

## **REPORT**

### **TPB Citizens Advisory Committee November 15, 2006 Emmet Tydings, CAC Chairman**

The November 9 meeting of the CAC included discussion of CAC and TPB staff outreach efforts surrounding the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study, an update on the establishment of the Transportation/Land Use Connections (TLC) local assistance program, and a briefing and discussion with the consultants conducting the upcoming evaluation of the TPB's public involvement process.

A briefing by TPB staff on the Household Travel Survey was postponed to a future meeting, as was discussion of proposed bus route and schedule changes by WMATA.

#### **Update on Recent Public Involvement Activities and Discussion of TPB/CAC Outreach Efforts Regarding the Scenario Study**

TPB staff member John Swanson updated the CAC on recent public involvement activities, including the second convening of the TPB Community Leadership Institute in October. He mentioned that TPB staff had attended a conference on using visualization techniques in the transportation field, and would be looking to include more sophisticated visualization strategies in public outreach efforts.

Mr. Swanson emphasized that staff hopes to create a more robust feedback loop between the public and the TPB by conducting outreach to seek feedback on the scenario study that would inform the development of a composite scenario or several composite scenarios. He said this outreach would need to collect and compile feedback in a manner that is more concerted and well-documented than previous outreach activities. He asked CAC members for suggestions on how to improve the outreach process, incorporate visualization techniques, gather public input, and proceed with the next stages of the scenario study.

CAC discussion centered around the following questions:

- *How would a composite scenario be developed? Is a single composite scenario necessary or worthwhile?* CAC members discussed a number of aspects of how a composite scenario might be developed, what it would look like and what its purpose would be. The committee generally concluded that it was crucial to establish up front how a composite scenario would be used to inform the long range planning process for the region, especially whether or not it is going to serve as an unconstrained regional transportation plan. CAC members also emphasized that public input for a composite scenario must be collected in a systematic manner, perhaps through an online database of feedback.

Director of Transportation Planning Ron Kirby noted that some TPB members had questioned the utility of trying to develop a composite scenario, saying it may be more trouble than it is worth. Some CAC members also expressed some skepticism, and said that a composite scenario should not be something that is aimed at establishing a single desired community form and lifestyle for the entire region.

- *Can the scenario study be sufficiently localized to elicit useful input?* CAC members indicated that the presentation of the scenario study in its current form may not be detailed enough or applicable enough to local concerns to catalyze useful feedback from the public. TPB staff members noted that they hoped to use visualization techniques to improve this aspect of the presentation, with more information about local impacts and more interactive exercises and discussion, including the “land use/transportation game” used at the Community Leadership Institute.
- *How does the message of the scenario study fit into the timing of local land use and transportation decision-making?* CAC members pointed out that it would be most useful for the presentation to be given in localities that are about to update comprehensive land use plans, although they also noted a reluctance on the part of local governments and citizens to change land use without transportation infrastructure in place. One member emphasized the importance of moving at a slow pace when changing the form of communities.
- *How should the CAC convey ideas for the next phase of the scenario study to the TPB?* CAC members determined that in the next couple months, the committee should attempt to reach agreement on major recommendations for the TPB regarding the scenario study and outreach on the study. They also concluded that further involvement and communication with the Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee would be constructive.

CAC members also recognized the benefit that the scenario study and corresponding outreach effort has already had in spurring discussion about the region’s growth and helping to give citizens and leaders a regional perspective.

### **Briefing on the Agenda of the November TPB Meeting and Update on the Establishment of the Transportation/Land Use Connections (TLC) Program**

Mr. Kirby summarized the information and action items on the agenda for the upcoming meeting of the TPB. CAC members asked some clarification questions about the process of nominating TPB officers, and there was also some discussion about how to encourage local governments to provide more financial support for the StreetSmart program.

Mr. Kirby also described the “TLC” program approved by the TPB at its October meeting. He said that the program will include a regional clearinghouse for information

about local projects and experiences and national best practices, along with a commitment of \$100,000 in FY 2007 for technical assistance services performed by consultants available to local governments on a project-by-project basis. Brief discussion by CAC members dealt with the process of selecting projects for inclusion in the program and how these would be vetted by the TPB and staff.

### **Briefing and Discussion with the Consultants Conducting the Evaluation of the TPB's Public Involvement Process**

Mr. Swanson introduced W. Steve Lee of CirclePoint, the project manager for the evaluation, and explained the context and intent of the evaluation process. Mr. Lee described the consultant team and outlined the three major tasks to be completed by the team:

- Research and synthesis of public involvement processes and techniques used by other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the nation, especially in regions with characteristics or MPO structures similar to this region.
- Interviews of local stakeholders including TPB members, CAC and other advisory committee members, representatives of special interest groups, and other citizens, and reporting of findings.
- “Goal-driven” recommendations for improvements to the TPB’s public involvement process, including guidance in formulating a “Public Participation Plan” as required by SAFETEA-LU and suggestions for more effective outreach.

CAC members asked about the evaluation schedule and encouraged Mr. Lee to attend the monthly meetings and provide regular updates to the committee. They also asked about how other MPOs of interest would be identified and emphasized the uniqueness of the Washington region as a multi-state region and the TPB as an entity with little purse-string power as compared to other MPOs.

Mr. Lee led a discussion of the committee that focused on the following questions:

- *How are comments from the public generally processed by the TPB?* CAC members said that the TPB gets many comments from the public regarding controversial projects, and noted that TPB staff has made strides in recent years in compiling the comments and making them available for viewing on the Web.
- *How can the evaluation process help the CAC accomplish its goals?* CAC members noted that the CAC typically focuses on questions of the long-term planning process as opposed to specific projects. Some emphasized the challenge the committee has faced in trying to guide the scenario study and how it fits in to the planning process, and how public input could best be incorporated. They asked Mr. Lee to think about what questions should be asked of the public

regarding the scenario study and who should be targeted, especially in terms of moving beyond those who already consistently comment on the TPB process.

- *To what extent is it appropriate to attract public comment to the TPB when decisions about transportation projects are typically made at other levels and venues?* CAC members said that it would be particularly interesting to see how other MPOs find a way to involve the public without misleading citizens about the role of the MPO in the planning process. They also expressed an interest in looking at transportation projects that have failed because of a lack of public support, and what the role might be for a regional body to play in such situations.

Mr. Lee said that he would focus on developing useful ways to measure the success of public involvement efforts, and Mr. Kirby noted that MPOs nationwide are rethinking how to effectively accomplish public involvement because of SAFETEA-LU.

## ATTENDANCE

### CAC Meeting, November 9, 2006

#### Members in Attendance

1. Emmet Tydings, Chair, MD
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Stephen Cerny, VA
4. Harold Foster, DC
5. Grace Malakoff, DC
6. Dan Malouff, VA
7. Allen Muchnick, VA
8. Alexandra Simpson, VA
9. Merle Van Horne, DC

#### Members Not in Attendance

1. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
2. Stephen Caflisch, MD
3. Elvin Crespo, MD
4. Jim Larsen, VA
5. Robin Marlin, DC
6. Larry Martin, DC

#### Staff/Others

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB  
Darren Smith, COG/TPB  
John Swanson, COG/TPB  
Steve Lee, Circle Point