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COMMISSION

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MTC Advisory Council  
July 8, 2009  
**Minutes**

Cathy Jackson called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. In attendance were members Wendy Alfsen, Paul Cohen, Raphael Durr, Rita Foti, David Grant, Richard Hedges, Xiao-Yun Lu, James McGhee, Eli Naor, Margaret Okuzumi, Bob Planthold, and Don Rothblatt.

**Minutes of June 10, 2009**

Due to a lack of quorum, the minutes were not approved.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

**Staff Report**

Due to the interest of time, Ms. Jennifer Yeamans submitted the staff report as written.

**Report from the Minority Citizens Advisory Committee (MCAC); Report from the Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee (EDAC)**

There was no report from MCAC.

Mr. David Grant stated that EDAC met on July 2. The substantive presentations were a review of STP/CMAQ funding projections, by Craig Goldblatt, and a discussion session about the advisory committee restructuring effort. The Land Use subcommittee presented a recommendation on a new policy for MTC, to mandate a minimum percentage of accessible housing be included in TOD projects that receive MTC funding. The Technology subcommittee had a presentation on the 511 phone system. The Pedestrian Safety subcommittee approved support for a Regional Pedestrian Conference, co-sponsored by MTC and California Walks (with potential additional sponsors) to be held in September or October at MTC. The EDAC pedestrian committee, along with the Regional Pedestrian Committee (an MTC staff advisory group) would begin planning.

**Legislative Update**

Ms. Rebecca Long reported that a draft version of the new federal transportation bill was released by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, incorporating some key recommendations from the National Transportation Revenue Study Commission. The current

draft of the bill consolidates or eliminates numerous programs, and adds several new ones, including a competitive “Metro Mobility” program and a goods movement program, and allocates a higher percentage of funding for transit, though there are not currently any funding specifics. While some House members are hoping to fast-track the bill for the end of the current authorization of SAFETEA later this year, the Senate will likely propose an 18-month extension.

Ms. Long went on to say that there is less to report on at the state level, given that there is not yet a state budget. One bright spot for transit funding was a recent victory in the suit brought by the California Transit Association against the state of California, in which the Third District Court of Appeals in Sacramento ruled that annual raids on public transit funding are in violation of state law.

### **Land Use Subcommittee Recommendations for “TLC 2.0” Program**

Mr. Eli Naor stated that the Land Use Subcommittee adopted the following recommendations for MTC’s Transportation for Livable Communities “TLC 2.0” Grant Program: 1) Recommend that the TLC 2.0 Grant Program be budgeted in the next round of STP/CMAQ Cycle for \$60 million per year for a six-year budget of \$360 million; and 2) Recommend that the TLC 2.0 Grant Program be allocated in sums not less than \$2.0 million per grantee project and be targeted exclusively at projects located within FOCUS Priority Development Areas with an emphasis on promoting walkability and universal accessibility and that demonstrate an increase in public transit ridership.

Mr. Bob Planthold moved approval of the recommendations. Ms. Wendy Alfsen seconded. The motion will remain open until a future meeting due to lack of a quorum.

### **MTC Advisory Committee Review**

Ms. Ann Flemer stated that last month MTC’s Legislation Committee heard a report reviewing the public outreach and involvement process for the recently adopted Transportation 2035 Plan. The committee showed interest in a couple of findings that were brought forward by a number of Advisory Council members as well as EDAC and MCAC members who participated in the T2035 Plan development, and in particular the Joint Advisor Workshops.

She stated that the T2035 process emphasized joint input to the Commission from MTC’s three advisory committees, which met jointly 12 times over the development of the T2035 Plan. Joint Advisor Workshops brought many perspectives together at one table to provide MTC with some direction and advice.

Ms. Flemer noted that the Commission directed staff to review and evaluate MTC’s advisory committee structure, including possible consolidation of the advisory committees, and considering ways to strengthen communication between MTC and its advisors. Ms. Flemer also explained that since the various advisory committees were formed, MTC’s focus has changed dramatically, and it’s worth examining our advisory committees in the context of MTC’s current and future work — with the goal of identifying a structure that is more functional while also representing the varied needs and perspectives of the region.

Ms. Flemer then introduced MTC’s public participation consultant, Ms. Kendall Flint of PMC, who reported on the findings of a telephone survey she conducted regarding the T2035 Plan

Joint Advisor Workshops. She also asked for committee input on their thoughts of strengthening the communication between advisors and the Commission.

Ms. Flint stated that out of 66 total advisors, 31 participated in at least 4 joint sessions and were contacted for the survey. Twenty-two advisors completed the telephone survey. Of those surveyed, 95% felt that the joint forums were a useful tool and were interested in more frequent joint forums. However, many advisors indicated they felt a disconnect between the advice they gave and the Commission's actions. She also noted that several advisors emphasized that joint forums would be more effective at the subcommittee level, working closely with MTC staff. Over half of the advisors thought that their comments were being adequately conveyed to the Commission, but about a third indicated their uncertainty as to whether their comments reached the Commission. Advisors asked for and want more direct access to the Commissioners.

