Certification of Quorum:
The following TAC Members were present: Paul Kaspar, Chair, City of Bryan; Tim Lomax, Vice-Chair, TTI-TAMU; Jason Schubert, City of College Station; Alan Munger, Brazos County; Wendy Weedon, Brazos Transit District; Chad Bohne, TxDOT; Bart Benthul, BCSMPO; and Dan Rudge, BCSMPO. A list of persons who attended is attached.

1. Welcome and open meeting

Paul Kaspar called to order the regular meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee at 2:35 p.m. on March 27, 2017, in the Brazos Transit District Conference Room, 1759 North Earl Rudder Freeway, Bryan, TX.

2. Minutes from February 16, 2016, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings

Minutes from the February 16, 2017, Technical Advisory Committee Meeting were considered for adoption. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Tim Lomax. The motion was seconded by Jason Schubert. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

3. Presentation by Halff Associates on potential concepts for bicycle and pedestrian safety on University Drive.

Christian Lentz introduced himself along with Aaron Cooper, Jim Carrillo, and Eric Ratzman from Halff Associates. For this particular project, when talking about the corridor study, they are referring to bicycle and pedestrian connectivity along and across the FM 60/University Drive corridor. A few weeks ago the same group from Halff held two days of meetings where they received a lot of varied input on pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across and along the University Drive corridor and how that could be best accomplished. Through these conversations, they were able to discover a number of recurring themes. Halff wanted to meet with the TAC and ATAP to make sure the information presented was truly reflective of what it might take to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety throughout the University Drive corridor. Unlike a lot of different planning processes, this isn’t a data driven process or a traffic analysis process. They will be utilizing existing data to complete a design exercise. Between now and the end of this project, they will present preferred design solutions for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety on the corridor. Ultimately, with the assistance of the TAC, ATAP, and the engineers from Halff, they will make sure that the creative design solutions are grounded in reality. They are still in the discovery phase of the project.

During the stakeholder meetings, there were general conversations around the room. There were a few maps and documents, but mostly conversation. During these conversations, the mind tends to draw pictures of what we think the other person is talking about. Because of this, when having a conversation about underpasses, overpasses, crosswalks, and different types of pedestrian and bicycle pathways along the corridor without pictures to support the conversation, a different idea may be generated of what the outcomes might be. Before getting into the main part of their
presentation, they took a few minutes to present the project scope and the expectations of the outcome of the project, as well as what the key themes they perceived from the initial feedback.

The project scope is through the entire corridor from Booneville Road down to the road entering the airport. This was divided into three segments; A, B, and C. A appears in the middle A & B are the priorities. They will be studying the existing conditions of the entire corridor; however, it is Segments A and B where they will be developing a variety of conceptual design solutions for bicycle and pedestrian safety. They recognize that any types of solutions proposed for bicyclists and pedestrians will have an impact on the motor vehicle traffic in the corridor. They will make sure the study acknowledges that impact once they have an endorsement from the TAC that these are the preferred types of treatments and solutions that they would like to apply to the corridor. The end project then must acknowledge that those solutions have the ability to modify the thoroughfare level of service. Some solutions, for them to work properly, might require that the MPO and the communities of the MPO look back at their respective Major Thoroughfare Plans and plan for alternative routing for some traffic or parallel routes. Any solutions generated have some degree of impact and are impacted by the projected future land uses both on campus and in the comprehensive plans of Bryan and College Station. Since the MPO is looking at 2050, this may be very timely in how this fits into the bigger long term picture.

The feedback from the stakeholder meetings were these key themes:

- We don’t need obvious solutions. We want outside the box solutions.
- We want to see things we’ve never seen before in Bryan-College Station.
- College Station has one of the largest downtowns in the state of Texas.
- Density and bicycle/pedestrian demand will increase in Northgate.
- Must balance local access with regional mobility.
- We are primarily interested in grade-separated solutions.
- Character is very important for the corridor.

During the second part of the presentation, the TAC and ATAP were shown a series of representative images from around the country to help identify what potential connectivity solutions along the corridor could look like. The TAC and ATAP were asked to provide feedback on each picture about possible pitfalls or potential without thinking about who is going to maintain or operate, the cost, or the constructability. Because the university and surrounding area are fast-growing and transforming, there are many dynamics. The solutions may not be for tomorrow but a little bit further down the road.

Everyone was given a copy of the presentation which was also made a part of these minutes. After today’s meeting, Halff will be creating a digital survey with these same images that were talked about today so the TAC and ATAP can provide additional feedback once they’ve had time to think about the images/possible solutions as well as other possible preferences or ideas that come to mind. This is the first of three meetings with Halff. The next meeting they will take all of the feedback and have much more definitive ideas that are put on the corridor in different locations. Ultimately, they will come back with recommended options.

