

Bryan/College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization

MPO Policy Board Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2018

Certification of Quorum:

Voting members present were Commissioner Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; Councilmember Greg Owens, Vice Chair, City of Bryan; Mayor Karl Mooney, Member, City of College Station; Lance Simmons, Member, TxDOT Bryan District Engineer; and Dr. Bill Stockton, Member, Texas A&M Transportation Institute. A list of persons who attended is attached.

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Commissioner Berry called to order the regular meeting of the MPO Policy Board at 9:01 a.m. on March 7, 2018, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States and Texas flags with an invocation given by Mr. Dan Rudge.

2. Public Comments regarding items not on the Agenda

No public comments were received.

3. Review and approval of February 7, 2018, Policy Board Minutes

Minutes from the February 7, 2018, Policy Committee Meeting were considered for adoption. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Owens. The motion was seconded by Mr. Simmons. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

4. Staff Report

Texas Innovation Alliance – The group was asked to choose the top five priorities out of the five main pillars that are used for the Innovation Alliance. The projects submitted were: 1) The human service agency client coordination or the shared human service transportation program. 2) Create a universal paratransit fare media system that would be applicable across all providers in the State of Texas. 3) Seamless planning which deals with developing a platform that allows citizens to have an app on their phone to get real time traffic information, accident information, the availability of public transit, the availability of ridesharing applications (Uber, Lyft), and giving them a variety of options to get from point A to point B before they leave their house or work. 4) Make Every Day a Game Day is a project that incorporates solutions from some of the game day lessons learned and applies them to every day peak period traffic. 5) A bird's eye traffic management system similar to the seamless one, but dealing more with inclement weather applications so that people know if there is flooding, etc. Those were the five projects selected and that best matched

up with the original three that were chosen. Team B/CS is still pursuing the Regional Mobility Symposium which includes the survey that was approved a couple of months ago.

FY 2019-FY 2022 Transportation Improvement Plan – The Technical Advisory Committee will be taking up the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program at their next meeting. The document requires a 45-day public comment period. Since the TIP cannot be taken up by the Policy Board in April, there will not be a Policy Board meeting. It is important that the TIP be approved in May, because after May 27th all Transportation Improvement Programs must be FAST Act compliant. What that means is that for every project in the TIP, a description would need to be written of how it meets performance measures and goals of the state transportation plan and our own Metropolitan Transportation Plan, including the targets that we've set. The goal is to have it approved before the May 27th deadline.

Regional Bicycle Plan and RELIS – The Active Transportation Advisory Panel has put together a Regional Bicycle Plan map that the TAC will review at their next meeting. One of the concerns of the ATAP is that they do not have enough information at this point about the RELLIS Campus to suggest the proper linkages between the rest of the community and the RELLIS Campus, particularly as it relates to getting from RELLIS to Downtown Bryan and from RELLIS to Blinn College. MPO staff will be working on that with them as we get more information.

5. FY 2017 – FY 2020 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Three

Brazos Transit District is not receiving any new funds, but they are moving forward money that they received in FY 2015 and applying it in FY 2017 and FY 2018, primarily for operating assistance. Funds that were received in FY 2017 are being moved into FY 2018 to use for operating assistance, their American's With Disabilities Act Transportation Program, preventative maintenance, debt service, short range planning, and project administration. Those are the amendments that were included in the TIP amendment. The changes appear on pages 16 and 17 with an updated summary table on page 18. The 15-day public comment period concluded yesterday at 5:00 pm and the MPO received no public comments. Dr. Stockton made the motion to approve Amendment Three to the FY 2017 – FY 2020 Transportation Improvement Program. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Owens. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

