

**2009 End-of-the-Year Report  
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee**

Farrell Keough, 2009 CAC Chair  
January 20, 2010

The TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee had a productive year in 2009. Throughout the year, we focused our attention on urging the TPB to enhance the region's long-range planning process. We also conducted outreach activities and provided comments on a number of other key issues before the TPB.

**Advocating for a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**

Since 2006, the CAC has called upon the TPB to develop a regional transportation priorities plan. Such a plan would identify both funded and unfunded priority projects of regional significance, and would provide a "big-picture" context for project selection in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

This year, the CAC decided to push this proposal harder, given a confluence of factors that seemed to make the time ripe. In October, we issued a set of recommendations called *Moving Forward With the Development of a Regional Transportation Plan*. These recommendations urged the TPB to put together a work plan for the development of an enhanced regional plan that would identify the region's transportation priority projects. We also asked the TPB to convene a high-level forum of decision-makers and citizens to achieve regional agreement regarding the development of such a plan.

In November, the TPB approved a memorandum responding to the CAC's recommendations. This response did not actually provide an answer as to whether the TPB supports the development of an enhanced regional transportation priorities plan. However, the TPB did vote to hold a regional forum in the spring of 2010, as the CAC requested. Based on the outcome of that forum, the TPB will develop an enhanced work plan addressing the CAC's recommendations. In December, the TPB further determined that two members of the CAC will participate in the working group that will oversee the development of that forum.

While the CAC was disappointed that the TPB did not fully commit to the development of a regional priorities plan, we do believe the TPB's response represents a significant step forward. During subsequent TPB meetings, given the various new funding sources of the current Administration, several TPB members remarked on the need for such an enhanced regional priorities plan. The CAC is particularly encouraged by the opportunity to participate in a process that could result in a new type of enhanced long-range planning for our region.

As we begin a new year, we would like to reiterate some of the reasons we believe the time is right for real change in the way we conduct regional transportation planning:

- First, regional leaders have long been preparing for this moment. The TPB has spent much of the last decade laying the groundwork for a new regional plan through the Scenario Study. More recently, the development of the TIGER grant application has demonstrated that all the different members and jurisdictions of the TPB have the capacity to work together effectively. We believe there is a growing appetite for more regional planning.
- Second, we believe the TPB is ready to demonstrate regional leadership. New federal legislation could provide the TPB with new opportunities. In fact, opportunities for federal funding have already become available – through the TIGER program, for example. By developing and articulating regional priorities in a new enhanced long-range plan, the TPB will clearly demonstrate that it is ready for new responsibilities and opportunities.
- Finally, we believe the development of an enhanced regional long-range plan that identifies transportation priorities is a logical next step for the TPB. In 2010, the TPB intends to integrate the scenario study into the CLRP and conduct a new round of public outreach to aid the process of regional priority-setting. In order to meet these commitments, we believe the region needs a new mechanism – a regional planning process culminating in an enhanced regional plan – for linking the “what if” culture of scenario planning with the cold reality of financial constraint reflected in the CLRP.

The CAC membership represents a collection of very different viewpoints, and frankly, we do not agree on many issues. Nevertheless, we agree that it is time for the TPB to finally commit to the development of an enhanced regional transportation priorities plan. We look forward to moving ahead with this concept in the new decade.

### **Other CAC Business in 2009**

The CAC conducted other activities and addressed a number of other topics over the past year:

- ***We conducted outreach meetings in Frederick and Alexandria.*** The committee “went on the road” twice in 2009, conducting our May meeting in Frederick and our December meeting in Alexandria. We decided to hold these meetings outside the COG offices because we believe it is important to develop a greater appreciation for the challenges that jurisdictions face, and how those challenges fit into the broader planning framework in the Washington region. Not only does this give citizens a chance to engage in the process of transportation planning, but it gives the CAC an opportunity to learn about areas they may not regularly encounter. Having “feet on the ground” is a very important experience as we all seek to grasp the myriad issues facing all of us in this region.
- ***We were briefed on Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) issues as they relate to transportation challenges for the region.*** Our final meeting in January 2010 featured a panel of speakers who discussed BRAC-related challenges for the region. This meeting was made open to the public as a way to broaden citizen engagement in regional

transportation issues. During this meeting, the CAC engaged in dynamic conversation with representatives from MDOT, VDOT, and the Federal Government on the opportunities, impacts, and challenges associated with BRAC. The conversation included an emphasis on funding needs and transportation strategies, as well as other related issues, such as workforce, housing, and land-use challenges that are faced by jurisdictions throughout the region.

- ***Two CAC meetings this year served as official outreach events for the CLRP and TIP process:***
  - In June, we participated in the annual forum on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in which citizens had a chance to review the draft FY2010-2015 TIP document. At this meeting, we mainly discussed how the TIP can be used as a vehicle for public information. Among other things we focused on information about pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in the TIP (see below).
  - In October, TPB staff convened an informal planning session with stakeholders in conjunction with the monthly CAC meeting to solicit input on how to conduct outreach for this year's update to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). Participants included members of the TPB CAC, along with representatives from interest groups and individual citizens from across the region. Ideas generated from that meeting are being used to develop an outreach strategy.
- ***We have expressed concerns to the TPB about the lack of information on bicycle and pedestrian projects in the TPB's six-year Transportation Improvement Program.*** The TIP document does not seem to have many ped/bike projects and funding levels seem to be very low. At a TPB meeting, a Federal Highway Administration official informed the CAC chair that there are no federal reporting requirements that would limit or exclude presenting this information. At the June TIP forum, state DOT representatives told us that many transportation projects have bicycle and pedestrian components embedded in them, but these elements are difficult to separate out from the full project. Nonetheless, we believe that better information on these projects needs to be provided. In response to our concerns, we received a briefing from COG/TPB staff about new information included in the latest TIP document.

The CAC appreciates these enhancements, but we would like to see more significant improvements in the TIP documentation. Specifically, we would ask that TPB staff continue to work with the TPB's Bike/Ped Subcommittee and with the DOTs to determine the best way for generating and presenting information that would include: 1) lists and descriptions of bicycle and pedestrian projects, and 2) funding levels being provided for bike/ped projects or project components.

- ***More broadly, we believe that better information is needed not just for bike/ped projects, but for all other modes as well, including rail transit.*** We want to emphasize that our committee is not interested in the creation of new bureaucratic requirements and more complicated documents. What we are really interested is this: Citizen-friendly

information that provides details on how this region intends to spend its transportation dollars over the next six years. We hope to be able to work with TPB staff in reviewing the TIP brochure, which was first developed last fall, to determine how it might be enhanced to provide more big-picture, citizen-friendly information.

### **Looking Forward**

While transportation planning in this Washington region can be frustrating, getting a glimpse of the lights at the end the various tunnels is what engages the volunteers of the CAC to continue to participate in this process. This has been a very engaging and productive group and I was honored to Chair this year's CAC. Each member recognizes that they are representing both their area of the region as well as areas of transportation solutions to benefit a larger segment of the population as a whole. This diversity brings a wide range of possibilities and solutions.

The coming year should provide more opportunities to engage the public and promote workable solutions. As we have noted throughout the past year, when money is short, that is the time to plan. Having developed an enhanced regional transportation priorities plan, we look forward to the potential this new focus can bring.