

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee May 19, 2004 Dennis Jaffe, Chair

The TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee held its first outreach meeting of the year on April 28 and its regular monthly meeting on May 13.

Public Forum

"Modern-Day Streetcars: Coming Soon to a Neighborhood Near You?" April 28, 2004, Washington, DC

This CAC public forum featured presentations on the four light rail lines that are being planned for the District of Columbia, with particular emphasis on the Anacostia demonstration line, which is scheduled to be in operation by 2006. Greg Walker of WMATA was the main presenter. DC Councilmember Phil Mendelson and DDOT's Alex Eckmann also spoke. The meeting was held at the Benjamin Orr Elementary School, 2200 Minnesota Ave, SE. Approximately 20 people participated, mainly from neighborhoods east of the Anacostia that are near the school.

A summary of questions and answers from the meeting are attached to this report.

CAC Monthly Meeting May 13, 2004

Presentations at the CAC monthly meeting focused on emergency preparedness and the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.

Emergency Preparedness

David Snyder, chair of the TPB's Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Task Forces, came to the CAC meeting to update the committee on recent developments to improve emergency preparedness. This was the second month in a row that Mr. Snyder has come to the CAC, and the committee truly appreciates his commitment to this issue and to the importance of citizen involvement.

At the last CAC meeting and at the TPB, Mr. Snyder presented options for strengthening regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents. He said that one option would be to establish an umbrella agency like TRANSCOM in New York that would be responsible for this coordination.

However, Mr. Snyder said the agencies in the region had instead decided to establish a series of improvements without setting up a new agency. These improvements will include

technical and operational coordination. Major agencies will assign staff, whose duties will be rotated among agencies, to exclusively monitor road and transit systems and to be ready to initiate and shepherd regional communication and coordination during incidents. Funding for these efforts will be sought through the forthcoming Congressional reauthorization of federal transportation legislation.

Mr. Snyder said the TPB would be asked to endorse these improvements through a resolution at the next TPB meeting. The resolution will call for the improvements to be implemented over the next six months.

Questions and comments from the CAC included:

- What will the TPB be asked to do regarding the institutional structure? Mr. Snyder answered that the TPB will need to set the direction for making these improvements. The agencies will need to implement the improvements— quickly. He said the public, through the CAC, needs to demand accountability.
- Can interim progress reports be provided, prior to the six month deadline, regarding the implementation of the improvements? COG/TPB staffer Andy Meese said he believes the pace for implementing these improvements cannot go much faster at this point.
- What can be done to pressure non-transportation agencies to improve communications and coordination with transportation agencies? COG/TPB staff noted that often the biggest problem is that emergency responders do not notify transportation quickly enough about a problem.

Throughout the discussion with Mr. Snyder, CAC expressed continuing concern about the need to keep the pressure on the TPB and on transportation agencies to quickly implement these improvements.

The CAC unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the TPB to act expeditiously. The resolution is attached to this report.

Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study

Bob Griffiths of the COG/TPB staff briefed the CAC on the current status of the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. The CAC has a long-standing interest in the study, which was initiated, in part, in response to a recommendation by the CAC in 2000. Last year, the “Region Undivided” scenario was added to the study at the recommendation of the CAC. Mr. Griffiths said the first results from the study will be available in July.

CAC member questions and comments included the following:

- Is the study looking at the policies that would be needed to bring about the different scenarios under examination? Mr. Griffiths said that the study is not looking at what policies are needed or how they would be effected. But it is looking at the effects of

major hypothetical shifts in land use and significant new transportation systems/facilities. For example, the study is not looking at what actions would be needed to increase jobs and housing on the eastern side of the region. But it is looking at the effects of such a shift in jobs and housing. CAC members said this distinction might be confusing to the public.

- A member suggested that the study's work group needs to fully appreciate existing pressures for development in the outer suburbs. The study's focus on shifting growth to inner jurisdictions could be perceived as too unrealistic. Mr. Griffith said that the scenarios under examination reflect policies of the TPB leadership. He also said that the scenarios might be considered extreme, but this approach may be the only way to obtain clear results.
- On the issue of HOT lanes, a CAC member suggested that two schools of thought seemed to be developing: people who wanted to build new capacity for HOT lanes and those who wanted to convert existing capacity to HOT lanes. For the study's HOT/HOV lane transportation scenario, the member suggested that both these approaches might be modeled.
- A member said that household shortages in the region could be higher than anticipated in the study. He asked if those numbers would be adjusted. Mr. Griffiths replied that the household growth forecasts would be adjusted during the new update to COG's Cooperative Land Use Forecasts, which will be known as Round 7.

