

**TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
2008 End-of-the-Year Report
Larry Martin, 2008 CAC Chair**

January 28, 2009

The Year 2008 was a productive one for the TPB CAC. If I were to highlight the single message with greatest consensus from the 2008 CAC it would be our strong recommendation that the TPB exercise more leadership in our region's transportation planning.

I recognize that each TPB member must balance their commitment to the TPB with numerous other important public duties. However, there is an extraordinarily capable TPB technical staff that is fully able to advance transportation planning in our region to another level of sophistication and accomplishment with your active vision and leadership. I challenge you to use and direct the staff to ramp-up the TPB's active role in shaping our transportation future. The CAC has championed the Scenario Study as a vehicle to inform the TPB's planning process by examining likely outcomes of various transportation strategies. The Scenario Study activities are as useful as you make them. This report summarizes key points of interest and activities of the CAC in the past calendar year.

- **Continued Involvement with the TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study**

As the most data-rich and rigorously designed vehicle for comprehensive regional discussion of land-use and transportation issues, the TPB Scenario Study was the focal point of the CAC's interest and involvement in 2008. At the beginning of the year, the TPB Scenario Study Task Force invited two CAC representatives to serve on the Task Force, which has met regularly since the Fall of 2007 to work on development of new scenarios and other related topics. Larry Martin and Emmet Tydings served in this capacity during 2008, attending Task Force meetings, providing input, and updating the Committee on progress with the study.

The CAC also developed and in September conveyed to the Task Force and the TPB – as a whole – a set of recommendations regarding development of new scenarios. In addition to regular briefings by TPB staff about the Scenario Study, a working group of the CAC met with key staff to get more background about scenario analysis, past public input on the scenarios, and plans for new scenarios before developing the recommendations. The full memorandum, dated September 17, 2008, is attached.

The CAC's latest recommendations regarding the scenario study were well received and helped crystallize consensus among the Task Force and staff about how to proceed in developing new scenarios. The Committee could not help but take note, however, of recent TPB discussion about the proposed federal stimulus package and possible

inclusion of funding for transportation projects, and draw connections between this discussion and the CAC's recommendations for the Scenario Study, especially the sixth and final recommendation:

“Develop the Scenario Study process to support creation of a Financially Unconstrained Transportation Plan of regionally prioritized projects for consideration.”

At the December 17, 2008 TPB meeting, members discussed the possibility that federal stimulus dollars may not be set aside for either [1] the most appropriate viable projects or [2] projects that are among the highest regional priorities; but instead may go toward projects on outdated lists of state-level priorities that may not necessarily reflect nor complement the TPB's regional vision.

Within this context, one TPB member stated that he was “concerned that this region speak as a region in terms of setting priorities and giving guidance as to how this money ought best to be spent for the benefit of the people in this region.”

Another TPB member said, “We are not really prepared to put the regional projects on the table that we would love to have in our region if we could fund them.”

As such, the CAC would like to take this opportunity in its end-of-the-year report to reiterate its desire for the TPB to develop an Unconstrained Plan or some other systematic way of integrating regional prioritization into the planning process. The CAC requested information from staff earlier this year on practices by other MPOs in unconstrained planning or regional prioritization, and we believe that this region could take further steps in this direction be it through results of the Scenario Study or some other process. It is most unfortunate that the National Capitol Region is not better prepared to systematically target any presently available or future stimulus funds to best use.

- **Other CAC Business in 2008**

Energy and Climate Change

The CAC made it a priority in 2008 to discuss and work to promote regional strategies for reducing the energy needs of the transportation sector along with the harmful byproducts of energy consumption such as CO₂ emissions. The Committee heard presentations by COG and TPB staff about analyses and goal-setting by the COG Climate Change Steering Committee, and how these goals would be integrated into TPB scenario work through the “What Would It Take?” Scenario. The CAC was also briefed on California SB 375, which links regional transportation planning with climate change goals. The increased attention being paid to energy use and climate change presents challenges and opportunities for the TPB. The CAC hopes to play a continued role in encouraging the Board to address these issues through regional discussion and action. In

this regard, CAC recommendations can be linked to the “What Would It Take?” Scenario Study.

Federal Surface Transportation Program Authorization and the Stimulus Package

As previously mentioned, the Committee views discussions about proposed stimulus money funding for transportation projects as exposing a need for [1] regional unconstrained planning; and, [2] project prioritization at the regional level. In addition, both the stimulus package and the larger discussion of federal transportation funding authorization raise the question of whether MPOs should have greater discretion over transportation spending within the metropolitan area, as opposed to the state DOTs. The CAC found it interesting to discuss the possibility of changes to the distribution of transportation funding in the coming years, and hopes that this will allow the TPB to move further toward implementing its vision for the region.

