

REPORT

TPB Citizens Advisory Committee

April 19, 2006

Jim Larsen, CAC Vice Chair

The CAC's meeting on April 13 included a panel discussion on HOT lanes and a presentation on the possible establishment of a TPB incentives program to promote more effective use of regional activity centers.

CAC Chairman Emmet Tydings chaired the CAC meeting on April 13. However, Mr. Tydings was unable to attend the TPB meeting on April 19, so he asked Jim Larsen, newly elected CAC vice chair, to present this month's report.

Discussion of a Possible TPB Incentives Program to Support Effective Development of Regional Activity Centers

CAC member Allen Greenberg began the discussion by calling attention to the comments of TPB Chairman Michael Knapp who came to the March CAC meeting. Mr. Knapp told the CAC in March that he would like the TPB to play a more explicit role in promoting the viability of the regional activity centers that were designated by the TPB and COG. Chairman Knapp noted that other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the country have implemented small grant programs to promote "livable communities." He suggested this might be an approach that the TPB, as an MPO, might want to take.

Mr. Greenberg said he would like the CAC to work with the TPB in promoting this kind of initiative. He noted that such a program would help the TPB move beyond the "what if's" of the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study and start to get into the "how to" questions of implementing transit-oriented development. He said he would like the CAC to establish a working group to support this kind of program. He said he would like the CAC to work with TPB staff in pursuing the program's development.

Ron Kirby, Director of COG's Department of Transportation Planning, briefed the CAC on the origin of the "incentives" idea. He said the TPB has long understood the need strengthen the linkages between transportation and land use. He noted that the scenario study (Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study) is a tool to improve these linkages.

Mr. Kirby described programs at other MPOs that provide small grants for transit-oriented development. The examples included the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in San Francisco, which he said has an interesting focus on the need for affordable housing, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), which has focused its efforts on revitalizing economically disadvantaged communities in the Philadelphia region. He also mentioned programs in Atlanta and in Burlington, VT.

Mr. Kirby noted that the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study has identified two long-term strategies that would improve transportation conditions in the region: 1) increase

the number of households in the region and concentrate that growth in activity centers, and 2) encourage more development on the eastern side of the region, with complementary transit improvements. He suggested that an incentives program in the Washington region might want to focus on these two strategies.

Mr. Kirby noted that the Philadelphia MPO (DCRPC) operates its program on a coordinated multi-state basis, although the funding for the program is pre-divided between Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He suggested that this type of state-based funding allocation would probably be the easiest way to approach such a program in our multi-state region. However, Allen Greenberg suggested that the TPB should continue to be open to developing a regional funding pool in which projects would be selected on merit instead of a state-based formula.

Panel Discussion on Express Toll Lanes and HOT Lanes

CAC Chairman Emmet Tydings introduced two guest speakers: Ken Orski of the Urban Mobility Corporation and Michael Replogle of Environmental Defense. The conversation focused on express toll lanes, including high-occupancy/toll (HOT) lanes, which combine characteristics of toll lanes and carpool lanes.

Mr. Orski noted that for a number of years, the TPB has taken a lead in promoting a discussion of express toll lanes, including the TPB's conference on value pricing in 2003. He said that today HOT lanes and other types of express toll lanes are no longer a curiosity; a number of these facilities are currently being planned for this region. He offered some key reasons why they are gaining in popularity:

- Funding problems continue to grow. Tolls are an obvious source of new money
- There is a demand for better traffic management.
- Travelers are interested in reliable transportation options – Express toll lanes provide “congestion insurance.”
- New technologies make express toll lanes more feasible.
- Express toll lanes can be built with little public subsidy.
- HOT lanes and express toll lanes are not just for the rich. Experience shows that drivers of modest means use them.
- Express toll lanes are a true user tax.

Michael Replogle emphasized the need for better transportation management and he said that pricing is at the heart of this challenge. He said the TPB's HOV/HOT lane scenario for the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study should only be a starting point for examining the possibilities for value pricing in the region.

Mr. Replogle emphasized that consideration should be given to converting some existing general purpose lanes to managed toll lanes. For example, he spoke in support of a proposal for the Beltway in Virginia that would convert one existing lane and build a new one, instead of the current plan that would build two new HOT lanes. Among other things, he said that conversion would be more cost-effective. Converting general purpose lanes to managed toll lanes would be just like creating new capacity, he said.

Mr. Replogle also emphasized the need to integrate transit options, especially Bus Rapid Transit, into HOT lanes and other express toll lane projects.

CAC member questions and comments included the following:

- ***How politically feasible would it be to price existing capacity?*** Mr. Orski said the public would not tolerate it; they would consider it to be “taking away a lane they we have already paid for.” Mr. Replogle said he partially agreed that it would be politically difficult. However, he said he thought the public would support upgrading existing lanes to high-performance, managed lanes, in combination with the addition of new capacity.
- ***How do people using HOT lanes know that prices are changing?*** Mr. Replogle answered that variable message signs provide that information.
- ***How feasible is it for the police to enforce HOT lanes—facilities that are free for carpoolers, but are tolled for non-carpoolers?*** Mr. Orski admitted that this enforcement challenge is difficult, and that is one reason that the state of Maryland seems to prefer express toll lanes instead of HOT lanes, which combine toll lanes with carpool lanes. He said that in the end the problem of enforcement will be become so obvious that most jurisdictions will choose express toll lanes instead of HOT lanes.

Election of CAC Vice Chairs

The committee elected two vice chairs for 2006: Jim Larsen for Virginia and Larry Martin for the District of Columbia.

CAC Working Group on the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study (RMAS)

Larry Martin announced that a new working group on the TPB’s scenario study had been formed and would hold its first meeting shortly. He said the group would focus on developing an outreach strategy.

ATTENDANCE
CAC Meeting, April 13, 2006

Members in Attendance

1. Emmet Tydings, Chair, MD
2. Ephrem Asebe, MD
3. Nathaniel Bryant, MD
4. Dan Malouff, VA
5. Stephen Cerny, VA
6. Harold Foster, DC
7. Allen Greenburg, DC
8. Jim Larsen, VA
9. Grace Malakoff, DC
10. Larry Martin, DC
11. Allen Muchnick, VA
12. Alexandra Simpson, VA

Members Not in Attendance

1. Stephen Caflisch, MD
2. Elvin Crespo, MD
3. Robin Marlin, DC

Alternate Members in Attendance

Joseph Bowser, DC
Merle Van Horne, DC

Staff/Others

Ken Orski, Urban Mobility Corporation
Michael Replogle, Environmental Defense
Julie Ruszczyk, VDOT
Ron Kirby, COG/TPB
John Swanson, COG/TPB