

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee November 16, 2005 Dennis Jaffe, CAC Chair

The CAC's monthly meeting on November 14 included discussions regarding the Metro funding legislation, the lack of a pedestrian/bicycle coordinator at WMATA, and improvements in public information regarding the 2005 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP).

Discussion on the Metro Funding Federal Legislation

Bill Womack, Legislative Director for Congressman Tom Davis, briefed the committee on H.R. 3496, the "Nation Capital Transportation Amendments Act of 2005," which would provide \$1.5 billion in federal money over 10 years for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Mr. Womack emphasized that in addition to providing federal funding, the legislation would require Virginia, Maryland and the District to establish dedicated funding sources to pay their share of Metro cost. He said dedicated funding is long overdue.

Mr. Womack said the Government Reform Committee of the House approved the legislation on October 20. He said the latest version of the legislation differs from the original in a few key ways, including the requirement for four new federally appointed members to the WMATA board. The original bill only required two federally appointed members. In addition, Mr. Womack said that the latest version of the bill essentially removed prohibitions on the disposition of WMATA property near the Vienna Metro station. Preceding that change, WMATA agreed to hold a public hearing to allow residents to voice their views on the proposed development at the rail station. The restriction on the Takoma Park rail station development proposal – on property within the District of Columbia – remains in the legislation, as does the restriction on property at Largo.

CAC members expressed general support for Congressman Davis' effort to obtain more funding for Metro.

Questions and comments included the following:

- ***Requirements regarding dedicated funding sources.*** The legislation, as currently drafted, would require that all state/local contributions to WMATA come exclusively from dedicated funding sources. This restriction would not only apply to the state match for federal funding, but to all state/local contributions. State and local leaders have indicated that this restriction could seriously harm the Metro system. A CAC member noted that if the system is going to rely upon dedicated sources, then the region must be certain these dedicated sources are enough.

Mr. Womack indicated that Congressman Davis has been motivated by the “bottom-line” need to get dedicated funding for Metro. He said the Congressman has asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to provide advice on whether and how much operating and capital expenses should be derived from dedicated sources.

Mr. Womack indicated the bill’s current requirement that all state/local contributions must be from dedicated sources was likely to be modified. Ultimately, he said, the legislation will probably specify percentages of operating and capital budgets that would need to be covered by dedicated funding sources.

He also noted that the definition of “dedicated source of funding” was not quite clear. For example, he said he would soon be having a meeting with the Maryland Department of Transportation to discuss whether or not the state’s transportation trust fund should be considered “dedicated.”

Mr. Womack emphasized that WMATA’s funding needs far exceed the \$3 billion that would be provided under Congressman Davis’ bill.

- ***New WMATA board members.*** Members asked who in the federal government would be responsible for appointing the new board members. Mr. Womack said that the Government Services Administration (GSA) administrator would be responsible. He said Congressman Davis wants this board expansion to be viewed as a “workforce issue,” i.e., the reason to expand the board to include federal appointees was because the federal workforce has become so reliant upon the Metro system.

CAC Chairman Dennis Jaffe emphasized that all Metro board members should be required to be riders of the system, but deferred on the precise definition of “regular.”

- ***Potential tax sources.*** Members discussed potential additional funding sources for WMATA, including cigarette, alcohol, parking and gasoline taxes, or a withholding provision on federal income for people living in the Washington region.
- ***What can we do?*** Members asked what they can do to support the legislation. Mr. Womack answered that members should lobby legislators in their jurisdictions to support approval of a dedicated funding source.
- ***Prospects for passage related to local action?*** A member asked about the likelihood of congressional approval of the legislation, as a factor that would influence whether local legislators are willing to commit themselves in support of adding a tax on their constituents. Mr. Womack stated this was a sensitive political issue and that a number of key actions must be achieved to make these efforts successful.

Discussion on the Need for a Full-Time Pedestrian/Bicycle Coordinator at WMATA

Some members have recently expressed support for proposals to create a pedestrian and bicycle access coordinator position at WMATA. This person would be charged with

increasing access to Metro by foot and by bicycle. The CAC discussed the purpose and need for such a position.

Committee members seemed to agree that such a position at WMATA could be valuable. Some members also asked if there were a way to quantify the number of people currently using bicycles – and prospectively using bicycles – who might be expected to benefit from improving such access.

The committee decided to continue this discussion at our December meeting.

Briefing and Discussion on Improvements in the Long-Range Plan Process for 2006

Jill Locantore briefed the committee on planned improvements in public information on the Constrained Long-Range Plan. She presented a draft CLRP homepage that will provide easily accessible information on the plan. She also handed out a draft brochure on the CLRP that provides basic information on the contents and analysis of the plan. This brochure will be developed for distribution in the spring at the time that projects are submitted and approved for conformity analysis.

These improvements are being made partly in response to draft recommendations made by the CAC's Working Group on CLRP/TIP Information and Analysis. CAC members expressed interest in monitoring these ongoing improvements.

Chairman Dennis Jaffe emphasized the importance of supporting adequate communications with citizens by the jurisdictions on proposed projects. **He said it's critical to provide enough digestible information, to enough citizens, enough times, and far enough in advance of local decision-making for the communication to be meaningful.**

Outreach Forum

The CAC will hold its next outreach meeting on the evening of November 16 in Takoma Park, Maryland. The meeting continues our series "What if the Washington Region Grew Differently?" which focuses on the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. TPB Vice Chairman Michael Knapp will moderate the session and Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter will offer introductory remarks.

Other Business

The committee agreed to have a briefing at a future meeting on high occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes. Committee members also suggested that future agenda items include the Northern Virginia long-range transportation plan update and a briefing on traffic accidents.

ATTENDANCE
CAC Meeting, November 14, 2005

Members in attendance

1. Dennis Jaffe, Chair, DC
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
4. Stephen Caflisch, MD
5. Stephen Cerny, Vice Chair, VA
6. Elvin Crespo, MD
7. Don Edwards, DC
8. Jim Larsen, VA
9. Grace Malakoff, DC
10. Allen Muchnick, VA
11. Lee Schoenecker, DC
12. Emmet Tydings, Vice Chair, MD

Members not in attendance

1. Stewart Schwartz, VA
2. Harold Foster, DC

Alternates in attendance

Robin Marlin, DC

Staff/Others

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
Jill Locantore, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB
Glen Harvie