

**TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
2008 End-of-the-Year Report
Larry Martin, 2008 CAC Chair**

January 28, 2009

The Year 2008 was a productive one for the TPB CAC. If I were to highlight the single message with greatest consensus from the 2008 CAC it would be our strong recommendation that the TPB exercise more leadership in our region's transportation planning.

I recognize that each TPB member must balance their commitment to the TPB with numerous other important public duties. However, there is an extraordinarily capable TPB technical staff that is fully able to advance transportation planning in our region to another level of sophistication and accomplishment with your active vision and leadership. I challenge you to use and direct the staff to ramp-up the TPB's active role in shaping our transportation future. The CAC has championed the Scenario Study as a vehicle to inform the TPB's planning process by examining likely outcomes of various transportation strategies. The Scenario Study activities are as useful as you make them. This report summarizes key points of interest and activities of the CAC in the past calendar year.

- **Continued Involvement with the TPB Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study**

As the most data-rich and rigorously designed vehicle for comprehensive regional discussion of land-use and transportation issues, the TPB Scenario Study was the focal point of the CAC's interest and involvement in 2008. At the beginning of the year, the TPB Scenario Study Task Force invited two CAC representatives to serve on the Task Force, which has met regularly since the Fall of 2007 to work on development of new scenarios and other related topics. Larry Martin and Emmet Tydings served in this capacity during 2008, attending Task Force meetings, providing input, and updating the Committee on progress with the study.

The CAC also developed and in September conveyed to the Task Force and the TPB – as a whole – a set of recommendations regarding development of new scenarios. In addition to regular briefings by TPB staff about the Scenario Study, a working group of the CAC met with key staff to get more background about scenario analysis, past public input on the scenarios, and plans for new scenarios before developing the recommendations. The full memorandum, dated September 17, 2008, is attached.

The CAC's latest recommendations regarding the scenario study were well received and helped crystallize consensus among the Task Force and staff about how to proceed in developing new scenarios. The Committee could not help but take note, however, of recent TPB discussion about the proposed federal stimulus package and possible

inclusion of funding for transportation projects, and draw connections between this discussion and the CAC's recommendations for the Scenario Study, especially the sixth and final recommendation:

“Develop the Scenario Study process to support creation of a Financially Unconstrained Transportation Plan of regionally prioritized projects for consideration.”

At the December 17, 2008 TPB meeting, members discussed the possibility that federal stimulus dollars may not be set aside for either [1] the most appropriate viable projects or [2] projects that are among the highest regional priorities; but instead may go toward projects on outdated lists of state-level priorities that may not necessarily reflect nor complement the TPB's regional vision.

Within this context, one TPB member stated that he was “concerned that this region speak as a region in terms of setting priorities and giving guidance as to how this money ought best to be spent for the benefit of the people in this region.”

Another TPB member said, “We are not really prepared to put the regional projects on the table that we would love to have in our region if we could fund them.”

As such, the CAC would like to take this opportunity in its end-of-the-year report to reiterate its desire for the TPB to develop an Unconstrained Plan or some other systematic way of integrating regional prioritization into the planning process. The CAC requested information from staff earlier this year on practices by other MPOs in unconstrained planning or regional prioritization, and we believe that this region could take further steps in this direction be it through results of the Scenario Study or some other process. It is most unfortunate that the National Capitol Region is not better prepared to systematically target any presently available or future stimulus funds to best use.

- **Other CAC Business in 2008**

Energy and Climate Change

The CAC made it a priority in 2008 to discuss and work to promote regional strategies for reducing the energy needs of the transportation sector along with the harmful byproducts of energy consumption such as CO₂ emissions. The Committee heard presentations by COG and TPB staff about analyses and goal-setting by the COG Climate Change Steering Committee, and how these goals would be integrated into TPB scenario work through the “What Would It Take?” Scenario. The CAC was also briefed on California SB 375, which links regional transportation planning with climate change goals. The increased attention being paid to energy use and climate change presents challenges and opportunities for the TPB. The CAC hopes to play a continued role in encouraging the Board to address these issues through regional discussion and action. In

this regard, CAC recommendations can be linked to the “What Would It Take?” Scenario Study.

Federal Surface Transportation Program Authorization and the Stimulus Package

As previously mentioned, the Committee views discussions about proposed stimulus money funding for transportation projects as exposing a need for [1] regional unconstrained planning; and, [2] project prioritization at the regional level. In addition, both the stimulus package and the larger discussion of federal transportation funding authorization raise the question of whether MPOs should have greater discretion over transportation spending within the metropolitan area, as opposed to the state DOTs. The CAC found it interesting to discuss the possibility of changes to the distribution of transportation funding in the coming years, and hopes that this will allow the TPB to move further toward implementing its vision for the region. The CAC found it interesting to discuss the possibility of changes to the distribution of transportation funding in the coming years, and hopes that this will allow the TPB to move further toward implementing its vision for the region.