The project scope is about connectivity for active transportation modes; however, at the end of the project we will talk to some degree about how to get them along the corridor. There is a variety of different pathways solutions, in addition to the crosswalk solutions, that can be applied to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to traverse the length of the corridor.
4. **Agency Reports (Updates from members on transportation related activities).**

In an effort to save time, the Chair requested that only essential information be heard. Peter Lange reported that Parents’ Weekend is coming up with most activity being on Saturday, April 8th. It is a very busy time on campus and in the community. Also, Chilifest is this weekend which generates a lot of traffic.

5. **Staff Report**

Dan Rudge made the following brief report:

Website Update – A few adjustments have been made in colors and tones.

FM 2818 Corridor Study – The MPO should have the draft report sometime in the next couple of weeks.

Bart Benthul made the following report:

Travel Demand Model Update – The base year network which is 2012 has been submitted and accepted. TxDOT wants a detailed coding on SH 47 and FM 60 and the interchange at FM 2818 just so they can get in new data with the new interchange. Bart is currently working on demographics. Throughout the past two weeks, Bart was working on getting median family income entered at the zonal level. Just before lunch he received an email saying they are separating all the students and student households out from the general population within the model. So we’re going to dump median family income and go to median household income. So the last three weeks of work was wasted. Once the model is approved, Bart will be able to model whatever we come up with on the major thoroughfare concept. Bart has already begun discussion with TxDOT about the fact that the population will need to be doubled because of the time frame for the thoroughfare concept. All of the network will have to be coded which is a lot of work.

6. **Revision to the 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

Dan Rude stated that whenever modifications are made to the MTP, only the pages that are impacted have to be changed. Since the Policy Board adopted the next ten years of Category Two funding, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan must be modified to show that. The “MPO Funding Forecast 2015-2040” page was updated. The “Table 6.1 Fiscally Constrained Project List” was modified to show the projects that were added. The GAP projects shown in 2025-2039, which has an allocation of $4.3 million, about $1 million of that is dedicated just to BTD to fix gaps in sidewalks. The project descriptions were updated to show new projects, as well as correct a few that had typos, and update project costs with revised estimates. The ranking shown on the project sheets are from the 2014 effort. The GAP projects are new and the “MPO Project” number on those are blank.

Wendy Weedon made the motion to approve the changes to the 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and submit them to the Policy Board for approval. Tim Lomax seconded the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.
7. **Brazos Transit District Operations Study**

The consultants were here in December and they did a presentation on highlights from the report which included the tweaks made to the existing BTD routes in terms of headways and circulation, and reduce duplication of services with Texas A&M Transportation. A big change will be that BTD is moving away from the flag stop to actual dedicated stops.

Wendy reported they are in the process of awarding an RFP to paint their new buses. The new buses are needed to implement the extended service. As soon as the buses are painted (which is a ten-day per bus period for five buses), they can begin the new routes. They are also working on bus stop signs. The new sign shape will be round in hopes that they will stand out.

Paul asked if a tentative map for the fixed stops had been developed yet and expressed that they would like to have an opportunity to comment. Wendy explained that is part of what they are waiting for from the consultant. They are currently tweaking the green route. There was disagreement on this route as an income level apartment complex was removed. BTD currently provides a lot of service to that complex. By removing it, people would have to walk in the grass and dirt on the side of the road to get to a bus. Enough information was gathered to support the argument to put it back in. The route needs 1-2 minutes shaved off it the time to finalize it. BTD is still waiting on suggested stops from the consultant. The suggested stops will be a separate task and not rolled into the study. Once the stops are suggested, BTD will see how they work in the system and allow other agencies to comment. It is a possibility that many of them will be adjusted after the route is operated for a while.

The way that the scope of the contract was written, the consultant was supposed to put together an operations study, and then once the BTD Board approved the operations study, they would come back and do the stops. The reason it is on the TAC agenda is because it is in the Unified Planning Work Program. Even though it is all BTD, and BTD has the right to accept or not accept the study, the TAC must make a recommendation to the Policy Board to accept the study as work complete. There is no official recommendation from BTD that the study is complete. Wendy does not feel as though it is complete. She reported there are a few things that BTD is waiting on but does not want to hold up the TAC. There is not a critical need to accept the study as work complete at this meeting. It is okay to table this item until a later meeting.

Wendy further reported that the first final draft given to BTD from the consultant was very generic. The consultant thought that was what BTD wanted, but BTD asked them to go back and make it more detailed because that is what they were paying for. BTD will also receive one more invoice from the consultant which will not be submitted until all the work is finished. Paul recommended that we wait another month and bring it back next TAC.

