

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
October 15, 2003
Karren Pope-Onwukwe, Chair

The TPB Citizens Advisory Committee hosted two outreach meetings on October 1 and October 7, and held its regular monthly meeting on October 9.

Outreach Meeting: “How Can We Get There? Looking at Transportation Options for Southern Prince George’s County,” October 1, Oxon Hill, Maryland

More than 120 citizens and community leaders gathered for the CAC’s outreach meeting at the Best Western Hotel in Oxon Hill on the evening of October 1. Peter Shapiro, who chairs both the TPB and the Prince George’s County Council, moderated the meeting. Presentations were made by Eric Foster of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Betty Hager Francis, Director of the Prince George’s County Department of Public Works and Transportation. Mr. Foster spoke about the forthcoming update to the Prince George’s County Transportation Master Plan, which will complement the county’s recent comprehensive plan update. Ms. Francis spoke about shorter-term transportation initiatives in the county. The session also included remarks by County Councilmember Tony Knotts.

During the question and answer session, many citizens voiced the feeling that the transportation needs of southern Prince George’s County’s have been consistently ignored. Participants noted that transit projects are being funded and planned elsewhere in suburban Maryland, but not in this part of Prince George’s County. A number of citizens clamored for a rail line on the Wilson Bridge between Oxon Hill and Alexandria. Others called attention to the transportation demands that will be created by the National Harbor development. Several citizens spoke of their frustration that bus services are lacking and that important bus lines have been slated to be cancelled. Some said that underutilized bus services actually should be cut.

At a number of points in the meeting, citizens debated among themselves about controversial issues, such as the transportation implications of the National Harbor development. Meeting participants also discussed how they, as citizens, might most effectively be advocates for desired changes. Some said that county officials should be held more accountable, while others noted that county leaders needed to be supported in their efforts to bring transportation improvements to the southern part of the county. Community leaders emphasized that much of the decision making power for transportation lies with the state of Maryland and therefore more pressure needs to be put on Annapolis and on the Maryland Department of Transportation.

Outreach Meeting: “(Re)Building Communities Around Public Transit on the Eastern Side of the Region,” October 7, Washington, DC

The CAC joined with the TPB’s Access for All Advisory Committee for a public meeting on October 7 that looked at transit-oriented development (TOD) and its implications for the eastern side of the Washington region. TOD is broadly defined as development that is clustered close to transit and features a mixture of jobs, housing and retail in a walkable environment. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting, which was held at St. Luke’s Center on East Capital Street near the Benning Road Metro station.

TPB Chairman Peter Shapiro chaired this forum, which brought together officials, community leaders and citizens from the District of Columbia and Prince George’s County. Three presentations framed the meeting discussion:

- Karina Ricks, DC Office of Planning
- Al Dobbins, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)
- Denton Kent, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Karina Ricks described the benefits of TOD, including economic development, environmental improvements and increased mobility. She listed actions that are being taken to implement TOD projects near the Minnesota Avenue, Anacostia and Capitol Heights Metro stations. She also noted that opportunities for TOD existed at the Congress Heights, Deanwood, Benning and Southern Avenue stations. In addition, TOD opportunities are being examined in conjunction with future light rail, including the Anacostia demonstration line, and with bus nodes that are heavily used on the eastern side of the region.

Al Dobbins from Prince George’s MNCPPC describe the county’s efforts to promote transit-oriented development. He noted Prince George’s TOD advantages, including available land for development and station capacity for additional riders; a strong market demand, especially for residential development; and public plans and policies that encourage TOD. He noted that the county’s new general plan and the county’s Livable Communities Initiative both promote TOD. He also described some of the challenges facing TOD in the county. Mr. Dobbins listed some of the sites that present TOD opportunities. Of these sites, he focused on recent progress made to develop the West Hyattsville station area.

