REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
April 15, 2004
Dennis Jaffe, Chair

The Citizens Advisory Committee held its monthly meeting on April 15. The meeting included presentations on emergency preparedness and the 2003 report of the Access for All Advisory Committee.

Emergency Preparedness

Falls Church Councilmember David Snyder briefed the CAC on regional activities to strengthen emergency preparedness particularly related to transportation. Mr. Snyder, who chairs the TPB's Management, Operations and Intelligent Transportation Systems (MOITS) Policy Task Force, described four key recommendations:

1. Carry out regional emergency management coordination efforts on a continuing basis.
2. Conduct a coordinated regional public education campaign on emergency preparedness.
3. Ensure that timely information is provided to the public during incidents.
4. Strengthen emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector.

Regarding recommendation #4, Mr. Snyder said that serious consideration has been given to developing a coordinating agency similar to the TRANSCOM agency in the New York region. But he noted that some key agencies in the Washington region seem to maintain that such a body is unnecessary.

CAC member questions and comments included the following:

- Have these planning efforts given adequate attention to the unique role of the federal government as the largest single employer in the region? Mr. Snyder agreed that coordination with the federal government was key. He noted that the region had been successful in persuading the Department of Homeland Security to establish an office for the National Capital Region.

- The planning seems to assume that the communications system itself will not be under attack. There was general agreement that communications systems must be sufficiently redundant.

- Concern was expressed that the "table top" exercises, which were conducted as part of the emergency coordination efforts, did not include a dirty bomb scenario.

- Could the MARC and VRE systems be used to quickly evacuate people in the event of an emergency? Andrew Meese of the COG/TPB staff indicated that these trains might be helpful over a period of days, but it would be difficult to marshal them (including the necessary train crews) for any form of quick emergency evacuation.

- Could the TPB itself decide to establish a new institutional framework for coordination? Staff explained that the TPB could not make this decision unilaterally.

- Could the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) be the coordinating agency for emergencies? Mr. Kirby explained that the TRANSCOM model in New York is a membership organization made up of the agencies it serves, which was key to its success.

- Recognizing the urgency of the issues at hand, members of the CAC felt the TPB must be urged to act on these issues. The CAC passed a motion expressing this urgency, which is attached to this report.

Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee 2003 Report

Wendy Klancher of the COG/TPB staff presented an overview of the AFA 2003 report. The report's recommendations fell under four main headings:

1. Develop more effective communication of regional transit information.
2. Prioritize regional and local transportation services for low-income populations.
3. Improve transit services for people with disabilities.
4. Promote more development around transit stations, but take care of the communities that are already there.

CAC member questions and comments included the following:

- Would it be possible to develop a rating system to evaluate and compare the accessibility of different geographic areas within the region that would help people with disabilities make decisions on where to live and work?
  - Ms. Klancher said that WMATA is planning to develop a database with accessibility information for bus and rail stops.
  - Some members doubted whether such a database on the accessibility of all areas (not just rail and bus stations) would really be useful to people, specifically low-income people, if the database is primarily developed for the Internet. In addition, such a database on the accessibility of the entire region would be very difficult to create and maintain.
  - Some members said that a comparative rating system could be used to shine a spotlight on jurisdictions and places where services are particularly inadequate.
  - Members seemed to agree that any such comparative ranking system or database that highlights deficiencies would need to be combined with other efforts to actually improve accessibility.

Other Business

The CAC elected Allen Muchnick of Virginia and Emmet Tydings of Maryland to serve as vice chairs for 2004.

The CAC discussed the possibility of electing alternate members, but decided to defer this issue. An ad hoc committee was formed to develop a draft policy on how alternates should be recruited and selected, and what their roles should be. This ad hoc committee consists of Steve Caflisch, Don Edwards and Allen Muchnick.

The committee agreed to have a briefing on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study at its next meeting.

The committee was briefed on outreach and preparation for the committee's first public forum of the year on April 28, 7:00 – 8:30 pm, at Benjamin Orr Elementary School, 2200 Minnesota Avenue, SE in the District of Columbia. The topic of the meeting is light rail in DC.

ATTENDANCE

CAC Meeting
April 15, 2004

Members in attendance

1. Dennis Jaffe, DC, Chair
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Steve Caflisch, MD
4. Steve Cerny, VA
5. Bob Chase, VA
6. Don Edwards, DC
7. Harold Foster, DC
8. Mark Friis, MD
9. Allen Mucnich, VA
10. Stewart Schwartz, VA
11. Emmet Tydings, MD
12. Merle Van Horne, DC

Members not in attendance

1. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
2. Michael LaJuene, VA
3. Lee Schoenecker, DC

Alternates in attendance

Alphonso Coles, DC

Staff/Others present

David Snyder, Falls Church Councilmember
Glen Harvie
Alexander Radichevich
Ron Kirby, COG/TPB staff
Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB staff
Andrew Meese, COG/TPB staff
John Swanson, COG/TPB staff

RESOLUTION

Of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

Approved April 15, 2004

The CAC calls upon the TPB and its member agencies and jurisdictions to act expeditiously upon the four recommendations of the Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination (REETC) Annex of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan.

The four recommendations call upon regional leaders to:

1. Carry out regional emergency management coordination efforts on a continuing basis.
2. Conduct a coordinated regional public education campaign on emergency preparedness.
3. Ensure that timely information is provided to the public during incidents.
4. Strengthen emergency communications and coordination in the transportation sector.

Under recommendation number 4, the CAC urges the TPB to give full consideration to different methods for strengthening communications and coordination, including the creation of a new regional transportation communications and coordination organization.