The TPB Vision

In 2008, the 10th anniversary of the TPB Vision, the CAC took advantage of an opportunity to revisit the eight broad goals and principles laid out in this policy document that was designed to guide the region’s transportation investments into the 21st century. In this regard, the goal of the CAC was to address the extent to which the CLRP is (or is not) linked to the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies delineated in the TPB Vision that was unanimously approved by the TPB after an extensive public outreach effort that lasted three years. As a result of this discussion, the CAC determined that the process for developing the new scenarios for study by the TPB should be more clearly grounded in the Vision. This CAC finding was incorporated into the recommendations memorandum conveyed to the TPB and the Scenario Study Task Force in September.

Dealing with Externalities: Gas Prices, BRAC, and Emergency Management

In addition to the influence that climate change discussions have had and will have on transportation, CAC members also wanted to discuss how the TPB and its members could work together to deal with other forces affecting travel conditions in the region. Members heard presentations on and discussed regional land-use changes and consequent effects resulting from the most recent round of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment process scheduled for implementation in calendar year 2009.

The CAC also sought more detailed information about the workings of the TPB’s Travel Demand Model, especially how it reflects changes in travel patterns due to gas prices and modal shifts to transit, bicycling, and walking. In addition, members wanted to receive up-to-date briefings on regional emergency operations and incident management plans – particularly as those plans impacted or influenced decisions regarding public health and safety should a catastrophic incident occur within the region that required mass evacuations along major roadways to nearby jurisdictions or in-place sheltering in impacted communities. Although addressed, the CAC was largely unable to provide the detail of analysis for these issues that many members sought.

Transportation Innovations and Alternative Modes

CAC members consistently have wished to explore alternative modes of transportation and new technologies, such as value-priced lanes and various forms of transit that are lacking in the region, including bus rapid transit (BRT), monorail, and intercity rail. No CAC members elected to lead subcommittees dedicated to extensive explorations of these alternatives; however, the CAC hopes to remain diligent in ensuring that transportation planners in the region do not fail to consider the relative strengths and benefits of this viable, alternative, strategies.

Priority Sub-Lists

Over the course of the year, the CAC was also briefed on the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Project List and the Regional Bus Priority Project List. The CAC supports implementation of the projects on these lists, and generally supports the concept of such regional prioritization applied to the entire CLRP and TIP as opposed to these specialized modal lists. The CAC hopes to strengthen its relationships with the TPB subcommittees that generate these lists, and explore the possibility of the TPB adopting a region-wide “Complete Streets” policy that would commit the region’s jurisdictions and implementing agencies to multi-modal accommodation on new or reconstructed streets.

Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program

The CAC has strongly supported the TLC Program since the inception of this initiative, and continues to see benefits to this program in promoting integration between land-use and transportation planning at the local level. At several stages since the TLC Program’s inception, including in 2008, the CAC has promoted strengthening the program by committing more resources to TLC technical assistance projects and potentially funding capital improvements that arise from TLC studies.

Public Participation

The CAC has been closely involved in the evolution of the TIP Forums, which began in 2007 and serve to provide more information to the public about transportation projects in the regional plans. The Committee is pleased to see staff move to a cycle of two forums per year, with one in the fall focusing on how to get involved with project prioritization at the local and state level, and another in the spring detailing the projects in that year’s TIP and CLRP with relevant analysis.

The Committee was also involved in the development of the Public Participation Program for FY 2009, which details staff activities and goals related to public involvement. CAC members also encouraged staff to explore avenues for remote participation in CAC meetings and holding outreach meetings in jurisdictions around the region, to encourage participation by interested parties in outer jurisdictions.

The Committee passed a resolution asking for at least two CAC meetings (one in Virginia and one in Maryland, respectively) in calendar year 2009. It was further agreed that meeting modalities inclusive of but not limited to teleconferencing, videoconferencing, etc., were among the viable meeting strategy options to be explored and agreed to by the full CAC membership—particularly in those instances where the appropriate conferencing sites were either too remote and/or road or weather conditions did not permit full CAC attendance. Roles and responsibilities of host jurisdictions at CAC meetings not held at COG headquarters related to meeting planning and coordination with the CAC Chair, COG support staff, and membership will be further discussed during subsequent CAC meetings. The Chair recommended that a workgroup be convened to address available “win-win” options for off-site CAC meetings in 2009.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 17, 2008
TO: TPB Scenario Study Task Force
FROM: TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
SUBJECT: Recommendations on the Development of the “CLRP Aspirations” and “What Would It Take?” Scenarios

Introduction

In keeping with the mission and vision of the TPB and work underway in the Aspirations Scenario and the “What Would It Take?” Scenario, the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) convened a subcommittee to:

- **Analyze** the design of the two new scenario studies;
- **Identify** relevant issues proposed in citizen comments; and,
- **Develop** recommendations for consideration by the Scenario Task Force.

