

MINUTES

Citizen Advisory Committee
of the
Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization
Bascom Room, Eugene Public Library – 100 West 10th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon

April 18, 2013
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Edward Winter, chair; Diana Alldredge, Linda Barrera, Wendy Butler-Boyesen, Bryant Dodson, Gary Gillespie, William McCoy, Bill Morganti, Eleanor Mulder, Kim Ridley, Leslie Fountain Williams, James Yarnall, members; Kathi Wiederhold, Paul Thompson, Lane Council of Governments.

ABSENT: Richard Beers, Cody Evers, members.

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Mr. Winter called the meeting of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to order and asked those present introduced themselves.

Comments from the Audience

There were no comments.

Approve March 21, 2012

Mr. Morganti, seconded by Ms. Butler-Boyesen, moved to approve the minutes of March 21, 2012. The motion passed unanimously.

Proposed New MPO Public Participation Program (PPP)

Ms. Wiederhold reviewed the agenda materials, which were the same as those for the March meeting with the addition of comments from CAC members at that meeting. She said once the CAC's review of the Public Participation Program (PPP) was completed all of the comments would be incorporated into an updated document. She noted that the agenda packet included a memorandum from staff with questions to help focus the CAC's discussion. She said once the document was updated with the CAC's recommendations it would either go directly to the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) for approval or, depending on the nature of the changes, back to the CAC first for review. She said the updated document would likely contain a section offering overall guidance and suggestions from the CAC.

Ms. Wiederhold reminded the committee that the PPP was summarized in color-coded tables: pink reflected the current PPP public outreach tools; blue reflected the proposed basic outreach tools to meet federal requirements. She invited comments from the committee on the proposed tools.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen questioned how the public would know about opportunities for public comment if they were not on the list of interested parties and did not access online notices, as those were the only tools proposed. She said a speakers bureau was not included in the basic tools.

Mr. Ridley said the limited public outreach made it appear there was an intent to omit people not already involved in transportation planning.

Mr. Thompson said it should be clarified that a speakers bureau was envisioned as an ongoing tool, but not attached to a specific MPO product. He said all media outlets received notification of MPC meetings and agenda topics and notices were placed in the public meeting calendar.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen said those should also be listed on the summary table of tools.

Mr. Yarnall reviewed the list of MPO products and asked why there was not equal concern for compliance with Title VI. He did not see Title VI listed in the table. Ms. Wiederhold pointed out a section in the staff memorandum that addressed specific ways the MPO reached out to transportation disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Yarnall felt that Title VI did not have equal rank with other MPO products. Mr. Thompson replied that Title VI was a requirement of all MPO activities and there was a separate Title VI plan that was reviewed annually.

Ms. Mulder commented that many people were so preoccupied with making ends meet and their own situations that they did not necessarily pay attention to issues like transportation. She said those people would not pursue becoming involved if the process was not easily accessible. She did not feel the basic tools were sufficient to reach that population and the planning process was moving more toward conversations among professionals.

Mr. McCoy said there were many resources available for the transportation disadvantaged and people who were aware of those resources could volunteer to spread the word in the community, such as speaking to neighborhood groups and community organizations. Community centers like Peterson Barn and Willamalane were a good place to provide information on transportation options.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen said the Hilyard Community Center should be added to the list of outreach groups under the speakers bureau.

Ms. Alldredge said she often overlooked notices in newspapers because of the format and did not access the web on a regular basis. She suggested that public service announcements and interviews on radio stations could reach a wide audience. She pointed out that many people accessed websites on their phone or tablet and the MPO should consider a website format that would accommodate those users.

Mr. Yarnall said people were bombarded with mailings, most of which were discarded without being looked at unless the person was already familiar with the subject. He agreed that radio and television could reach more people in the community.

Mr. Ridley said that email inboxes were also bombarded with information. He said whatever method of outreach was used, it should be presented in a way that caught people's eyes and created interest. He said timing of notices was also important - whether to send them out early or just prior to an event to achieve the greatest participation. He said all methods should still be used to reach the widest audience and communications should be clear and thoughtful.