Peter asked Wendy if the TMA recommendations were part of the deliverables. There is some TMA information in the study now, but it is not a big section. The consultant laid out what it means; however, they did not give a road map of what needs to be done. It was suggested that John look over that section because the TMA information is something he wanted to see. BTD received the first draft of the study at the end of December and it was very generic. After Margie and Wendy
read over it, they had a conference call with the consultant in early January and asked for a more
detailed report which was finally received last week. After a month of waiting, last week BTD also
received the turn-by-turn on the green route.

Dan pointed out that an important item to ask is that when we become a TMA, how much the local
communities are going to have to fund to fill in for the operating assistance BTD will lose. This will
allow the cities to have a ball park estimate that if they want to continue service, this is how much
it’s going to cost. Paul concurred and said it was a very important thing that needs to go into
whatever presentation is given to the Policy Board because the Policy Board members are the
avenues back to those agencies. Peter said there are some governance things that go along with it
too that is not in there. The study eludes to changes which we already know. Tim pointed out that
we were talking about the potential for separating BTD Bryan/College Station from the rest of BTD.
It was mentioned in passing but it needs to be emphasized a little bit more. It was brought up in the
study but not in the TMA portion.

This item was tabled for a future TAC meeting.

8. 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The MPO staff will soon get started with the 2045 MTP. Dan put together a schedule of tasks
working backwards from the MTP due date. The process will start in May to meet the schedule that
Dan set forth. Even though the MPO will be able to build on what is existing, there is quite a bit of
additional information that needs to be added for the transition to a TMA. The next update of the
MTP needs to be much more detailed. This will require more work on the planning side rather than
just statements of fact. Dan explained that it will be a very big effort. Paul said he would like to see
a lot of outside partners brought in to discuss the freight portion. A gentleman from TTI came and
spoke to the Chamber on freight issues. Dan brought up the MTP and the gentleman said if we did
not hire a consultant, they could help with that. We have a lot of resources at TTI and as long as we
don’t ask them to do all the work, they can help us with some of the background data and making
sure that we analyze it properly.

9. Texas Innovation Alliance Mobility Challenge

There is a Mobility Data Challenge on July 20-22, 2017, in Austin. The MPO is tasked with putting
together some kind of problem and what kind of data we would like to have access to for this
mobility challenge. We were thinking Make Every Day a Game Day as our issue and then what kind
of data would we like to have access to be able to make that work. It is presenting a need as
opposed to bringing a solution. It was previously called a data hackathon, but there were concerns
with calling it a hackathon. They are changing the name to try and better reflect what the event will
be.

10. Future Activities

Tedi Ellison, representing the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce has asked the MPO to
take a position on having someone at the Chamber be an unpaid person to represent all of the
jurisdictions and to serve as a transportation facilitator in the area. They have asked Dr. Dennis
Christiansen to be that facilitator and he has agreed. The unpaid position would work for the
Chamber of Commerce, but would have the ability to lobby for anything the MPO feels appropriate.
All of the Policy Board members received this letter and it was asked that the TAC react to it as being supportive of the idea or not liking the idea.

This person is not so much of a liaison to the MPO as much as it is someone who is going to advocate toward the legislature. He would be there to represent in both Austin and Washington D.C. Also, as the MPO adopts different plans and programs, if there is concern at any of the jurisdictions, he could help walk through those issues.

If the position is as an unpaid employee of the Chamber, the Chamber is allowed to lobby and advocate. This position would be lobbying as the Chamber rep and not an MPO rep, but the MPO would need to be very careful about that. The flip side is that most of the agencies can’t lobby and so potentially this is someone that could go to Austin and could hang out and have conversations about mobility issues in Bryan/College Station without having any affiliation with folks that can’t do that.

Peter Lange stated that it has been a long time since the MPO started and it has been very different in the last ten years than it was in its first ten years. Some of the nostalgia that Tedi is referring to in a couple of these paragraphs kind of sounds like talk of the good old days when we were doing some of these things before. The level of cooperation in the community is night and day better than in the past, and they are kind of harkening back to a situation or a configuration that they liked a number of years ago, but things are really different now. It sounds as if they are trying to pick up on some of those positive aspects of the things that they had Ronnie and Al doing that could translate into today’s world. There are a lot of meetings and there is a lot going on and there is always an opportunity to miss a couple of dots that need to be connected. If you hear Peter talk about some crazy thing that A&M is thinking about doing its like hey we know about that we don’t know about that is something that matches up with something that Troy has been talking about. That’s not a bad thing.

Wendy Weedon asked if the MPO would have to approve anything prior to the lobbying. Dan said no, but he can’t foresee Dennis going over to Austin and saying the MPO hasn’t addressed this yet, but... Wendy said Brazos Transit has a lot of lobbyists that we pay out of our unrestricted funds so they are pretty active over there and in D.C. BTD would just not want them to be lobbying... BTD would want them to be lobbying for the same things and not against each other and public transit tends to take a backseat sometimes.

