



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 3

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Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: September 4, 2009

FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy

RE: Evaluation of MTC's Advisory Committee Structure

This is an informational item following up on a discussion at last June's Legislation Committee regarding MTC's advisory committees. At that time, the Committee gave direction for a comprehensive review of the existing advisory committee structure. This topic will be discussed further with our advisors later this month at a meeting tentatively scheduled for September 23.

Background

In June, MTC staff presented the evaluation of Transportation 2035 Plan's (T2035) public involvement program to the Legislation Committee. The evaluation, conducted by MTC's public involvement consultants, Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC), included a review of MTC's advisory committees' participation in the development of the 2035 Plan. Input from all three advisory committees on T2035 came via a series of 12 joint workshops. In order to gauge the value of these joint meetings, PMC surveyed 22 of the advisors who participated in four or more sessions. They found that the vast majority of advisors surveyed felt that:

- The joint forums were useful and provided them with an increased understanding of other viewpoints, and
- They were uncertain whether the comments they offered were conveyed to the Commission.

Evaluation Process and Recommendations to Improve Advisory Committee Structure

As part of the review, PMC facilitated discussions with all three advisory committees at their July meetings, and at a special joint workshop in August. They also interviewed staff, reviewed advisory committee agendas over the last few years, and compared advisory committees at similar agencies. Commissioners were also interviewed as part of the review of the 2035 public involvement program. Attachment 1 shows the present and proposed advisory committee structure; Attachment 2 is the full evaluation report for your consideration. In summary, PMC offers the Commission four key recommendations:

1. **Replace the existing structure with a new, multi-interest Citizen Policy Advisory Committee.** Establish a new, expanded and more inclusive committee to provide citizen advice to MTC's policy and program decisions (see Attachment 1).

2. **Provide strategic direction to citizen advisors.** The Commission should establish a mission, purpose and measurable goals for the new committee. The Commission and staff should communicate this strategic direction to the committee.
3. **Strengthen communication between advisors and Commissioners, and advisors and staff.** Establish formalized reporting and communications procedures to improve interaction between Commissioners and advisors, and executive staff and advisors.
4. **Solicit project- and program-specific technical advice.** Ensure that advisors continue to provide staff with specific technical advice for implementation of programs and projects.

Staff Comments

We fully acknowledge comments from advisors and recommendations from PMC that MTC's process for engaging its citizen advisors in key decisions needs improvement. The three existing committees were formed many years ago, and in the interim the breadth of issues that the Commission faces has changed dramatically to include complex topics such as climate change and focused growth. We see great potential in the recommendation for one integrated advisory group to offer policy advice to the Commission on an array of topics. Just as the Bay Area Partnership Board brings together public agency officials from different modes together to grapple with complex issues at one table, the holistic approach recommended would bring together different citizen perspectives to advise the Commission.

Next Steps

PMC staff will present the evaluation at your September 11, 2009 meeting and will request your input on the evaluation's recommendations. We will then forward the recommendations — along with comments from Legislation Committee members — to advisors at another joint session tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, September 23, following the Commission meeting. We will return to the Legislation Committee in October with a specific proposal. We welcome your ideas.



Ann Flemer