
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MONTHLY REPORT

May 18, 2022
Ashley Hutson, CAC Chair

The TPB Community Advisory Committee (CAC) met on Thursday, May 12, for an online-only meeting. The committee discussed regional transportation safety planning and received a briefing on public comments on the update of the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan.

Discussion about Regional Safety Planning

Jon Schermann and Janie Nham of the TPB staff provided a comprehensive presentation on safety-related planning activities at the TPB over the past several years. Mr. Schermann described federal requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), including the TPB, to analyze safety trends and establish targets through the Performance-Based Planning and Programming (PBPP) requirements. He said analysis shows that roadway fatalities in the region have started to increase in recent years, which is consistent with national trends. He said a regional safety study was conducted a few years ago that highlighted causes for crashes in our region. In response to this analysis, the TPB established a technical assistance program, called the Regional Roadway Safety Program, to support safety improvements at the local level.

The CAC has long been interested in safety and was vocal in promoting more aggressive action on the part of the TPB, including the establishment of the Regional Roadway Safety Program. Mr. Schermann thanked the CAC for elevating safety as a priority topic over the years.

Member questions and comments included the following:

- **Alarm over the increasing number of fatalities.** CAC members expressed concern that people, particularly pedestrians, are dying in larger numbers on our roads. They also observed that communities of color and lower-income communities have been particularly hard hit. They noted that numerous jurisdictions in the region have passed Vision Zero-type policies in recent years, and they wondered if there has been a failure to implement improvements associated with these programs.
- **Are vehicle speeds the main problem?** The group discussed the role of vehicle speeds in causing crashes. One member stressed the role that high speeds play in causing fatalities, noting that too often our roads are designed to maximize vehicle throughput instead of safety. In contrast, another member said that speed was not the only contributing factor. They noted that the rate of incidents in D.C. is also increasing, although high speeds are not particularly high in more urban places.
- **National problem versus regional problem?** Some members noted that the increase in fatalities is occurring nationwide, and in fact this is not necessarily a local or regional problem. One member suggested that because this trend is happening at the national level solutions may be outside the purview of the TPB. Other members maintained, however, that it is important to try to deal with these problems at the local and regional level.
- **We should learn from international examples.** Members suggested that the TPB should learn from international examples and should identify whether longer-term solutions might be

implemented, including land-use and community design changes that would create safer streets and roads.

- ***It's important to understand the psychology of dangerous behavior.*** Members discussed the phenomenon of road rage, which can be linked to variety of factors. One member said that the stresses of daily living, including issues in some communities related to poverty, could be a major contributor to dangerous driving. Ms. Nham of TPB staff agreed that it is important to understand the psychology behind behaviors in order to try to implement behavior change. For example, why don't people wear safety belts? Why do they run red lights?
- ***Technology can offer safety benefits.*** A member noted that despite negative recent stories about autonomous vehicles, she believed that full implementation of driverless cars could ultimately save many lives. She said a variety of technological solutions should be explored because there is no single solution to our roadway safety problems.

Briefing on Visualize 2045 Public Comments

John Swanson of TPB staff provided a review of input received during the final public comment period, which was conducted between April 1 and May 1, for the update of the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation. He said the TPB had received 518 comments. The majority of the messages expressed concern about big-picture issues, including support/opposition to highway expansion, desire for actions to stop climate change, and support for investments in sustainable, walkable communities. A large number of comments were specifically focused on MDOT's "Op Lanes" projects to widen I-270 and the Beltway between the American Legion Bridge and I-270.

CAC comments and questions included the following:

- ***The use of "equity" as a point of concern.*** A member highlighted that the public comments used concerns about equity to justify both pro-road and anti-road perspectives. In addition, she suggested that equitable treatment may be different in outer jurisdictions where driving is more essential than it is in the core.
- ***Importance of interstate coordination.*** A member noted that in order for longer-distance transit services on the Beltway to be reliable and successful, congestion between Maryland and Virginia on either side of the American Legion Bridge must be reduced. He called for greater interstate coordination.

Other Business

- Lyn Erickson of the TPB staff provided an overview of the upcoming TPB agenda.
- John Swanson said that staff would be organizing a joint meeting in the near future between the TPB officers and CAC members.

Attendees

Members

Ashley Hutson, Chair
Nancy Abeles
Ra Amin
Solomon Haile Jeff Jamawat
Jemila Kia James
Audrey Nwaze
Daniel Papiernik
Jeff Parnes
Lorena Rios

Staff

Rachel Beyerle
Lyn Erickson
Janie Nham
Jon Schermann
John Swanson