Denton Kent explained that WMATA’s Office of Property Development and Management acquires, manages, and develops WMATA’s real estate assets and facilities. The office oversees more than 56 joint development projects, which provide approximately \$11 million in annual revenues to WMATA. Transit-oriented development is one the key goals of the Joint Development Program. Through a solicitation process, WMATA pursues its joint development goals by selecting a preferred developer, negotiating a long-term ground lease or sales agreement, monitoring project construction and operation, and receiving purchase price or annual rent. WMATA regularly assesses the market ripeness of its land portfolio by ranking various sites as 1, 2 or 3. A ranking of “3” indicates sustained problems. (A participant asked for the ranking of the Addison Road station; Mr. Kent replied that it was a Level 3.) Mr. Kent emphasized that although WMATA has extensive real estate assets, it does not possess land use authority.

Participants at the meeting included several mayors and elected officials from nearby jurisdictions. A number of these officials expressed frustration that promises are continually made regarding development near transit stations, but there have been few real results.

Broaching the subject of gentrification, some participants asked whether TOD would inevitably result in higher rents and living expenses, which would push out lower-income people. The speakers described ways in which these concerns might be addressed, such as requiring that a certain percentages of living units will be set aside as “affordable.”

The presenters spoke about the need for sustained community involvement and political leadership. Mr. Kent described the long-term commitment to transit-oriented development demonstrated by political leaders in Arlington County. Mr. Dobbins described citizen involvement in Columbia Heights, D.C., where the development plan near the Metro station is a result of extensive community planning and involvement.

CAC Monthly Meeting

The CAC’s monthly meeting on October 9 focused on the 2003 Update of the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP). Wendy Klancher and Ron Kirby of the TPB staff gave a briefing on the CLRP. Ms. Klancher’s presentation included maps depicting the plan’s projects and studies superimposed on maps indicating high concentrations of low-income and minority communities.

Questions and comments from the CAC members included:

- Members suggested that it would be interesting to have a comparative analysis of how the CLRP benefits different communities. Ms. Klancher replied that the Accessibility Analysis, which was performed in 1999, provided this kind of information. Mr. Kirby said that it might be possible to expand this type of analysis in the future.
- A member suggested that it would be helpful if an analysis of the CLRP impacts were performed before the plan is approved.
- Members discussed the fact that the CLRP represents a compilation of projects that are typically developed at the state or local levels. Mr. Kirby indicated that the CLRP is a reflection of priorities. Because of the federally imposed planning process, the CLRP provides a “full disclosure” of what the jurisdictions’ priorities are. He said that those priorities can be changed in future plan amendments and updates; just because a project is in the plan this year is no guarantee that it will ultimately be built. In response, a CAC member said that he regretted that citizens had missed the opportunity to affect the plan during this update cycle.
- A member suggested that it would be helpful to have an explanation for CAC members on how projects are developed at the state and local levels.

- A member suggested that a CLRP analysis should include the plans effects on transit-dependent people, measured through Census data on number of vehicles per household.
- A member said that the CLRP demonstrates that there is no regional commitment to improving transportation. The plan only includes spot improvements. It contains nothing approaching a regional approach or a regional system.

Other Business

The CAC will hold elections in November to designate six individuals—two each from D.C., Maryland and Virginia—to serve on next year’s committee. In December, the TPB officers will nominate an additional nine individuals—three each from D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

The CAC also discussed preparation of its end-of-year report.

ATTENDANCE

CAC Meeting, October 9, 2003

Members in Attendance

1. Karren Pope-Onwukwe, MD Chair
2. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
3. Bob Chase, VA
4. Jim Clarke, MD
5. Federico Cura, VA
6. Glen Harvie, MD
7. Allen Muchnick, VA
8. Lee Schoenecker, DC
9. Stewart Schwartz, VA
10. Merle Van Horne, DC

Alternates in Attendance

- Harold Foster, DC
Harry Sanders, MD

COG/TPB Staff

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff

Members Not in Attendance

1. Steve Cafilisch, MD
2. John Edwards, VA
3. Dennis Jaffe, DC
4. Nancy Jakowitsch, DC
5. Jacque Patterson, DC