

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
March 21, 2012
Tina Slater, 2012 CAC Chair

At its meeting on March 15, the CAC discussed the TPB's draft Complete Streets Policy, received a briefing on the Commuter Connections Program, and discussed the committee's agenda for 2012.

Discussion on the TPB's Draft Complete Streets Guidance and Policy Template

Michael Farrell of the TPB staff spoke about a draft document that staff has developed in response to a CAC request last summer that the TPB should establish a regional Complete Streets Policy. He explained that the document was the result of extensive discussion among TPB stakeholders and committees. He said that the subject of Complete Streets would be discussed at a special work session on March 21 prior to the TPB meeting. The TPB's Complete Streets Guidance and Policy Template is scheduled for approval by the TPB in April.

CAC comments regarding the draft Policy Template are attached to this report. These comments include points that CAC members made at the CAC meeting, as well as issues that were raised during an email exchange prior to the meeting.

The CAC wishes to thank the TPB and its partner agencies for taking up this issue and elevating the importance of a Complete Streets approach to transportation planning in our region.

Briefing on Commuter Connections Programs

Nicholas Ramfos of the TPB staff briefed the CAC on the range of programs conducted under Commuter Connections. He explained that the goal of Commuter Connections is to reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles and increase the use of alternate commute modes, including transit, car-sharing, walking, bicycling, as well as telecommuting.

CAC members expressed the following questions and comments:

- What is the overall cost of the programs? Mr. Ramfos said the program costs approximately \$5.3 million this year.
- How many members are in the Guaranteed Ride Home Program? Mr. Ramfos said that approximately 15,000 people are members of the GRH Program, although more than 30,000 individuals have accounts with Commuter Connections. He said the GRH Program provides approximately 280 rides per month.
- Members discussed the importance of federal incentives for transit use.

Discussion of CAC Agenda Items & Activities for 2012

CAC members put the following topics "on the table" as the committee seeks to determine possible activities this year:

- ***Actively participate in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.*** Many committee members emphasized that the importance of maintaining a CAC role in this planning activity,

which has resulted in part from the CAC's prodding over a number of years. Members spoke about some key issues that relate, or might relate, to the priorities planning efforts, including:

- How performance measurement and cost/benefit analysis will actually be applied;
 - How the plan might affect people in various parts of the region, including areas outside the Beltway and in outer jurisdictions;
 - How the plan might incorporate bold projects or solutions, such as a second Potomac River crossing.
- **Promote opportunities for citizen information.** In particular, CAC members are interested in preliminary plans to develop an online clearinghouse on the transportation planning and decision-making activities of the TPB's member jurisdictions. Members also suggested the possibility of hosting public forums outside the COG offices, which is something the committee has done in the past.
 - **Receive information on new topics that might be relevant to future action.** CAC members suggested it would be useful for the TPB staff to provide citizen-friendly information on the following topics:
 - Information on how the effects of transportation improvements (both policies and investments) that are have been implemented in the past 3-5 years, including
 - how those projects have made a difference in the lives of seniors, youth, people with disabilities, low-income households and communities of color;
 - how those projects affect other communities and the region as a whole.
 - Information on how computer models are used to determine travel forecasts and help shape regional transportation decision making.

Other Business

- TPB staff announced that the next session of the TPB's Community Leadership Institute would be held on March 29 and 31. New CAC members will be invited to attend.
- Ron Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning at COG, provided a briefing on the TPB's upcoming agenda.

ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, March 15, 2012

Members Present

1. Tina Slater, Chair
2. Maureen Budetti (VA)
3. Veronica Davis (DC)
4. Bill Easter (MD)
5. Harold Foster (DC)
6. Rob Mandle
7. Larry Martin (DC)
8. Allen Muchnick (VA)
9. Krystle Okafor (MD)
10. Jeffrey Parnes (VA)

11. William Soltesz (VA)
12. Stephen Still (VA)

Members Not Present

1. Kelby Funn (MD)
2. Anita Hairston (DC)
3. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Alternates Present

- Justin Clarke (MD)
John Epps (MD)

- Richard Ellis (MD)
Mauricio Hernandez (DC)
Kimberley Kaplan (VA)
Fred Walker (VA)

Staff and Guests

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
Mike Farrell, COG/TPB staff
Nick Ramfos, COG/TPB staff

COMMENTS FROM THE TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

On the Draft Complete Streets Guidance and Policy Template for the National Capital Region March 21, 2012

The following comments represent consensus opinions expressed by CAC members during the committee's meeting on March 15, 2012 and via email exchanges. This document was not formally approved by the committee, although it was circulated for review among CAC members prior to the TPB meeting on March 21.

Background

Last year, the CAC called upon the TPB to develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy. A copy of the committee's original recommendations document is attached. In those recommendations, we noted that "the region broadly agrees that we need to promote walkable, mixed-use, more compact communities, and give people more options for getting around. These objectives can be supported through a Complete Streets approach to street design, planning, and engineering."

The CAC further suggested that such a policy would be a way for the TPB to demonstrate regional leadership. "The TPB needs to put a finer point on its existing policies," the committee argued. "If we believe in *Complete Streets*, we need to say it, clearly. Providing recommended guidelines for different street typologies will further encourage adoption by member jurisdictions that currently don't have complete street policies or standards."

Comments

We are pleased that the TPB responded affirmatively to our recommendation by directing staff in July to develop a regional complete streets policy. As the TPB considers a draft "policy template" for approval, we offer the following comments:

- ***We broadly support the draft and we applaud the elevation of Complete Streets as an issue.*** The Committee is generally supportive of the draft that has been circulated. Furthermore, we appreciate the extensive review and discussion that has informed its development. We believe this process has elevated the importance of a Complete Streets approach in all aspects of regional transportation planning. The new regional policy on Complete Streets will provide accountability in determining whether Complete Streets principles are actually being met.

- **Suggestions regarding the draft text.** The CAC offers the following comments regarding the draft document:
 - Under V.1. (Documentation and Reporting section), we recommend the text specify that the reporting process should begin as soon as possible by compiling a list of jurisdictions that are already in compliance.
 - Under V.1. (Documentation and Reporting section), the text should specify that the report will also document the exemptions to the policy that have been made.
 - Under V.2. (Documentation and Reporting section), we recommend that the document specify that the regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Database should be updated immediately. The committee understands that this database has not been updated since it was first developed two years ago, and so we hope this activity will not be put off.
 - Under V.3. (Documentation and Reporting section), we are concerned about the open-ended nature of the commitment to documenting implementation of the principles in the region’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). We would prefer to see a more explicit description of how this documentation will occur. We suggest the following text: “Modify the TIP submission project sheet to more clearly indicate how projects will accommodate walking, bicycling, and transit use.”
 - Under VI. (Promotion), we suggest the text make explicit that such training will be conducted annually.
 - We suggest that definitions should be provided for the terms “senior manager” and “responsible agency” (1st sentence under “Exemptions”).
 - We suggest that the document make explicit that the TPB’s federal partners who maintain or own transportation facilities in the region, are covered by this policy.
 - Under IV.1. (Inclusions), add "lighting" to the list of components covered by the policy. This is important for safety and also accessibility for users with low vision. We also suggest that “landscaping” be included.

- **General Comments.** The committee members offer the following points for the TPB to consider during discussion of this draft document:
 - **Why a “policy template”** Why is the draft document a “policy template” when the original CAC recommendations called for an actual regional policy. We are somewhat concerned that the word “template” seems to water down our original intent. Instead of a statement of regional policy, the document might be construed only to be a set of suggestions that should be considered at the state or local level.
 - **Importance of intra-agency “champions” for Complete Streets.** CAC members believe it is important that each major agency in the region designate a Complete Streets “champion” in their organization. Such an individual would be responsible for pushing that agency, across silos, to get serious about

implementation. Monitoring and measuring progress would be part of that role. The champions from various agencies could meet at least quarterly to exchange ideas and share best practices.

- ***Importance of community buy-in.*** We believe successful Complete Streets policies will need to address community opposition. As an example, many neighborhoods simply do not want sidewalks. The policy needs to determine how to deal with the general concerns of residents.
- ***A Complete Streets approach requires multimodal planning.*** A Complete Streets approach must be integrated into all levels of current transportation planning practice. In describing this challenge, one CAC member noted that D.C. has separate Master Plans for various transportation modes. A Complete Streets policy would acknowledge the importance of having an overarching approach to transportation throughout an entire jurisdiction.