

**MEETING MINUTES
OF THE DVRPC REGIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 15, 2010**

Present: Aissia Richardson (Chair); Wanda Stuart, John Johnson, David Hojsak, Leah Colley, Ernest Cohen, Elaine Cohen, Andy Sharpe, Bob Machler, John Pawson, Bridget Chadwick, Jon Frey, Susanne Whitehead, William Faltermayer, Tom McHugh, John Burkhardt, Warren Strumpfer, Larry Menkes, Cheryl Tumola, Ray Rauanheimo, Dennis Winters, Jerome Lutin, Sue Herman, Dan Rappoport, Juanita Lewis Hatton, Kathryn Garza, Kathy Zukoski, John Butler, Carol Butler, Kamil Siddiqi, Li Dongquan(citizens); Candy Snyder, Jane Meconi, Patty Elkis, Gregory Krykewycz, Barry Seymour (staff); Donna Pitz (guest).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of the November 16, 2010 RCC meeting were approved as mailed.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS:

John Burkhardt reported that the Nominating Committee met prior to the RCC meeting and were unanimously submitting the name of Aissia Richardson for RCC Chair for Calendar Year 2011. The floor was opened for nominations; none were submitted and nominations were closed.

ACTION TAKEN BY COMMITTEE:

MOTION to unanimously elect Aissia Richardson as RCC Chair for Calendar Year 2011.

MOTION CARRIED.

Warren Strumpfer noted that the RCC should review the Nominating Committee procedures. Candace Snyder stated that it may also be a good time to review the RCC general operating procedures as well. In January, Aissia Richardson will appoint a task force to review these. RCC Vice Chairs and RCC representatives to other DVRPC committees will be named at the January RCC meeting.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Aissia Richardson reported that there was an additional Board action item that was not reviewed by the RCC, entitled "Regional Trails Network Re-Grant and Technical Assistance Program". This Work Program amendment, which is in conjunction with the William Penn Foundation, was approved by DVRPC, and will be an information item at the January RCC meeting.

Ms. Richardson also noted that there was a lot of discussion at the Board meeting regarding the Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis Tool Pilot Project Work Program amendment.

RTC REPORT

The RTC does not meet in December.

REPORTS FROM RCC REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER COMMITTEES:

Warren Strumpfer and Jim Richardson attended the Safety Action Task Force Meeting in November. The primary focus of discussion was the importance of keeping vehicles on the road. 38% percent of fatal road accidents occur when a vehicle leaves the road.

Dennis Winters is planning to attend the Regional Aviation Committee meeting on 12/16. He also wanted to thank DVRPC for the excellent Staff Showcase on December 3. There was discussion about whether the Showcase could be planned at a time where more RCC members could attend.

DISCUSSION ITEM: OVERVIEW OF THE DVRPC FISCAL YEAR 2012 WORK PROGRAM

Barry Seymour, DVRPC Executive Director, presented how DVRPC develops its Work Program, which is the agency's primary "blueprint" for all Commission activities within a given fiscal year. The Work Program is in place by March, and goes into affect at the start of DVRPC's fiscal year, July 1. The annual budget for the Work Program is \$25 million, and 25 percent of those funds pass through DVRPC directly to its member governments. Forty percent of the budget is contract work that DVRPC undertakes; i.e., DVRPC acts as a non-profit consulting firm to complete projects such as traffic counts, the Classic Towns program etc. The projects that DVRPC undertakes in this capacity have to be consistent with the agency's policies. Thirty-three percent of the budget is federal dollars that can be assigned to complete projects under the discretion of the Board. Several mandated projects, such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Environmental Justice/Public Participation, and the Long-Range Plan also fall under this category. The remainder of funding is then used to fund Work Program projects.

Work Program development begins in early fall, with outreach to the Board, RTC, RCC, other DVRPC committees, and member governments to identify priorities. DVRPC staff looks at the initial proposals as a preliminary screen to assess if the project can be done, how it could be funded, if it supports the Commission's policies, and if it fits into existing Work Program areas.

Every year, there are projects that are submitted that do not make it into the Work Program, including those that are submitted by staff and Board members. That doesn't mean that the project won't someday be included in some form, but at the time there may be funding issues (the Work Program is fiscally constrained) or the project is not identified as a priority by the Board.

Four RCC proposals were submitted to the Board this year, and two (Accessibility & Mobility Report for EJ communities and Transit Oriented Services) will be included in the Environmental Justice Work Program area, which will receive additional funding for Fiscal Year 2012.

The Work Program is not a static document; Work Program amendments come to the Board for review and approval throughout the fiscal year. The Work Program is currently under public review until January 14, 2011. The draft Work Program is available online and members of the public can submit comments or questions. The Work Program will go before the Board in January 2011 for approval.

Discussion: RCC members expressed the opinion that there seemed to be more car-related projects than projects for transit, or projects that lessen VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled). Mr. Seymour replied that DVRPC is one of the few MPOs that actually "flex" highway dollars to transit and that DVRPC's TIP is evenly split between highway and rail/alternative transportation modes.

Also, many program areas, such as the Congestion Management Process and Smart Growth, intrinsically support transit, pedestrian and bicycle planning. RCC members also discussed that the RCC's process for developing Work Program proposals went very smoothly this year. Finally, it was noted that the Work Program illustrates an enormous amount of creativity and contains a great list of projects.