6. Presentation on Draft Federal Legislative Action Plan

Dr. John Nichols, Chair of the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee presented the Chamber's draft Federal Legislative Action Plan (FLAP), Transportation section. The FLAP brochure is the device that is used to carry information to D.C. in May, and a group is getting organized to do that. There are eight or ten different sections in the plan. Historically, the transportation section is included as one of the important areas that we can highlight to educate and share with our congressional delegation, not just the Bryan/College Station area, but all the Texas delegation when they

go to Congress to meet with them. Michael Parks, Teddi Ellison, and Dr. Nichols are the three that have been working together to develop the transportation section. The document is first brought to the FLAP coordinating committee that Mike Conner chairs. Today at 1 p.m., the bullets that are being shown today will be brought before the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Chamber. Once they approve the document, it goes to the Chamber Board for their approval. Once the board approves, it goes to print. Currently they are developing talking points for each area. Dr. Nichols invited the Policy Board to present any thoughts that they felt may help to articulate what the needs and opportunities are.

The introduction to the set of six bullets simply sets the stage. It isn't much different than what has been done in previous years, but they did try to highlight the word innovation. The document shows opportunities for moving beyond what technology and ability we currently have available by capitalizing on some of our local talent and institutions to move forward in that area. The document also emphasizes that we are in a high growth rapid economic development population expansion area. That is where investments are needed and it is hoped that the delegates that are visited will work together with us. Larry Meyers has reviewed the set of bullets and they have received feedback from his office. Mr. Meyers is well connected in Washington, D.C., particularly on transportation issues. The six bullets contained in the document regarding transportation are:

- Appropriating funds for planning and developing I-14 extending westward to Midland/Odessa and eastward to I-45 and to the Louisiana border.

I-14 has been on the list in past FLAP presentations, but was moved up to the top. The narrative has moved beyond simply approving the idea that there would be an I-14, and they are trying to emphasize the need to begin to appropriate funds for planning and developing I-14. They focused mainly on the I-35 to I-45 connection and onward to the Louisiana border. If speaking with the Texas delegation, they will recognize that westward is also important to many of our state congressional delegation, so that was also added. The point is really emphasizing moving forward to find ways to get appropriations moving for planning and development.

- Developing new, equitable funding mechanisms, vehicle motor tax, or person-trips taxes, and increase the fuel tax to stabilize and restore the Highway Trust Fund.

The ever-present Highway Trust Fund discussion is included in the list again this year. They broadened it a bit to communicate not only is the increase in the fuel tax needed, and apparently there is some discussion of that which they want to encourage in a positive way. Mr. Parks shares the opinion there is no point in trying to increase dollars in a broken fund. The thought is we really need to move to some more creative mechanisms of vehicle motor tax, person-trips, etc. They will expand those ideas so the people carrying the message can elaborate a little bit on how real they are, how close to being adopted they could be, and what the technology is that would allow us to get

away from the fuel only and look at highway use in terms of people miles or vehicle miles.

- Increasing federal infrastructure funding that will address locally prioritized transportation needs.

The emphasis here is twofold. If there is going to be some big infrastructure discussions in Congress, we want to be involved and highlight what we hope our local legislators will do to put that forward in an appropriate way. The locally prioritized transportation needs could be read as a euphemism for what used to be called earmarks. There has been discussion, and apparently leadership in congress is not nearly as interested in it as some of the congressmen themselves. There is a movement to try to find a new way to allow individual congressional districts to have some allocation of funds that they can dedicate to specific locally prioritized needs. Really what the MPO and our local planning groups are all about is to have those priorities already settled. Then, our congressional delegation has an opportunity to influence something. They would like to see that happen so we are encouraging them to support those kind of initiatives should there be an opportunity to get it done politically.

- Developing innovative regulations complementary to high speed rail and insure the Federal Railroad Administration and USDOT support for safe, sustainable and privately funded high speed rail.

The community is on record as supporting safe, sustainable, privately funded high speed rail. The teachable moment is to encourage our congressional delegates to point out to the regulatory environment that high speed rail is different than heavy rail from a safety point of view. As we understand it, there are some issues that in the traditional safety discussions of the bureaucracy of Federal Railroad Administration, they are always thinking about protection of crash from heavy rail crossing highways, running into each other, etc. The entire idea here is this is self-contained unique high speed rail system that is totally independent of any other rail and will not ever have a reason to be worried about those kinds of crashes. You must take advantage of light weight high speed low energy use and try and get that message across. It is important to emphasize because we all want safety, and that's got to be number one, but there are different ways of getting that done in the rail industry if you look at the individual investments.

