

Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) Process Summary of July 22, 2009 Task Force Meeting

Attendance

Jim Stallman, David Simons, Herman Wadler- Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
(**BPAC**)

Charlotte Powers, Stephen Blaylock, Peter Skinner - Citizens Advisory Committee (**CAC**)

Aaron Morrow, Emma Eljas, Katie Heatley, Larry Saltman - Committee for Transit Accessibility
(**CTA**)

Chris Moylan - Policy Advisory Committee (**PAC**)

Ben Tripousis, Don Dey - Technical Advisory Committee (**TAC**)

Greta Helm, Deborah Harrington, Stephen Flynn, Jennie Loft, Ann Carey, Brandi Childress -
VTA Staff

Carmen Clark – **Facilitator**

The ACE Task Force met on July 22, 2009 at 11:30 a.m. in Conference Room B-104 of VTA's River Oaks Complex.

1. Staff briefly reviewed the options previously developed via the Advisory Committee Enhancement for improving the advisory committee process. These recommendations will be included in the report that will go to the A&F committee in August:
 - Inclusion of advisory committee vote and major comments/concerns on memos submitted to the Board of Directors and on a summary report provided to the Board Standing Committees.
 - Ability of each committee to submit for potential Board consideration future trends, potential areas of concern or proposed initiatives (this proposal will require Board approval).
 - Development of provisional mission statements for each committee (which require the adoption of the Board for inclusion in the respective committee bylaws).
 - Quarterly coordination meeting between VTA chairperson and vice chairperson and advisory committee chairpersons/vice chairpersons.
 - Annual orientation and training for advisory committee leadership (chairperson and vice chairperson).
 - Agreement that each committee will review and provide input on the Consolidated Board & Committee Work Plan.
2. Most of the meeting time was spent exploring the strategies that were discussed at the June meeting for improving advisory committee process, specifically focusing on increasing efficiency, communication, and efforts to build consensus among stakeholder groups. The strategies discussed, and the Task Force's input on each, are as follows:
 - *The VTA Organizational & Financial Assessment (Hay Group Report) recommendation to combine PAC and TAC.*

The consensus of the group was to not recommend this strategy to the Board of Directors. The reason stated for this was that since PAC and TAC serve separate but important functions and provide different perspectives, combining the two committees would result in

an unmanageable agenda as they would have to cover major policy items as well as fulfill technical workgroup responsibilities.

- *Modify frequency of meetings (bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.) for some or all committees.*

The consensus of the group was to not recommend this strategy to the Board of Directors. The main reason stated was that they did not want to have less than monthly meetings as it becomes difficult to time items to come before them, and could result in more items either coming late to the committee or missing them entirely. The committee wanted to retain flexibility and a schedule that allows for VTA business to come to them in a timely manner. Members pointed out that currently meetings are cancelled when the agendas do not merit holding a meeting, such as when items are not time-critical. Since meetings are cancelled when conditions warrant, that efficiency currently exists. Members also indicated that they wanted to retain the flexibility of holding special meetings when conditions warrant, but acknowledged that the associated scheduling challenges of arranging for staff resources, distribution of packets, and complying with the Brown Act could make this prohibitive. It was also noted that workshops allow more flexibility and do not have the same resource issues as regular meetings.

- *Modify existing committee structure:*

Under this strategy, the committee looked at four distinct options, specifically: merger of two or more committees; creation of subcommittees reporting to one or two primary committees; creating “ex officio” positions on committees; and holding joint meetings of two or more committees when reviewing items that are important to all.

A. Merger option:

- *PAC suggestion of merging all policy-based committees, and also merging all technical or operations-based committees, creating two separate committees: Community Policy (PAC and CAC) and Technical (BPAC, CTA and TAC).*

The consensus of the group was to not recommend this strategy to the Board of Directors. Several participants expressed that several committees, including BPAC and CTA, deal with both policy and technical issues and therefore it would inhibit their effectiveness to be lumped into solely the technical or the policy grouping.

One member noted that the emphasis should not be on reconstituting the committee structure, but rather on refining each committee’s current duties.

