

**TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
2012 End-of-Year Report**

Tina Slater, 2012 CAC Chair

For the last 20 years, the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee has been providing region-oriented, citizen advice to the TPB and has been promoting public involvement in the regional transportation planning process. As required by the TPB's Participation Plan, this report summarizes the committee's activities and interests in 2012.

Continued Interest in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP)

As a committee with a mission to promote public involvement, the CAC has been working for more than two decades to promote a regional discussion of transportation priorities. The committee long ago realized that the TPB's current planning process provides very limited opportunities for public involvement because most of the decisions reflected in the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) are made at the state and local levels, not the regional level. In order to provide an enhanced forum for meaningful regional planning and public involvement, the CAC since 2006 has sought the development of a regional priorities plan by the TPB.

The committee was pleased that the TPB finally initiated the development of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) in 2011. We are pleased that progress appears to have been made on the RTPP in 2012 and we were impressed with information we received about the focus group that was conducted on June 2.

However, the committee has also has some serious concerns regarding the RTPP. In recent months, we have not received much information about the plan and many members are confused about the direction it has taken.

To begin, we are concerned about the inclusiveness of the planning process. We had hoped the RTPP development would engage TPB stakeholders and leaders in a constructive and creative dialogue about our region's future. To date, few opportunities for such exchange have occurred. In April, the CAC passed a resolution (included as Attachment A) calling upon the TPB to either reestablish the priorities plan scoping task force or establish a new group to provide regular, substantive input into the development of the RTPP. In responding to our request, Ron Kirby, MWCOG Director of Transportation Planning, said that work sessions on the RTPP would be held prior to TPB meetings and the CAC members would be welcome to attend. We look forward to attending such meetings.

We are also concerned about the role of public involvement. Instead of the "top-down" approach that the plan seems to be taking, we had hoped for more collaborative involvement from a variety of different constituencies throughout the region. Instead, it seems that the RTPP is almost solely focusing on public opinion research through focus groups and surveys using paid participants. While we appreciate the value of controlled opinion research, we believe that public outreach for the RTPP should be much broader.

According to the Draft Interim Report for the RTPP, issued in July of 2012, the TPB staff had planned to conduct a web-based survey of 600 paid participants this past fall. The committee understands that this survey has been delayed. We further understand that in the spring of 2013, the RTPP process was scheduled to conduct additional outreach “during which a number of public outreach tools will be utilized, possibly including a combination of web-based polling, additional deliberative forums, and mobile kiosks throughout the region. The purpose of these efforts would be to inform the selection of priority strategies from a longer list of strategies under discussion.” We hope that all these outreach efforts will still occur, even if delayed.

Finally we are concerned about the final product and the methodology for the plan. Many CAC members had originally hoped the plan would identify priority *projects*. However, we understand now that the plan will instead identify general strategies. We are concerned that many TPB members and other stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of how the final product focused on strategies will look and how it will be useful. Furthermore, the initial “longer list of strategies under discussion” has never first been adequately vetted by either TPB stakeholders or the general public.

Last year we understood that the plan would be grounded in performance analysis and cost/benefit analysis – and while we expressed some concerns about that approach, we were interested to see its application. But more recently it seems that the emphasis on quantitative analysis has been reduced or even eliminated. It is not clear to us why that original proposed approach was altered.

The CAC represents a group with considerable transportation knowledge. We believe we can contribute to steering the RTPP going forward, and ask the TPB for special consideration to solicit our involvement. We look forward to closer involvement in the RTPP planning process in 2013.

Followup on the Regional Complete Streets Policy

In 2011, the CAC passed a resolution recommending that the TPB adopt a regional policy promoting “complete streets.” As stated in the CAC’s original resolution “the region broadly agrees that we need to promote walkable, mixed-use, more compact communities, and give people more options for getting around. These objectives can be supported through a Complete Streets approach to street design, planning, and engineering.”

In March, the CAC provided comments on the TPB’s draft regional policy. Those comments, which are included as Attachment B to this report, provided specific suggestions regarding the draft text and also provided broader recommendations on how a Complete Streets policy might be made more effective.

The CAC was pleased that in May of this year, the TPB approved a Regional Complete Streets Policy. To date, however, the CAC wishes to register some ongoing concerns with the implementation of the documentation and reporting provisions of the policy. Specifically, the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Database has not been updated, as required within 120 days under the Complete Streets Policy.

Further, the Complete Streets Policy states that the forthcoming Regional Information Clearinghouse (now called the Transportation Planning Information Hub for the National Capital Region; see below) will include information on Complete Streets aspects of the state and local projects. However, from the preliminary design of that website, it is clear that it will not provide such detailed information on projects. The CAC suggests that it would be much more effective if each TIP project submission form

and summary included agency project design web page hyperlinks and/or project manager contact information.

