

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**1. Create a process by which the public can influence transportation policy positions at the jurisdictional level.**

CAC suggests that the BRTB officials form citizen transportation planning groups within their jurisdictions in order to increase citizen involvement in and input to local decisions that influence selection of the TIP and long-range plan projects. It is important that these sessions be accessible and advertised and that local elected officials and the empowered representative attend.

YES - BRTB Response: BRTB members with existing opportunities will share this information with the CAC and staff to be posted in a user-friendly format online (web, e-newsletters, social networking sites, etc). Information to be shared could include local working groups, planning activities, and public meeting dates for upcoming local planning meetings. In addition, the BRTB will consider the following ideas/examples.

Ideas/Examples: Press releases; Working Groups

Press Release about public input at local level for LRP

- *Projects for next Southeast Michigan long-range transportation plan now being considered at the local level; Input is requested. Full release:*
www.semco.org/TopNavInfo.aspx?id=9104

Public/Stakeholder working group – Members apply to serve

- **Corridor Transit Project Working Group**
Info: www.sandag.cog.ca.us/index.asp?publicnoticeid=135&fuseaction=notices.detail
Application: www.sandag.org/uploads/newsid/newsid_594_9615.pdf
- **Regional Planning Stakeholders Working Group (SWG)** - The SWG will act in an advisory capacity to both the SANDAG Regional Planning and Transportation Committees on the development of the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and its components, and laying the foundation for the next Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) update. The 2050 RTP is scheduled for adoption by the SANDAG Board of Directors in 2011.
www.sandag.org/enewsletter/feature_4.html
- **Public Involvement Advisory Council** - The Public Involvement Best Practices Program in the Office of Neighborhood Involvement provides staff support for the PIAC. The PIAC is comprised of 32 members, from both City bureaus and the community. www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=48951

2. Widely disseminate a clearer timeframe of annual activities and opportunities for public input and engagement

Citizens need more up-front information regarding transportation planning in general and the UPWP, TIP, strategic plan, long-range plan, MDOT annual budget, MDOT/MTA

Ideas/Examples:

- **Brevard MPO Public Involvement Evaluation Handbook**
www.brevardmpo.com/downloads/documents/current/PIP_eval_handbook.pdf
- **Hillsborough MPO Measures of Effectiveness**
www.hillsboroughmpo.org/pubmaps/pubmaps_folders/folderother/otherplans_files/PIP%20Measures%20of%20Effectiveness%200405.pdf

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

1. More special meetings/workshops/forums of BRTB officials with CAC and the public, including annual workshops for regular processes like TIP.

Special public workshops (such as those associated with the Transportation Outlook 2035 Amendment process) are useful in educating the public, encouraging dialogue, and allaying public concerns. Some topics, like the UPWP and TIP, could be covered in annual workshops hosted jointly by BRTB and CAC. At least one joint meeting of BRTB officials and CAC should be considered annually that would promote discussion on topics of special concern to citizens. The PPP should more clearly promote additional public forums, meetings, and workshops that allow the public to engage in discussion with their elected officials and each other.

YES - BRTB Response: The BRTB interested in supporting public workshops/forums during the year. In particular, the BRTB empowered representatives are interested in working with the CAC to host these events in communities around the region.

Ideas: Annual forums could be developed around the UPWP and the TIP. Other forums/workshops might relate to long-range plan components, transit planning activities, congestion management tools, development/permit reports/socio-economic forecasts etc. These workshops could include content development and review by the CAC.

The format of the workshops could be open house style, with tables/displays from various partner organizations throughout the region and including state departments. Another format could be community conversations, co-hosted by the CAC. All meetings could utilize technology or engagement games such as electronic polling or Transopoly.

Examples:

Atlanta Regional Commission "open house" Transportation Fairs

www.atlantaregional.com/html/81_2591.aspx

The ARC is sponsoring a series of Envision 6 Transportation Fairs across the region so the public can learn more about transportation projects, talk with regional and state planners, listen to a short presentation about regional challenges and much, much more. Participants will learn more about transit options, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, truck lanes, toll lanes and other transportation and land use planning that's taking place in their neighborhoods and across the region.

