

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
September 13, 2012
Tina Slater, 2012 CAC Chair

The CAC's meeting on September 13 included a briefing on COG's Economy Forward report, progress in developing a new clearinghouse website on transportation planning activities throughout the region, and a discussion of issues for the committee to focus on for the remainder of the year.

Recognition of the Life and Contributions of Harold Foster

At the start of the CAC meeting, members spoke about the death of long-time CAC member Harold Foster on September 4. Harold was a dedicated planning professional and a friend. Several members spoke about Harold's contributions to the committee and to the region. The committee sent a wreath to his memorial and signed cards and a letter of condolence to his widow. A copy of that letter is attached to this report. Harold will certainly be missed.

Briefing on COG's Economy Forward report

Dave Robertson, COG's executive director, briefed the committee on *Economy Forward*, a report that is subtitled "COG's Call to Action for a More Competitive Metropolitan Washington." Mr. Robertson noted that while the federal government has been the driving force of the region's economy for decades, the combination of slow job growth, decreased federal spending, the sequestration of \$1.2 trillion, and ongoing federal budget uncertainty represents a serious threat to the region. The *Economy Forward* report says that urgent action is needed on issues like workforce development and transportation funding in order to maintain and improve the region's economic competitiveness.

Mr. Robertson emphasized the important role that the TPB's forthcoming Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) can play in supporting economic growth. He encouraged the CAC to continue to participate in the RTPP planning process. He noted that TPB Chairman Todd Turner had briefed the COG board the previous day on progress in the RTPP's development.

Comments from the CAC included the following:

- Members were gratified that the importance of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan was prominently featured in *Economy Forward*. They noted that the CAC has long championed the idea of an RTPP.
- Members expressed support for the attention given to land use in the report, particularly the emphasis on promoting regional activity centers.

- Members noted that the report does not mention the region’s universities, which is a key part of our economy. The report is also missing discussion about the region’s school systems. Improving education will be vital for maintaining our competitive edge.
- Members also suggested that the report should emphasize the role that telecommuting can play in supporting economic development.

Update on the “Transportation Planning Information Hub for the National Capital Region”

Deborah Bilek of TPB staff provided an overview of the TPB Information HUB, a clearinghouse website that is intended to be a one-stop shop for information on regional transportation planning. She demonstrated some of the website’s functionality and the improvements that had been made since the CAC last saw a demonstration of the website in June. Members of the CAC provided feedback on their impressions thus far:

Site appearance and user interface

- The overall look is clean, appealing to the eye, and simple.
- Include interactive maps as a way to present this information visually.
- The home screen image may not be the most appropriate choice. Consider using an image of something that is more iconic of DC. This does not need to be the Capital, but could be one of the monuments, or a photo of the district from Anacostia Heights. Alternatively, consider adding an image of metro to the existing home page image.
- Consider including a back button on the actual page, rather than making the visitor use the browser toolbar to go back, or requiring the user to go through numerous backtracking clicks.
- It’s worth noting that “transportation planning” can be interpreted as a personal mission – a user might happen upon this site when they are actually looking for WMATA’s trip planner. It would be good to link to these other personal trip planning site to the HUB so users can find what they’re looking for if they happen upon the HUB site by mistake.

Improving information delivery

- Incorporate short videos of staff (or celebrities, like Dr. Gridlock) talking to the website visitor. Videos should be under 1 minute, would serve to make the website more interactive and welcoming, and can help explain complicated processes, concepts or documents. Perhaps find a graphics design graduate student or group in need of a project to help design this website component
- Currently, “High Profile Projects” are only searchable by state. Consider making them searchable by type – such as rail, road, bike/ped, etc.
- Consider making the language in the Planning Process section more concise. One way to do this would be to present information in a timeline format.
- In the “Resources” section, it would be useful to have a 1-2 sentence explanation of what the document contains.

- Make sure to spell out hyperlinked acronyms, as well as include them in an easily found glossary of terms.
- Cross-link CLRP information to individual regional projects pages.
- It would be good to include a calendar of events. Understanding that maintaining this could be extremely difficult, consider linking to the different calendars around the region.
- Link partners to twitter feeds and facebook pages as a way to keep information current.

General

- If I'm Jane Citizen this planning process doesn't answer a big question for me: "Where are the points in the process where I can provide input and to whom?"
- Consider the best way to streamline content updates – it would be good to have a database that informs staff when content needs to be updated.