Noting that she had also contacted a number of MTC Commissioners to gain their perspectives, Ms. Flint reported that most commissioners found that a joint response from the three advisory committees was more useful. Commissioners would like to see policies and action items vetted by the committees in a collaborative manner, and that joint advisory committee workshops provide a good means to achieve consensus.

Ms. Flint then posed three questions for committee response, and noted that their input will be forwarded to the Commission meeting in September 2009.

Question 1: How important is the involvement of Commissioners and executive staff? How should Commissioners and executive staff be engaged?

Committee comments:

- MTC needs a formal process whereby the recommendations of any of the advisory committees are referred to an MTC committee or the full Commission for a hearing and a response. Too often committee recommendations get sidetracked because staff is unsure of where to direct them.
- It's valuable, though not essential, for commissioners and executive staff to attend advisory committee meetings.
- The current advisory committee structure should be retained; it's valuable to have EDAC and MCAC members attend the Advisory Council meeting, and one improvement would be to encourage more Advisory Council members to reciprocate and attend MCAC and EDAC meetings.
- If MTC were to retain only one advisory committee, then it should be EDAC, since it has been a very effective committee and it's critical for MTC hear the views of the rapidly growing senior and disabled population in the region.
- In order to have meaningful engagement, there has to be a process that allows the members to give advice, and there is no such process.
- The agendas need to be set up with more action items rather than just informational items.
- The Joint Advisor Workshops need to reflect items that warranted committee members' input, and not simply report on what has been already decided.

- Advisors need sufficient time to review and formulate recommendations; often there are only a few days between the advisors' meeting and a final action by MTC.
- It's unclear how recommendations from the Joint Advisors Workshops were conveyed to MTC.
- The various subcommittees serve the purpose to explore whether there something merits being brought forward to the Advisory Council to be discussed, which then allows an avenue to bring items forward to the Commission.
- Need a formal process for getting a *response* from the Commission on advisor recommendations — a formal "closing of the loop," so to speak.
- It would be very worthwhile to have executive staff be able to attend meetings; it may be harder to get Commissioner attendance given their schedules.
- The Advisory Council agenda should include a mission statement, and include the relationship to the commission.
- The Commission should have a standing agenda item for advisory committee reports.
- Advisory committees should have a dedicated member to serve as a liaison to the Commission who would attend MTC meetings and report on behalf of advisors.
- The Commission should set at least part of the advisory committees' agenda; with no policy agenda coming from MTC, the Advisory Council has to develop its own – what does the Commission *need* from the Advisory Council?
- Have a process similar to the State of California Small Business Advisory Group, where they have a staff person report to the Governor quarterly on important topics for his direction, and he provides a response back.
- Provide an agenda item on the Commission agenda periodically (for example, twice a year) for advisors to report and get feedback.

Question 2: If the Advisory Committee structure were to be changed, what should that look like?

Committee comments:

- MTC needs to coordinate the diversity of interests, both advisory and advocacy.
- Is this process really just about cutting costs? Response: No, the Commission did not question the amount of resources dedicated to advisors. Rather the intent is to get greater productivity and effectiveness out of the existing allocation of resources, including advisors' time and effort.
- The current system seems to work well for MCAC. There the issue isn't so much the process but the fact that the Commission doesn't always listen to their recommendations.
- More direction from Commission on their priorities would be helpful.
- More direction from the Commission on priorities would be useful. Advisors don't know.
- If consolidation occurs, appoint people who represent constituencies who have connections in the community so that the advisors are also helping to provide that bridge back to the community on transportation issues.
- Advisory committee membership with a diversity of interests is important.

- The current structure uses few staff resources, but MTC, if necessary, could cut back even further if budget is an issue. However, reducing the number of advisors is not beneficial.
- A group larger than 25 would be difficult to engage in a productive participatory discussion.
- Need three advisory committees to get unique technical and policy advice, for example EDAC with TransLink<sup>®</sup> and 511, MCAC with DBE and contracting issues.
- The commission needs to let the committee know what they want feedback on.
- The committees become more of an advocacy group when they are not given a specific agenda.
- The question is how best to leverage the volunteer advisor. It is hard to be an inch deep and a mile wide; the benefit to advisors has to be tangible in terms of their time, which many donate from their professional time. First develop a strategic plan, then budget the time and resources to support it, and the result will be a much greater degree of accountability.
- It's a disservice to ask the different advisory committees to make recommendations about the other groups, when the decision is ultimately up to MTC.
- Staff support could be more targeted. Hire a coordinator to strictly focus on the three committees and develop the committee's recommendations/resolutions for the Commission based on the direction that the Commission gives the committees.
- Advisors currently do not have sufficient administrative support.
- Any advisory body needs a budget for both staff and research support. Advisors are willing to help put this together.

In the interest of time, discussion of the third question — What areas of concern do you have if the groups change? — was held over until the next meeting, Ms. Flint reminded committee members that she would also be able to receive written comments by e-mail until August 14.

#### **New Surface Transportation Act: CMAQ/STP Programming Update**

This item was deferred to the August 12, 2009 meeting.

#### **Other Business/Public Comment/Announcements**

There was no other business. The next meeting of the Advisory Council is scheduled for August 12, 2009. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.