Ms. Wiederhold said the MPO had always used a two-pronged approach: basic tools for some products and the addition of enhanced tools for more significant products. She said the new program would retain that approach, with some changes to the set of basic tools. She said the intent was to focus limited resources on key products with the most impact on people's lives. Mr. Thompson added that the Lane Council of Governments and MPO websites would be redesigned to be more accessible from handheld electronic devices.

Ms. Fountain Williams asked if there was a process in place to continuously evaluate how the target audiences wished to be contacted in order to stay current with changes in how people communicated and received information. Ms. Wiederhold said there strategies in place to check in with people during events, but not on a continuous basis. She said at one point a community focus group was asked about best ways to reach people in the community and staff went to meetings of various groups to provide transportation planning updates and determine areas of interest. Mr. Thompson added that he intended to visit community groups two or three times per year, in part to solicit their assistance in getting the word out to their members about transportation issues.

Mr. Yarnall clarified that his concern was with making it clear that Title VI compliance was a requirement for every MPO project and product and that responding to the needs of disadvantaged people was a priority. Mr. Thompson said better references to Title VI compliance could be made in the PPP.

Ms. Barrera suggested several methods for outreach to University of Oregon students, including flyers and posters notifying them of opportunities for public involvement. She agreed with Mr. Ridley that many people were bombarded by emails and said posting timely notices around campus could be a more effective way to reach interested students.

Ms. Wiederhold said that posters were placed on Lane Transit District (LTD) buses and at bus stops, advertisements were placed in the student newspapers and information was provided to various student organizations. She liked the suggestions for broadening student outreach.

Ms. Mulder strongly supported outreach efforts on campus. She said flyers could also be placed at the bookstore and notices provided to various departments, many of which had helped spread the word to students.

Mr. Gillespie notified the committee that he was now vice president of the LTD Board of Directors, as well as a designated representative on the Metropolitan Policy Committee, and would no longer have the time to participate on the CAC. He thanked committee and staff for the opportunity to serve and had enjoyed working with the group.

Mr. Yarnall observed that the proposed PPP would place a heavier burden on staff. He asked how an ad hoc committee would be formed if one was deemed appropriate for a specific product. Ms. Wiederhold explained that the MPC would appoint any ad hoc committees and determine on a case-by-case basis when one was needed and how the appointment process would be conducted. She said specific details of the process were not included in the plan in order to provide the most flexibility for tailoring each outreach effort to a product.

Mr. Yarnall asked how the MPO would "keep its finger on the pulse of the community." Mr. Thompson said staff intended to maintain regular contact with a wide range of community groups to determine what issues were of interest to residents.

Mr. Winter felt that the following MPO products required more than the basic outreach tools: Public Participation Plan, Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Surface Transportation Program-Urban (STP-U). He said it was difficult for the public to understand the planning continuum and identify where to provide effective input. He referred to the "Citizen's Guide" that was developed several years ago and while that was now outdated, educational materials were important in helping people to understand the process. He said the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) had a STIP guide and the Federal Highway Administration also had pamphlets. He suggested if there were no funds to publish those guides perhaps they could be made available on the MPO's website. He felt that the CAC had been useful in educating the public about transportation planning issues.

Mr. Yarnall commented that Point2point provided a good model for distributing educational resources in the community, although its scope was somewhat limited.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen stressed the importance of involvement in the initial stages of planning when decisions were made at the local level; it was difficult to have an impact on projects once they reached the MPO level.

Mr. Ridley said people were not invited to participate at the early stages of planning because there were agendas in place that preferred certain outcomes; decisions were made before the public had an opportunity to provide input.

Ms. Mulder pointed to the Broadway Place project in which the public was involved at an early point in a lengthy planning and decision-making process, but when the project moved to construction people new to the community raised objections because they were not aware of the earlier process. Mr. Thompson agreed that was a problem with long-range planning where it could be five to ten years between when a project was first conceptualized and when it was funded and constructed.

Ms. Alldredge said that people should be educated about the need to have a long-range plan in place in order to be positioned to access resources when they became available. In order to get people invested in the process they needed to support the idea, rather than a specific project.

Mr. Yarnall stated he had attended several meetings of the Lane Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) and was impressed by the thoughtful discussions and approach to decision-making. He said transparency in the early, local stages of planning was critical and people should have an opportunity to express their preferences during pre-planning activities well before decisions were made. He said that would encourage people to participate and help gain their support for ideas.

The committee took a short break.