CAC Activities for the Remainder of the Year

The committee discussed issues and activities it would like to work on for the remainder of the year:

- ***Priorities Plan*** – The CAC would like the opportunity to actually contribute to Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) in addition to receiving briefings on it. Members specifically said they would like to provide input on the public involvement strategy for the RTPP and on the RTPP's use of performance measures.

Some newer members suggested that they did not fully understand the importance of the RTPP and why longer-term CAC members were so committed to its development. They suggested the purpose of the RTPP had not been clearly and succinctly explained. Members discussed the possibility of convening a conference call to discuss the RTPP.

- ***Safe Routes to School*** -- Christine Green from the Safe Routes to School Network suggested that the CAC might play a role in promoting Safe Routes to School programs in the region. The CAC invited Ms. Green to make a presentation to the CAC in October.
- ***The Information Hub website*** – The committee expressed continuing interest in monitoring the development of this new TPB website and providing feedback.
- ***Street Smart*** – The CAC would like to provide input to the creative process for developing the new campaign rather than simply receiving a briefing on campaign materials after they have been finalized.
- ***MAP21 Transportation Alternatives Program*** – CAC members said they would like to learn how the TPB intends to administer the process for selecting projects under this new program established by the recent federal transportation reauthorization legislation.

- **Complete Streets Policy followup** – The CAC last year recommended that the TPB develop and adopt a regional Complete Streets Policy. The TPB approved the policy in May. The CAC requested a followup briefing to learn about implementation of the TPB’s Regional Complete Streets Policy, particularly regarding some key milestones that were supposed to be achieved within 120 days of the policy’s adoption.
- **Other briefings** – Committee members expressed interest in receiving briefings on several additional subjects:
 - The TPB’s study on the public acceptability of congestion pricing
 - Regional freight issues
 - Intermodal facilities

ATTENDEES
CAC Meeting, September 13, 2012

Members Present

1. Tina Slater, Chair (MD)
2. Maureen Budetti (VA)
3. Bill Easter (MD)
4. Anita Hairston (DC)
5. Larry Martin (DC)
6. Allen Muchnick (VA)
7. Jeffrey Parnes (VA)
8. William Soltesz (VA)
9. Stephen Still (VA)

Members Not Present

1. Veronica Davis (DC)
2. Kelby Funn (MD)
3. Rob Mandle (DC)
4. Krystle Okafor (MD)
5. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Alternates Present

- Justin Clarke (MD)
 Fred Walker (VA)

Staff and Guests

- Dave Robertson, COG executive director
 John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
 Deb Bilek, COG/TPB staff
 Christine Green, Safe Routes to School National Partnership
 Bill Orleans, citizen

September 13, 2012

District of Columbia
Bladensburg*
Bowie
Charles County
College Park
Frederick
Frederick County
Gaithersburg
Greenbelt
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Rockville
Takoma Park
Alexandria
Arlington County
Fairfax
Fairfax County
Falls Church
Loudoun County
Manassas
Manassas Park
Prince William County

*Adjunct Member

To the Family of Harold Foster ~

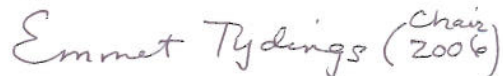
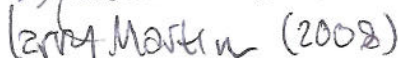
Harold Foster was our colleague, and a friend and teacher to many of us. We, the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Transportation Planning Board are deeply saddened by Harold's sudden passing. We truly share your loss. The CAC was Harold's salon. We would dine together monthly and discuss the regional transportation issues of the day. Harold would listen until he marked the crux of the discussion. He didn't challenge anyone's opinion, rather he'd describe the issue and then with the skill of a southern preacher describe how it should be resolved or dealt with. On complicated topics and discussion, the CAC could rely on Harold to provide a context and the history of a topic—he was the CAC's institutional memory. Harold's sentences were not short. They brought old colleagues back to life, told of history repeated, and animated our discussions with color and life.

Harold told stories, but never preached justice or equality or any idealism; though his reasoning was undoubtedly rooted there. His wisdom, insight, and sense of humor were appreciated by all. Always on top of transportation issues, CAC members could count on Harold to provide timely e-mails with links to informative articles— always prefaced with his wry, witty and pithy observations. The CAC is losing, among other things, one of our most even-tempered and steady members, and the District is losing a solid citizen. Knowing Harold was one of the most enjoyable parts of joining the CAC. It was a privilege just to know him as a friend, and it is an honor to have worked with him over the years at the CAC. To simply hear him talk was a pleasure. He was one exceptional and wonderful human being.

Warmly,



Tina Slater (on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Committee)
2012 Chair, Transportation Planning Board Citizens Advisory Committee



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