

## **Comments of CLI Participant Jennifer Deng-Pickett at the July 18, 2007 TPB Meeting**

Hello everybody. Thank you for inviting me here today to share with you my experiences and learnings from the Community Leadership Institute on Regional Transportation Decision-Making (CLI). First and foremost, I wanted to thank the facilitators and the staff of the CLI for their work convening us and sharing with us the process that the TPB undergoes to make transportation decisions here in the Metro area.

There were multiple highlights in participating in the CLI. These highlights include networking with a diverse array of leaders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors that are either from or working in diverse, multi-ethnic communities throughout the D.C. met. Another highlight is that I was able to learn, in a relatively short period of time, what the TPB does and the complexities involved in the decision-making process. Finally, I also learned that most of our communities, however different, have similar desires of their transportation system. Many leaders selected for this year's CLI echoed the desire to see more environmentally-friendly transportation methods, transitioning to a fleet of all hybrid and energy saving vehicles for bus routes. We also had a lot of thoughts around how to connect the multiple jurisdictions in the area through public transit and although we were not unanimous on this, many believe that improving the efficiency, effectiveness, affordability of public transit should be the priority over and above constructing bigger and wider roads and super-highways. No doubt, many other creative ideas were spawned during our time together, including a fleet of water transportation vehicles to increase alternatives to road traffic. If you are interested in the ideas that we came up with, I'm sure the staff of the CLI have our ideas on record.

Our time together also allowed us to dive into the many complexities involved in the transportation planning and decision-making process. One of the issues that we debated is the notion that transportation is a social justice issue – the quality and accessibility of public transportation, often determines the lifeline of neighborhoods, capacity of residents to access job markets, opportunities for communities to be seen as desirable – attracting economic development and investments. We all recognize the ripple affects good transportation planning and execution can make in our lives and the lives of the communities we represent. Therefore, as the metro region continues to grow in numbers with people from all different walks of life, all different cultures and communities, I strongly urge the TPB to adopt measures that will increase access for everyone to use and participate in public transportation and transportation decisions. It is just good business sense, to use the words of John Catoe, to provide information about our transit system in multiple languages so that people can access it, generating more ridership. Furthermore, it is imperative that there be more spaces created so that leaders that represent and have the trust of different ethnic communities have a voice at the table to be engaged in the transportation decision-making processes. The only critique that I have of the CLI is that after 2 days of thought provoking activity, there were no avenues and opportunities presented for us afterwards – no list of boards or committees that one can join if interested in working on transportation in our local jurisdictions. In the future, maybe in part to create space for new voices that represent diverse constituencies, after the CLI, a list of options are provided for those who are interested to participate in transportation decision-making processes in the area.

In closing, thank you all, very much for this opportunity – the exercises were very useful, so much so that many of the CLI leaders are looking forward to asking the CLI staff to replicate The Land Use/Transportation Connection Activity in their communities, giving residents an introduction to these transportation issues, regionally. Thanks again.