



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Abigail Zenner, TPB Communications Specialist
SUBJECT: Staff activities at the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations annual meeting
DATE: October 4, 2018

The following is a summary of staff experiences at the Association of Metropolitan Organizations (AMPO) annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Five members of the TPB staff attended the meeting. While there, they participated in committee meetings, presented their work, learned best practices from peers, and met staff from other MPOs.

TPB STAFF TOOK HOME TWO AWARDS

The Ronald F. Kirby National Award for Outstanding Individual Leadership

This year, one current and one former member of the staff received AMPO awards. Ron Milone was awarded the Ron Kirby Award for Outstanding MPO Leadership. It is awarded to professionals who can be counted on to continue Ron's legacy and tradition of professionalism and commitment to excellence.

TPB's very own Ron Milone received the award for his work on travel forecasting and modeling. It was a special award to someone who had worked closely with Ron Kirby. It also provided an opportunity to honor Ron Milone on the cusp of his retirement.

Former member of the TPB staff, Bob Griffiths was awarded the National Award for Excellence in MPO Staff Achievement. Since his retirement, Bob Griffiths has continued to work with TPB staff as a consultant.

TPB STAFF PRESENTED ON USING PLAIN LANGUAGE AND OUR LONG-RANGE PLAN TASK FORCE

As part of a session focused on public involvement, TPB's communications specialist, Abigail Zenner, presented on the importance of using plain language and avoiding jargon when communicating with almost any audience. The session was designed as a game show in which the audience helped contestants define jargon, acronyms, and technical concepts. A bicycle horn would sound anytime a contestant used jargon or acronyms. To avoid the, "horn of jargon" participants needed to use plain language as if talking with a friend or family member.

Plan Development and Program Coordination Director Lyn Erickson told the story of how the TPB changed its long-range plan and the story of the TPB's Long-Range Plan Task Force. The session focused on the challenges of changing how the TPB had approached long-range planning in the past and the complexities of the Long-Range Plan Task Force process.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

TPB staff also attended sessions on a wide range of topics for MPOs. These sessions covered freight planning, resiliency, technology, public involvement, complete streets, environmental justice, and more. The following are a few key takeaways from some of those sessions.

MPOs can be neutral conveners when it comes to incident management. MPOs provide a platform for regional stakeholders to bring together transportation and public safety for better coordination. Some MPOs were able to access funds from outside Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) funds to support traffic incident management activities

In a technology focused session, the City of San Antonio and San Antonio's transit provider highlighted their use of smart phone applications. Using Smart City infrastructure and smart phone applications like 311 services, the city has been able to improve city services. The city has also hosted "hackathons" to encourage fresh ideas and involve the public.

Two sessions on resilience focused not only on planning for a disaster response but also recovering after a disaster. MPOs play an important role in in the months-long or years-long process of communities, infrastructure, and economies coming back/rebuilding from disasters. The second session focused on how to integrate resiliency into transportation planning.

In sessions focused on public involvement, MPO staff talked about the importance of heading out into communities that are traditionally underserved. Many MPOs regularly visit groups who represent these communities so the people in the region get to know the MPO. The use of video is also a great way to help catch and keep the public's interest in long-range planning.

There were many sessions focused on Performance Based Planning and Programming (PBPP), as this is a new requirement for all MPOs. While our federal partners have attempted to guide everyone through the process, there are many facets and details that are still unclear and untested, and our federal partners have encouraged everyone to continue to "do the best you can." We learned that there is an internal federal document called a "PBPP Implementation Roadmap" that will help to enable the 52 FHWA division offices to try to interpret the regulations in a similar manner. The current set of performance metrics were considered "not perfect" and could be improved. There are some real-world challenges to PBPP implementation, especially board discussions of funding impacts, lack of data/lack of access to data, and lack of resources. The dilemma of aspirational (e.g. Vision Zero) versus trend-based safety targets (which currently could be trending worse, not better) was discussed.

Staff learned about different kinds of scenario planning that other MPOs have tried. One is called "VisionEval." It packages three previously independent scenario planning tools under a single unit using a consistent open source framework. The component tools include: GreenSTEP, RSPM and RPAT. These and other similar tools are useful for strategic planning and for their quick turnaround analysis time and the multi-modal and multi-sectoral metrics used. The session was useful in informing TPB staff's efforts at expanding its in-house knowledge of scenario planning tools.

Staff attended sessions on coordination and collaboration, which highlighted the topics of safety, freight, and a really neat performance dashboard tool (78,000 people used it at least once!). One session showcased the Texas Innovation Alliance (TIA) as a model for collaboration among

stakeholders to understand and implement emerging technologies to solve community mobility challenges. The TIA consortium has variety of collaborators - unlicensed agencies (State, Local, MPO), private sector and academia including research institutions. TIA work includes equity, freight, EV adaption, seamless mobility (across multiple modes). This could be an interesting and worthwhile idea for the TPB to explore - in the face of mobility challenges being faced and given the diversity of jurisdictions and opportunities for collaboration with the private sector to use technology.

One session provided details of US DOT's Connected Vehicle (CV) Pilot Deployment Programs (New York, Wyoming, Tampa) where communications and controls through CVs are being tested on different facilities focused on different aspects (truck safety, urban area traffic signals, etc). The session also previewed a pending FHWA guidebook designed to help planners use scenario planning methods to assist in long range planning. A status report on an ongoing project in SANDAG on a long range transit system plan that attempts to factor TNCs, CV, AV are presented. Additionally, the draft Guidance on ACES (Automated Connected Electric Shared) into LRTP - Policy Guidance from Florida DOT was reviewed. All three projects are of relevance and would be of interest for our region.

PEER EXCHANGES AND COMMITTEES

In addition to the sessions focused on various topic areas TPB staff also participated in peer exchanges and AMPO committee meetings.

TPB is a member of AMPO's policy committee. In the committee meeting staff learned about the federal appropriations for FY 2019 and the reauthorization of Fast Act which is set to expire end of federal FY 2020. The Committee will be developing a set of reauthorization principles and priorities from the MPO perspective. TPB staff will be able to reconcile TPB's reauthorization principles with that of AMPO as appropriate.

TPB is also a member of the AMPO technical committee, and they focused on identifying research topics and how their work could better compliment the work of the policy committee. TPB has many issues that are common with other large MPOs that were suggested for further research. Equity, TNCs, Consistency and ease of data availability, innovative means to raise funds were some of the common issues.