

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee December 16, 2009 Farrell Keough, CAC Chairman

On Dec 10, the CAC conducted its regular monthly meeting in Alexandria, VA at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. This meeting featured briefings about issues of particular importance to Alexandria and of regional and national significance.

Welcome

Farrell Keough, CAC Chair, welcomed the featured speakers, CAC members, and visitors. John Swanson of the TPB staff explained that the CAC occasionally conducts its meetings out of the COG offices because the committee believes it is important to develop a greater appreciation for the challenges that places like Alexandria face, and how those challenges fit into the broader planning framework in the Washington region.

Mr. Swanson reminded the CAC that the deadline to vote in the current CAC election would be noon on December 11. He also announced that the regular January CAC meeting would feature a briefing on BRAC activities.

Briefing on Transportation Activities in Alexandria

Rich Baier, Director of the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services in the City of Alexandria, provided a briefing on the transportation activities in Alexandria. He explained basic demographics of Alexandria, which currently has approximately 140,000 people. He noted that the city has grown by 10,000 people in the last 10 years and traffic has increased by about 1–1.5% per year. Throughout his briefing, he reinforced the notion of a marriage between transportation and land-use as the key to effective transportation planning. He discussed funding challenges for local transportation, noting that a large percentage of the city's transportation revenues come from urban funds through VDOT, which fluctuate annually. Alexandria therefore lacks consistency in its transportation funding. Shortfalls have affected the city's ability to complete a number of important projects, such as the Potomac Yard Metro station, which would cost \$125–200 million. Mr. Baier also discussed the importance of providing an increased range of transportation options, and cited HOT lanes and Metro capacity issues as phenomena that have pushed people to acknowledge the need for a multi-modal approach to transportation planning and decision-making.

Briefing on High Speed Rail

Lois Walker, immediate Past President of Virginians for High Speed Rail and former member of the Alexandria City Council, provided a briefing on national and regional high speed rail initiatives. She defined high speed rail as fast, frequent, and reliable passenger rail. Ms. Walker mentioned that conventional rail runs at approximately 79 miles per hour (mph) in a mixed-use corridor, whereas high speed rail runs at

approximately 90 mph. She added that regional high speed rail runs at approximately 110 mph in a mixed-use or dedicated corridor, and express high speed rail, as demonstrated in other countries, can run up to 150 mph in a dedicated corridor. Ms. Walker also discussed funding opportunities for high speed rail initiatives, citing federal funding through the American Recover and Reinvestment Act (approximately \$8 billion), the FY2010 Transportation Appropriations legislation (approximately \$2 billion) and potential funding through the federal surface transportation reauthorization (approximately \$50 billion). Ms. Walker also discussed regional high speed rail opportunities, noting a recent CSX grant proposal, and Virginia's location as a place that is connected to both the northeast and southeast rail corridors.

Briefing on Federal Transportation Opportunities

Mariia Zimmerman, Vice President for Policy for Reconnecting America and former Chief of Staff to Congressman Earl Blumenauer, provided a comprehensive overview of the federal transportation decision-making landscape. She discussed several federal initiatives aimed at improving coordination and integration among housing, transportation, and environmental priorities. First, she mentioned the White House Office of Urban Policy, which was created shortly after the start of the Obama Administration. She also described the Federal Livability Initiative, an executive level interagency partnership between the US Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Protection Agency. This initiative aims to integrate priorities of each of these agencies in regional long-range planning processes. In addition, she spoke about the federal TIGER grant, which stems from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as a means to provide funding for comprehensive, integrated projects that promote Federal Livability criteria. Ms. Zimmerman also cited two recent notices of funding availability created through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for proposals for urban circulator projects (\$130 million) and bus and bus facilities (\$150 million) – both of which include Livability factors as major evaluation criteria.

Ms. Zimmerman also provided a briefing on federal legislative activities. She discussed the FY2010 Transportation Appropriations bill, which provides \$150 million to the Department of Housing and Urban Development to create an Office of Sustainable Community Initiatives, which will administer grants consistent with the Livability Initiative cited above. She discussed federal funding challenges for transportation, noting that a federal surface reauthorization bill is one way to address fundamental funding shortfalls. SAFETEA-LU, the current authorizing legislation, provides \$268 billion for federal surface transportation programs. Ms. Zimmerman said that a new bill would require a doubling of this funding amount to maintain and expand existing programs, but there does not currently exist a way to fill this revenue gap. Ms. Zimmerman discussed a growing desire in Congress to comprehensively reform federal transportation legislation, and use interim solutions in the short-term to continue funding for programs beyond December 18th, when the current legislative extension expires. Some of these interim options include providing an additional short-term extension, creating a “Jobs Bill” that ties in transportation legislation as a way to promote a

secondary economic stimulus, or attaching authorizing language to the Defense Appropriations bill. Ms. Zimmerman concluded by mentioning two bills that Congressman Blumenauer recently introduced to the House of Representatives as a way to provide competitive grant funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

ATTENDANCE
CAC Meeting, December 10, 2009

Members in Attendance

Farrell Keough
Maureen Budetti
Bill Klenke
Allen Muchnick
Gail Parker
Rich Parsons
Emmet Tydings

Members Not in Attendance

Harold Foster
Roland Gunn
Bernard Hill
James Larsen
Larry Martin
Gertrude Reeves
John Lynn Shanton
Shirley Williams

Staff/Others

Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB
Darren Smith, COG/TPB
Sarah Crawford, COG/TPB
Deb Kerson Bilek, COG/TPB
Mariia Zimmerman
Jennifer Joy Madden
Dwayne Guthrie
David Kaplan
Ethan Inn
Andrew Aurbach
Ben Cuddy
Anne Haynes
Yvonne Matinyi
Abi Lerner
Rich Baier
Lois Walker