The primary purpose of this document is to bring to the attention of the Task Force a variety of considerations for the design of the two scenarios that the CAC believes can affect results of the Travel Demand Forecast Model, and better bring into focus key differences in strategy leading to different outcomes; thereby improving the analysis possible from these forecasts. The CAC sincerely hopes this will contribute to a spirited discussion of scenario assumptions and findings – as we believe this is one of the most important outcomes of the Scenario process for supporting transportation planning in our region.

Background

Throughout the 2008 calendar year, the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) discussed newly emerging and ongoing initiatives of the TPB and identified several TPB work activities and national and regional issues of interest to committee members. A common focus of these discussions was how the committee could assist the TPB in implementing the TPB Vision to meet long- and short-term strategic goals and objectives. The connection between the construction of the scenarios and the TPB Vision is a central factor behind the CAC recommendations presented below.

The CAC recognizes the need for expanding capacity in the Region’s transportation network, but also appreciates the need to optimize existing transportation infrastructure, as it is likely to be the most cost-effective strategy for meeting our region’s demand for mobility. The escalating cost of new construction, increasing demands for maintenance of existing infrastructure, and the available funds that area jurisdictions dedicate to transportation all argue for leveraging more effective use of what we’ve already built and planned. Regardless of one’s preference for transit mode, the CAC believes that active use of the Scenario process by the TPB and area leaders can contribute to strategic planning of the DC Metro-area transportation network in the years ahead. The process can and should be used to enhance coordination, efficiency and prioritization of transportation projects.

Recommendations

The CAC is hopeful that the TPB members use the scenarios under development to fully explore the priorities that will guide the build-out and development of our regional transportation

infrastructure over the next 10-20 years. The scenarios are tools that should productively inform strategic thinking and prioritization of regional mobility options by providing the TPB with contrasting outcomes resulting from emphasizing various strategies, including highway, transit, land use and urban form.

The CAC developed **six recommendations** to inform the development of the two scenarios:

1. Tie the development of the scenarios more explicitly to the TPB Vision.
2. Transportation planning must take a more targeted approach for assigning land-use shifts among activity centers in both the CLRP Aspirations and “What Would It Take?” (WWIT) scenarios based on an explicit connection to the TPB vision.
3. The transportation component for the Aspirations scenario should focus highway and transit accessibility improvements on prioritized activity centers identified by a more targeted land-use development approach.
4. There should be a clearly articulated interaction between Aspirations and WWIT so that the conclusions from WWIT can be used to further explore options in the Aspirations scenario.
5. External factors such as gas prices and housing issues must be addressed either through change to the model or by using other tools to analyze the potential effects of these factors.
6. Develop the Scenario Study process to support creation of a Financially Unconstrained Transportation Plan of regionally prioritized projects for consideration.

These six recommendations are explained in greater detail below.

Recommendation #1: Tie the Scenarios to the TPB Vision

The previous RMAS study was borne out of CAC recommendations that there still existed significant gaps between the desired outcomes expressed in the TPB Vision and the forecasted outcomes of the CLRP. While the current scenario study continues the work of RMAS and is largely based on the RMAS assumptions, there should be an explicit focus on achieving the vision goals. For instance, the sixth vision goal includes a proposed strategy to “plan for development to be located where it can be served by existing or planned infrastructure”. In order to link the scenario outcomes to this goal, the land use scenario could locate all future growth in prioritized regional activity centers and also adjust activity centers to reflect current and future transit infrastructure. By tying the CLRP Aspirations scenario to the TPB Vision, the CAC recommends that the goal of the Aspirations scenario be to shape a long-term, financially unconstrained multi-modal transportation plan that includes all highway, transit and land-use aspirations for our region; and that the plan serve as the framework for establishing transportation investment priorities directly tied to TPB goals.

Recommendation #2: Adopt a Targeted Approach for the Land Use Component

Within the TPB Vision are various goals that should guide the development of the land use in the CLRP Aspirations scenario. An example is under Goal #2 of the TPB Vision, there is an objective to create “economically strong regional activity centers with a mix of jobs, housing, services and recreation in a walkable environment.” In order to explicitly achieve this objective with the land use portion of the scenario, staff should develop “rules” to guide where expected

growth should go. The essential characteristics of the walkable, “compact community” is that there is: [a] a balance of households and employment opportunity; and, [b], benefits derived by virtue of a critical population threshold, for example, convenient shopping and entertainment. Such communities demonstratively reduce VMT and the use of the transportation network for daily trips. In order to provide a mixed use, walkable environment, the scenario approach could include achieving a jobs/housing balance in each activity center and a walkable density in the activity center, which can approximate proven regional models such as Rosslyn-Ballston corridor/Old Town Alexandria. It is important to note that since this may not be appropriate or possible in every activity center, a system of allocating growth to major “magnet” activity centers is needed. The CAC recommends that staff determine the appropriate density and jobs/housing balance for activity centers based on their current development patterns and projections and on the characteristics of their surrounding areas. The analysis of centers can be characterized using a set of evaluation criteria and conditions that support and substantiate recommendations (based on quantitative evidence) that it qualifies for consideration as an ideal candidate for a compact, walkable community. Examples of pre-decisional evaluation criteria include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Undeveloped land adjacent to a transit node
- Transit/HOT-lane connectivity
- Excess transit capacity
- Population density
- Linkages to one or more mass-transit options
- Area-types (i.e. street network(s))

