artson	Prince William County	VA
Prince Coulibaly	City of Gaithersburg	MD
Tracy Duvall	City of Takoma Park	MD
Edith Goldman	Prince George's County	MD
Solomon Haile	Fairfax County	VA
Delia Houseal	DC Ward 7	DC
Justin Isbell	City of Alexandria	VA
Robert Jackson	Fairfax County	VA
Jeff Jamawat	DC Ward 1	DC
Jemila Kia James	DC Ward 7	DC
Katherine Kortum	DC Ward 6	DC
Eyal Li	City of Takoma Park	MD
Audrey Nwaze	City of Greenbelt	MD
Dan Papiernik	Fairfax County	VA
Jeff Parnes	Fairfax County	VA
Delishia Pittman	Prince George's County	MD
Lorena Rios	Loudoun County	VA
Rafael Sampayo	Arlington County	VA
Ron Skotz	City of Bowie	MD
Emmet Tydings	Montgomery County	MD
Elisa Walton	DC Ward 6	DC