

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
September 21, 2011
Zach Dobelbower, 2011 CAC Chair

The CAC meeting on September 15 included a briefing on the recommendations of the WMATA Governance Work Group (GWG) and the public comments that have been received, and a discussion of the TPB's proposed public involvement activities for FY 2012.

Briefing on “Transforming Governance of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority: Phase 1 Recommendations” Report by the Governance Work Group (GWG) Appointed by the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the Mayor of the District of Columbia

Bruce Gartner, Director of Policy and Government Affairs at the Maryland Department of Transportation, briefed the CAC on the Phase 1 recommendations of the WMATA Governance Work Group (GWG) report. Mr. Gartner was joined by Kristin Weiss (also of MDOT) and Joe Swartz, of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). David Alpert, chair of the WMATA Riders Advisory Council's Governance Committee provided a summary of the RAC's feedback to the Phase 1 recommendations.

Mr. Gartner explained that Phase 1 recommendations of the GWG focused on improving: leadership; regional, high-level policy focus; accountability; and, transparency. Mr. Gartner discussed in greater detail the main recommendations, which included:

- Establishing Board member term limits
- Allowing multiple-year Board chair terms
- Setting minimum experience qualifications for Board members and setting system ridership and meeting attendance requirements
- Formalizing an annual review of the overall composition of Board membership
- Shifting the Board toward having a more high-level policy and regional focus
- Reducing the frequency of Board meetings
- Publicly disclosing Board member compensation
- Enhancing oversight authority of the Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC)
- Providing an Orientation Program for jurisdictional staff and other key stakeholders
- Reviewing and improving public input in the Board decision-making process
- Limiting the use of closed-door executive sessions by the Board

Mr. Gartner also described Phase 2 recommendations, which focus on drafting and advocating for legislation that was recommended in Phase 1, in addition to resolving any open questions that remain. Mr. Gartner highlighted the role of Board alternates, the size of the Board, and the appropriate use of the jurisdictional veto as unresolved issues that still need to be addressed in Phase 2.

Mr. Alpert summarized the comments provided by the WMATA Riders Advisory Council (RAC) during the public comment period for the Phase 1 recommendations. The RAC comments affirmed many of the GWG's findings, especially service ridership and meeting attendance requirements for Board members, and also stressed the importance of the timing of public involvement and input during the Board's decision-making process as well as the need to be careful in defining "experience" in recruiting board members with appropriate experience. The RAC was also concerned about term-limiting especially valuable or effective Board members.

In general, the CAC was supportive of the GWG findings, but members highlighted a few main concerns or recommendations moving forward, such as:

- The CAC can provide feedback with regard to the GWG recommendation for the Board to empower the CEO to establish appropriate public and stakeholder involvement processes. The CAC sees qualitative information gained from public input as being essential to good policy development and sound decision-making.
- Reports of Board members' system ridership should show which routes Board members rode so as to provide the public with a better idea of what parts of the system had been observed.
- A more formal system for use of the jurisdictional veto should be established, and Board alternates should not have voting authority on standing Board committees.
- The three state DOT directors should meet with the WMATA Board once a year to maintain a good working relationship and ensure that the jurisdictions and WMATA are generally on the same page.
- Local residents should have a more direct voice in Board actions via their elected officials. Accordingly, Board members representing Virginia jurisdictions should be elected officials since Virginia's share of WMATA funding comes from local jurisdictions.
- Board members should have appropriate "experience" and diverse perspectives. One suggestion, in particular, was that one seat on the Board should be reserved for someone with a disability.

Discussion on FY2012 Public Involvement Activities

Mr. Swanson of the TPB staff briefed the committee on new and continuing public involvement activities that in July were incorporated as amendments into the TPB's FY2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). He noted that a number of new activities will be programmed as part of the development of the TPB Priorities Plan. New activities are also being pursued in response to the Federal Certification Review that was released earlier this year.

CAC members expressed particular interest in the following new activities:

- ***Clearinghouse on public involvement activities of the TPB's member jurisdictions.*** CAC members were enthusiastic about plans to develop an online clearinghouse with information on public involvement activities among member jurisdictions. This clearinghouse will provide an explanation of how decisions are made at the state, local and regional and will provide information and links regarding various planning activities that effect the decisions that are reflected in the Constrained Long-Range Plan. CAC member felt this kind of clearinghouse was a missing link in current information sources and it was sorely needed.
- ***Strategically plan outreach for the Priorities Plan.*** The committee discussed the need to develop a strategic plan for outreach as part of the priorities plan. As a first step, Mr. Kirby suggested that public input should be sought for the identification of the key strategies and indicators that will underlie the new plan.
- ***Webcasts of TPB meetings.*** Members also supported plans to make webcasts or at least recordings of the TPB meetings available on the web. They also suggested setting up an I-Tunes channel.
- ***Focus on cross-jurisdictional concerns.*** The TPB has a unique role as a regional agency, and should especially focus on sharing information about projects and issues that cross jurisdictional borders.
- ***Targeting under-served populations.*** Special efforts should be taken to ensure input from groups that have been traditionally been left out of the decision-making process.
- ***Sharing data about regional data and regional transportation planning.*** Members were supportive of plans to provide citizen-friendly information about data and planning activities.
- ***Student membership on the CAC.*** Support was expressed for plans to reserve a seat for a student representative on the CAC.

Other Business

- Regarding the upcoming TPB agenda, CAC members had the following comments:
 - ***Link future TIGER or other federal funding to the Priorities Plan.*** Regarding the TIGER grant application, a member reiterated the point that future applications of this kind will hopefully be easier once the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is completed or at least underway.
 - ***Consider including energy costs in the study of housing and transportation costs.*** Regarding the study by the D.C. Office of Planning that analyzed

combined housing and transportation costs, a member suggested that future research might also include costs associated with household energy consumption.

- ***Regional Complete Streets Policy.*** In response to a CAC recommendation, the TPB in June voted to direct staff to proceed with the development of a regional complete streets policy. The CAC looks forward to receiving a briefing on the draft policy in October or November after it has been reviewed by other key committees of the TPB, including the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, the Access for All Advisory Committee, and the Regional Bus Subcommittee.

A CAC member suggested that COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) should also be asked to review the draft regional policy because implementation of complete streets policies at the local level will involve land-use considerations.

ATTENDANCE

CAC Meeting, September 15, 2011

Members Present

1. Zach Dobelbower (DC), Chair
2. Harold Foster (DC)
3. Kelby Funn (MD)
4. Stephen McCoy (DC)
5. Madeline McDuffy (VA)
6. Allen Muchnick (VA)
7. Fred Walker (VA)
8. Faith Wheeler (DC)
9. Brian Winterhalter (VA)

Members Not Present

1. Maureen Budetti (VA)
2. Bill Easter (MD)
3. Howard Levine (MD)
4. Larry Martin (DC)
5. Tina Slater (MD)
6. Emmet Tydings (MD)

Alternates Present

- Mauricio Hernandez (DC)
- Rob Mandle (DC)

Staff and Guests

- Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB staff
- Ben Hampton, COG/TPB staff
- Bruce Gartner, MDOT
- Kristin Weiss, MDOT
- Joe Swartz, VDOT
- David Alpert, WMATA Riders Advisory Council
- Bill Orleans, citizen