Proposed New MPO Public Participation Program (PPP) (continued)

Ms. Wiederhold directed the committee's attention to the questions posed in the agenda materials and suggested members respond to any of those issues during the next part of the discussion.

Mr. Morganti said that not everyone had access to a computer or email and other methods for distributing information be used.

Ms. Mulder said bus riders were a good target audience for information as many of them were students and therefore tomorrow's voters.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen, Ms. Barrera and Mr. Morganti also supported making information available on buses and at bus stops.

Mr. Yarnall urged that posters and cards on buses be well designed and relevant to draw riders' attention and their placement be timely. Ms. Wiederhold said typically posters remained in place for a month and she often received calls from people in response to them.

Ms. Mulder suggested placing posters and cards on *RideSource* vehicles.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen said there should be a column for bus posters and cards on the table of basic outreach tools.

Mr. McCoy commented that no matter what tools and strategies were used it was not possible to reach everyone. He said that campus counseling centers were also good locations for informational materials.

Mr. Winter said that an ad hoc committee would be a useful tool for certain products such as a major RTP update and should be listed as an option.

Mr. McCoy said that KVAL-TV used to have a feature at noon that publicized items of community interest and that type of venue could be useful as an outreach tool.

Ms. Alldredge said the use of a community focus group in an earlier outreach effort had been very successful. It involved a diverse group of participants, generated good feedback and reached members of the community not usually involved in transportation issues. She encouraged use of a focus group on an annual or periodic basis.

Mr. Yarnall suggested adding Willamalane to the list of venues for the speakers bureau. He had been a member of Springfield's urban renewal initiative and maintained an interest in development activities by reviewing the groups minutes until they were discontinued. He hoped that the CAC minutes would be available to the public. He said it was important to educate people about where to find information to help them make informed decisions.

Mr. Morganti suggested using prepaid taxis or having people provide rides so those who did not have a vehicle could attend meetings.

Mr. Dodson said his transportation modes were walking and biking; information on buses would not reach people like him. He did spend time online, using email and social media. He said when he lived in Denver he received regular emails from his city councilor about activities in her district, including transportation projects. He said the emails were interesting and relevant because they were geographically targeted and presented information that mattered to recipients. He suggested enlisting local elected officials in a similar effort in Lane County.

Ms. Butler-Boyesen said she was not certain if the proposed PPP met all federal requirements, but it did respond to the MPC directive to conserve resources. She said the outreach seemed limited and hoped that additional elements would be added to the next draft. She supported the idea of free media public service announcements (PSA), features and interviews. She hoped there were public relations people on staff who knew how to access the PSA market.

Mr. Ridley suggested partnering with other organizations and agencies to distribute information about transportation planning activities and opportunities for public involvement. He liked Mr. Dodson's suggestion about public officials becoming involved in outreach to their constituents, particularly at the earliest stages of project planning.

Mr. Winter said people could sign up to receive the City of Eugene's electronic transportation newsletter InMotion.

Ms. Barrera said that outreach materials should be designed not only to inform people about how they could become involved, but to explain why they should care about transportation planning and how it will affect them and their community in the future.

Ms. Fountain Williams said most neighborhoods had gathering spots where people came together. If those could be identified they would be good places to distribute information and neighbors could help inform each other.

Mr. McCoy said when the Lane ACT was reviewing projects for potential STIP funding it invited project managers to make brief presentations about their respective projects. He said CAC members could also attend meetings where projects were being discussed and provide comments.

Mr. Yarnall agreed with Mr. McCoy. He said he had recently provided comments before the Springfield City Council and received a thank you note from a councilor via mail, which was more personal than an electronic message. He did not feel that an online open house was effective. Mr. Thompson said an online open house would be conducted in conjunction with an actual open house so that people who could not attend the meeting could access all of the materials. He said that strategy had been used successfully in other jurisdictions.

Ms. Mulder suggested that people sign up for the Lane ACT's electronic mailing list to receive notifications about opportunities to provide input.

Mr. Winter asked to have the GEARS advocacy group added to the speakers bureau list.

Wrap-Up

Mr. Thompson described an outreach effort being used by Portland Metro. He said the Opt In panel included surveys of participants and it had been very effective. The MPO was going to review the program to see if it was appropriate for the Central Lane area.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)