Evaluation of BRTB Public Involvement Activities

Public Advisory Committee

May 27, 2020
Tonight’s discussion

• Study update
• Options for the PAC’s Future
• Discussion
• Next steps
Update on Task 1: Evaluate Effectiveness of Current BRTB Public Involvement Activities

Review of:

• Key documents: Public Participation Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan
• Current practices for engaging traditionally underserved communities
• Website and social media platforms
• Current outreach efforts overall
  • Qualitative assessment
  • Quantitative assessment using Public Involvement Effectiveness (PIE) Tool
Update on Task 2: Review BRTB Public Involvement Activities with Key Participants

- Meetings and interviews with key participants
- PAC Assessment and Input
Assessment: Core Issues Identified

• Lack of clarity regarding purpose and relevance of the PAC given that many decisions are made at state or county level
• Many members do not feel they have meaningful influence
• Lead time to consider and comment on issues pending before the BRTB is often limited
• Membership does not fully represent the region’s population
• Difficulty attending meetings due to time and/or location
• Difficulty retaining members, particularly from outlying jurisdictions
• Limited orientation for new members
Comparison with Other MPOs

• Internet scan of peer MPOs that are a) roughly similar in size and b) known for strong public involvement programs

• Reveals a mix of practices, with some peer MPOs using citizen committees and others relying on alternative methods to engage public
  • MPOs with citizen committees include Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Broward MPO, and Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
  • MPOs without citizen committees include Alamo Area MPO and Capital Area MPO (Austin)
  • Other non-peer MPOs that excel in public involvement without citizen committees include Puget Sound Regional Council and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Comparison with Other MPOs, cont.

• Survey in partnership with AMPO (the Association of MPOs)
  • Distributed to the AMPO Public Involvement Working Group
  • Survey currently underway, will close this Friday
• Questions cover committee membership, roles, meeting frequency and use of virtual meetings, perceived usefulness, and engagement with issues of equity, among others
• Responses thus far show a mix of practices in place
  • Example: meeting frequency varies—some meet monthly, some bi-monthly, some quarterly, and others “as needed” with no set schedule
  • Those without committees gave varied reasons for not having one
• Results will be incorporated in final report (Task 3)
Options for the Future of the PAC

• Based on information and feedback to date, two initial options identified
  • Option A: Retool the PAC
  • Option B: Replace the PAC with New Forms of Public Engagement

• Ultimate decision to be made by the BRTB; could differ from these options
Option A: Retool the PAC

• Reduce the frequency of meetings to 6-8 meetings per year.
  • This might include 6 core meetings and 2 optional meetings if needed.
  • A lighter level of commitment may encourage broader participation

• Consider a later meeting time to accommodate those who must travel from work

• Convert some meetings to a virtual format and provide a video feed for all meetings

• Provide a simple meal for those meetings that remain in-person, especially if the meeting time remains at 5:30
Option A: Retool the PAC, cont.

Focus on issues where PAC can have the most meaningful input

• Development of UPWP topics and priorities
• Providing input to various policy studies, reports, analyses
• Providing input to the long-range plan or its implementation
• Bringing information on transportation needs from members’ own constituencies
• Holding public education events such as Transportation Academy
• Participating in occasional topical roundtables
• Reviewing public involvement plans for specific outreach campaigns
Option A: Retool the PAC, cont.

• Establish a predictable annual calendar with meetings structured around the issues identified for the PAC’s main focus
• Encourage BRTB members to attend PAC meetings
• Consider appointing a PAC member to serve as a liaison to the Technical Committee
• Drop the policy subcommittee (since policy would now be a focus of the full group meetings)
• Identify steps to increase member diversity
• Develop and implement a more comprehensive orientation program for new members
Option B: Replace the PAC with New Forms of Public Engagement

- Add seats for representatives of the general public to other BRTB advisory committees to preserve opportunities for regular, structured input
- Create a virtual panel to provide input to BMC/BRTB for various activities throughout the year
- Maintain involvement of interested former PAC members in the Transportation Academy/Every Voice Counts program
- Consider holding an annual public workshop prior to the development of the UPWP
Option B: Replace the PAC with New Forms of Public Engagement, cont.

How might a virtual panel work?

- Would serve as a permanent focus group, providing input for various activities and topics throughout the year
- Aim for approximately 50-75 members
- The panel would mainly function “asynchronously” through email outreach and online feedback
- All current and past members of the PAC would be invited to join
- Additional members could be recruited from BMC’s email lists, social media followers, and organizations representing a wide range of constituencies
Discussion