The committee will monitor implementation of the policy in 2013.

Endorsement of a Strong Regional Approach for the New Transportation Alternatives Program

Soon after the enactment of the new federal transportation law, MAP-21, the CAC began discussing ways in which the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) could be established in our region. The committee believes this new federal program represents a rare opportunity to strategically improve walking and bicycling [access and mobility] in our region."

In October, the CAC passed a resolution urging the TPB to establish a strong regional program.

"The CAC recommends that the TPB move forward expeditiously to develop a competitive regional program for implementing the new federal Transportation Alternatives Program, using a transparent project selection process and regional project selection criteria."

In encouraging the development of this new program, the CAC made the following points:

- The TPB should use regional criteria for the selection of projects to be funded under the TAP.
- The program should be designed to complement and build upon a number of past and ongoing regional planning activities, including promoting regional activity centers, the TLC Program and COG's Region Forward activities.
- In our multi-state region, the TPB should take care to implement the TAP in a manner that is as unified and "regional" as possible, and not simply three separate programs in D.C., Maryland and Virginia.
- The TPB should consider how the TAP can be relevant to the development of the Regional Priorities Plan.

Providing Input on the Street Smart Campaign

In 2012, the committee sought ways to become more directly involved in the *Street Smart* campaign. The committee believes that campaigns to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, like *Street Smart*, are an essential part of the wider effort to make our streets safe and convenient for all users. In the past years, however, the CAC had concerns about the content and style of the *Street Smart* campaign materials. Further, in past years, the CAC has been briefed on the *Street Smart* campaign materials after they have already been developed, and the committee expressed concern that they had no opportunity to provide real input in the process.

This year, we were pleased to have the opportunity to make our opinions heard during the design process for the new campaign materials. At the committee's request, a member of the CAC is currently participating in *the Street Smart* Advisory Committee meetings. Also, at the CAC's December meeting, representatives from the campaign's new advertising consultants in Austin, Texas presented draft campaign concepts to the committee in a focus group-style session.

Support for TPB Information Improvements

The CAC discussed and supported new improvements in public information, including 1) the forthcoming website called the “Transportation Planning Information Hub for the National Capital Region” and 2) the *TPB Weekly Report*, which was established one year ago. The Hub website is intended to be a one-stop-shop for information on the planning activities of the TPB’s member jurisdictions. The *Weekly Report* is designed to provide brief, timely summaries of TPB research, analysis, outreach and planning.

The CAC is pleased to see the development of these information improvements that help explain the relevance of regional planning in this region, and seek to explain the connections between different levels of planning. We look forward to providing additional comment in 2013.

Suggestion for Future TIP Forums

In June, the CAC hosted a public forum on the draft FY2013-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Under federal law, such a public meeting is required prior to the approval of the TIP.

The CAC appreciated the chance to discuss projects in the TIP and the process for developing for developing this regional six-year program. Members were concerned, however, that information about projects in the TIP, which was provided by the TPB’s member jurisdictions, often seemed inaccurate or inconsistent. In addition, members questioned the timing of the TIP forum, asking whether it might be a more useful session if were conducted at an earlier stage in the TIP development process.

For the future, the CAC suggests that TPB staff might consult with the committee in advance of official outreach activities like the TIP Forum to determine how those events might be more useful for stakeholders and citizens.

Other Briefings and Discussions in 2012

In many ways, the CAC acts as a sort of permanent focus group for the TPB. Our monthly reports describe the comments of individual members that do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee. We believe these comments provide citizen-oriented “food for thought” that regional leaders might consider when reviewing materials before the TPB.

Topics discussed in 2012:

- Analysis of the 2012 Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP)
- Commuter Connections Programs
- Household Travel Survey
- Regional transportation issues related to low-income and minority communities, and people with disabilities
- Regional Activity Centers
- Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program
- Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS)

- COG's Economy Forward Report
- TPB study on the public acceptability of congestion pricing

Celebrating 20 Years

The CAC held its first meeting in December of 1992 and to commemorate that anniversary, we are planning a party in February to which TPB members and past CAC members will be invited. We want to use this event as an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the committee and to look forward to the future. We also want to use our 20th anniversary to celebrate the lives of past CAC members who are no longer with us, including Harold Foster who passed away this past September.

As a group of citizen volunteers, the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee is faced with the formidable task of working to understand, question and comment upon regional-level transportation issues. This is not an easy job, but it is an important one. We look forward to continuing this work in the years ahead.

RESOLUTION

**Of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
Of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)**

**Recommending that the TPB Establish a Working Group to Oversee the
Development of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**

April 12, 2012

As described in the CAC's report to the TPB of April 18, 2012, the CAC has a long-standing interest in the development of a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP). The committee's past recommendations helped to spur the initiation of the RTPP's development, which began in mid-2011 and is slated to be completed in mid-2013. The committee continues to believe that the RTPP is a vital planning activity for the region, but the CAC notes that no working group or task force currently exists to oversee the plan's development.

