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## 2020 Federal Certification of the BRTB

1 message

**Eric Norton** <enorton@cmtalliance.org>

Thu, Apr 30, 2020 at 4:01 PM

To: "comments@baltometro.org" <comments@baltometro.org>

Cc: Regina Aris <raris@baltometro.org>, "Monica B. Haines Benkhedda" <mhainesbenkhedda@baltometro.org>

As part of the recertification process for the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board as the metropolitan planning organization for this region, the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) has been afforded an opportunity to submit comments.

Due to limited time and capacity, the PAC is unable to organize a formal resolution to represent its official comments for certification. However, last year, the PAC spent a considerable amount of its time reflecting on its role within the BRTB, its effectiveness, and how PAC members felt about their service. These discussions may be of interest to the certification team.

In lieu of a resolution that distills or summarizes those discussions, the PAC would like to share those meeting minutes with the federal team for its consideration during certification. The PAC would be happy to clarify or respond to any questions raised by these submissions.

Attached you will find a summary of conversations from the PAC Retreat in the summer of 2019, the August 27, 2019 BRTB Minutes, and the September 4, 2019 PAC Minutes.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Eric Norton

PAC Chair

Eric Norton

Director of Policy & Programs

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### 3 attachments

 **PAC Retreat Summary.pdf**  
100K

 **PAC190904min.pdf**  
412K

 **BRTB190827min.pdf**  
393K

- Members discussed their role in regional planning – collectively and as individuals.

Survey results of [current PAC members](#) and [former members](#) indicate members value the:

- diversity and multi-disciplinary experience of PAC members who are motivated and interested;
- exchange of ideas from a diverse cross-section of the community;
- presentations on transportation plans and projects and knowledge sharing on transportation related issues; and
- discussions and debates, even if difficult at times.

Frustrations expressed include feeling as if individual talents aren't being utilized by the BRTB. Some expressed interest in doing more outreach and volunteering to talk with people in the community. Others stated they found working on the Every Voice Counts Transportation Academy extremely fulfilling. Overall, opportunities for members interested in doing more community engagement is limited, leaving some members feeling their time and talents could be more effectively engaged.

Collectively, members expressed ongoing frustration that their input is not heard or utilized, especially on items that are outside of BRTB plans and products. Survey results reflect this sentiment, with 62% of current members and 78% of former members who responded to the survey indicating they feel their work on the PAC had little to no impact at all.

- PAC members shifted to discuss comments/resolutions submitted to the BRTB. Members decided that an in-depth look at the comments made and BRTB response would help determine if this frustration can be verified by the data. Other members suggested it would be good to also identify results of regional plans and UPWP funds used for local studies – what are the results of those? How has the information identified in these studies been utilized?
- Members discussed the difference between a process in which public input is used to inform decision-making (Comments → Decisions) and a process in which comments are sought as consultation for decisions already made (Decisions → Comments).
- Members discussed the mission of the BRTB and the PAC (see attached) and talked about both formal and informal organizational structures. Members also discussed the role of the BRTB in transportation planning process and how it fits in with other local and state planning processes.

One member pointed out that metropolitan planning organization's (MPO's) were first created by federal mandate in 1962, with an intermodal approach to highway and transit funding being implemented in 1991 with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Since their formation, each metropolitan area has created their own local structure and policies guiding their MPO.

Members asked if there are any other MPO's which offer examples of more effective public engagement and collaborative decision-making. This was tabled as a potential follow-up action item.

- Through the discussion and the survey, several members asked what BMC staff and the BRTB sees as the PAC's role and value add to the process. Members also suggested that, if much of

the decision-making in the region happens locally or at the state, the PAC would benefit from their ability to connect more with BRTB members and provide input into local planning initiatives.

- Other questions raised included:
    - Why do PAC meetings begin during rush hour?
    - Are there any key initiatives or recommendations that the PAC can agree upon and collectively advocate for?
    - Is there value in having the PAC help capture the pulse of the community on transportation needs for use in the planning process?
    - Is there a role for the PAC in helping to build capacity for local planning efforts?
    - Is there space for the PAC to have conversations which are outside of the existing planning process or does the BRTB wish to have the PAC be a consultation only role?
    - What is the process in which the BRTB discusses and deliberates collectively on public comments?
- 
- PAC members feel that the PAC is a valuable resource for sharing information about transportation projects and plans.
    - Are there ways in which more members can utilize this information to share with others in the community? Obtain input to share with decision makers?
  - Members recommend more space be created for regional dialogue, with an emphasis on events where both the public and government staff can learn about and discuss a range of topics, and information gathered can inform decisions being made.
  - Understanding that the PAC is not a decision-making body, but rather offering advice... Does this work for everyone? Are there ways to manage expectations and make the limitations of the volunteer position clearer to potential volunteers?
  - Are there other PAC's which have gotten over these hurdles and have a PAC which feels its input is more fully utilized to inform decision making process?
  - Members would like clarification on what the BRTB would like from the PAC.
    - If suggestions given by the PAC are not being utilized, what kind of input would the BRTB like from the PAC?
    - If many transportation decisions are made outside of the BRTB's purview, should the PAC focus its efforts on a few key ideas to share and discuss with BRTB members?
    - Is there a way for the PAC be a more effective tool for gathering public input and sharing the public's voice with the BRTB?
  - Since the BRTB's Technical Committee have more robust discussions with more time in advance of voting, the PAC recommends a seat at the table at Technical Committee meetings in order to provide PAC input earlier in the process. A

## BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD

August 27, 2019  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
9:05 to 10:59 A.M.

### MINUTES

The 311<sup>th</sup> meeting was called to order at 9:05 A.M. by the Chair, Ms. Lynda Eisenberg. Ms. Eisenberg began by thanking everyone for attending and to MDOT for offering space in their building.

#### 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A request for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2019 BRTB meeting was made by Ms. Eisenberg. A motion was made by Mr. Gary Blazinsky to approve the minutes and seconded by Mr. Greg Carski. The minutes were approved unanimously.

#### 2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

There was no one from the public who wished to address the BRTB.

#### 3. REPORT ON PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Monica Haines Benkhedda reported there are no BRTB comment opportunities this month. However, there are many opportunities for the public to get involved with these local BRTB member initiatives:

- Howard County public meeting about proposed Ducketts Lane bike lane on August 29
- 2019 Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan - Carroll County Planning & Zoning Commission will accept comments on Tuesday, September 17
- Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan (RTP) Commission meeting on September 20
- Annapolis Ahead 2020 Comprehensive Plan – Survey to gather public priorities for the next 20 years in the City of Annapolis: [forms.gle/uYdq7sCX2ihF96dq8](https://forms.gle/uYdq7sCX2ihF96dq8)

Ms. Haines Benkhedda encouraged members to share additional public meetings with BMC staff to share via social media and other outreach channels.

***[Handout: Public Involvement Report for August 2019]***

#### **4. REPORT FROM THE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mr. Eric Norton reported that the July and August PAC meetings were focused on the role of the PAC in the BRTB's planning process and how the members can be more effective and serve as a more valuable public involvement resource for the BRTB. Mr. Norton explained that these discussions were born of some members expressing frustration over the process, confusion over roles, and in some cases members resigning or no longer attending meetings.

A survey of current and former members found a lot people liked about the PAC:

- The diversity of backgrounds and experiences of members
- The exchange of ideas
- The presentations and knowledge sharing on transportation plans and projects

The survey also demonstrated frustrations among PAC members that their individual talents and group wisdom weren't being utilized by the BRTB, with 62% of current and 78% of former members who felt their service on the PAC had little to no impact.

Mr. Norton asked, "What is the incentive to serve on the PAC if volunteers give their time and energy and yet still feel as if they aren't having an impact?"

He also explained that members also discussed a disconnect in what the PAC is asked to do in terms of providing input into a process where decision- making happens primarily at the state and local levels in Maryland, not at the BRTB.

Mr. Norton acknowledged that the PAC doesn't need to exist – it is a tool the BRTB has established in an effort to get public input and feedback from a diverse representation of members from around the region. Given this, he asked the BRTB, "Is the PAC useful and valuable to you? Are we giving you the kind of input you're looking for? Are there other tools and strategies for gathering public input that could be more useful than the PAC?"

Mr. Norton shared that he understands this may be a lot for members to take in at the moment, and asked the BRTB if they would be open to having a dialogue with the BRTB about these questions. A number of members had comments which they offered and discussed to some extent with Mr. Norton.

The BRTB thanked Mr. Norton for bringing these concerns to light and shared some of their immediate thoughts. Highlights include:

- Mr. Gary Blazinsky recommended the PAC may want to focus on several key areas.  
Mr. Norton suggested that greater clarification from the BRTB as to what they would like to see from the PAC what would be valuable and help guide their work.
- Ms. Eisenberg noted that more robust discussion tends to happen at the Technical Committee earlier in the month, two weeks before the BRTB votes. Having the PAC provide input prior to the Technical Committee hopefully will allow more time for it to be more effectively incorporated into the BRTB's process.

- Ms. Eisenberg suggested that it would be good if BRTB members could rotate their attendance at PAC meetings so that members can hear directly from the PAC and have a chance to dialogue, ask questions, share information, offer feedback, etc.
- Mr. Bruce Gardner also shared that he found it very valuable having a PAC member from his jurisdiction who also serves on a transportation board in Howard County. He appreciates this person as a resource who can bring a regional perspective and knowledge because of their participation on the PAC.
- Members also discussed the pros and cons of having members appointed or selection via application. Members acknowledged the challenges of having a volunteer board and finding people who are willing to give their time and energy come here each month.
- There was a brief discussion about balancing the obligations to elected officials and the general public with input received from the PAC, which is a fraction of the overall population of the region.