Discussion on CAC Public Outreach

CAC members agreed to conduct three outreach meetings later this year in Maryland, Virginia, and D.C. on the subject of the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.

ATTENDANCE

CAC Monthly Meeting

May 13, 2004

Members in Attendance

1. Dennis Jaffe, DC, Chair
2. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
3. Stephen Caflich, MD
4. Stephen Cerny, VA
5. Don Edwards, DC
6. Harold Foster, DC
7. Mark Friis, MD
8. Michael LaJuene, VA
9. Allen Muchnick, VA
10. Lee Schoenecker, DC
11. Stewart Schwartz, VA
12. Emmet Tydings, MD

13. Merle Van Horne, DC

Members Not in Attendance

1. Ephrem Asebe, MD
2. Bob Chase, VA

Staff/Others Present

Alexander Radichevich
Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
Bob Griffiths, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB

RESOLUTION

Of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

Approved May 13, 2004

Following upon the CAC resolution from April 15, 2004, the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee:

- Reiterates its call for the TPB's member jurisdictions and agencies to act expeditiously to strengthen emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector;
- Supports Resolution TPB R17-2004 to endorse recommended actions to improve regional transportation communications and coordination during incidents;
- Endorses, in particular, the provision in TPB R17-2004 calling for the implementation within six months of technical and operational improvements, duty rotation procedure, funding requirements and schedule for necessary improvements.
- Requests that interim progress reports on the implementation of these improvements be provided at the end of the second and fourth months.
- Asks key decision makers to expand coordination and integration among transportation, public safety and other agencies.

Comments
From the CAC Public Forum on Light Rail in Anacostia
April 28, 2004

Comment: Tracks should not be too close to houses and should minimize noise and vibration impacts on neighborhoods.

Response: The project is being built on an existing commercial rail corridor. These impacts were modeled as a part of the Environmental Assessment. There were no detectable noise or vibration impacts on any housing structures. The new tracks are continuously welded, eliminating the “click-clack” of trains on traditional, segmented tracks. The trains are almost too quiet, creating a safety concern that people may not hear them coming. Other systems have added bells to alert pedestrians and motorists.

Comment: Will Pennsylvania Avenue, NW be re-opened in front of the White House?

Response: There is disagreement between local and federal agencies, and a solution has not been reached at this time.

Comment: What can the District do to combat sprawl in suburban jurisdictions?

Response: By providing better transportation alternatives, the District can proactively compete with those jurisdictions by offering an improved quality of life.

Comment: Does WMATA plan to redistribute the new Metrorail cars recently added to the Red Line?

Response: This issue is being discussed by the WMATA Board and some redistribution will likely occur.

Comment: How fast can the proposed street cars travel?

Response: The new street cars are expected to travel at an average speed of 12 miles per hour, compared to buses that currently travel at an average speed of between 8 and 10 miles per hour.

Comment: Will the street cars cause congestion on Suitland Parkway?

Response: The streetcars will obey the same traffic signals as automobiles and should not block traffic or add to congestion.

Comment: Will the tracks be grade-separated?

Response: In an attempt to keep costs minimized, most track will be at-grade. There will be instances where some tracks may need to be grade-separated.

Comment: Is there a plan to implement street cars on K Street?

Response: Yes, K Street has been identified as a priority corridor.

Comment: How is parking being addressed?

Response: The light-rail system is not predicted to create a significant impact on parking. The system is not a suburb-to-core commuter line, so “park and ride” lots are not expected to be necessary. The impacts on parking will be observed once the system is open and any necessary measures may be implemented at that time.

Comment: What will the hours of service be for the light rail system?

Response: The hours of operation will be similar to the bus system; 5:30 a.m. until midnight.

Comment: Will buffer walls be built to protect neighborhoods from noise?

Response: The engineering phase has not begun yet, and the need for these would not be determined until that phase.

Comment: What is being done to address safety concerns?

Response: DDOT has taken the lead on implementing a number of safety features similar to those introduced in the area around Barry Farms.

Comment: Why does the initial project not go all the way to Minnesota Avenue?

Response: The cost to extend the system that far would be prohibitive at this time.

Comment: What amount of local match is required for funding the project?

Response: The Federal Transit Administration’s New Start program originally provided up to 80% federal funding. Now, due to increasingly competitive applications

from around the country New Start projects are typically funded with about 50% federal funds.

Comment: Will the system be single or double-tracked?

Response: Approximately two-thirds of the system will be single tracked. The remaining one-third will be double-tracked where passing areas are required.

Comment: Given the difficulties that WMATA has experienced with purchasing new Metro Rail cars, what is the likelihood that vehicle production for the new system would be on schedule?

Response: The system would use the same vehicles that are in operation in several other metropolitan areas. The vehicle building facility is already in operation and WMATA would be buying “off the shelf” rather than custom vehicles.

Comment: What will the frequency of service be on the starter line?

Response: The street cars will run on a 15-minute headway during peak hours and a 30-minute headway during non-peak hours.

Comment: What is DDOT’s responsibility under the Clean Air Act Amendments and the Clean Water Act and the funding associated with those requirements?

Response: The District contributes its projects to a regional planning level where those projects are modeled in conjunction with other jurisdictions and a number of emissions mitigation measures. This modeling process determines if the region has achieved “conformity” under an air quality budget. DDOT must also meet all the requirements set forth in the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and similar legislation pertaining specifically to the District of Columbia.

Comment: Is the CSX railway corridor considered a “brownfield” area?

Response: The initial Environmental Assessment did not indicate any significant sources of contamination. The contract for the system includes a complete clean-up of the Right-of-Way property.

Comment: Will the Right-of-Way be cleaned up to Minnesota Avenue?

Response: WMATA intends to acquire the full Right-of-Way to Minnesota Avenue and as part of the contract, will insist on a full clean-up of the property.

Comment: The Anacostia River is severely polluted. No further damage should be caused by construction of this system.

Response: There are no predicted impacts on the Anacostia River.

Comment: Why is such a short system being built that doesn't even take people towards the downtown area?

Response: Most residents in the areas using this are not going downtown. This segment is only the first installment of a much bigger system. It is being built as a demonstration of and enticement for a larger system.

Comment: Economic redevelopment can be spurred by new transit.

Comment: Anything that takes traffic off of the Souza Bridge is welcome.

Comment: As a priority, WMATA needs to work very closely with the community in and around Anacostia. The residents and workers at Bolling Air Force Base should also be considered, but they will have different concerns.

Comment: The community needs to be aware of the inherent advantages of rail technology over buses. People find rail more attractive and easy to use than buses and people can read on rail where it is more difficult to read on the bus. The construction of a rail line represents a significant commitment to economic development in a neighborhood.

Comment: 30 to 40% of people parking at the Anacostia Park and Ride lot are residents of Bolling Air Force Base.

Comment: Is there a plan to remove Barry Farms?

Response: There has been no confirmation of this rumor from any District agency.

Comment: Traffic controls need to be implemented to slow speeds on nearby roads.

Comment: How will people cross Pennsylvania Avenue to reach the station?

Response: This may continue to be an issue until the system is extended north towards Minnesota Avenue. However, people are currently crossing the road to get to the existing bus stop, so it is not impossible.

Comment: Do not exclude the CSX alignment near Minnesota Avenue. This alignment can easily serve that neighborhood and Minnesota Avenue is too narrow at that point to carry street cars.

Response: WMATA is still in the analyzing alternatives and will consider this input.

Comment: Can residents expect the same degree of economic revitalization around this system that occurred around the U Street/Cardozo Metro Station?

Response: The amount of development is hard to predict. The research done to date does not indicate a strong market at this point in time, but that can change. WMATA is working with the District of Columbia Office of Planning to redevelop the Anacostia Metro Rail Station from a "terminal" station to more of a neighborhood station. There are also a number of development projects including the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the South Capitol Gateway, and the Middle Anacostia Bridges project that DDOT project managers meet monthly on for coordination.

Comment: DDOT and WMATA should have dedicated community outreach offices. More outreach is required for this community. A CAC member suggested that the CAC might play a further role in such outreach.

Response: Steven Del Guidice is in charge of community outreach for this project. He will be conducting a series of outreach meetings in May and June of 2004.