

**2010 End-of-the-Year Report  
TPB Citizens Advisory Committee**

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2010 CAC Chair  
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The TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee is a diverse group representing citizen transportation interests in D.C., Maryland and Virginia. Although members reflect a range of opinions, we are united in our belief that regional transportation issues have a profound impact on the lives of our communities and therefore, the regional planning process deserves the attention of a wider spectrum of citizens and decision makers throughout the region.

In 2010, our committee continued to focus its attention on ways in which the TPB process can become more meaningful. In particular, this year we intensified our advocacy encouraging the TPB to conduct a long-range planning process that would clearly identify the region's transportation priorities, both funded and unfunded. We are pleased that the TPB has responded positively to our recommendation for the development of a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

**Why do we continue to push for a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan?**

The TPB does not currently have a truly strategic plan that articulates and consistently promotes the Region's transportation priorities. The CAC believes the absence of this wider context represents a critical missing link in our region's planning process, which will assume more significance as Congress again debates federal funding for national transportation infrastructure programs.

As a committee charged to promote meaningful public involvement in the regional transportation planning process, the CAC has been trying for the past decade to promote exactly this kind of continual, thorough-going regional discussion of transportation policies, priorities and programs. Unfortunately, there is no structured planning process through which this regional conversation about priorities can occur. Ten years ago, CAC members expected the TPB Scenario Study to eventually evolve into a priorities plan. However, to date the TPB has not identified a systematic method for using its scenario analysis to identify and assert a clear set of regional priorities, or, at a minimum, inaugurate a comprehensive regional debate on those priorities.

We believe a regional priorities plan is essential to carrying out the regional goals of the officially endorsed TPB *Vision* and COG's *Region Forward*. A priorities plan would provide a method for developing strategies that best lead to fulfilling that vision of an efficient, rational and fair regional transportation system. The planning process will also be a tool for responding

to regional grant applications, identifying gaps within the CLRP, and broadening public “literacy” about region-wide strategic transportation issues.

More effective long-range transportation planning will provide a clarity and readiness that will enable the region to take advantage of opportunities and will enhance the public’s belief in the ability of regional leadership to solve our pressing regional transportation problems. We believe the absence of such a priorities plan undermines the public’s willingness to fund transportation improvements.

Our request is not radical or unusual, nor is it unprecedented. In fact, we understand that most other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) across the nation regularly develop long-range plans that incorporate or at least factor in unfunded priorities. They have found such planning to be valuable. We believe the same can and ought to be true of our region.

In this region, we understand that regional planning will inevitably be complex. However, we do not believe it needs to be as complicated and fragmented as it currently is. The planning process can be enhanced and, as we have continually noted, we believe the best way to do that at this time is to develop a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

### **Moving towards a Priorities Plan**

The CAC has been calling for the TPB to develop a priorities plan for the past five years. In 2010, our committee concentrated most of its efforts on pushing harder on this issue, and we are pleased that progress has been made.

At the request of the CAC, the TPB hosted an interactive forum on May 26 called the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities. This event brought together a cross-section of stakeholders, including members of the TPB, the CAC, the Technical Committee, and Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee, to consider the idea of developing a “Regional Priorities Plan” that would serve as a financially-unconstrained regional vision for transportation investment. Participants worked in small groups to answer the overarching question: What would a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan mean? This question was broken into three sub-questions: How do we understand the current process? What are the reasons to change? What are the options for change?

We believe this event generated considerable enthusiasm and specific ideas about how a priorities plan might be developed. The report from the Conversation, including the CAC’s presentation at the event, can be found at: <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/b15YX1xb20100610160043.pdf> (Item 12, June 16, 2010 TPB meeting).

As follow-up to the Conversation event, the TPB voted on July 21 to form a task force to determine the scope and process for developing a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. This task force met in October and December, and is expected to issue its final report in April 2011.

We believe it is vital that the Scoping Task Force seek to generate a sense of interest and enthusiasm on the part of all TPB members and stakeholders about the process for developing the new priorities plan. We hope the task force will clearly define the need for a priorities plan, the challenges in developing one, the risks associated with not developing one, the differences between this plan and the CLRP, and the tools and process for developing a priorities plan.

We recommend that the scope of any priorities plan take into account the overall 2050 population and job forecasts, multimodal transportation options (integrated as regional systems), and land-use planning with an articulation of activity centers to encourage transit-oriented development. Such a scope would represent our best regional thinking, but would not dictate decisions to any jurisdiction. Its value would lie in advancing an approach against which we can evaluate our respective jurisdictions' plans and budgeted strategies.

### **Other activities in 2010**

The committee conducted a number of other activities in 2010, some of which are summarized below:

- ***Federal Certification Review.*** The CAC's April meeting included an extensive discussion with representatives of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration who were conducting the triennial federal review of the TPB process. Much of the discussion at this meeting focused on the difficulty of getting the public interested in regional-level planning because the process, including the development of the CLRP, is complex and abstract. We believe that in some part, the abstract nature of the CLRP and TIP could be reduced (and public interest increased) if we had a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.
- ***Public Forum on the CLRP/ TIP.*** The CAC hosted a public forum in October on the CLRP and TIP that emphasized the new financial forecasts for the CLRP, which were sobering as usual. It is worth noting that the presenter at this event spoke about unfunded needs in aggregate although we do not have a regional priorities plan that actually spells out those needs.
- ***HUD grant application.*** The CAC in July discussed COG's application for a grant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a regional plan for sustainable development. Although HUD ultimately did not fund the grant application, CAC members were encouraged by the potential commonalities that might exist between COG's approach to long-range planning (especially from the land-use perspective) and the components that would be required for a TPB Priorities Plan.

- **WMATA issues:**

- **WMATA's Regional Transit System Plan.** In November, WMATA staff briefed the CAC on the process for developing their new long-range plan. The committee invited WMATA to make this presentation because of potential linkages with the future TPB's Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. As WMATA pursues this planning effort, the CAC hopes it will be coordinated with the development of the TPB's Priorities Plan.
- **Communications with the Riders Advisory Council (RAC).** The CAC in July invited the RAC officers to speak to the committee about common interests.
- **Discussion on WMATA governance.** Throughout the year, the CAC monitored studies on WMATA governance that have been conducted by both the RAC and by a joint task force of COG and the Greater Washington Board of Trade. Without endorsing specific steps or recommendations, CAC members expressed broad support for the current efforts to improve WMATA governance. The committee believes that changes are clearly warranted. One member, Harold Foster, independently produced a document comparing the two reports on WMATA governance, which can be found at the CAC webpage: [www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/cac](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/cac).

- **Other updates.** The committee received updates on a number of TPB activities, including the regional Bike/Ped Plan and the CLRP Aspirations Scenario.

### **Closing message from the CAC Chair**

It has been an honor and a pleasure to have served as CAC chair in 2010. This year, the committee demonstrated a level of engagement that I believe is quite impressive for a group of volunteers. I am particularly pleased that the committee included a number of new members who brought fresh energy and ideas, as well as long-time members who are well-versed in the responsibilities and experiences of the TPB.

I would also like to thank the members of the TPB and their staff. Throughout the year, and particularly during the Conversation event in May, the members of the CAC were pleased that our opinions were heard and respected. In the years ahead, I look forward to continuing the work that we have initiated together.