

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee December 17, 2003 Karren Pope-Onwukwe, Chair

The Citizens Advisory Committee hosted two outreach meetings on November 18 and December 3, and held its regular monthly meeting on December 11.

Public Outreach Meeting: "*Thinking Outside the Box: Should the Beltway Be Expanded With HOT Lanes?*" November 18, Falls Church, Virginia

More than 100 citizens came to this forum to hear about a proposal to expand the Beltway with high occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes. These lanes would permit solo drivers to pay tolls to use carpool lanes. The Fluor Daniel company is proposing to build the HOT lanes under Virginia's Public-Private Transportation Act. Gary Groat of Fluor Daniel was the main presenter along with Tom Farley of the Virginia Department of Transportation, who provided an overview of the project's goals and process. The session was moderated by Fairfax County Supervisor Catherine Hudgins. Ms. Hudgins and Mr. Farley are both members of the TPB.

The HOT lanes, as conceived by Fluor Daniel, would run between Springfield and Route 193. They are estimated to cost \$693 million. Eighty-seven percent of these costs would be repaid through toll revenues. Using existing right-of-way for the most part, Fluor Daniel estimates that the project could be completed by 2009.

Supporters of the project spoke about the need for new transportation capacity, expressing that the argument that "if you don't build it, they will come anyway." They said that tolls facilities are one of the few feasible transportation options currently available in this tight funding environment. They also spoke about the opportunity to develop the facility for express bus service.

Opponents of the proposal questioned its financial feasibility and its effectiveness in relieving congestion relief. They also said that it would not provide significant funding opportunities for transit and they questioned the feasibility of using the lanes for bus service.

While many citizens came to express already formulated "pro" and "con" positions, others were in attendance to listen, learn and perhaps express concerns about design details that might be altered to improve the project or make it more acceptable.

For example, Fairfax County Supervisor Dana Kaufmann said the project should be designed to ensure good transit connections between the HOT lanes and the planned Orange Line Metro extension at Tysons Corner. Another participant asked about the effects of traffic on adjacent neighborhoods and about whether the ramps were being designed with adequate safety considerations.

Public Outreach Meeting: "Columbia Pike Revitalization: Can It Be a Model for the Region?" December 3, Arlington, Virginia

This meeting focused on Arlington County's efforts to revitalize Columbia Pike, including improved transit services and more pedestrian-friendly urban design. These enhancements are intended to return the Pike to a more traditional "mainstreet" environment.

Approximately 40 participants came to learn about this project and whether this type of revitalization can be a model for the Washington region. Presenters included Arlington County Board Member Chris Zimmerman, Tim Lynch of the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization and consultant Geoff Ferrell.

Mr. Ferrell spoke about the principles and goals that underlie the revitalization efforts, including very detailed specifications on height, lot coverage, parking, building uses and street types. He also described the extensive public involvement process that created the revitalization plan. Mr. Lynch described the basics of the "form-based code," the zoning approach that is being used to implement the revitalization plan. In addition, he described economic tools that can be used to help realize the goals of the code. Finally, Mr. Zimmerman spoke about transportation components of the plan — what he called the "public space" along Columbia Pike. He described transit development options and still unresolved issues regarding bicycle facilities.

The audience at this meeting included well-informed citizens and professional planners who asked detailed questions about the design of the project and the objectives of individual requirements or policies.

For example, one participant asked about businesses' parking needs. Mr. Zimmerman noted that although parking is expensive in Arlington, developers and businesses still have typically wanted more parking than they can typically use. A "consolidated parking strategy" has been designed to break down "parking feudalism" and encourage people to share parking. Another questioner asked about dealing with delivery vehicles that continually block traffic during the day. Mr. Zimmerman said that a system of continuous circulation, for things like loading, will be built behind the commercial buildings.

Toward the end of the meeting, the discussion turned to the project's applicability to other parts of the region. The speakers emphasized that there are key lessons to be learned, although Mr. Lynch stressed that Columbia Pike is not a "distressed area" and therefore it should not be construed that this revitalization project is an effort to pull a neighborhood out of blight. But numerous corridors throughout the region, such as Lee Highway, might look at the Columbia Pike experience and seek to replicate some of the planning and public involvement efforts that went into the project's development. The speakers all stressed the importance of working with citizens and getting them to lobby for what needs to be done. CAC Chair Karren Pope-Onwukwe said it is also vital to have a local champion, like Mr. Zimmerman, to push these kinds of projects forward.

CAC Monthly Meeting, December 11, 2003

The CAC's last monthly meeting of the year centered largely on a discussion of the Intercounty Connector (ICC) in Maryland. Sam Raker, from the office of Maryland Secretary of Transportation Robert Flanagan, presented the CAC with an overview of the study process for the project, including its need and purpose and the alignments that are under study. The project is estimated to cost \$1.7 billion.

