

REPORT

**TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
July 19, 2006
Emmet Tydings, CAC Chairman**

The July 13 meeting of the CAC included presentations and discussion of 1) the TPB's emerging role in human services transportation planning, 2) a report from the Access for All Advisory Committee on transportation issues of concern to low-income communities, and 3) the public involvement requirements of the 2005 federal surface transportation act (SAFETEA-LU).

Presentation: "The Proposed TPB Role in Human Service Transportation Coordination Planning"

Michael Eichler of the COG/TPB staff gave a presentation that will be given to the TPB at its meeting on July 19. He said that the 2005 federal surface transportation act (SAFETEA-LU) contained changes to two key human service transportation programs, Elderly and Disabled, and Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC), and created a new program called New Freedom, which will fund programs that go "above and beyond" the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. SAFETEA-LU required the development of a regional Coordinated Plan for these programs. The JARC and New Freedom programs must be selected on a competitive basis. A "designated recipient" of these funds will be responsible for running the competitive process.

Mr. Eichler explained that a group of stakeholders in the Washington region has proposed that the TPB be made responsible for developing the Coordinated Plan. The group also has proposed that the TPB be made the designated recipient for the JARC and New Freedom programs. The TPB is scheduled to approve the proposal at its meeting on July 19.

CAC member questions included the following:

- ***What is the timetable for the TPB to assume this new role?*** Mr. Kirby said that if the proposal is accepted, a TPB task force would be established in July and this fall would develop a Coordinated Plan with a framework for competitive selection. The TPB would be asked to approve the Coordinated Plan in the winter of 2006/2007.
- ***What is an example of programs that might be funded under the New Freedom program?*** As an example, Mr. Eichler said that the funds might be used for accessible taxicabs, which are not required under ADA.

Presentation: “Access for All Subcommittee on Transportation Issues for Low-Income Population: Findings and Recommendations”

Michael Eichler of the COG/TPB staff briefed the committee on this report, which will be presented to the TPB at its meeting on July 19. He described findings of the report, including the fact that poverty rates are highest in the region’s eastern and central jurisdictions, job growth in the east is lagging behind the west, and jobs sites on the east are accessible to more households than jobs sites in the west. He cited statistics showing that cars are not available to many low-income individuals. In comparison with the general population, low-income individuals tend to be more dependent on buses and walking. Mr. Eichler listed key recommendations of the subcommittee’s report:

- Improve bus stops
- Enhance bus service
- Provide better transit information
- Increase access to jobs and services

He said the subcommittee identified three “pilot areas” that could be a focus for these improvements. The pilot areas are Langley Park in Maryland, Anacostia/Congress Heights in D.C. and the Route 1 Corridor in Virginia.

CAC member comments and questions included the following:

- ***Green Line trains are already packed. Do we really need—or want—increased development around transit stations on the eastern side of the region?*** A member who lives on the eastern side of the region expressed concern about the report’s contention that land around Metro stations on the eastern side of the region was underutilized. This member noted that Green Line trains are crowded and cannot accommodate many more rush-hour riders, especially considering the limited number of trains. Furthermore, the member expressed concerns about the increased local traffic that would be generated by more development.

In response, another CAC member noted that an increase in jobs on the eastern side of the region—especially near transit stations— could have positive impacts on congestion. This member acknowledged, however, that Green Line crowding had to be addressed by increasing the number of trains on the line.

- ***It is unclear that the subcommittee that prepared the report was representative of the communities on the eastern side of the region.*** A member from the eastern side of the region expressed concern that it was not clear that the group that prepared the report included full representation from the communities it was evaluating. Staff responded that the subcommittee was comprised of leaders representing low-income communities. The subcommittee itself was chaired by Brenda Richardson, an activist from Ward 8 in D.C.
- ***Many of the issues raised in the report go beyond the traditional scope of transportation planning.*** A member noted that it is beyond the power of

transportation planning to get development on the eastern side of the region. Another member pointed out that some of the issues raised in the report relate to differing skill levels of people in different parts of the region.

- ***It might be worthwhile to look at experiences in other countries.*** A member suggested looking at methods used in other countries for communicating in other languages.
- ***Does the TPB actually do anything with recommendations like these?*** A member asked what the TPB typically does with recommendations like these. He expressed concern that recommendations may be simply discarded, with little or no follow-up. In response, Ron Kirby said that the Access for All Advisory Committee can choose to follow up and request an update in six months.

Presentation: “Evolving Involvement: New Public Participation Requirements of SAFETEA-LU”

Darren Smith of the COG/TPB staff gave a briefing on the public involvement requirements of the 2005 federal transportation reauthorization act. He described the numerous aspects of the legislation and the preceding federal laws. He said that the new act now requires a “Participation Plan,” among other things.

Mr. Smith described current public involvement activities of the TPB, and noted that efforts are underway to make improvements in education, information and input. He emphasized that it has been particularly challenging to find appropriate methods for obtaining representative citizen input.

Mr. Smith said that TPB staff is currently planning to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for an evaluation of the region’s public involvement activities for transportation planning. He noted that such an evaluation was recommended in the Federal Certification Review of the TPB that was conducted last year and released as a report in April of this year. He said that a draft RFP had been distributed to the CAC for comment. Staff plans to issue the RFP within the next two weeks.

Mr. Smith described the tasks in the draft RFP for an evaluation of public involvement activities:

- Documentation of current public involvement activities and comparison to other MPOs.
- Discussion with representatives of stakeholders and decision-makers about current process.
- Assessment of current techniques and recommendations for improvements.
- Recommendations for the development of a Public Participation Plan.

Mr. Smith asked the CAC to consider the questions of how the TPB can improve the public involvement process, especially relating to the collection and meaningful use of public input, as well as how the process of evaluating existing public involvement techniques can be made as useful as possible.

CAC member comments and questions included the following:

- ***The evaluation of public involvement activities needs to consider how feedback might be more effectively used to influence decision making.*** A CAC member said it was important to ask basic questions: Does and can citizen input have an influence on decision making? What happens to recommendations that are given to the TPB? The member said it would be useful for the evaluation to examine current practices and opportunities for effectively incorporating citizen feedback into the decision making process.
- ***The state DOTs and WMATA must be integral to the evaluation of public involvement.*** A member noted that because the DOTs and WMATA are so important to transportation decision-making, these agencies should be fundamental to the evaluation of the TPB's public involvement.
- ***The evaluation should burrow into the question of how to use the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (RMAS) as a vehicle for public input.*** The CAC and TPB staff have long promoted the RMAS as a vehicle for public education and involvement in regional transportation planning issues. The evaluation should consider how these efforts can be more effective.
- ***Public involvement and transportation decision-making in general should not lose sight of big-picture goals.*** A member emphasized that long-range planning should begin by asking for an identification of the policy goals that the region wants to achieve and then work to identify the transportation projects that will move the region toward those goals.

Discussion Regarding CAC Activities for the Remainder of 2006

Chairman Tydings noted that he would like the CAC to further pursue a key issue that was included in a set of CAC recommendations that were presented to the TPB in January:

“The CAC recommends the TPB develop a list or plan of unfunded priority projects, which would provide a “big-picture” context for understanding project selection for the CLRP. The development of this plan could start with the projects that have been identified for study in the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.”

Mr. Tydings said he would like the TPB to use outreach to inform the development of an unconstrained plan. He noted that a number of other Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) around the country have developed unconstrained plans. He said he would like to pursue this issue in more depth at a future meeting.

In response, Mr. Kirby noted that he and the TPB have been examining the possibility of establishing a new program to link transportation and land use. He said that Mr. Tydings'

interests in identifying unfunded transportation needs might be addressed through this effort.

Other Business

- Mr. Kirby provided an overview of the upcoming TPB agenda.
- John Swanson of the COG/TPB staff said that staff has begun the development of a schedule of public meetings for the fall.
- Larry Martin, chair of the CAC's Working Group on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, said he would like to convene a meeting of this group in July.

ATTENDANCE CAC Meeting, July 13, 2006

Members in Attendance

1. Emmet Tydings, Chair, MD
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Stephen Caflisch, MD
4. Stephen Cerny, VA
5. Grace Malakoff, DC
6. Dan Malouff, VA
7. Robin Marlin, DC
8. Larry Martin, DC
9. Allen Muchnick, VA
10. Alexandra Simpson, VA
11. Merle Van Horne, DC

Members Not in Attendance

1. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
2. Elvin Crespo, MD
3. Harold Foster, DC
4. Jim Larsen, VA

Staff/Others

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB
Darren Smith, COG/TPB
Michael Eichler, COG/TPB
Julie Ruszyk, VDOT
Glen Harvie