

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
June 14, 2012
Tina Slater, 2012 CAC Chair

The CAC's meeting on June 14 included a discussion regarding the update process for COG's Regional Activity Centers maps and a public forum on the draft Fiscal Year 2013-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Update on Process for Revising the Designations for COG's Regional Activity Center

Sophie Mentier of COG's Department of Community Planning and Services gave a presentation on the process for updating the designations for COG's Regional Activity Centers. In the 1998 TPB Vision, the TPB first called for the development of Regional Activity Centers maps to identify places that are planned to be focal points for the development of jobs and housing, and nodes for transportation linkages. The first Activity Centers maps, approved in 2002, were largely based upon existing and expected employment centers. The Activity Centers have been extensively used in the TPB's scenario analysis.

Ms. Mentier said the Activity Centers designations were undergoing the first major overhaul since 2002, with the goal of turning the centers into a useful policy tool for decision making, not just a technical tool for analysis. She said the new centers would be identified to align with local planning, with the goals of COG's *Region Forward*, and with existing transportation infrastructure. She said the new centers were expected to be more numerous – increasing from a total of 54 centers on the existing map to a proposed list of 124. However, she emphasized that individually the new centers would tend to be smaller in size and collectively would occupy less geographic area than the current list.

She said that the draft list of centers had been identified through criteria that included “core attributes” (first, must be identified as a local priority, and second, must anticipate minimum densities) along with a range of additional attributes (any designated center must qualify for at least two additional attributes). She said that once the locations of the centers had been agreed upon, staff would categorize the centers into typologies that will identify appropriate market strategies for development in different types of centers.

CAC members expressed interest in the centers and complimented COG staff on the process for the update. Members made the following suggestions regarding the presentation.

- *The purpose for identifying Regional Activity Centers should be clearly stated.* Why is COG spending so much time identifying these centers? The answer to this question should not be assumed. It should be answered upfront when presenting information about Activity Centers. The benefits of promoting mixed-use development in Activity Centers need to be reiterated because it is not immediately obvious to most citizens.

- ***How might the centers be used?*** Staff should provide examples of ways in which the new Activity Centers maps might be used. For example, Ms. Mentier mentioned that the centers could be used by the Washington Regional Grantmakers as a consideration in awarding grants. Such examples are useful to understanding potential applications of the activity centers designations.
- ***The current activity centers should be more explicitly compared with the proposed new ones.*** It would be helpful for citizens and decision-makers to know more detail about the newly proposed centers in comparison to the existing ones, including illustrative examples of how individual centers are getting smaller.
- ***Information about the locations and details of the Activity Centers should be readily available to interested citizens and decision makers.*** Members suggested that the following features would be helpful for the public: an interactive map with a web link for each center; county-level maps with the centers identified; better labeling of the centers.

Public Forum on the Draft FY 2013-2018 Transportation Improvement Program

At the CAC meeting on June 14, the Draft FY 2013-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was released for a 30-day public comment period. The comment period will last from June 14 to July 14, 2012. The Transportation Planning Board is scheduled to approve the TIP on July 18.

To kick off this public comment period, Andrew Austin of TPB staff provided a briefing on the draft TIP, including information on proposed changes since the last TIP update two years ago, analysis of revenues and expenditures, and status updates on major projects.

Participant comments included the following:

- ***Information about projects often seems inconsistent or incorrect.*** Members noted a number of inaccuracies in the information regarding project costs and completion dates. Some of these inconsistencies reflected differences between the draft TIP and the CLRP. Members asked how the public can make comments if such information is incorrect. Staff responded that the official information regarding projects is provided by the implementing agencies, and only those agencies are authorized to change it.
- ***What is the purpose of public comment on the TIP?*** Participants wondered why public comment was being solicited at this point in the process when essentially the TIP had just been assembled in the last few days from inputs provided by the states and WMATA. Mr. Kirby said that federal regulations require a "TIP forum" prior to the approval of any TIP. He said there are two primary reasons for this session: 1) The TIP forum and public comment period provide a chance to improve accuracy of the TIP. He noted that participants had already commented on several issues that needed to be addressed and/or corrected; 2) Releasing the TIP provides citizens with a chance to see how work on specific

projects is progressing or not progressing. For citizens to wish to stay on top of specific projects, this status information is very valuable.

- ***The structure for the TIP Forum might be reconsidered.*** Participants suggested that it would have been useful for state DOT and WMATA representatives to be present at the forum. They further noted that such a forum could be a chance for a more thoughtful reassessment and public discussion regarding the anticipated direction of regional transportation planning.

Thanks to the TPB on Complete Streets Policy

The committee was pleased that the TPB approved the Regional Complete Streets Policy at its May meeting. The CAC first recommended the development of such a policy last year.

The CAC wishes to thank the TPB and its partner agencies for taking up this issue and elevating the importance of a Complete Streets approach to transportation planning in our region. The committee further appreciates the TPB's responsiveness to input from its citizens committee.

Other Business

- CAC members discussed the work session on the Priorities Plan that is scheduled for the morning of June 20. Several CAC members said they planned to attend. The CAC looks forward to receiving a briefing on the Priorities Plan at its next meeting on July 14.

ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, June 14, 2012

Members Present

1. Tina Slater, Chair
2. Maureen Budetti (VA)
3. Veronica Davis (DC)
4. Bill Easter (MD)
5. Harold Foster (DC)
6. Kelby Funn (MD)
7. Anita Hairston (DC)
8. Rob Mandle (DC)
9. Allen Muchnick (VA)
10. Jeffrey Parnes (VA)

11. William Soltesz (VA)
12. Stephen Still (VA)
13. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Members Not Present

1. Larry Martin (DC)
2. Krystle Okafor (MD)

Alternates Present

- Justin Clarke (MD)
Peter Pennington (VA)

Fred Walker (VA)

Staff and Guests

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
Ben Hampton, COG/TPB staff
Christopher Falkenhagen, AAA
mid-Atlantic
Christine Green, Safe Routes to
School National Partnership
Bill Orleans, citizen