

# Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity (ACTE)

December 15, 2016

Meeting Notes

## ATTENDEES

### *Committee Members:*

- Chairman Michael Nutter – Professor of Professional Practice in Urban & Public Affairs, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs
- Mr. Billy Altom – Executive Director, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living
- Ms. Ann Ferro – President and CEO, American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators
- Ms. Angela Glover Blackwell – President and CEO, PolicyLink
- Dr. Joe Grengs – Professor, University of Michigan Urban and Regional Planning
- Mr. Van Jones – President, Dream Corps (participated by teleconference)
- Mr. Robert Puentes – President and CEO, ENO Center
- Dr. Beverly Scott – Chief Executive Officer, Beverly Scott Assoc., LLC
- Dr. Jim Spencer – Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, Clemson University
- Mr. Phillip Washington – Chief Executive Officer, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

### *USDOT Office of the Secretary (OST) Participants:*

- Mr. Keith Benjamin – Transportation Specialist, Office of Policy Development, Strategic Planning & Performance
- Ms. Artealia Gilliard – Deputy Assistant Secretary, Transportation Policy
- Ms. Stephanie Jones – Senior Counselor to the Secretary and Chief Opportunities Officer
- Ms. Barbara McCann – Director, Office of Policy Development, Strategic Planning & Performance

## WELCOME AND MISSION OF ACTE

Chairman Nutter welcomed the Advisory Committee on Transportation Equity (ACTE) and the public and brought the meeting to order. He provided an overview of the committee's objectives, as laid out in the [ACTE Charter](#). The committee was established by Secretary Foxx, as authorized by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The purpose of the ACTE is to provide independent advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation about comprehensive, interdisciplinary issues related to transportation equity from a variety of stakeholders involved in transportation planning, design, research, policy, and advocacy. The Committee will remain in place for two years, and after that date the charter may be renewed.

Stephanie Jones, the USDOT Chief Opportunities Officer, described how it is important to the Secretary that opportunity is part of everything that USDOT does. Transportation options are critical to advancing opportunity. The ACTE can help institutionalize the opportunity principles that the Department has recognized over the last several years.

Ms. Jones encouraged the committee to think of transportation not just as the movement of people and goods, but as something that influences the entire community. With major transportation infrastructure coming to the end of its service life, there is an opportunity to replace this infrastructure with something that benefits communities. Mistakes have been made in the past, and there is a need to remedy those mistakes and to not replicate them in the future. Transportation decisions need to be made by, with, and for communities.

Ms. Jones described materials that have been provided to ACTE members that reflect USDOT initiatives to advance opportunity. These include:

- Information about and a report summarizing the [Every Place Counts Design Challenge](#), which brought together community members to reimagine existing transportation projects via innovative and restorative infrastructure design that corrects past mistakes;
- [Every Place Counts Leadership Academy](#) and Toolkit, which has the goal of demystifying the transportation planning process and empowering the public to get involved to improve their communities;
- A [report on the LadderSTEP Initiative](#), which provided technical assistance to seven communities to foster sustainable economic development related to planned transportation projects; and
- A brochure on the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program and contracting with USDOT for small businesses.

## LADDERS OF OPPORTUNITY OVERVIEW

Secretary Foxx provided an overview of the Department's work on opportunity. USDOT is trying to build a culture of opportunity into its systems, and has taken many steps towards this in the last several years.

Work to advance opportunity includes initiatives to help communities discover their voice and affect decision-making, such as Every Place Counts and LadderSTEP. The Department is also institutionalizing work in this area by asking grant applicants to describe how their projects will help improve access and reconnect communities. In December 2016, Secretary Foxx signed a new National Environmental Policy Act order to require public input earlier in the environmental review process. USDOT will be releasing new Title VI guidance soon as well.

The ACTE will help the Department further its efforts on these topics and push it to do better.

## COMMITTEE FACILITATED DISCUSSION

### *Responses to Secretary Foxx*

- This committee can play a role in setting the strategy for developing new infrastructure in a way that involves communities and promotes transportation as an economic engine. (Mr. Washington)
- Secretary Foxx has set a new paradigm for transportation planners and communities about how to address opportunity in transportation planning and involve the community. (Ms. Ferro)
- Opportunity should be a part of everything that the transportation sector does. It is important to follow the money and follow the decision-making by understanding and getting involved with what metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are doing. (Dr. Scott)

- Changing established business models is also important. For example, a 40-year contract sets things in stone for a while, and if a community doesn't participate in developing the contract initially they won't have the ability to later on. (Dr. Scott)
- It is important to put data and facts behind arguments about equity. (Dr. Scott) Data is what people want to see, but stories are also helpful. (Ms. Blackwell)
- There are real fears that if a community invests in transportation infrastructure, the current residents will be priced out. We need to figure out a way to capture the value of new investments to benefit the community. We should consider whether we talking about equity at the community or the individual level. (Dr. Spencer)
- The media and messaging often gets left out of discussions about policy development or implementation, but it should be part of the discussion from the beginning. (Mr. Jones)
- Many transportation professionals think about how to move vehicles, not about the people using transportation services. It is important to think about accessibility in addition to mobility. We should be asking, "Is the project helping people get to more opportunities?" to inform performance metrics and decision-making. (Dr. Grengs)
- One standard metric for transportation projects should be carbon footprint and the project's impact on climate change. (Chairman Nutter)
- Since transportation investments last for generations, we have to be careful to get them right today. (Mr. Puentes)
- It is important to involve the community in transportation decision-making, and the Every Place Counts Leadership Academy/Toolkit is helping to do that. We have to get infrastructure right the first time. (Mr. Altom)

#### *Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)*

- Strong-mayor cities and weak-mayor cities differ in how they address community impacts in transportation planning. In weak-mayor cities, there may be more of a constituency for addressing these impacts. (Secretary Foxx)
- The biggest opportunities for PPPs are related to Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Some people in the labor community are concerned about PPPs because of their impact on job creation and local hiring. (Secretary Foxx)
- For TOD, coordinating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development is critical. Housing drives the cost of living, and housing ownership can help prevent gentrification around TOD. (Dr. Spencer)
- Many communities are wary of PPPs and whether public services will be preserved and people will be able to benefit economically from them. It is important to take these concerns seriously. (Ms. Blackwell)
- Privatization does not change the need for transportation infrastructure to serve a public function. (Ms. Blackwell)
- The urban areas that passed transportation funding ballot initiatives in November have some leverage to get projects built in their communities. For PPPs, it is important to understand the lifecycle of the projects and the agreements. (Mr. Washington)
- With the new administration likely to focus on infrastructure, the ACTE has an opportunity to make the conversation about infrastructure investment and shared prosperity. (Dr. Scott)
- It is important to build capacity from the bottom up for understanding PPPs. Cases in which PPPs are problematic are when the public doesn't know what it wants. (Mr. Puentes)

- Principles of opportunity apply to rural areas as well as urban ones. The absence of intercity passenger rail has hurt rural America more than urban America, as intercity rail would reduce transportation costs for people living in rural areas. (Secretary Foxx)
- From an equity standpoint, we need to think about how to meet infrastructure needs and how the money flows. PPPs cannot meet all infrastructure needs. (Secretary Foxx)
- A key to social equity is what happens to the form of urban space. Decentralization of urban space will hurt low income and minority communities. (Dr. Grengs)

#### *Outreach*

- USDOT has helped to expand to pool of people entering transportation careers. For example, the Department now evaluates air traffic controllers in an equitable way. As a result, the number of minorities and women in air traffic controller careers has increased. (Secretary Foxx)
- One of the best tools for outreach and education is the University Transportation Centers (UTCs). This year, a number of historically underserved universities received grant funding as UTCs. Some of the UTCs also have partnerships with community colleges. (Secretary Foxx)
- USDOT has an opportunity to make automation work for everyone, not just for the well-off. (Secretary Foxx)

#### *TIGER Grants*

- Some of the projects funded by TIGER wouldn't have happened without the program. (Secretary Foxx)
- TIGER has established itself in a post-earmark world and focuses on the merits of the projects. Earmarks may be returning, and that could mean that some of the discretion that the Executive Branch has now may be transferred back to Congress. (Secretary Foxx)
- Earmarks also happen at the state and local levels. Competition occurs between counties for state funds, and there are few incentives for counties to work together to achieve regional solutions, such as coordinated transit systems. (Dr. Spencer) The new USDOT rule on MPOs will encourage regional coordination. (Secretary Foxx)
- A lot of the work that USDOT has done on opportunity has not been celebrated in the public sphere. There is a big jobs impact of this work, and the public is not recognizing it. (Mr. Jones)
- Infrastructure includes human capital, and there is a need for more modular training to train employees for positions that don't require a four-year college degree. (Dr. Scott)

#### *Final comments from Secretary Foxx*

- The committee has a role to play in building off of what has been done so far in the Department relating to equity and opportunity, and informing the new administration about this. Transportation is not just about providing access, but also about making places better. (Secretary Foxx)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

- Paul Grugin, American Motorcyclist Association (AMA): The AMA supports the work that committee is doing on equity. The AMA can provide information to the committee about this segment of the transportation industry.
- Rick Rybeck, Just Economics, LLC: The public often ends up paying twice for infrastructure – once in the form of taxes and again in the form of higher rents – while the value created from

these projects often goes to the landowner. In his written testimony, Mr. Rybeck provided a diagram of how to use the value created by transportation projects to return it to the public.

- Carmen Harris, Girl Trek: Transportation infrastructure can serve as a barrier to people walking. USDOT should prioritize investments that serve women of color, their families, and communities. The ACTE should work with other agencies and communities to ensure that people will still be in their homes 10 years after transportation investments.

Written testimony was provided by these speakers and other individuals, and is available as part of the meeting record. (Please see PDF of statements at [www.transportation.gov/acte](http://www.transportation.gov/acte))

## ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Chairman Nutter stated that one element of the ACTE Charter is to make recommendations to the Secretary on best practices for expanding the equity and opportunity of the transportation system, and on transportation equity metrics. He asked the group for input on next steps and direction:

- The committee could play a role in advancing the concepts of equity and opportunity in the incoming administration. The committee could respond to specific policy proposals, or proactively release a statement of values or priorities related to equity.
- USDOT has provided the landing team with briefing materials about the Department's programs, including information on the elements of the Ladders of Opportunity initiative. (Ms. McCann)
- Committee members discussed releasing a public statement, taken from the committee charter, about the importance of equity in transportation planning.
- The committee should develop a strategic plan on transportation equity within a year. The committee should meet with a representative in the new administration after January 20 about the committee's role and priorities. (Chairman Nutter)
- The committee could review and respond to infrastructure proposals in coordination with USDOT's internal working group on transportation equity.
- The ACTE is open to receiving materials from the public. Committee members should share information about the committee to their networks, and encourage them to provide comments and input. (Chairman Nutter)
- USDOT should put out a press release informing the public that the committee has been established, who its members are, and that it held its first meeting. (Chairman Nutter)