

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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Special Focus Group Meeting for the Regional Transportation Plan

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Justice Advisory Board Meeting

Capitol Region Council of Governments

Hartford, CT

December 18, 2003

Minutes

Board Members Present: Katherine Jones, Career Team Plus; Charlie Carson, CT Transit; Mark Mitchell, Hartford Environmental Justice Network; Leon Churchill, Town of Windsor; Richard Parmlee, Sr, CT Hartford Environmental Justice Network.

Others: Mark Phillips and Grayson Wright, ConnDOT; Bradford Smith, Windsor; Jean Pottinger, Hartford; Tom Maziarz, Mario Marrero, and Karen Olson, CRCOG.

1. Welcome: Tom Maziarz called the meeting to order and welcomed members of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the update of the Capitol Region's Long Range Transportation Plan. This is the most important document prepared by CRCOG since it sets policy direction for the next 3 years and gives a long range (20 year) view to that policy. The EJAB was being asked to help insure that environmental justice issues were addressed in the Plan.

2. Discussion of Issues.

Mr. Maziarz referred the Board members to the Focus Group Briefing Paper on Environmental Justice. The briefing paper was used to guide the discussion.

a. Structure of CRCOG committees: Mr. Maziarz reminded the Board members that the EJAB had been established as a direct result of the work done under a federal Environmental Justice challenge grant and that two members of the EJAB had also been appointed to serve on CRCOG's Transportation Committee. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Advisory Committee however, had no representatives from with the minority or low-income communities. Richard Parmlee stated that he had searched for a person to join the committee but thus far had been unsuccessful. Leon Churchill stated that he did not think it was mandatory to have a representative of either EJ community, as long as the decisions made were sensitive to the concerns of minority and low-income citizens. Mr. Maziarz said that these concerns would be covered at the decision-making stage since those decisions are made by the Transportation Committee, where representation is assured. He remains open, however, to the suggestion of a name or two to add to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Committee.

b. Access to Jobs: Mr. Maziarz asked if the Access to Jobs program remained a high priority of the minority and low-income communities. Katherine Jones stated that it was important to continue to monitor the program and particularly the location of jobs so that the program can respond appropriately to the needs of the job seekers. Charlie Carson stated that the program was extremely important since it was meeting the otherwise unmet needs of so many people.

c. Better Transit Service: The Board members recognized the difficult situation concerning transit service in the State. While the need for service is growing, the available funds to provide transit

services have been cut. Mario Marrero pointed out that no new service had been added in the last four years (at least) except the Jobs Access Program. Jean Pottinger stated that it was not fair that Seabury Retirement Community received more transit service than Federation Homes, both in Bloomfield. She also stated that there needs to be better maintenance at bus stops particularly the removal of snow on the sidewalks and in the street. Mark Mitchell stated that a member of the CCEJ has a difficult time negotiating the sidewalks when snow is left on the sidewalks. Dr. Mitchell also stated that the Bus Users Forum was very valuable and should be continued. Following a discussion of federal funding levels of highways and transit, it was suggested that a funding fact sheet would be a valuable tool.

- d. **Rapid Transit Service:** The group did not discuss the rapid transit issue since there will be more data available at a future meeting on the distribution of benefits.
 - e. **Diesel emissions:** Dr. Mitchell stated that clean fuel buses should be supported for important health reasons. He added that particulates are the most critical emission. Reduction of diesel emissions should be a goal. Mr. Maziarz stated that CRCOG has not taken a position on that issue as yet.
 - f. **Pedestrian safety:** Ms. Jones stated that pedestrian safety issues were important because many more people were expected to come to downtown Hartford. Dr. Mitchell stated that crosswalks need to be made more pedestrian friendly. Mr. Churchill stated that these safety issues were important outside Hartford as well.
 - g. **Road designations:** Dr. Mitchell stated that the fact that major roads within the City of Hartford are not designated as State roads costs the City a lot of highway funding money. Mr. Maziarz stated that this issue has been addressed in the past and that in some respects the City does not want State road designation because the State then makes other critical decisions regarding the roadway. This is an issue that may need to be addressed again.
 - h. **Conclusions:** At the conclusion of the discussion the Board members agreed that all the issues raised in the briefing paper were issues of special concern to minority, low-income, and transit dependent communities in the region.
 - Improving access to jobs
 - Improving transit service
 - Developing a rapid transit system
 - Low emission buses & reducing diesel emissions in general
 - Improving pedestrian safety in urban areas
 - Improving bicycle traveling urban areas
3. **Next steps:** Mr. Maziarz stated that in the interest of time the Board would discuss priorities and also the proposed equity assessment measures at the next meeting of the EJAB. We will be contacting members to find a convenient meeting date for January.