Recommendation #3: Adopt a Targeted Approach for the Transportation Component

The CAC recommends that the Aspirations scenario incorporate the recommendations of the variable priced lane (VPL) third option to include VPLs on all major highways in the region with collected funds put toward the support of a comprehensive bus rapid transit (BRT) to augment and supplement the existing mass transit option presently provided. This is in support of many of the Vision goals, including goal 7, which calls for the development of enhanced funding mechanisms. This component needs to be fully explored to ensure that the most reasonable assumptions regarding actual construction and modification of existing roadways are used to design the scenario. There needs to be careful consideration of where VPLs will connect to the exiting highway network and the number of interchanges proposed. The CAC recommends that dedicated access and egress points to the priced network are focused on major “magnet” activity centers. This will reduce the cost of the VPL network; and reinforce the desired shift of jobs and households into targeted areas promoting the more compact, walkable communities desired to reduce transit demand. The CAC recommends that the BRT system under evaluation be focused on major “magnet” activity centers to reduce dependence on automobile trips.

Recommendation #4: Increase Integration Between The Scenarios

The CAC recommends that the CLRP Aspirations and “What Would it Take” (WWIT) scenarios should be developed in concert, so that strategic interactions may occur. For instance, the CLRP Aspirations scenario may need to be modified by an iterative process with the WWIT scenario in order to best represent the TPB Vision and realistic external concerns, such as climate change. Likewise, the WWIT scenario should be developed with the goals of the CLRP Aspirations scenario in mind by incorporating measures of VMT and congestion indicators as well as CO₂ to

highlight the different outcomes resulting from different strategies modeled (i.e. some strategies such as maximizing low-carbon fuels may reduce CO₂, but not reduce VMT or congestion, others may serve to both reduce CO₂ and VMT, but have less affect on congestion, etc...)

Recommendation #5: Better Consider External Factors

In the past year we have seen several major external factors that have and will continue to affect transportation and housing choice. For instance, the price of fuel has been rising at a far more rapid rate than we have seen before and driver behavior has changed in a similar, dramatic manner. The travel demand model, which currently is the primary analysis tool for the scenario study, is not currently equipped to predict such drastic changes. Therefore, fuel prices continue in the forecasts to rise with inflation, which falls significantly short of what we're currently observing. Empirically we can see that this has likely been a contributor to a shift in housing/community design preferences. Robert Charles Lesser & Co. conducted a dozen consumer preference surveys for builders in suburban and urban locations to help design their developments. Each study found that about one-third of respondents prefer smart growth housing and communities. Other studies have corroborated these results, including the National Association of Homebuilders, the National Association of Realtors, and the Fannie Mae Foundation. Chris Leinberger of the Brookings Institution reports that because the demand for housing in compact, mixed-use neighborhoods is greater than the current supply, the value of such houses is substantially greater – from 40 to 100%, compared to houses in nearby single-use subdivisions. Households without children will account for close to 90 percent of new housing demand through 2025, and single person households will account for one third. Nationwide projections are that the demand for attached and compact housing will exceed the current supply by 35 million units (71 percent), while the demand for large-lot housing actually will fall short of the current supply. Indications are that the supply of traditional subdivision homes with large lots is overbuilt, and that demand for compact, walkable communities will only increase in coming years. The CAC recommends that staff develop a method to analyze for these factors in the demand model, either within the model or by other means.

Recommendation #6: Support creation of an Unconstrained Transportation Plan

The CAC has repeatedly advocated for more rigorous regional prioritization of transportation projects. The Scenario Study process offers a well structured and informed process for advancing this objective. Necessarily, TPB members should be actively engaged in the design of the scenarios for the project to successfully form the basis of a long range, regional, Financially Unconstrained Transportation Plan. Such a plan could sharpen the strategic thinking of the TPB, and invigorate a regional prioritization process for project selection. The CAC requested TPB staff to provide background on the value of unconstrained long range plans to other Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and based upon other MPO's experience, is impressed with the value such plans confer. Advantages include: informing a regional dialogue about transportation issues; creating a comprehensive vision for an interlocking transportation network; a plan for staging projects that do not yet comply with requirements for inclusion in the CLRP; and as a tool to advocate for funds.