STAFF PRESENTATION: SCOPING A SUCCESSFUL WORK PROGRAM PROJECT

Gregory Krykewycz, Senior Transportation Planner, DVRPC Office of Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning, presented how to scope a successful Work Program project. First, Mr. Krykewycz defined "success" in that the goals of a Work Program study or project should ultimately be about setting policy, actionable outcomes, and offer useful information to decision-makers. There are many planning reports that only sit on shelves; a successful report should always be implementable. The goal of a study is not simply to produce a report.

Mr. Krykewycz outlined the following steps for developing a Work Program proposal:

- 1: Start with a concrete idea that can be described in one paragraph. A study should note what question it is trying to answer; there should be no "fishing" to see what can be done.
- 2: Reach out to relevant implementing partners. Is there a related question that they would like answered through a study? The RCC can reach out to DVRPC staff to assist in coordinating this as well as to help package an idea.
- 3: Find a partner early in the process. If a project has any shot at being implemented, an implementing agency should be involved in the process.

Discussion: RCC members asked whether it would be beneficial to reach out to the counties when suggesting a Work Program idea. Mr. Krykewycz responded that county support would be greatly beneficial and could certainly enhance a proposal's chance of being selected for the Work Program.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

Patty Elkis, DVRPC Director, Comprehensive Planning, and Donna Pitz, Executive Director of the GreenSpace Alliance, presented a recently released study that documents the economic value of protected open space in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

The study found that there were specific benefits in the following areas:

Property value impacts: Open space adds \$16.3 billion to the value of Southeastern PA's housing stock, and protected open space generates \$240 million annually in property tax revenues to support county and municipal governments and local school districts

Environmental impacts: Southeastern PA realizes nearly \$61 million in annual cost savings from protected open spaces' ability to naturally filter out pollutants and replenish water supply. Also, trees on protected open space are estimated to provide \$17 million in annual air pollution removal and carbon sequestration services.

Recreation Impacts: Each household in the region saves \$392 a year by having open space available for recreation and exercise. There is a yearly \$1.3 billion of health-related cost savings, of which \$795 million of those are related to medical cost savings.

Economic Activity Impacts: Economic activity associated with open space in southeastern PA results in more than 6,900 jobs and \$299 million in annual earnings, as well as \$30 million per year in state and local tax revenue.

A media event was held in November to introduce the study and draw support from more than 80 attendees representing various organizations through the region. The results of this study will be used to educate the public and decision-makers about the economic value of protecting open space; raise political and financial support for more open space prevention; promote policy changes that will favor open space protection; and re-frame the dialogue about open space as a benefit, not just an expense. The study is not a cost of community services study, a cost benefit analysis, or can be construed to be used for one particular property.

Discussion: It was noted that this study should bolster the City of Philadelphia's efforts in its Green 2015 effort.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Action Task Force: The Action Task Force did not meet, as there were no Board action items to review.

Long-Range Plan Task Force:

MOTION PASSED BY THE RCC:

The RCC supports the successful "rails-with-trails" principle as a highly desirable way to achieve both freight or passenger rail service and pedestrian trails in the same corridor.

Specifically, we believe that the Pennypack Trail, already built, paved, and operating across Northeast Philadelphia as far as Pine Road, should be extended to the banks of the Pennypack Creek and to the proposed Cross County Corridor in eastern Montgomery County. This route should replace the disconnected gravel path built upon the Fox Chase-Newtown rail line between Rockledge Borough and Route 232. Further north, it should incorporate the existing Creek Road Trail, instead of the rail grade.

Such alignment will likely prove to be the least expensive, most promptly achieved, most direct, and most physically attractive routing for the Pennypack Trail.

Non-use of the Fox Chase-Newtown rail grade in this trail alignment will facilitate the ultimate restoration of rail service.

Transportation Research Board (TRB) Synthesis 374 entitled "Preserving Freight and Rail Passenger Corridors and Service" contains many relevant concepts for the Fox Chase-Newtown line, and for other dormant rail corridors in our region such as Quakertown-Hellertown Wawa-Chadds Ford Junction, and the Warminster-New Hope line. Included in the TRB document is the concept of marking dormant corridors at conspicuous points with signs stating that the future use of the grade for freight or passenger services may occur and warning persons in general from detracting in any way from that future use, such as using the right-of-way for dumping or removing material contained in it. The document contains two pictures of such signage actually in use.

We specifically recommend that this practice be used on the rights-of-way listed above.

RCC members will be following up with DVRPC staff, but it was noted by some RCC members that the focus of the resolution should be on policy and practice. This item will be further discussed at the January RCC meeting before it is brought to the Board at the end of January.

Work Program Task Force: The next meeting is scheduled for January 18, 2011.

OTHER BUSINESS:

John Pawson noted that there needs to be more balanced representation at the RCC in relation to a member's geographic location. This has been discussed many times both at the RCC level and at the Board and federal certification levels as well. Staff will provide a breakdown of membership by location, as well as by other demographic information.

Kathryn Garza noted that some good news has been released from the recent UN Climate Change conference in Cancun, Mexico.

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