- Developing funding and regulatory actions to speed up research and application of technology that will expand transportation options including artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, public transit, smart infrastructure and cyber security.

This bullet overlaps with the section on higher education and research. The purpose is to highlight the opportunity to fund and take regulatory action that will speed up research and the application technology to take advantage of the various test beds in Brazos County, the tremendous resources at TTI, other university and research institutions, and the RELLIS Campus. There is an opportunity to do a whole host of

things here so they are trying to reinforce the message that they are presenting from the higher education section. The talking points will give examples of artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, public transport, smart infrastructure, and cyber security which are all areas that can come together and benefit from increased funding and a clearer pathway from a regulatory point of view. These projects need to be advanced from basic research into application by getting them on the road and tested.

- Streamlining of Federal permitting processes for infrastructure development.

Environmental permitting is a regulatory barrier for getting projects online. With all of the rollback of regulatory efforts that the Trump administration has done this past year, it was thought that maybe it didn't need to be highlighted as much. They were reminded that environmental is one thing, but there are still a whole host of issues in the regulatory world. Narrative should be included that says we need to streamline the permitting processes for infrastructure development. Not doing away with them, but setting deadlines when different agencies need to respond in order to get clearance and move on so projects are not held up for years.

After Dr. Nichols presentation, Board Members had the opportunity to ask questions. Mayor Mooney asked if on the I-14 part, they would specify that our community would like to see the route pass through not just the Brazos Valley, but specifically through Bryan and College Station. From an economic standpoint, there are a number of business that will bypass Bryan/College Station because we are not in close proximity to an interstate. Dr. Nichols said they had not discussed it yet as a committee and would have to defer to experts on alignment versus route. Mr. Simmons explained that any organization is allowed to express their preference; however, many people would be involved in deciding the route alignment and it would be a statewide process. It must go through the NEPA process which must be done a certain way and is not done by a vote or governing body. Mr. Nichols said that depending on who you are meeting with, and what their interests and priorities are, would determine the message, and if I-14 was even discussed. For example, if meeting with someone who represents Huntsville, then it would be brought up; however, if meeting with someone from Midland/Odessa, it would not be a very important point to make. Mayor Mooney further gave the example of I-45 where one sleepy little town can now post bond issues and the sales tax revenue basically covers it. He has spoken with the mayor of Huntsville, and as high speed rail was mentioned, with a stop there he believes we would all be benefitted by I-14 coming down SH 6 to SH 30 and then on to Huntsville. Commissioner Berry wanted to be sure that one of the talking points was that Bryan/College Station is the largest metropolitan area in the country without access to an interstate. Dr. Nichols said that was one of the talking points and it has been for quite a while. Commissioner Berry thanked Dr. Nichols for his presentation and for the work done by him, Mr. Parks, and Ms. Ellison.

7. Adjourn

The next Policy Board meeting will be May 2nd at 9 a.m.

Dr. Stockton attended a Texas State Transportation Innovation Council meeting yesterday. The meeting was jointly sponsored by TxDOT and Federal Highways. As part of the Texas Innovation Alliance, he was really proud to hear when they are announcing the four MPO's that are taking leadership roles in key areas, Bryan/College Station MPO was one of those that they called out as doing a super job in leading the Equity and Access focus area. This is the advocacy role that Mr. Rudge and the committee are taking to make sure Human Services agencies have the ability to coordinate transportation and that people have true access to services that they might otherwise miss due to lack of coordination. He gave Kudos to Dan and the committee.

The Policy Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

Tracy Perry

MPO Policy Board Chair or Vice-Chair
Bryan-College Station
Metropolitan Planning Organization

5-2-18

Date

ATTEST:

Daniel Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO