

**2011 END-OF-YEAR REPORT  
OF THE TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

**January 18, 2012**

**Zach Dobelbower and Rob Mandle, 2011 CAC Chairs**

As required by the TPB's Participation Plan, this report summarizes the activities and interests of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee in 2011. Throughout the year, our committee continued to focus much of our attention on ways in which the TPB's public involvement process can become more meaningful, particularly through the development of a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

### **THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES PLAN**

The CAC is pleased that in 2011 the TPB initiated the development of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. The CAC has been calling for a priorities plan since 2006, and so we are pleased that it is finally underway.

In the first half of 2011, the CAC monitored the development of the scope for the forthcoming plan. Four CAC members participated in the Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force. In May, the committee developed a set of questions for review by the task force. Those questions are attached to this report as Appendix A. On July 14, the CAC voted to recommend the approval of the draft scope for the Plan, which the TPB approved at its meeting on July 20.

#### ***Continuing Interests and Concerns***

Throughout the past year, the CAC actively discussed the Priorities Plan and made numerous recommendations to the TPB and staff. These concerns are organized below into three major themes: Public Involvement, Defining Benefit, and Systems Approach.

- ***Public Involvement***

An enhanced planning process – culminating in an overarching regional priorities plan – will provide new opportunities for public involvement. Such opportunities do not exist under the TPB's current planning process because most of the decisions reflected in the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan are not made at the regional (TPB) level.

Throughout the year, the CAC encouraged TPB staff to tailor a package of outreach activities as part of the new planning process to reach a variety of constituencies with different interests and types of knowledge, especially those that are currently grappling with transportation issues that have a regional component. The CAC made several key points regarding public involvement:

- ***Generate interest and enthusiasm.*** The TPB needs to cultivate a sense of public interest and enthusiasm as part of this planning process. The new Priorities Plan needs to make a tangible connection between local interests and the regional context. Outreach should include a strong educational component about the status quo *and* options for change. It should be interactive,

incorporating new technologies and social media. And it should help people understand why regional planning is important.

- **Develop a feedback loop for decision making.** Members also said it was important to identify a feedback loop to ensure that decision makers consider and use the input received during public outreach for the Priorities Plan.
- **Don't lose the big picture: Reaffirm and rearticulate regional goals.** The CAC encouraged the TPB to emphasize the region's overarching goals as part of this new planning process. The goals, articulated 13 years ago in the *TPB Vision* and recently reaffirmed in COG's *Region Forward*, need to be rearticulated in order to gain wider public support and enthusiasm for the Priorities Plan.

In November, CAC members expressed concern that the public outreach process for the Priorities Plan does not include a goal-setting stage because, as DTP Director Ron Kirby explained, regional goals have already been established in the *TPB Vision* and *Region Forward*. CAC members commented that if there is no open discussion regarding the region's goals, the process will miss a key opportunity to engage community leaders and citizens. Members further suggested that a robust discussion about goals at the beginning of the process will create a solid foundation for the new plan. Members cautioned that the potential influence of the plan might be diminished or the final product may be less legitimate if the discussion about goals is shortchanged.

- **Implement recommendations in response to the TPB's Federal Certification Review.** As part of the public involvement strategy for the Priorities Plan, and for other TPB outreach activities, the CAC encouraged the TPB and its staff to pursue the following recommendations that were laid out in the staff's response to the federal review of the TPB process that was conducted in 2010:
  - **Strategically plan outreach activities.** The TPB should be more strategic and deliberate in determining which activities to pursue and which tools to use. Specific and measurable goals that are tailored to each constituency are important for an effective participation program.
  - **Improve integration of public involvement activities.** The TPB has made a number of recent enhancements in public participation, but it needs to comprehensively examine how various public involvement activities fit together and to identify where gaps remain.
  - **Move beyond a "one size fits all" approach.** Different types of audiences and constituencies need different types of participation tools. Each TPB constituency has different information needs and opportunities for involvement.
  - **Work toward developing an integrated regional transportation "story" that is clear and compelling.** The TPB needs to explain how regional transportation challenges affect the lives of everyone in the region – from central D.C. to the outer suburbs. This "regional transportation story" would show how the TPB plays a coordinating role in tying together actions and policies that are pursued at many levels of government and address many different considerations, including land use, the environment and other factors.