Go To 2040 Community Conversations

www.goto2040.org

The GO TO 2040 regional plan will be built on a common vision of how residents want northeastern Illinois to look for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren. Community Conversations have been designed to coincide with various phases of the GO TO 2040 Regional Comprehensive Planning Process.

Members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) hosted many of the early meetings; and CMAP also piloted a micro-grant program in winter of 2008 to have community-based organizations from across the region help gather public input for the GO TO 2040 campaign. These Community Conversations were organized by partner agencies with support from CMAP.

Let's Talk Annapolis

www.letstalkannapolis.org

Let's Talk Annapolis is a process to involve the people of Annapolis in a community-wide conversation. Interested individuals are invited to form or join a small discussion group.

Turning Point Technologies

www.turningtechnologies.com/governmentnonprofitinteractivepresentation/faq.cfm

Electronic voting and tracking of public input

Transopoly

www.transopoly.cnt.org

Transopoly is a hands-on visualization tool for building public consensus and facilitating informed transportation planning for large regions, including counties or multi-county areas.

Its purpose is to encourage public participation in regional transportation planning by clarifying risks, benefits and costs. The appropriate geography for this version is a large city, a county or a multi-county region. Transopoly has been used successfully since 2001 to help groups articulate their transportation priorities within reasonable financial limits.

Note: An online E-Transopoly version is also now available.

2. Increase use of print media in public notification.

NO - BRTB Response: Paid advertising for print media is both rising in cost and reaching a smaller audience. Press releases to print media will be pursued aggressively, however online paid advertising is much more cost effective and provides documentation on the number of readers clicking on a site.

For example, a one day, typical weekday, a 5.75" x 7" ad in the Baltimore Sun costs over \$8,000. Additional 1-day ads (of similar size) placed in at least 1 paper in each jurisdiction cost an additional \$4,000-\$5,000 at a minimum.

By comparison, BaltimoreSun.Com offers 2 days of "sliding billboards" and 7 days of a "cube" ad for \$1,520 with documentation on the number of specific "hits" and "clicks" to the BMC

web site. (For example, an August 2008 Transportation Outlook 2035 ad delivered 226,435 impressions, with 316 clicks recorded while a January 2009 TO2035 Amendment advertisement had 151,784 impressions with 197 clicks recorded.)

Further, more and more individuals are shifting from print news media to online news media to obtain their news. Here are a few statistics regarding internet usage and the news media:

- 81% of U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 65 use e-mail or access the web at home and/or work on a regular basis.*
- More than 90% will use the web and/or e-mail by the end of 2009.*
- People prefer e-mail and “web communication” 2 to 1 over all other forms of communication.*
- In the Pew Research Center's 2008 news media consumption survey, 39% said they read a newspaper yesterday -- either print or online -- down from 43% in 2006. The proportion reporting that they read just the print version of a newspaper fell by roughly a quarter, from 34% to 25% over the two-year period.**
- In 2008, online readers comprised more than a third of all newspaper readers; two years earlier, fewer than a quarter of newspaper readers viewed them on the Web.**

* Source: Nielson/NetRatings as cited in “How to Use the Web for Communications and Marketing” webinar, June 2, 2008

** Source: Pew Research Center <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1133/decline-print-newspapers-increased-online-news>

As such, the BRTB opts to maintain its policy of advertising online. Press releases will continue to be sent to major and local media outlets. In addition, major planning actions will continue to be released in print format and available in the Planning Office of each member jurisdiction as well as in 21 targeted libraries throughout the region (including libraries in low-income and/or minority areas).

The BRTB will also continue to ask the CAC members for their assistance in distributing flyers to local organizations and community groups.

3. Improve web site and its maintenance.

YES - BRTB Response: The BRTB acknowledges the importance of keeping this key communication tool up-to-date and functioning. There is currently an ongoing process by the BMC to improve and update the web site to include important metropolitan transportation planning information. As such, the BRTB has invested staff time and money over the last several years to study the web sites usability and improve its performance and accessibility.

