

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
July 17, 2013
Stephen Still, 2013 CAC Chair

The CAC meeting on July 11 focused primarily on the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, including a presentation of the plan, and a discussion about the CAC's first impressions of the Plan. Details about the CAC's reactions can be found in the attached document titled, *"Comments by the Citizens Advisory Committee on the Draft TPB Transportation Priorities Plan."*

In addition, the CAC received briefings on the TPB's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and the FY2014 Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program.

Briefings on the TPB's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program

Ms. Crawford of the TPB staff briefed the committee on projects that have been recommended for funding under the TPB's TLC and TAP programs. These project recommendations will be presented to the TPB for approval on July 17.

The CAC has a long standing interest in both these programs. In 2006, the committee pushed for the establishment of the Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which provides technical assistance to the TPB's member jurisdictions to conduct small-scale, targeted planning studies to promote transportation alternatives and livable communities. In 2012, the CAC encouraged the TPB to be pro-active in taking on its new federally mandated responsibility for project selection under the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which provides capital funding for small "transportation alternatives" projects.

The CAC was pleased to see that both programs are moving forward in a complementary fashion. The committee further encouraged the TPB to consider how the two programs can be coordinated in the future.

CAC members asked if TPB members might be confused regarding the difference between the two programs. Ms. Crawford emphasized that the programs are linked, but clearly distinct. She said they are designed to fund different kinds of projects: The TLC Program is for planning, while the TPB's TAP funds are only being used for capital implementation.

Members discussed the relatively small number of applications that were received this year for the Transportation Alternatives Program. Ms. Crawford said that the solicitation had been broadly distributed and staff had worked closely with the state DOTs to "get the word out." But she noted that there was a short timeframe for starting up the program, which may be a partial explanation for the relative lack of competition. She said that staff would work closely with the state DOTs during future rounds to seek a larger number of applications.

A CAC member suggested that all applications, including those that did not receive funding, should be posted on the TPB website to provide information for future applicants.

Briefing and Discussion on the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan

Mr. Kirby, Director of the Department of Transportation Planning, provided a briefing on the draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. Following this presentation, the CAC held a discussion on their initial reactions to the plan. As mentioned above, the CAC has drafted a report on its initial impressions.

Other Issues

- Mr. Kirby provided an update on the July 17 TPB Agenda.

ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, July 11, 2013

Members Present

1. Steve Still, Chair, (VA)
2. Neha Bhatt (DC)
3. Justin Clarke (MD)
4. Veronica Davis (DC)
5. Cherian Eapen (MD)
6. Allen Muchnick (VA)
7. Emily Oaksford (DC)
8. Jeff Parnes (VA)
9. Lorena Rios (VA)
10. Tina Slater (MD)
11. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Alternates Present

- Anita Hairston (DC)
Rosemarie Helen Savio (DC)
Jeff Slavin (MD)
Jarrett Stoltzfus (MD)
Janie Nham (VA)

Members Not Present

- John Epps (MD)
Tracy Haddon Loh (DC)
Patrick Gough (DC)
David Skiles (VA)

Staff and Guests

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
Deb Kerson Bilek, COG/TPB staff
Sarah Crawford, COG/TPB staff
Dan Sonenklar, COG/TPB staff
Eric Randall, COG/TPB staff
Andy Meese, COG/TPB staff
Mike Farrell, COG/TPB staff
Bill Orleans, citizen

The TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
One Region Moving Forward

July 17, 2013

Comments by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) on the Draft TPB Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

At the July 11, 2013 CAC meeting, Mr. Ron Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning, presented a draft report of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP).

In that briefing, Mr. Kirby provided an overview of the plan including these items, among others:

- Background and objectives of the RTPP
- A summary of goals, challenges, and strategies
- Overview of results of a public survey
- Recommendations

The summary was provided in a powerpoint presentation, as well as the written 74 page draft report.

This report provides the CAC's first impressions of the plan, including a summary of points made orally by CAC members during the meeting, and additional comments developed in the few days leading up to the July 17th TPB meeting.

Use of the RTPP in the Regional Planning Process

The CAC believes further clarity is required on how the RTPP will influence other planning processes including the CRLP and the TIP. Process and timing interactions should be explicit. The draft does not identify a clear means for phasing in recommendations. The RTPP would be a disappointment if its value was limited to an interesting "policy statement."

Additionally, further thought should be given on how the Priorities Plan will be monitored and measured for success. To be effective, priorities need to be tied to action, and those actions need to be measured. We encourage staff to elaborate on this point.

The following is a summary of initial comments specific to the content of the report:

Report Organization

Overall, the plan is presented in a logical framework. Overarching goals are articulated, along with the key challenges to achieving those goals. A series of strategies for reaching goals are listed in various timeframes including near-term, ongoing, and long-term. The report then describes a public opinion survey process that was used to solicit citizen input on potential components of the plan.

In general, the CAC endorses the overall organization of the plan as being logical and well-organized. Most comments concern specific content, particularly the report's recommendations.

