

REPORT
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
December 18, 2013
Stephen Still, CAC Chair
Veronica Davis, CAC Vice-Chair

The CAC meeting on December 12 included briefings on the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) and the performance evaluation of the 2013 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

This was the first official meeting of the CAC since the loss of Ron Kirby, although committee members did have an informal gathering in November to honor Ron's memory.

Briefing on the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

John Swanson of the TPB staff announced that a newly revised version of the RTPP was being released on December 12 for public comment. He said that on November 21, staff had released a version of the document that included Ron Kirby's final edits. Since that time, TPB staff members have conducted intensive outreach to identify ways in which the earlier draft could be revised to respond to continuing concerns and build consensus for approval.

He said that changes in the new draft were developed to respond to comments that have been received since mid-October. He said that the board will be briefed on the draft on December 18. At the January 15 TPB meeting, the RTPP is currently scheduled for board action. Mr. Swanson itemized a list of comments that were addressed in the new draft.

CAC Interest in the RTPP's Connection to the CLRP

The CAC sent comments to the TPB on December 4, which responded to the November 21 draft. Those CAC comments, which are attached to this report, largely focused on the need for specifics with regard to implementation.

The key points from the CAC's December comments were:

- Revise the "Call for Projects" document to most explicitly reference the RTPP.
- Proactively request that jurisdictions summarize their contribution to the RTPP.
- Allow for more frequent revisions to the RTPP.
- Include measurement criteria in the RTPP.

Mr. Swanson said that staff had studied the CAC comments as part of the recent revision process. He said that some changes in the recent draft directly responded to the CAC's requests. For example, he noted that there is new language in Chapter 5 (page 77 of the draft) that was inspired by the CAC's comment (identified in the second bullet above):

“The TPB will also work collaboratively with the region’s jurisdictions to develop a process by which each jurisdiction will demonstrate—in a formal letter or other documentation—the ways in which the projects and programs they submit for inclusion in the CLRP address the priorities in this Plan.”

Regarding the call for including measurement criteria (fourth bullet above), Mr. Swanson said that this topic had been discussed extensively. He noted that the strategies in the RTPP, as it was actually developed, are not specific enough to be measurable by specific targets. He said that this point has been explained in the revised document. However, he did note that the new draft includes language on page 77 that more broadly calls for evaluation:

“In the future, the TPB will undertake efforts to evaluate how well the projects and programs in the CLRP, taken as a whole, support regional priorities.”

Regarding the frequency of updates (third bullet point), Mr. Swanson said that the TPB may very well decide to update the RTPP less than four years from now in order to ensure the next RTPP update happens well in advance of the next four-year update to the CLRP. However, he noted that the current draft calls for the RTPP to be updated every four years, and as a general practice, staff does not anticipate updates happening more frequently than that.

Regarding the recommended revision in the Call for Projects document (first bullet above), staff has indicated that in the future, Call for Projects documents would be revised to include more specific references to the RTPP. This year’s Call for Projects, which was released in November, did make general reference to the RTPP even though it is not yet adopted. Staff indicated that it is too late to revise this year’s Call for Projects because projects are expected to be submitted in the coming weeks.

Other Comments

At the meeting on December 12, CAC members had not have a chance to review the new draft that was released that day. However, they did offer the following comments regarding their continuing interests as a committee and as individual members:

- ***Emphasizes the East-West regional divide.*** Members were pleased to learn that the new draft had included more explicit references to regional balance, including development opportunities around Metro stations on the eastern side of the region. However, they indicated that perhaps this issue had not been given the attention that it deserved in the document.
- ***More clearly articulate the problem of fragmentation in this region.*** The document should state that our key problem is the inherent lack of jurisdictional coordination in a region with competing states and local governments. Along the same lines, the document should identify multi-jurisdictional transportation projects as special opportunities that can help overcome intra-regional divisions.

- ***Address the importance of commuter bus services.*** Members suggested that commuter bus services should be included in Long-Term Strategy 4. They further noted that commuter bus services require free-flowing travel conditions on roads in and out of Activity Centers.
- ***Make sure environmental benefits are highlighted.*** Members noted that environmental benefits were woven into many aspects of the RTPP strategies. These attributes should be emphasized.
- ***Concerns about the process for concluding the RTPP.*** A participant expressed concern that since the document was scheduled for approval in January, it was not being given enough time for input.

Briefing and Discussion on the Performance of the 2013 CLRP

Dan Sonenklar of TPB staff briefed the committee on the performance of last year's CLRP, including forecasts of travel demand (including VMT), the use of different transportation modes, transit and highway congestion, access to jobs, and air quality.

Member questions and comments included the following:

- ***What's the source of data on growth?*** Staff briefly explained the process for developing the Cooperative Forecasts. They noted that recently approved land-use developments may not yet be included in the Forecasts.
- ***Does the TPB's definition of a transit trip differ from the American Community Survey (ACS) definition?*** Yes. Staff explained that the ACS, which is conducted by the Census, asks participants what mode they "usually" take. For the TPB's models, any journey that includes a portion on transit is considered to be a "transit trip."
- ***How accurate are the forecasts?*** Staff said that the biggest challenge historically has been forecasting population growth because it is hard to predict household size. In contrast, household forecasts have generally been on target. Employment forecasts have been somewhat uneven— sometimes overestimated, sometimes underestimated.

Resolution in Honor of Ron Kirby

Committee members approved a resolution, which is attached, in honor of Ron Kirby. CAC members have spent many hours with Ron over the past 20 years. He will be sorely missed.

Other Business

- The CAC election for 2014 will be conducted via email. According to the TPB Participation Plan, the 2013 CAC will elect six individuals – two from each state – to serve on next year’s committee. The three TPB officers for 2014 will then nominate nine individuals – three from each state – to complete the full roster of 15 members for 2014. The TPB is scheduled to approve a full slate of CAC members at its January meeting.
- Deb Bilek has left the TPB staff for a job as Director of Community Outreach for ULI-Washington.
- Bryan Hayes has joined TPB staff. He will be working on communications and public participation.

ATTENDEES CAC Meeting, December 12, 2013

Members Present

Veronica Davis, vice chair, presiding (DC)
Justin Clarke (MD)
Cherian Eapen (MD)
John Epps (MD)
Tracy Hadden Loh (DC)
Allen Muchnick (VA)
Emily Oaksford (DC)
Jeff Parnes (VA)
Lorena Rios (VA)
Tina Slater (MD)
Emmet Tydings (MD)

Members Not Present

Neha Bhatt (DC)
Patrick Gough (DC)
David Skiles (VA)
Stephen Still, Chair (VA)

Alternates Present

Anita Hairston (DC)
Rosemarie Savio (DC)
Jarrett Stoltzfus (MD)

Staff and Guests

Bob Griffiths, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/ TPB staff
Ben Hampton, COG/TPB staff
Dan Sonenklar, COG/TPB staff
Bryan Hayes, COG/TPB staff
Christine Green, citizen
Bill Orleans, citizen

December 4, 2013

CAC Updated Comments on the Draft Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

The CAC has been engaged in the formulation and discussion of the RTPP since its conception. Most recently, the 2013 CAC has continued to have extensive dialogue on the RTPP, both in meetings and in written discussion.

The following document provided additional feedback to the TPB and staff regarding the latest RTPP draft dated November 21, 2013.

General Comments

The CAC appreciates that staff intends to diligently push forward with a RTPP final report and implementation in the next months. The sudden passing of Ron Kirby, who personally oversaw many elements of the draft RTPP, is a significant loss to the region and to the development of the RTPP. In Ron's last days he worked to make further enhancements to the Plan based on CAC, TPB and citizen inputs, and the Plan was strengthened as a result.

The latest draft does reflect improvements in various areas that the CAC has mentioned. This includes additional language on the long-term vision for the region that specifically references other important work including Region Forward, and WMATA's Momentum Plan.

There are however areas still in need of further improvement. This is particularly true with regard to implementation steps, as described below.

Implementation Shortcomings

Implementation needs to be specific, actionable, and measurable, otherwise the RTPP will be limited to an interesting policy document. The RTPP draft is still lacking in some key areas as described below.

The RTPP clearly makes a linkage to the Constrained Long Range Plan (CRLP) as the primary vehicle for implementation. The RTPP states, "The ultimate purpose of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is to highlight priorities that should be funded and included in the CLRP." The RTPP further states, "The release of the final Priorities Plan ...is designed to ensure that the priorities identified in the Plan are available for consideration in developing the next four-year update of the CLRP, due by the end of 2014."

The challenge as the Plan freely admits is that the TPB has limited influence on what projects are put forward in the CRLP to meet the priorities. “The TPB has little direct control over funding, and the actual implementation of priorities, in most cases, will occur at the state and local levels.”

Therefore, it is critical that specific direction be given to the local jurisdictions on how they can best put forward projects and funding that best serve the RTPP. So far, it appears that the direction is limited. In the November 14, 2013 “Call for Projects” on the 2014 CRLP, page 8 does have a short section on the RTPP. Mainly this is a description of the history of development of the RTPP. There is a very little in the way of specifics on how the CLRP should conform to the RTPP. The entirety of advice appears to be limited to a single sentence. “The strategies identified in the RTPP should be considered by implementing agencies as they develop project submissions for the CLRP and TIP.” In the check-lists for project attributes on pages 23 or 32, there is no mention of conformity to the priorities in the RTPP.

Implementation Recommendations

The CAC has continually mentioned the need to for specifics with regard to implementation. The following steps should be considered for inclusion in a broader implementation section:

- Revise the “Call for Projects” document. The list of project attributes listed on pages 23 and 32 needs to be expanded to indicate how each project advances the priorities outlined in the RTPP.
- Proactively request that jurisdictions summarize their contribution to the RTPP: Along with their 2014 CLRP project submissions, each jurisdiction should submit a letter to the TPB indicating how their CLRP submissions specifically address the priorities set forth in the RTPP. This should include broader strategies used to accomplish the priorities, as well as highlighting specific key projects that advance the RTPP.
- Allow for more frequent revisions of the RTPP: The current draft suggests that the RTPP should be updated every four years. We would expect that the first year will yield significant learnings, and a revision should be contemplated 12 month hence, at least with respect to implementation steps.
- Inclusion of measurement criteria: There is no framework suggested for measuring success. At minimum this needs to include a report from the jurisdictions how they have advanced the RTPP in the last year. In addition, TPB staff should design a means to track success against the priorities, and issue a summary report that highlights in qualitative and quantitative terms how the RTPP advanced.

In general, the RTPP should be considered a living, breathing document that should be updated and made more specific over time.

Next Steps

The CAC will again discuss the RTPP at its December 12th meeting. Comments will be provided to the TPB in the December 5th RTPP workshop as well as the December 18th TPB meeting. The CAC will continue to be active in monitoring the success of the RTPP.

CAC Resolution to Honor Ronald Kirby

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) does hereby resolve on the part of the 2013 CAC and all prior CACs:

- Ron Kirby was a thought leader, not only for the Washington region, but for transportation planning worldwide.
- His pragmatic and thoughtful approach to regional planning significantly moved the region forward.
- He spent countless hours of his personal time being the spokesperson for the TPB and COG staff before the CAC in our evening meetings.
- He was patient and open minded to many points of view and took joy in both teaching and listening.

Mr. Kirby's presence at the CAC will be sorely missed but his legacy will live on in the regional plans he developed, and in the hearts and minds of all he touched.