CAC questions and comments included the following:

- **Purpose/scope.** A member asked what roads the ICC would be designed to be relieving. Mr. Raker answered that the entire area is congested; the road is not relieving a particular road. He also emphasized that the road is not designed to relieve the Beltway. He said the Beltway needs different solutions. Another member complained that the study's problems/needs statement was specifically designed to build a limited access highway, not to look at the best options for the corridor. He said that because Governor Ehrlich had identified the proposed road as his number-one transportation priority, other options would not be given fair consideration in the study.
- **Multi-modal.** In his presentation, Mr. Raker said that the project would be multi-modal. A CAC member asked when the multi-modal options would be defined. Mr. Raker said they would be defined through the study. It is generally assumed that potential ridership in the corridor would not be big enough to support rail. A member asked about plans to build a bikeway adjacent to the project. Mr. Raker said that the Montgomery County Master Plan had called for a parallel bikeway, but the state would be looking at the possibility of not building that bikeway.
- **Tolls.** Members asked about proposals to make the road a toll facility. Mr. Raker said a proposal under serious consideration would develop the road with managed toll lanes in which prices would change based upon levels of congestion.
- **GARVEE bonds.** Members expressed concern about the use of GARVEE (General Anticipated Revenue Vehicle) bonds for the project. One member said the use of GARVEE bonds was designed to insulate the project from future funding problems, but could negatively affect whether other projects in Maryland could be built. Another CAC member said she understood that other states currently dedicate a very large percentage of their federal transportation funding to repaying GARVEE bonds.
- **Four lanes?** A member asked whether a four-lane alternative was being considered. Mr. Raker said it was not.
- **Environmental streamlining.** A member said he would like an example of how President Bush's designation of the project for environmental streamlining would affect the current study. He said the public should know which studies would be conducted concurrently that otherwise would be done sequentially. Mr. Raker did not have a specific example to provide at this time.

- **Environmental stewardship.** Members expressed keen interest in the state's claim that the project will be a good example of environmental stewardship. Members said this emphasis on environmental stewardship seemed to be just a communications strategy. Another member said that there are two types of actions associated with the state's environmental stewardship: One includes ways of reducing the impact of the project. The other includes spending money on things that have nothing to do with the ICC. He said that the state should be doing the things in the second category regardless of whether the ICC is built.
- **Building through parkland.** A member asked about federal statutory restrictions on building a road through park land ("4F" requirements) unless such a road is absolutely necessary. Mr. Raker said that this standard does apply and will be part of the ICC study.
- **Potential perceptions of bias.** A member cautioned that the state should be careful not to give the impression that the ICC is a "done deal." He said that care should be taken to ensure the "no-build" alternative is given adequate attention. He said perceptions of bias in the study could undermine it later on. Mr. Raker assured the committee that the study will be conducted on a "level playing field" with full consideration given to all alternatives under study and all requirements of the federal process.
- **Serving inescapable realities** A member said that Virginia has built two "ICCs" in recent decades that have made a big difference: the Fairfax County Parkway and the Prince William Parkway. He said it is an inescapable reality that Montgomery County is growing and it needs east-west connections in addition to the Beltway. He said a "regional grid" is needed in the road network, and the ICC should be part of that.
- **Needs inside the Beltway.** A member said that better east-west connections are needed more inside the Beltway than outside. A member responded that major growth in the future will not be inside the Beltway, it will be outside.
- **Continuing the ICC east?** A member asked about whether consideration is being given to extending the road east of Route 1 deeper into Prince George's County. Mr. Raker said no, the study corridor would end either at Route 1 or at I-95.
- **No possibility for compromise.** A member said this whole process was very frustrating because there appeared to be no opportunity for compromise between proponents and opponents.
- **TPB involvement.** A member asked when the ICC would come before the TPB again. Ron Kirby said the project would come to TPB to be included in a conformity finding prior to the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.
- **Air quality impacts.** A member said he was concerned that the air quality impacts of the project may never be known because it will be bundled with other amendments considered by the TPB at the same time. Mr. Kirby said that often such very large projects are follow their schedules and are evaluated separately for conformity.

ATTENDANCE
December 11, 2003

Members in Attendance

1. Karren Pope Onwukwe, chair, MD
2. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
3. Steve Cafilisch, MD
4. Bob Chase, VA
5. Jim Clarke, MD
6. Federico Cura, VA
7. Glen Harvie, MD
8. Dennis Jaffe, DC
9. Nancy Jakowitsch, DC
10. Allen Muchnick, VA
11. Lee Schoenecker, DC
12. Merle Van Horne, DC

Members not in attendance

1. John Edwards, VA
2. Jacque Patterson, DC
3. Stewart Schwartz, VA

Alternates in Attendance-

Harold Foster, DC
Harry Sanders, MD

Staff/Others

Sam Raker, MDOT
Fatimah Hasan, MDOT
Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
Patrick Zilliacus, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB