

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

May 18, 2011

Zach Dobelbower, 2011 CAC Chair

The CAC meeting on May 12 included a presentation and discussion about public involvement at the Denver Regional Council of Governments, and a discussion about whether and how the CAC should push for the development of a regional “complete streets” policy.

Presentation and Discussion on Public Involvement at the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)

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. Ms. Locantore is a former TPB staffer and played a major role in developing outreach material for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study and in developing documentation for the Constrained Long-Range Plan.

According to Ms. Locantore, DRCOG has used a variety of outreach techniques to educate citizens and incorporate their input into the regional planning process. She said it is important for planners to determine what outcomes they are seeking through public involvement. She called attention to the “Spectrum of Public Participation” developed by the International Association for Public Participation (www.iap2.org), which identifies a range of purposes for public outreach – at one end of the spectrum is “inform” and at the other end is “empower.”

Ms. Locantore’s presentation described public involvement techniques that DRCOG has used in developing and updating its long-range plan, *MetroVision*. Unlike the TPB’s long-range plan, *MetroVision* includes an unconstrained aspirational element. In large part, DRCOG’s public involvement efforts have fostered a regional discussion about growth scenarios, not unlike the alternatives established in the TPB’s scenario analysis, although DRCOG’s scenario development was more explicitly linked to the development of the region’s long-range plan.

Ms. Locantore described two outreach techniques using growth scenarios that were particularly interesting:

- ***Metroquest*** is a visualization software package that allows citizens to view the impacts of various growth and transportation scenarios “on the fly.” As participants explore various alternatives, the Metroquest tool fosters a discussion among participants about their preferences for the future. With Metroquest, Ms. Locantore said that “people learn for themselves and the issues become concrete.” In addition to providing a tool for public meetings, the Metroquest software can be developed for use online.

- The *World Café technique* elicits discussions in small groups and seeks incorporate a variety of opinions and inputs in the planning process.

CAC questions and comments for Ms. Locantore included the following:

- ***How do you motivate the public to attend meetings on regional planning?*** Ms. Locantore said that using a tool like Metroquest is a great way to get people involved who might not otherwise think they care about regional growth challenges. She also said that rather than organizing independent meetings, it is usually more effective to find out when civic groups are already planning place and try to get on those groups' agendas.
- ***Is it useful to hire a consultant for public outreach?*** Ms. Locantore said that a consultant did guide the original development of their MetroVision plan. She said using a consultant can be helpful, but the most important thing is to recognize that public involvement requires extensive resources, whether it is done in-house or with consultant support. She added that Metroquest was developed by company in Vancouver, Canada.
- ***What role should citizen task forces play in developing a plan?*** Ms. Locantore said that task forces and citizen committee can be useful, but it is important not to rely upon them too much. She again called attention to the need for a multi-faceted public involvement program.

Discussion Regarding a Potential Regional Complete Streets Policy

Mike Farrell of the TPB staff briefed the committee on the concept of “complete streets,” an approach to planning that 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.

Many members of the CAC have suggested that the TPB should be encouraged to develop a regional Complete Streets Policy. At its June meeting, the committee will determine whether to develop a recommendation to the TPB regarding the development of such a policy.

At the CAC's May meeting, member comments and questions regarding complete streets included the following:

- A TPB complete streets policy should lay out a regional policy and go beyond simply encouraging local jurisdictions to adopt their own policies.
- The TPB should focus on transparency and analysis regarding pedestrian and bicycle projects and funding.
- A complete streets policy should not be rigid or burdensome.

- We need to be sure that bike/ped improvements do not create too much additional impervious surface area.
- The CAC's main focus in recent years has been on a regional transportation priorities plan. If the CAC chooses to call for the TPB to develop a complete streets policy, it should also call for such a policy to be integrated into the priorities planning process.
- How would the existence of complete streets policy affect regional decision making? How can the CAC's recommendation on this subject produce the most positive impacts? The committee agreed to address these questions at its next meeting.

Research on WMATA Governance

Ron Kirby provided a briefing on recent staff research on WMATA governance. A member asked if the research found correlations between governance issues and performance problems. Mr. Kirby said that that this question was not included in the research, although he acknowledged it was an interesting point.

ATTENDEES

CAC Meeting, May 12, 2011

Members Present

1. Zach Dobelbower (DC), Chair
2. Maureen Budetti (VA)
3. Bill Easter (MD)
4. Kelby Funn (MD)
5. Stephen McCoy (DC)
6. Madeline McDuffy (VA)
7. Allen Muchnick (VA)
8. Tina Slater (MD)
9. Fred Walker (VA)
10. Faith Wheeler (DC)
11. Brian Winterhalter (VA)

Alternates Present

- Amanda Campbell (DC)
 Kimberley Kaplan (VA)
 Kevin Posey (VA)

Staff and Guests

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
 John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
 Deborah Bilek, COG/TPB staff
 Gareth James, COG/TPB staff
 Bill Orleans, citizen
 Steve Merkli, citizen

Members Not Present

1. Harold Foster (DC)
2. Howard Levine (MD)
3. Larry Martin (DC)
4. Emmet Tydings (MD)