The TPB Vision

In 2008, the 10th anniversary of the TPB Vision, the CAC took advantage of an opportunity to revisit the eight broad goals and principles laid out in this policy document that was designed to guide the region’s transportation investments into the 21st century. In this regard, the goal of the CAC was to address the extent to which the CLRP is (or is not) linked to the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies delineated in the TPB Vision that was unanimously approved by the TPB after an extensive public outreach effort that lasted three years. As a result of this discussion, the CAC determined that the process for developing the new scenarios for study by the TPB should be more clearly grounded in the Vision. This CAC finding was incorporated into the recommendations memorandum conveyed to the TPB and the Scenario Study Task Force in September.

Dealing with Externalities: Gas Prices, BRAC, and Emergency Management

In addition to the influence that climate change discussions have had and will have on transportation, CAC members also wanted to discuss how the TPB and its members could work together to deal with other forces affecting travel conditions in the region. Members heard presentations on and discussed regional land-use changes and consequent effects resulting from the most recent round of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment process scheduled for implementation in calendar year 2009.

The CAC also sought more detailed information about the workings of the TPB’s Travel Demand Model, especially how it reflects changes in travel patterns due to gas prices and modal shifts to transit, bicycling, and walking. In addition, members wanted to receive up-to-date briefings on regional emergency operations and incident management plans – particularly as those plans impacted or influenced decisions regarding public health and safety should a catastrophic incident occur within the region that required mass

evacuations along major roadways to nearby jurisdictions or in-place sheltering in impacted communities. Although addressed, the CAC was largely unable to provide the detail of analysis for these issues that many members sought.

Transportation Innovations and Alternative Modes

CAC members consistently have wished to explore alternative modes of transportation and new technologies, such as value-priced lanes and various forms of transit that are lacking in the region, including bus rapid transit (BRT), monorail, and intercity rail. No CAC members elected to lead subcommittees dedicated to extensive explorations of these alternatives; however, the CAC hopes to remain diligent in ensuring that transportation planners in the region do not fail to consider the relative strengths and benefits of this viable, alternative, strategies.

Priority Sub-Lists

Over the course of the year, the CAC was also briefed on the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Project List and the Regional Bus Priority Project List. The CAC supports implementation of the projects on these lists, and generally supports the concept of such regional prioritization applied to the entire CLRP and TIP as opposed to these specialized modal lists. The CAC hopes to strengthen its relationships with the TPB subcommittees that generate these lists, and explore the possibility of the TPB adopting a region-wide “Complete Streets” policy that would commit the region’s jurisdictions and implementing agencies to multi-modal accommodation on new or reconstructed streets.

Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program

The CAC has strongly supported the TLC Program since the inception of this initiative, and continues to see benefits to this program in promoting integration between land-use and transportation planning at the local level. At several stages since the TLC Program’s inception, including in 2008, the CAC has promoted strengthening the program by committing more resources to TLC technical assistance projects and potentially funding capital improvements that arise from TLC studies.

Public Participation

The CAC has been closely involved in the evolution of the TIP Forums, which began in 2007 and serve to provide more information to the public about transportation projects in the regional plans. The Committee is pleased to see staff move to a cycle of two forums per year, with one in the fall focusing on how to get involved with project prioritization at the local and state level, and another in the spring detailing the projects in that year’s TIP and CLRP with relevant analysis.

The Committee was also involved in the development of the Public Participation Program for FY 2009, which details staff activities and goals related to public involvement. CAC members also encouraged staff to explore avenues for remote participation in CAC

meetings and holding outreach meetings in jurisdictions around the region, to encourage participation by interested parties in outer jurisdictions.

The Committee passed a resolution asking for at least two CAC meetings (one in Virginia and one in Maryland, respectively) in calendar year 2009. It was further agreed that meeting modalities inclusive of but not limited to teleconferencing, videoconferencing, etc., were among the viable meeting strategy options to be explored and agreed to by the full CAC membership—particularly in those instances where the appropriate conferencing sites were either too remote and/or road or weather conditions did not permit full CAC attendance. Roles and responsibilities of host jurisdictions at CAC meetings not held at COG headquarters related to meeting planning and coordination with the CAC Chair, COG support staff, and membership will be further discussed during subsequent CAC meetings. The Chair recommended that a workgroup be convened to address available “win-win” options for off-site CAC meetings in 2009.