- **Evaluation of involvement efforts and strategies should occur more frequently.** This could include self-appraisal by TPB staff and as-needed evaluation of program effectiveness by third parties.

- **Defining Benefit**

CAC members were generally supportive of the proposed use of performance measures as a key method for identifying priorities for the Priorities Plan. However, the committee offered the following comments regarding the definition of benefits:

- **Be careful that metrics do not drive priorities.** CAC members expressed concern that some important goals/challenges may be difficult to measure and therefore might not be included.
- **Are performance measures a good topic for the beginning of public involvement?** Members suggested that performance measures seemed more appropriate as a topic for discussion among professionals because the public will care more about outcomes than measures.
- **Encourage decision makers to consider broad benefits of investments.** Members said the TPB, in developing the Priorities Plan, should not be tied to a narrow benefit/cost approach, but instead should be encouraged to think about and explicitly state benefits more broadly. For example, the long-term value of public transit investments, recent data on health effects of walkable communities, and, more generally, the positive and negative multiplier effects of transit choices, should be considered.
- **Do not over-emphasize performance measures.** Members suggested that even though the federal government seems to be focused on performance measurement right now, this could be a “flavor of the month.” The TPB should be sure the priorities plan is grounded in our region’s needs, and is not based upon an approach that is imposed by the federal government.

- **Systems Approach**

In various ways, CAC members throughout the year spoke about the importance of developing a “systems approach” for the priorities plan in which packages of different priorities would be shown to provide synergistic and mutually supportive benefits.

- **Ensure linkages to the TPB’s scenario analysis.** The CAC has a long-standing interest in ensuring that scenario planning is used to identify regional priorities that the TPB can officially endorse. In proposing the Priorities Plan, the CAC’s original intention was to see an overarching regional plan that, in large part, would be derived from the TPB’s scenario analysis, which called attention to the challenges of growth and potential solutions.

Mr. Kirby assured the CAC that the scenarios will be considered as part of the priorities planning process. He suggested that scenario analysis might identify certain segments that make most sense to pursue first. CAC members expressed concern that the linkage to scenario planning was not clear in staff’s approach to the priorities plan development, and should be more explicit and visible.

## **REGIONAL COMPLETE STREETS POLICY**

In 2011 the CAC called upon the TPB to develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy. A complete streets approach recognizes that streets should be designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities.

The CAC's position was summarized in a set of recommendations, which was unanimously approved by the committee on June 15. The CAC further requested that each TPB member jurisdiction pledge to adopt a Complete Streets policy for their jurisdiction by 2014.

The CAC's recommendations regarding Complete Streets are attached as Appendix B. In those recommendations, the CAC emphasized that the TPB should lay out a regional policy and go beyond simply encouraging local jurisdictions to adopt their own policies. The policy should increase transparency and provide analysis regarding pedestrian and bicycle projects and funding. However, members agreed that the Regional Complete Streets Policy should not be rigid or burdensome. Most important, the CAC urged the TPB to develop a policy with the goal of maximizing opportunities for affecting regional decision making.

In response to the CAC's recommendation, the TPB voted in June to direct TPB staff to develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy.

In November, TPB staff presented a draft policy to the CAC that included language requiring (not just suggesting) that the safety and convenience of all users be accommodated in accordance with Complete Streets principles in any federally-funded transportation project under the jurisdiction of the TPB. The draft policy would allow exemptions from the policy. The draft policy also included documentation and reporting requirements. CAC members expressed satisfaction that the process was moving along, although they also called for "more teeth" in the draft policy, particularly related to enforcement mechanisms.

The CAC is very pleased that the TPB moved so quickly on the CAC's recommendation for a Complete Streets Policy. The committee looks forward to the finalization, approval, and implementation of this policy early in 2012.

## **IMPROVING INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS**

In addition to pushing for a priorities plan, the CAC has long encouraged the TPB to do a better job of providing information on the existing TPB process. This year, the CAC discussed ways to improve public information on the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

CAC members were particularly enthusiastic about TPB staff plans to develop an online clearinghouse with information on public involvement activities among member jurisdictions. This clearinghouse will provide an explanation of how decisions are made at the state, local, and regional levels and will provide information and links regarding various planning activities that affect the decisions that are reflected in the Constrained Long-Range Plan. CAC member felt this kind of clearinghouse was a missing link in current information sources and it is sorely needed.

## WMATA GOVERNANCE

The CAC maintained a strong interest in various recommendations, which have been developed by several groups, for the improvement of the governance structure of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Recommendations were developed in 2010 by 1) a combined task force of COG and the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and 2) by the WMATA Riders Advisory Council (RAC). In response, the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the D.C. mayor appointed a Governance Work Group (GWG), which in 2011 released a report titled "Transforming Governance of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: Phase 1 Recommendations."

During the year, the CAC received the following briefings on WMATA governance:

- In March, WMATA Chair Cathy Hudgins, briefed the CAC on the position of the WMATA board regarding potential governance changes.
- In September, Bruce Gartner, Director of Policy and Government Affairs at the Maryland Department of Transportation, briefed the CAC on the Phase 1 recommendations of the WMATA Governance Work Group (GWG) report. Mr. Gartner was joined by Kristin Weiss (also of MDOT) and Joe Swartz, of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). David Alpert, chair of the WMATA Riders Advisory Council's Governance Committee, provided a summary of the RAC's feedback to the Phase 1 recommendations.
- At key points throughout the year, Rob Kirby of TPB staff briefed the CAC on research conducted by TPB staff at the request of the GWG on selected topics related to WMATA governance.

The CAC has not developed formal recommendations or comments on WMATA governance, although the committee has been generally supportive of the GWG recommendations. Overall, the CAC has expressed the broad position that decision makers, particularly both the Transportation Planning and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Boards, should move quickly to respond to recommendations for WMATA governance reform.

CAC members also suggested that decision makers should consider conducting a regular periodic WMATA governance review, at least once every three years. This would ensure that the full range of solutions identified in the wake of the June 22, 2009, accident have been both implemented and are being regularly updated and checked for their value in maintaining a leading edge regional rapid transit system in the National Capital Region.

## OTHER INTERESTS

In addition to the topics highlighted above, the CAC received briefings and conducted discussions on the following issues in 2011:

- In May, Jill Locantore, Senior Planner at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), gave a briefing to the CAC by conference call about **public participation techniques** that her agency has used as part of its long-range planning process.
- In June, Beth Newman of TPB staff provided an overview of the **JARC and New Freedom** programs that are administered by the TPB.

- In July, in preparation for a new TPB study on the **public acceptability of road-use pricing**, Deb Bilek and John Swanson of TPB staff conducted a listening session to discuss the issues that should be explored in the study, how the public should be engaged, and what voices need to be included in this regional discussion.
- In July, Harold Foster, representing the Prince George's Planning Department of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, briefed the committee on the 2009 Approved Prince George's **Countywide Master Plan of Transportation (CMPOT)**, including an explanation of how this plan and subsequent updates and implementation steps will be relevant to the regional interests of the CAC.
- In October, Eric Randall of the TPB staff briefed the CAC on the TPB's draft project application for funding under the FY 2011 **Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER)** competitive grant program.
- In October, Erin Morrow of the TPB staff provided a briefing on a **streamlined version of the CLRP Aspirations Scenario** that analyzes the impact of a lower-cost variably priced lane network with less new construction and more conversion of general purpose lanes to variably priced lanes than envisioned in the earlier Aspirations Scenario (2010).
- In December, Daivamani Sivasailam of TPB staff briefed the committee on the findings of the 2011 Freeway **Congestion Monitoring Program**.
- In January 2012 (the final meeting of the 2011 CAC), TPB staff conducted a listening session to get input on the use of performance measures in developing the forthcoming Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.
- On several occasions during the year, committee members suggested that the TPB **use the CAC more explicitly as a focus group** to test regional programs and activities. In particular, members suggested that future Street Smart campaign materials should be presented to the CAC for feedback.

## CONCLUSION

As a group of citizen volunteers, the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee is faced with the formidable task of working to understand, question and comment upon regional-level transportation issues. We take this responsibility seriously, but we also believe that we need to share it. Regional citizen involvement in regional transportation planning should not begin and end with the CAC. We must find ways to encourage and incorporate broader citizen input from a variety of levels.

For this reason, we have pushed hard over the years for a public involvement process that includes a prominent role for the TPB in setting regional priorities and a variety of public involvement opportunities so that citizens can participate in a vigorous discussion about the future of our region. In 2012, we eagerly await the implementation of a new regional planning process, which the forthcoming Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is intended to provide.

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Zach Dobelbower, Chair of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: Questions regarding the Draft Scope for the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan

DATE: May 18, 2011

Upon receipt of the latest iteration of the Priorities scope at our meeting last week, and with anticipation the scope was nearing its conclusion, the CAC developed a set of questions we hope will benefit the Taskforce's effort in finalizing the scope. The ingredients for a successful priorities plan are in place; we believe that additional clarity will only strengthen the process moving forward and reinforce the good work that's already there. Please find our comments and questions below.

CAC questions:

- Is this a plan or a process? Can the proposed scope be revised to clarify what parts are an ongoing process (who are the participants and what is the process cycle), and how and when do the processes yield products? Will all prospective projects with regional significance be evaluated? Which group will be responsible for oversight of the plan and/or the ongoing use of the tool?
- We believe the scope will benefit with more direction and clarification on the 'strategy development' and 'candidate selection' processes. How they are designed, who designs them, and what process guides that? Will these processes be transparent and involve the public? More specifically, as part of Task 2, will the TPB identify and approve a limited number of key strategies that will be combined into a synergistic and aspirational regional system (essentially a preferred scenario)? And will such a system be used as the basis for identifying a limited number of priorities (numbering 10-15, as the scope suggests)? The draft scope alludes to a connection between strategies and priorities, but it does not clearly explain it.
- What provisions are there for public participation in the selection and final design of the performance measures in task 1, the selection of strategies in task 2, and the design of benefit-cost analysis in task 3? How will differences of opinion be resolved to ensure transparency and sound rationale in the outcomes? What happens after the projects are selected? Who will use the plan and priorities, and how?
- The CAC would like to ensure an appropriate role at each stage for public involvement, and we encourage the TPB to develop staff capacity and seek external professional support to conduct a multi-faceted public involvement strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION**  
**THAT THE TPB DEVELOP A *REGIONAL COMPLETE STREETS POLICY***

**TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**  
**JUNE 15, 2011**

The CAC requests that the TPB develop and approve a *Regional Policy on Complete Streets*. A *Complete Streets* approach recognizes that streets should be designed, built, and operated to enable safe access for all users and potential users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of diverse ages and abilities. The CAC further requests that each TPB member jurisdiction pledge to adopt a Complete Streets policy for their jurisdiction by 2014.

***Why does the Region need a Regional Complete Streets Policy?***

- *Improve Safety* – A regional policy will support the regional goal of reducing injuries and deaths on our streets and help ensure that our streets are perceived as safe.
- *Public Health* – A Complete Streets policy supports federal and regional public health efforts and promotes the linkages between public health and the built environment.
- *Economic Activity* – A network of Complete Streets is safer and more appealing to residents and visitors, which is good for retail and commercial development.
- *Climate / Environmental* – A regional policy will support efforts to reduce ground level pollution, GHG emissions, and decreases noise pollution.
- *Quality of Life / Environmental Justice* – A variety of transportation options allow everyone – particularly people with disabilities, older adults, children under 16, and those without cars – to get out and stay connected to the community.

***Why does the TPB need a Regional Complete Streets Policy?***

- *Help meet broader regional goals and strategies* – The region broadly agrees that we need to promote walkable, mixed-use, more compact communities, and give people more options for getting around. These objectives can be supported through a Complete Streets approach to street design, planning, and engineering.
- *Provide regional leadership* – The TPB needs to put a finer point on its existing policies. If we believe in *Complete Streets*, we need to say it, clearly. Providing recommended guideline for different street typologies will further encourage adoption by member jurisdictions that currently don't have complete street policies or standards.
- *Save money* – A *Complete Streets* approach will save money in the long run. By building streets right in the first place, we will avoid expensive retrofits later.
- *Federal Funding* – A regional Complete Streets policy better positions COG/TPB to pursue federal financial assistance and funding for competitive grants.
- *Potential Federal Mandate* – Proposed Congressional legislation would require MPOs to adopt Complete Streets policies that meet specified criteria.
- *Inter-Jurisdictional Travel* – Because travel within the Washington area often crosses jurisdictional boundaries, transportation projects that inadequately accommodate non-motor vehicle modes impede the access and mobility of residents of neighboring jurisdictions.

***What is the regional planning context related to Complete Streets?***

- TPB policies promote key principles linked to *Complete Streets*:
  - Improved pedestrian and bicycle safety
  - Walkable mixed-use communities
  - Community Connectivity



- Reduced reliance on driving
- These policies were articulated in the TPB' *Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the National Capital Region* (2010), COG's *Region Forward* (2010) and the *TPB Vision* (1998).
- Many of the TPB's member jurisdictions have approved *Complete Streets* policies.

***Some specifics:***

As a group of citizen volunteers who are not experts on this topic, the CAC is not in a position to provide direction regarding the specific components of this policy. However, we would recommend the following:

- As a starting point, the process for developing a regional policy should begin with the "Ideal Complete Streets Policy" from the National Complete Street Coalition: [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org). TPB staff should also research and potentially draw from the *Complete Streets* policies that have been developed by other MPOs.
- The regional policy should emphasize the regional goals that will be served by the implementation of *Complete Streets* policies and plans. These include regional transportation objectives such as the reduction in VMT, congestion and auto-dependence. They also include broader regional goals such as the creation of economically vibrant, mixed-use communities.
- A regional *complete streets* policy should note there is not a one-size-fits-all approach—a Complete Street will not look the same in Purcellville as it would look in Petworth. But the policy should emphasize commonalities throughout the region and the benefits of a *Complete Streets* approach for all types of communities.
- The regional policy should emphasize that *Complete Streets* planning is a common-sense approach that is cost-effective. Particularly on the regional level, it should not be perceived as a bureaucratic or rigid set of rules.
- The TPB *Complete Streets* Policy should require implementing agencies to publicly report to the TPB how each project would accommodate walking, bicycling, public transportation, and freight movement or document why walking, bicycling, public transit, and/or freight considerations are irrelevant to that project. In addition, the policy should require implementing agencies to document that each project, including freeway expansion projects, would at least not degrade the level of service for pedestrians, bicyclists, and bus riders. To avoid excessive burdens, full *Complete Streets* documentation could be delayed until a project is proposed for addition to the TIP, rather than for its first addition to the CLRP.
- In addition to articulating an overarching Regional *Complete Streets* Policy, the TPB's policy should encourage the TPB's member jurisdictions to develop their own *Complete Streets* policies, if they have not already done so.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee should take the lead in developing this policy, but the process for developing the policy should also interface with the Access for All Advisory Committee, the CAC and the task force or committee that will oversee development of the TPB's Priorities Plan.