Ms. Eisenberg recommended staff take some time to put together a report about the PAC's concerns and an evaluation of the current process, information on what other MPOs are doing, and recommendations and a work plan moving forward to address concerns and incorporate recommended changes.

***[HANDOUT: Summary of PAC Retreat]***

## **5. REPORT FROM THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

There was no Technical Committee meeting held in August, however Mr. David Cookson noted that the Technical Committee members had engaged in discussions about potential tasks for the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). This activity will be discussed under a subsequent agenda item.

## **6. BRIEFING ON THE REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN FOR CENTRAL MARYLAND**

Ms. Kate Sylvester, MDOT MTA, updated members on progress related to the Regional Transit Plan. Ms. Sylvester covered the background and approach being taken to develop the RTP, described transit in the region as it functions today, shared changing demographics, reviewed the three draft goals, identified transit needs and the methodology to uncover those needs, and shared public involvement methods and upcoming open houses.

Members had questions on whether future funding would be discussed, about the Cornerstone Plans, and with changing demographics what is a solution as nonprofits are unable to serve clients that end up at the doors of the LOTS agencies. These conversations will continue as the RTP process moves forward.

***[PowerPoint: Connecting Our Future: A Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland, Project Update]***

## **7. DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL TOPICS FOR FY 2021 UPWP**

Mr. Cookson reported that the Technical Committee had held a GoToMeeting on August 12 to discuss potential tasks for the FY 2021 UPWP. Following up on these discussions, BMC staff developed an augmented list of potential tasks and asked the Technical Committee members to rank these tasks and add any other potential tasks they'd like to pursue. BMC staff entered the resulting rankings into a spreadsheet and calculated average rankings for each potential task.

Mr. Lang distributed a list of the average rankings and presented a PowerPoint with supplemental information on each task. BRTB members gave comments on each of the highest ranking potential tasks. Some of these tasks might be folded into work already being undertaken by MDOT or work being conducted by BMC staff and consultants under current UPWP tasks.

Discussions will continue on these topics over the next few months, with continued input from Technical Committee and BRTB members. The eventual product will be a list of preferred tasks for the FY 2021 UPWP. This will enable the TC/BRTB retreat to serve as a budgeting session on upcoming, well defined tasks.

***[PowerPoint: FY 2021 UPWP Potential Project Ideas]***

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

- Mr. Lang reminded members that the AMPO conference will be held in Baltimore this year and he needs the name of up to two staff (BRTB, TC) that will attend.
- Mr. Lang also updated members on the status of the office renovations. We have just entered Phase II and the work appears to be on schedule. The September 3 TC meeting is scheduled to be in the new conference room.

The meeting adjourned at 10:59 A.M.

**Members**

Gary Blazinsky, Harford Transit  
Greg Carski, Baltimore County Department of Public Works  
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County Department of Public Works  
Lynda Eisenberg, Carroll County Department of Planning  
Bruce Gartner, Howard County Office of Transportation  
Valorie LaCour, (for Steve Sharkey) Baltimore City Department of Transportation  
Heather Murphy, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)  
Sally Nash, City of Annapolis Department of Planning  
Alex Rawls, Harford County Department of Planning  
Ramond Robinson, Anne Arundel County Department of Planning & Zoning  
Kate Sylvester, Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA)

**Staff and Guests**

Regina Aris, Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)  
Tyson Byrne, MDOT  
David Cookson, Howard County, TC Chair  
Terry Freeland, BMC  
Monica Haines-Benkhedda, BMC  
Don Halligan, BMC  
Dan Janousek, MDOT  
Todd Lang, BMC  
Eric Norton, PAC Chair

Respectfully submitted,

Todd R. Lang, Secretary  
Baltimore Regional Transportation Board



## **PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, September 4, 2019

Impact Hub

5:35 to 7:00 P.M.

### **MINUTES**

Mr. Eric Norton, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 P.M.

#### **1. UPDATE ON PAC RETREAT**

Mr. Eric Norton reported that he presented an update to the BRTB at their August meeting on the role of the PAC in the BRTB's planning process and how the members can be more effective and serve as a more valuable public involvement resource for the BRTB:

- Mr. Norton shared what people liked about the PAC: The diversity of backgrounds and experiences of members; the exchange of ideas; and the presentations and knowledge sharing on transportation plans and projects.
- He also shared frustrations among PAC members that their individual talents and group wisdom weren't being utilized by the BRTB, with 62% of current and 78% of former members who felt their service on the PAC had little to no impact. He also explained that members also discussed a disconnect in what the PAC is asked to do in terms of providing input into a process where decision-making on transportation projects happens primarily at the state and local levels in Maryland, not at the BRTB.
- Mr. Norton acknowledged that the PAC doesn't need to exist – it is a tool the BRTB has established in an effort to get public input and feedback from a diverse representation of members from around the region. Given this, he asked the BRTB, "Is the PAC useful and valuable to you? Are we giving you the kind of input you're looking for? Are there other tools and strategies for gathering public input that could be more useful than the PAC?"

