

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

December 7, 2007

TO: TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

FROM: John Swanson, Senior Transportation Planner
Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Comments Received and Recommended Responses on the Draft TPB Participation Plan

On September 13, 2007 the draft TPB Participation Plan was released for a 45-day public comment period at the Citizens Advisory Committee meeting. The public comment period closed on October 29, 2007. The public was given the opportunity to submit comments on-line, by e-mail, telephone or mail.

This memorandum reviews the comments received during the public comment period and provides recommended responses. The comments received are posted on the TPB website at www.mwcog.org/transportation/public.

1. Comment: The region does not need more information or public participation in transportation decision making. It needs leadership and a commitment to action.

Response: The Participation Plan does not deny the importance of leadership and a commitment to action. In fact, the document emphasizes that public involvement is an essential component of effective decision making. As the draft Participation Plan states “The TPB believes that public input into its process is valuable and makes its products better. Regional transportation planning cannot, and should not, be based simply upon technical analysis. The qualitative information derived from citizen involvement is essential to good decision-making.”

2. Comment: The TPB website should include an archive of all recently submitted public comments, at least for the current calendar year or TIP cycle.

Response: In recent years, the TPB website has been significantly enhanced to allow members of the public to directly post comments online. In addition, all comments received during a comment period are now posted and available for public review. Staff made these improvements largely in response to suggestions by the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee. In the future, staff will continue to identify suggestions, such as the one noted above, for making comments more accessible for the public and for decision makers.

3. Comment: The TPB staff must do a better job of announcing its public comment periods and public forums.

Response: The TPB currently uses a number of methods to provide notification of its public comment periods, including announcements in the *TPB News* (circulation more than 1,400), email notices (subscriber lists of more than 300), advertisements in regional and local newspapers, and other methods. As described in the draft Participation Plan, staff intends to improve its notification procedures through the TPB website and other means.

4. Comment: The draft Participation Plan does not respond to some of the specific suggestions that were included in the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) 2006 recommendations for improving CLRP/TIP information and analysis.

Response: Because the Participation Plan is designed to be a broad policy document with a multi-year horizon, it does not address some of the more detailed suggestions that the TPB has received, including some of the recommendations provided by the CAC in 2006. As described in the Participation Plan, the TPB will develop specific tasks for outreach and participation in the annual participation program. This program will be developed in consideration of CAC recommendations and in consultation with the CAC. The TPB takes the CAC's input seriously, and has already used the committee's 2006 recommendations to make improvements in the public information provided on the TPB website and in its publications.

5. Comment: The Participation Plan should make clear that members of the public who may not be already actively involved in the TPB process have opportunities to submit comments to the TPB.

Response: The Participation Plan encourages informed citizens who are not typically heard at the TPB to participate in public comment processes. The TPB will seek to ensure that all parties have the ability to reach the Board with their comments.

6. Comment: It will be interesting to see how environmental consultation and mitigation activities, as required by SAFETEA-LU, will be implemented.

Response: Information in Appendix E of the draft Participation Plan describes how the TPB, pursuant to SAFETEA-LU requirements, will expand participation activities to include engagement and consultation with affected land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation state and local agencies regarding the development of the CLRP. This will be done annually as part of the regular CLRP update and will evolve after the first year as the TPB evaluates current outcomes and areas for improvement for subsequent years.