- *CAC suggestion that stakeholder groups common to CAC, BPAC and CTA be merged (for example, the Bicyclists position on CAC).*

The consensus was to not recommend this strategy to the Board at this time, pending further development, including reviewing the Comprehensive Board & Committee Work Plan by all advisory committee chairpersons to identify existing linkages and overlap between committees. Participants discussed the possibility of current BPAC and CTA members filling the Bicyclist, Pedestrian and Disabled seats on CAC, in order to improve communication, cooperation and understanding between the committees. This strategy was discussed at length, with the Task Force coming to a general consensus on the following factors:

- The same representative should attend the meetings when appropriate, to ensure continuity and a thorough understanding of the CAC and the issues it is considering. This means a specific BPAC and/or CTA member would be assigned to CAC, as

opposed to a CAC seat being assigned to those committees that could be filled by any of its membership on an ad hoc or rotational basis.

- The representative should have the authority to fully represent the committee and speak on its behalf.

Members discussed, without coming to a consensus, whether this representative should serve as an ex-officio or a voting member, whether it should be filled by the committee chair or vice chair, and whether the representative should attend all meetings or just those with items pertinent to their other committee. Members also acknowledged that it would be difficult for many members to attend a second meeting each month, especially working individuals and those with disabilities.

➤ *PAC suggestion that CAC serve as the committee representing policy stakeholders.*

The consensus of the group was to not recommend this strategy to the Board. This recommendation would eliminate PAC as an advisory committee, leaving CAC as the sole committee representing policy stakeholders. Several members expressed that PAC provides a valuable perspective and information conduit to and from the Board, one that cannot be supplied by another existing committee, and therefore PAC should not be eliminated.

B. Subcommittee option:

Have BPAC and CTA serve as technical expertise working groups of the TAC.

The consensus of the group was to not recommend this strategy to the Board at this time, pending further development including review of the Comprehensive Board & Committee Work Plan by all advisory committee chairpersons. Participants indicated this proposal should be given further consideration after the committee chairpersons have reviewed the Comprehensive Work Plan for linkages between committees. It was also noted that working groups, because they are less formalized, require fewer staff resources.

C. Ex Officio option:

The members of several advisory committees expressed the desire to have the option to send a designated representative to other advisory committee meetings, to sit as an “ex officio” member, at the table with the rest of the committee, with right to participate in the discussion but not have voting rights. This was more flexible than just sending someone to sit in the audience and offer input (limited in time) as it allows for discussion with the committee as opposed to just expressing an opinion. One member expressed frustration with the “ex officio” position as they indicated that they would want the authority to vote. There were several members who indicated that time constraints for those who are working and have other commitments may make it difficult to find individuals willing to sit on more than one committee per month.

D. Joint meetings option:

- *Hold joint meetings where appropriate or conduct workshops in lieu of scheduled meetings.*

The consensus of the group was to recommend this strategy to the Board of Directors. Participants indicated general support for holding combined meetings of two or more committees where feasible, including potentially one meeting annually of all five committees to discuss the major issues and initiatives for the upcoming year and to discuss common concerns and issues. Members also noted that joint meetings may pose logistical challenges.

3. General Discussion

The group also agreed that the chairpersons of all advisory committees should meet periodically to review the Consolidated Board and Committee Work Plan as a group. This will not only provide each committee the ability to suggest items that they wish to add or delete from their committee work plan to ensure early involvement in the development process but provide the opportunity to identify linkages between committees and also opportunities for joint meetings.

Members expressed that consideration should be given to changing the meeting time for advisory committees from daytime to evenings, to make it more feasible for working members to attend. However, CTA members pointed out that due to their commute challenges and the need to arrange for special transportation, most CTA members would prefer that meetings be held during the day. VTA staff mentioned that the additional cost of staffing night meetings should be considered.

Members also noted that one of the implicit barriers in the Task Force, which directly affects any consideration of combining committees or modifying their membership, is that self-preservation of their committee naturally is each member's first goal. Members acknowledged that in the end, it is the Board's decision on the number, composition and responsibilities of the advisory committees providing input to them.

4. Next steps

Periodic updates on the ACE process are provided to the Administration and Finance (A&F) standing committee for their information and consideration. The next update is scheduled for the August 20, 2009 A&F meeting. Task Force members agreed they would not meet again until after the A&F report has been received and the Board provides further direction. **As such, the July 29th meeting date has been cancelled.**