In FY 2008 the BRTB approved a consultant effort to provide an analysis of the content of the web site for readability as well as an analysis of the general usability of the site's organizational structure. This was accompanied by recommendations for improvements to both readability and usability.

In FY 2009 the BRTB approved a consultant effort to proceed with recommendations to address Section 508 (ADA accessibility features), improved search engine, streamlined pages, etc. These changes are expected to be unveiled in summer 2009.

Also in FY 2009, BMC staff began using Facebook and Twitter to share messages about Bike to Work Day, Clean Commute Month, and Clean Car Clinics. Staff seeks to expand usage in FY 2010.

However, does the CAC have any specific recommendations to improve the web site they can share with the BRTB?

TRANSPARENCY

1. Restore quarterly attendance of BRTB elected officials at BRTB meetings at which agendas feature issues of public interest and major policy votes.

The elected officials on the BRTB meet only once a year, providing little opportunity for citizens to know their views on transportation issues or to interact with them. CAC urges BRTB to restore the required meeting attendance of officials to four times a year and have those agenda focus on issues of public interest (perhaps solicited through public surveys or comment) and voting on major policy questions.

NO - BRTB Response: The BRTB previously considered this matter in 2007 and declined to change the current meeting schedule. The BRTB will keep with its decision to continue an annual BRTB meeting with elected officials.

2. Schedule BRTB meetings in the early evening and rotate these around the region

Public access to BRTB meetings--with regard to time and location [23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(v)] and in terms of who can attend--remains a concern. Eleven of the BRTB meetings are held in the morning, precluding attendance by working people. An early evening time is preferable. Meetings, currently held only in Baltimore, should be held in a variety of locations across the region.

BRTB Response:

NO - Option #1 The BRTB respectfully declines to modify its meeting schedule with empowered representatives at this time. However, as stated previously, the BRTB is willing to host public workshops and meetings in the evening for regular processes such as the TIP, UPWP, long-range plan, etc.

MAYBE - Option #2 The BRTB is willing to host 1 early evening BRTB meeting in the Spring to coincide with the development of the TIP, UPWP, and/or other future planning activities. Regular BRTB business could run from 4 to 5 pm, followed by a 1-2 hour open house to share information and gather input from the public.

3. BRTB meetings should be videotaped and aired on public-access TV, online, and in libraries/media centers.

To further improve access and awareness, BRTB meetings should be videotaped, aired on public-access television and online, and transmitted live to libraries or videoconference center across the region.

NO - BRTB Response: The BRTB will explore the use of video and/or podcasts for select topics or meetings and the associated costs. From there, the BRTB will explore the feasibility of its use (and public interest) in viewing monthly BRTB meetings.

Ideas/Examples:

Video taping of meetings

Market House Charrette Aired Live Saturday, May 30th - Annapolis Mayor Ellen Moyer wants to ensure that everyone interested in the Market House can watch the charrette on television if they can't show up in person. The charrette will be aired live on COA-TV (City of Annapolis Television) for Comcast subscribers on channel 99/100 and on channel 34 for Verizon subscribers between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, May 30th.

Online video archives

MPO in Pinellas County, Florida www.pinellascounty.org/media/MPO

Live and archived Video Stream

EI Paso, TX MPO www.elpasompo.org/Default.aspx?tabid=82

4. Cease closed Management Committee meetings

NO - BRTB Response: The Management Committee is a BMC committee, not a committee under the BRTB.

5. Open Executive Committee meetings to the public.

To increase transparency and more fully comply with the Open Meetings Act, the Executive Committee of the BRTB should be explicitly included as being covered and its meetings announced publicly, and BRTB should avoid making regional transportation decisions in closed-door Management Committee sessions.

NO - BRTB Response: No, the Executive Committee does not represent a quorum of the BRTB and therefore, is not subject to the Open Meetings Act. Minutes of the meetings are available and distributed in the BRTB meeting packet as well as posted online.

PUBLIC INPUT

1. Public comment regarding items scheduled for vote at BRTB meetings should be received by officials prior to voting

The method by which public comments are received and used by decision-makers needs to be improved. BRTB Notes should mention upcoming BRTB meetings and agenda vote items. In the current system, issues are discussed before the empowered representatives and then the vote is taken—although empowered reps have already been instructed how to vote. Elected officials need to be made aware of public sentiment before voting decisions are made. Topics that attract significant public comment should be voted on by the BRTB officials, not the empowered.

NO - BRTB Response: The BRTB includes participants that are empowered to vote for their respective Elected Officials or State Secretary's. The BRTB or any of its members can choose to delay a vote to consider testimony received on that day if they deem it necessary.

2. Public and CAC comments should be read in summary at BRTB meetings and available online.

Public and CAC comments received in writing should be noted at each BRTB meeting and be made part of the public record.

YES - BRTB Response: Public comments have been compiled and made available online for all public review and comment periods for the last several years. Additionally, comments submitted through the public comment form continue to be available online at www.baltometro.org/bboard.

The BRTB is interested, however, in providing greater transparency regarding public comments received and as such, has requested that BMC staff provide a printed compilation of any comments received during the month at each BRTB meeting. The information packet will include any responses that have been sent or identify the need for the BRTB to prepare a response as a group.

Ideas/Examples:

BMC staff receives a 5-10 minute slot on the monthly agendas to present a summary of any comments submitted during comment periods and/or submitted via mail, fax, or via the online comment form (comments@baltometro.org).

In addition to making these comments a part of the public record, this will increase awareness among BRTB members, staff, and members of the public (including partner agencies) of public concerns and ideas. Further, presenting any submitted comments could engender greater dialogue and discussion amongst the BRTB members.

Public Comments + Letters Sent/Received - MWCOG Transportation Planning Board

Example 1:

Letters Sent/Received Since the April 15th TPB Meeting (2.0 MB)

www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/ZF5cV1pW20090514141001.pdf

Example 2:

Additional Public Comments Received: Postcards (17.3 MB)

www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/bV5cW15X20090318155009.pdf

3. Provide more considerate written responses to public suggestions that indicate that input is actually being used.

PPP should explicitly state that all citizen comments regarding plans will be responded to prior to voting. Written responses by the BRTB to public comments should include how these were used or provide rationale if they were not (“The BRTB thanks you for your comment” is not adequate). More frequent surveys of the public could inform BRTB well-in-advance on various planning initiatives and voting.

YES - BRTB Response: The BRTB does its best to respond to specific comments with specific answers. In reality there has been limited use of the response, “Thank you for your comments,” and those are for supportive comments. However, the BRTB will review responses in the future to see if the answer is responsive to the comment.

ADDITIONAL STEPS TO BE CONSIDERED AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF

As a result of these comments on public participation, the BRTB will explore additional methods to enhance our interaction with the public. This can be accomplished through use of some of the following techniques.

Surveys – consider opportunities for additional telephone surveys (two recent telephone surveys cost between \$22,000 - \$25,000 each).

Continue to solicit public input where appropriate such as with the amendment to TO2035 and how BRTB directly responded to call for additional funds for transit.

Ideas/Examples: Online surveys

2009 MD Transportation Plan Online Survey + Libraries – “MDOT used a fresh approach to outreach by facilitating an innovative partnership between MDOT and Maryland’s county libraries, where patrons accessing library computers were invited to participate in an on-line MTP survey. This partnership encouraged the involvement of a wide-range of Maryland’s citizens, many of whom might not typically participate in traditional transportation planning outreach efforts”.

Source:

<http://www.marylandtransportation.com/Planning/Plans%20Programs%20Reports/Reports/MTP/09MTP.pdf>

Constant Contact Surveys and Polling

BMC recently obtained an online survey and polling tool, which can be used to create online surveys that can be disseminated via e-mail, in e-newsletters and on various social networking sites. There is also an online polling tool that can be implemented on the BMC web site. Once surveys are created, these tools can also be promoted by local partners on their web sites, newsletters, etc.

Training opportunities for BRTB members, staff of local jurisdictions, etc at BMC.

- FHWA/NHI webinar course “Effective Communications in Public Involvement”
- “Bridging the Gap”: Improving communication between transportation agencies and communities