

Advisory Committee Enhancement (ACE) Process Summary of June 24, 2009 Task Force Meeting

Attendance

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

Charlotte Powers, Bob Jacobvitz - Citizens Advisory Committee (**CAC**)

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

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

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

Greta Helm, Deborah Harrington, Stephen Flynn, Jennie Loft - **VTA Staff**

Carmen Clark – **Facilitator**

The ACE Task Force met on June 24, 2009 at 11:30 a.m. in Conference Room B-104 of VTA's River Oaks Complex.

Staff briefly reviewed the purpose and goals of the ACE Process, which was initiated by the VTA Board and General Manager to address recommendations contained in the VTA Organizational & Financial Assessment (Hay Group) and Bureau of State Audits (BSA) reports.

The goals of the ACE Process are:

- Efficient use of resources
- Enhanced communication
- Consensus building
- Informed discussion

A majority of the meeting was spent exploring options for improving the advisory committee process. This included examining potential strategies for increasing meeting efficiency as well as for sharing information or building consensus among stakeholder groups and committees. A key focus was on improving cost effectiveness. The strategies discussed, and the Task Force's conclusions on them, are:

- *The VTA Organizational & Financial Assessment (Hay Group Report) recommendation to combine PAC and TAC.*

The majority of Task Force members at the meeting strongly disagreed with this recommendation, stating that the PAC and TAC serve completely different but important functions and thus should remain as is. The consensus of the group was to delete this strategy from further consideration.

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

The concept of some or all committees meeting on a schedule other than monthly to improve cost-effectiveness was discussed. Included was the proposal for two of the technically-oriented committees (BPAC and CTA) to meet every other month, with the provision of holding special meetings when needed. Most participants indicated they felt their committee needed to meet monthly in order to consider and provide input on the items on their work plan in a timely fashion. The consensus of the group was to delete this strategy from further consideration.

However, the suggestion was reiterated to give consideration to moving TAC meetings from Thursdays to earlier in the same week so TAC members have adequate opportunity to brief their PAC representative.

Members expressed that it was important for each committee to have the ability to hold special meetings when needed.

- *Modify existing committee structure:*
 - *PAC suggestion of combining policy-based committees and technical/operations-based committees into two separate committees: Community Policy (PAC and CAC) and Technical (BPAC, CTA and TAC).*

The concept of combining the committees based upon expertise and defined responsibilities was discussed at length. Several participants expressed that it might be difficult or disadvantageous to combine the technical committees. Some members thought combining the memberships would inhibit discussion or make it difficult to participate, while other thought the different perspectives would be beneficial. It was also noted that BPAC and TAC serve different functions: BPAC members are advocates whereas TAC members are responsible for implementation.

It was also suggested that PAC and CAC be combined, forming a body similar to the Santa Clara County Transportation Commission that existed in the early 1990's, but this suggestion received minimal support.

Multiple members expressed that due to the size, complexity and broad responsibilities of VTA, the number of advisory committee was appropriate. It was further expressed that what was needed was an effective mechanism for the advisory committees to share information.

The general consensus of the group was that this strategy should remain for further consideration, including development of specific proposals on how the committees would be combined (for example, would the existing memberships be combined into one large committee or would the numbers of members be reduced).

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

Participants discussed the possibility of current BPAC and CTA members filling the Bicyclist, Pedestrian and Disabled seats, in order to improve communication, cooperation and understanding between committees. It was also suggested that this and other Task Force recommendations could be both phased in and implemented on a trial basis.

The general consensus of the group was that this strategy should remain for further consideration and development, including the specifics on whether the individuals appointed to these seats would attend both meetings (CAC and their own) and how would the individual appointment be determined. Task Force members indicated it would be possible for a member to attend both meetings. Members also indicated that the feedback loop that would result would be advantageous.

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

This recommendation would have eliminated PAC as an advisory committee to the VTA Board and staff, leaving CAC as the sole committee representing policy stakeholders.

Several Task Force members expressed disagreement with this recommendation, stating that because it is comprised of elected officials from each of the county's cities plus the County of Santa Clara, the PAC supplies a valuable perspective and information conduit to and from the jurisdictions represented, one that cannot be supplied by another existing committee. The general consensus of the group was to delete this strategy from further consideration.

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

Participants indicated that the CTA, and especially the BPAC, were already serving informally as technical advisors to the TAC. It was also indicated that it would be difficult to codify this relationship. Other members indicated that it would be best to keep separate the advocacy function of the BPAC from the project funding and implementation responsibilities of the TAC.

The general consensus of the group was that this strategy should remain for possible further consideration, dependent on development of specifics on the relationships between TAC and the other two committees and what changes would result from CTA and BPAC becoming working groups of TAC. Other considerations, such as the appointment process, would also have to be reviewed.

- *Hold joint meetings where appropriate or conduct workshops in lieu of scheduled meeting (similar to Board's July Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting and Board workshops on important items).*

Participants indicated general support for holding combined meetings of two or more committees where feasible, including potentially one meeting annually that would include all five committees to discuss the major issues and initiatives for the upcoming year.

The general consensus of the group was that this strategy should be one of the Task Force's recommendations to the Board

The Task Force did not suggest any new potential strategies from those listed on the agenda. However, members indicated that consideration should be given to having any changes implemented be subject to a trial period. This trial period would end at a predefined date when the effectiveness of the modification would be reviewed and the decision made on whether to continue with the trial, modify the implemented strategy, or make it permanent. In effect, each implemented modification would be subject to a test drive.

Staff provided a brief overview on the purpose and benefit of the VTA Consolidated Board and Committee Work Plan. This tool provides advisory committees the opportunity to review all items projected to be considered by the Board, each standing committee, and each advisory committee during the six-month period (January – June and July – December). It also provides committee members 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. The Consolidated Work Plan also illustrates to committee members the extremely large volume of items considered by the Board and each standing every month.

Lastly, the Task Force scheduled its next meeting for Wednesday, July 22 at 11:30 a.m., Conference Room B-104 of VTA's River Oaks Campus. The group also agreed to keep open Wednesday, July 29 (11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., same meeting room, lunch provided) as a potential additional meeting date in case development of its recommendations is not completed and general consensus is not achieved at the July 22nd meeting.

Next Steps

At its next meeting, the Task Force will continue discussion of strategies for improving the advisory committee process, with focus on strategies for increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness (streamlining). VTA Board Chairperson Dolly Sandoval and Vice Chairperson Sam Liccardo have been invited to attend Task Force meetings. Due to prior commitments, neither can attend the July meeting.