Mr. Norton reported that BRTB members thanked him for bringing these concerns to light and shared some of their immediate thoughts and ideas, which included:

- Explore the option of having a PAC seat at the Technical Committee where more robust discussion happens in advance of a vote by the BRTB. This would require moving the PAC meeting to a new monthly date and time in order to have time for the PAC to review information and develop recommendations prior to the Technical Committee meetings. Staff will work with the PAC Chairs to identify possibilities for a new meeting schedule and a seat at the table for the PAC at the Technical Committee meetings.

- BRTB members will look at options for attending PAC meetings so that various BRTB members can hear directly from the PAC and have a chance to dialogue, ask questions, share information, offer feedback, etc. This would also fulfill the statement in the PAC Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3: "The BRTB shall provide a non-voting liaison to the PAC."
- The PAC would like to gain greater clarification from the BRTB as to what they would like to see from the PAC and what would be valuable to the BRTB. In addition to BRTB members attending the PAC meetings, an idea was raised to host meet and greets with the BRTB members, local planning staff, and PAC members.
- A recommendation was made for staff to put together a report about the PAC's concerns and an evaluation of the current process, information on what other MPOs are doing, and recommendations and a work plan moving forward to address concerns and incorporate recommended changes.

Staff will continue to work with the PAC and BRTB leadership teams on these items and continued efforts to improve the function of the PAC and its relationship with the BRTB.

## **2. DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL REGIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS FOR FY2021 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)**

Mr. Todd Lang presented a list of potential topics being considered for inclusion in the FY2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). This initial list of was generated by the Technical Committee as a starting point and discussions on these topics will continue over the next few months, with selected topics included in a draft UPWP for public comment in February 2020.

PAC members asked questions and offered feedback on existing ideas. They then went on to brainstorm the following ideas:

- designate additional staff and resources for Every Voice Counts;
- create an updated affordable housing plan which looks at the link between transportation and housing;
- look at traffic operations impacts (or lack thereof) of bus lanes and bike lanes;
- examine the safety of various bike lane designs and ways to increase visibility of signage and safety for cyclists;
- transportation for people with disabilities;
- develop an equity framework;
- explore options for creating a regional transportation authority or other ways to institutionalize cooperative regionalism and planning beyond political boundaries; and
- review previous UPWP studies to asses usefulness/applicability.

PAC members asked how UPWP studies are selected and discussed the importance of selecting projects which relate to regional goals of the long-range transportation plan and the Public Participation Plan.

The PAC agreed to continue to discuss ideas via subcommittees in September with further discussion at the October PAC meeting. Specifically, the PAC will look at:

- previous PAC recommendations and opportunities for inclusion in the next UPWP;

- discuss how these studies fit into bigger picture concepts of regionalism and equity and public involvement and if there is a scoring mechanism to evaluate UPWP project ideas based on these frameworks.

**[PowerPoint: FY 2021 UPWP Potential Project Ideas]**

### **3. OTHER BUSINESS**

The following announcements were made:

- BMC has issued an [RFP for a consultant to evaluate the effectiveness of current public involvement activities](#) of the BRTB and to develop recommendations for improving public involvement in the region's transportation planning process.
- The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) will host a series of [meetings on the draft Consolidated Transportation Program](#) (CTP).
- The MDOT MTA's [Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan Commission meeting](#) will be held Friday, September 20 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Howard County Miller Library (9421 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042).
- Get Maryland Moving is hosting a [webinar](#) on Thursday, September 12 at 7:30 p.m. to give an update on what the RTP is and how residents can get involved in its development.
- MDTA is hosting a series of six [Open Houses on the Chesapeake Bay Crossing Study](#): Tier 1 NEPA (Bay Crossing Study) from September 24 through October 9.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

### **ATTENDANCE**

#### **Members**

Michael Davis – Resident, Carroll County

*(by phone)*

Janet Eveland – Resident, Baltimore City

Mark Lotz – Resident, Harford County

Eric Norton – Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

Arthur Petersen – Resident, Baltimore City

Sharon Smith – Partners In Care

Arjan van Andel – Resident, Anne Arundel County

Paul Verchinski – Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA)

Jennifer Weeks – Resident, Baltimore City

*(by phone)*

Daniel Yi – Resident, Howard County

#### **Staff and Guests**

Monica Haines Benkhedda – Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)

Todd Lang – BMC

Ramond Robinson – Anne Arundel County