

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee January 19, 2005 Dennis Jaffe, 2004 CAC Chair

The CAC held its regular monthly meeting on January 13. Because the 2005 committee has not yet been appointed, the 2004 members convened for this meeting. The committee discussed the recent blue ribbon panel report on funding for Metro and received a briefing from the newly formed organization MetroRiders.org.

Briefing on MetroRiders.org

Kevin Moore, principal founder of MetroRiders.org, briefed the committee on the new, non-profit organization's efforts to organize mass transit users to press for dependable, quality Metro service levels, additional rail and bus capacity to meet increased demand, and for better coordination with other transit systems serving the region.

Mr. Moore said the organization's major priority for the next six months is to support funding for Metro's 2006 budget without additional fare increases. He said they also are seeking funding to support their advocacy and education work. He said they supported the recent Metro accountability measures that were recommended by the Sierra Club.

Discussion of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Metro Funding

The committee discussed the recent report issued by the blue ribbon panel on Metro funding that was sponsored by the Council of Governments, the Board of Trade and the Federal City Council.

For background, the committee heard about the study from a panel of three speakers:

- Scott Kubly – Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA);
- Cheryl Cort – Washington Regional Network (WRN) for Livable Communities; and
- Kevin Moore – MetroRiders.org

Scott Kubly of the WMATA staff put the study into the context of WMATA's Capital Improvement Program and the recent infusion of funding for the Metro Matters program. He said the system continues to face major long-term shortfalls.

He said the blue ribbon panel's recommendations could be broken down into three main points:

- Metro riders should continue to pay approximately the same share of costs; the system currently has a 55-60 percent cost recovery rate.

- The solution to the system's continuing shortfall should be regional.
- Although the report recommended an increase in the sales tax, the blue ribbon panel also indicated that it would not necessarily be opposed to other mechanisms.

Mr. Kubly said that WMATA staff believes the advocacy for new revenue sources would be more effective coming from outside of WMATA. He said they believe the advocacy needs to be broad-based, including environmental, business, civic, and other constituencies.

Cheryl Cort of the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities made several points:

- The recommendations of the panel seemed to be "dead on arrival." The press conference announcing the panel's recommendations did not include representation from the elected officials who originally called for the study. It will be difficult to achieve the political will necessary in each jurisdiction for the revenue increases. The challenges in each jurisdiction are different.
- The sales tax is highly regressive. Other mechanisms are preferable, especially increased fees at Metro parking or more broadly, the enactment of a region-wide fee on free commuter parking.
- Environmental groups should have been included on the blue ribbon panel.

Finally, **Kevin Moore** said that MetroRiders.org believes that regardless of the mechanism used to raise revenues, it is imperative that action be taken.

CAC member questions and comments included the following:

- **How much time** does the system have before it really breaks down? Mr. Kubly answered that the six-year Capital Improvement Plan approval bought 3-4 years before the system again faces a crisis. He said that no funding agreement is in place beyond 2010.
- Can **homeland security** concerns be used to argue for additional federal funding? The speakers said that WMATA is still waiting for \$143 million in federal funding for increased security that was part of the Metro Matters program.
- What efforts have been made to **improve efficiency**? Mr. Kubly said that \$80-90 million had recently been cut as part of efficiency improvements.
- Will **new technology** be part of the improvements for Metro? Speakers indicated that the funding needs examined by the blue ribbon panel largely relate to preserving and maintaining the existing system, and accommodating new riders. But they did mention that WMATA is planning bus rapid transit (BRT) services and improved real-time information.

- Have ***fees on free parking*** been tried elsewhere in the country? Ms. Cort said she was not aware of such a program being implemented elsewhere. She said that the establishment of such a program in D.C. would require an inventory of parking because this information is not typically included in tax assessments.
- Is the ***allocation formula*** for Metro up for discussion or renegotiation? Ron Kirby, Director of COG's Department of Transportation Planning, said the formula had not been directly addressed in the panel's recommendations. He said this is a question of continuing political sensitivity.
- A member expressed concern that a barebones funding solution would just focus on the urgent needs of the rail system, and feared that the ***bus system could be left by the wayside***.
- Finally, some CAC members expressed concern about the panel's recommendation regarding ***MetroAccess paratransit services***. The report stated that "the needs of this service should be met from other than transportation system revenues." Some members said they believed this language unfairly segregated paratransit services and could potentially penalize people with disabilities. Other CAC said they had mixed feelings. Committee members decided to more fully discuss this issue at the February meeting. Members said they were particularly interested in learning about the position of the TPB's Access for All Advisory Committee.

Other Business

- ***Timely CAC appointments.*** The committee discussed the importance of having the 2005 CAC appointed in time for the February CAC meeting.
- ***Future meeting topics: Committee members suggested the following***
 - Briefing on the status of the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study, especially the development of transportation scenarios.
 - Discuss and plan the 2005 outreach meetings, including continued outreach on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. The PowerPoint presentation used for the outreach meetings in December will be modified for the February CAC meeting.

ATTENDANCE
CAC Meeting, January 13, 2005

Members in Attendance

1. Dennis Jaffe, Chair, DC
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
4. Steve Caflisch, MD
5. Steve Cerny, VA
6. Don Edwards, DC
7. Harold Foster, DC
8. Allen Muchnick, Vice Chair, VA
9. Lee Schoenecker, DC
10. Stewart Schwartz, VA
11. Emmet Tydings, Vice Chair, MD
12. Merle Van Horne, DC

Members Not in Attendance

1. Bob Chase, VA
2. Mark Friis, MD
3. Michael LaJuene, VA

Staff/Others

Kevin Moore, Metroriders.org
Scott Kubly, WMATA
Cheryl Cort, WRN
Ron Kirby, COG/DTP
John Swanson, COG/DTP
Harry Sanders
Alexander Radichevich