Considering these factors, the CAC provides the following recommendation:

The TPB should either 1) re-establish the task force that in 2010 and 2011 oversaw the development of the scope and process for the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan (RTPP) or 2) establish some new structure to provide regular and substantive input in the development of the RTPP. The CAC further asks that this oversight group include members of the CAC in its membership.

*Approved unanimously by the TPB CAC
April 12, 2012*

COMMENTS FROM THE TPB CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

**On the Draft Complete Streets Guidance and
Policy Template for the National Capital Region
March 21, 2012**

The following comments represent consensus opinions expressed by CAC members during the committee's meeting on March 15, 2012 and via email exchanges. This document was not formally approved by the committee, although it was circulated for review among CAC members prior to the TPB meeting on March 21.

Background

Last year, the CAC called upon the TPB to develop a Regional Complete Streets Policy. A copy of the committee's original recommendations document is attached. In those recommendations, we noted that "the region broadly agrees that we need to promote walkable, mixed-use, more compact communities, and give people more options for getting around. These objectives can be supported through a Complete Streets approach to street design, planning, and engineering."

The CAC further suggested that such a policy would be a way for the TPB to demonstrate regional leadership. "The TPB needs to put a finer point on its existing policies," the committee argued. "If we believe in *Complete Streets*, we need to say it, clearly. Providing recommended guidelines for different street typologies will further encourage adoption by member jurisdictions that currently don't have complete street policies or standards."

Comments

We are pleased that the TPB responded affirmatively to our recommendation by directing staff in July to develop a regional complete streets policy. As the TPB considers a draft "policy template" for approval, we offer the following comments:

- ***We broadly support the draft and we applaud the elevation of Complete Streets as an issue.*** The Committee is generally supportive of the draft that has been circulated. Furthermore, we appreciate the extensive review and discussion that has informed its development. We believe this process has elevated the importance of a Complete Streets approach in all aspects of regional transportation planning. The new regional policy on Complete Streets will provide accountability in determining whether Complete Streets principles are actually being met.

- **Suggestions regarding the draft text.** The CAC offers the following comments regarding the draft document:
 - Under V.1. (Documentation and Reporting section), we recommend the text specify that the reporting process should begin as soon as possible by compiling a list of jurisdictions that are already in compliance.
 - Under V.1. (Documentation and Reporting section), the text should specify that the report will also document the exemptions to the policy that have been made.
 - Under V.2. (Documentation and Reporting section), we recommend that the document specify that the regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Database should be updated immediately. The committee understands that this database has not been updated since it was first developed two years ago, and so we hope this activity will not be put off.
 - Under V.3. (Documentation and Reporting section), we are concerned about the open-ended nature of the commitment to documenting implementation of the principles in the region’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). We would prefer to see a more explicit description of how this documentation will occur. We suggest the following text: “Modify the TIP submission project sheet to more clearly indicate how projects will accommodate walking, bicycling, and transit use.”
 - Under VI. (Promotion), we suggest the text make explicit that such training will be conducted annually.
 - We suggest that definitions should be provided for the terms “senior manager” and “responsible agency” (1st sentence under “Exemptions”).
 - We suggest that the document make explicit that the TPB’s federal partners who maintain or own transportation facilities in the region, are covered by this policy.
 - Under IV.1. (Inclusions), add "lighting" to the list of components covered by the policy. This is important for safety and also accessibility for users with low vision. We also suggest that “landscaping” be included.

- **General Comments.** The committee members offer the following points for the TPB to consider during discussion of this draft document:
 - **Why a “policy template”** Why is the draft document a “policy template” when the original CAC recommendations called for an actual regional policy. We are somewhat concerned that the word “template” seems to water down our original intent. Instead of a statement of regional policy, the document might be construed only to be a set of suggestions that should be considered at the state or local level.
 - **Importance of intra-agency “champions” for Complete Streets.** CAC members believe it is important that each major agency in the region designate a Complete Streets “champion” in their organization. Such an individual would be responsible for pushing that agency, across silos, to get serious about

implementation. Monitoring and measuring progress would be part of that role. The champions from various agencies could meet at least quarterly to exchange ideas and share best practices.

- ***Importance of community buy-in.*** We believe successful Complete Streets policies will need to address community opposition. As an example, many neighborhoods simply do not want sidewalks. The policy needs to determine how to deal with the general concerns of residents.
- ***A Complete Streets approach requires multimodal planning.*** A Complete Streets approach must be integrated into all levels of current transportation planning practice. In describing this challenge, one CAC member noted that D.C. has separate Master Plans for various transportation modes. A Complete Streets policy would acknowledge the importance of having an overarching approach to transportation throughout an entire jurisdiction.