Goals, Challenges, and Strategies

In prior years, the CAC was given some exposure to the overall regional goals that are used in the RTPP. For the 2013 CAC, it was assumed that the six regional goals described in the report are a "given." There was no particular concern raised with respect to goals since these cover many areas we endorse, including:

- Offering a range of transportation options
- Promoting links between land use and transportation
- Ensuring maintenance and safety
- Enhancing the environment

With regard to challenges to meet the goals, the CAC had no direct influence on drafting the list of items. The items listed generally make sense, but the CAC recognizes that there may be other challenges that could have been listed.

CAC raised concern with regard to the specific strategies listed in Chapter 3. General questions surrounded "why these, and not some others?" For example, long-term Scenario A is aimed at Toll Lanes with Bus Rapid Transit. The CAC understands this strategy is consistent with the "Aspirations" plans being developed, but also feels that there could be additional broad reaching strategies considered in the Long-Term section. Most CAC members would strongly endorse Strategy B that has land-use and transportation connectivity as its core theme.

There were other specific comments by individual members, provided later in this report.

Public Survey

The CAC endorses using a survey to gauge public reaction to goals, challenges, and strategies, and to provide an initial means to prioritize their importance among the general population. However, some concerns were expressed with regard to the survey. For instance, because respondents graded each strategy independently, respondents were not explicitly compelled to make tradeoffs; they could pick all the items they liked most.

One CAC member observed that that transit riders made up a disproportionate rate of respondents. This was countered by the notion that the transit-riding population will have growing importance in the future, so they should be given high weight relative to today's population.

The CAC has expressed a desire to take the survey and have the results tabulated for the CAC separately. Staff has indicated a willingness to do so.

Recommendations

Recommendations were largely developed based on guidance provided by the public survey. The CAC understands that this is important feedback; however, it should not be the sole basis for setting priorities going forward. The CAC and the TBP, given the opportunity to take the survey, may arrive at a different set of strategic priorities.

Priority One: The report identifies Priority One as keeping Metro and Highways in good repair. These short term issues are what commuters (survey respondents) are facing TODAY, so it is no surprise that they were given high ratings. Longer-term priorities such as land-use and transportation links are harder concepts to grasp in terms of "how this can make my life better now."

While the CAC commends and agrees that ongoing maintenance is important, the CAC raised concerns that this Priority may be short-sighted. The CAC questioned if dedicated funding is suggested, what is the process to decide how much is required and what are potential sources? Given limited resources, does this imply funds be diverted from new capital projects and diverted to ongoing operations?

Priority Two: Transit crowding and roadway congestion have a similar close-in focus. Commuters face these issues now, and want them solved urgently. The CAC believes that improving these conditions require more than short-term improvements in efficiency. Major initiatives are likely required, such as expansion of the Metro core, e.g. Rosslyn Tunnel or additional highway capacity.

Priority Three: The CAC generally found this priority to be ambiguous, and as one member said, "a spongy catch-all." The CAC suggested that this section be re-worked to be more specific. In its current form, this Priority is difficult to articulate and act on.

Overall, the CAC suggests that the recommendations section take a broader view than that derived from the public survey. Clearly, the region needs to grow differently in the future, with an emphasis on smarter land-use and transportation efficiencies. The regional activity centers concept was not endorsed as the highest priority in the survey, but its importance should not be minimized.

Further CAC and Public Comment

This report does not represent the final word of the CAC on the RTPP. The CAC encourages the TPB and COG staff to provide additional opportunities and time for more comprehensive feedback. Though the CAC is not scheduled to meet in August, we have decided to convene in August for a focus-group style discussion session, and we request another opportunity to provide feedback at the CAC September meeting.

There is further concern that the public feedback period is not well-timed or of sufficient length. August is not a good period for public comments. One member of the CAC suggested that the public comment period extend through September in order to maximize the opportunity for public involvement.

Additional Comments on Specific Topics

Members of the CAC, either individually or collectively, have made the following comments about specific elements of the RTPP that should be refined, or elements be given greater consideration:

- *Road Construction:* Some CAC members suggested that new road construction was not given enough weight given the importance of driving in the greater region. In particular, there was a desire to see more discussion specifically aimed at new river crossings. While this could potentially be considered part of the “alleviate roadway bottleneck” strategy, additional weight was suggested in the plan.
- *Ped-Bicycle:* The CAC believes that the relatively low support for bike facilities should not be misinterpreted. 30% of respondents support more bike infrastructure while a much smaller percent commute by bike. Ped/Bike improvements are relatively inexpensive and have a high benefit/cost performance ratio.
- *Transit-oriented development:* There was a concern that TOD was not given higher weighting in the survey results. This should not be interpreted to mean that TOD should be considered a low priority.

The CAC appreciates TPB’s and MWCOG’s staffs consideration of our comments, and we look forward to being engaged as further phases of the RTPP are developed, and specific actions are designed and implemented.

Action is critical to our region’s mobility and vitality.