Chad Bohne said he agrees with Peter on the way we have come to work together as a community and the evolution of this MPO. Most MPO’s, most districts that Chad works with in dealings with their MPOs are jealous of us. They would love to be us because we get along, we work together. When Chad told his cohorts in Austin a week or so back that we had come up with a list of projects through 2026, they couldn’t believe it. When he told them we were working on a regional thoroughfare plan amongst all of us and that we worked together and come up with a plan, they couldn’t believe it. When Chad read Tedi’s letter, he was concerned about adding a new person to the hierarchy that works so well with this MPO. If the Chamber of Commerce wants someone to speak for the Chamber of Commerce, we would be glad to let that person and the Chamber know the priorities of the MPO. But when Chad read this, he really doesn’t want someone to try and answer some of the questions that are posed here because we don’t need another person suggesting things that are counter to what this MPO has worked so hard to achieve. Chad thinks the Chamber can do whatever they want to do and we’ll work with them and tell them our priorities, but for us to say that the MPO anyway advocates and supports, I would just as soon leave that alone.
and say you guys do what you want to do. TxDOT will tell you what our priorities if the Chamber wants to go talk those up for the greater area. Chad is concerned throwing another position into the mix for us to say represents us or in any way guides and directs and answers our questions and solutions that Chad feels the MPO is doing a really good job of leaves him wondering what this position would be solving.

Wendy said she feels uncomfortable giving her blessing on this with us not knowing what they’re going to be lobbying for in advance. Because some people don’t put their personal agendas aside for that and I don’t know this person at all and I will ask John his opinion and be happy to give it back to you. Peter said I don’t really get hung up on the lobbying part because remember Dennis was the Policy Board rep for two years. Tim was TAC and Dennis was Policy Board. But I don’t think we should get hung up on the lobbying thing. I think what they’re looking for is would it be okay for Dennis to come to this meeting? I think it’s an open meeting. Would it be okay for Dennis to go to Policy Board meeting and it’s an open meeting. Is it okay for Dennis to advocate for some regional idea that the Chamber is running with and to have a conversation to have a conversation with Chad or Lance about it. Peter gets the feeling it’s more like that than anointing or appointment someone to some new position. I think it’s a combination of leveraging Dennis’ professional expertise and his love and knowledge of the community.

Paul asked if this is the Chamber’s thinking why even have the MPO at the TAC or Policy Board level weight in one way or another. Chad said when you say you are nominating a person to facilitate at the policy level transportation projects in our area, that’s a little bit stronger than listening in and getting people’s priorities and trying to help. That is someone who you are facilitating at the policy level our transportation projects for our area, that’s pretty strong. Peter said knowing that there is the official way that happens so the MPO and TAC, working through this process, working through policy with TxDOT, it’s a constraining process. It’s not a process that we can redefine overnight. We have to do this process that we currently do in order to have a product come out the other side. Peter’s reading a few things into this, but he thinks they are looking for a bigger and better connection to the business community. He doesn’t think they feel that they’ve got the business community connected to some of these bigger road issues. He thinks they are looking for trying to pull some of those folks in a little bit better into the conversation for input and buy in and things like that. Chad said if they wanted to word something like they had a person who participates more fully in our process fine, you sure can. Ms. Sharon Anderson came to every Policy Board and TAC Meeting for over a decade and took more notes and better notes than we ever thought of taking. The wording here does not necessarily say that… the wording here is in Chad’s mind indicates more than that level of participation but actually a role in our processes that I don’t even think that’s a good idea.

Peter suggested so that this goes back to Dan to have a conversation with Tedi about maybe digging into that a little bit. That we actually have a defined process already and it’s not one that we just made up… it’s one that we have to be following from federal or from state, and so try to flush out through a conversation with Dan and Teddi a little bit more or Dan, Teddi, and Dennis what exactly that means from this very formal organization dealing with maybe some of the more informal elements that surround the Bryan/College Station community, Chamber Transportation Committees, Council Chamber’s at both cities, their work groups and things like that, they are always looking for input and always willing to give input and things like that. Chad said I think there could be conversation at some level for a nonvoting member to the TAC. We have nonvoting members… we’ve had that before, you could be a nonvoting member to the TAC, attend the
meetings, and be fully engulfed in what is going on. But, I’m not exactly sure what this is even asking. Allison said that’s what she gets from reading it is that is what they are asking for.

Paul said he thinks the letter is just worded in a way that makes you hesitant to take any action on it. If it the Chamber is considering having this position to better centralize our focus point and gather information and we’d like to have representation and be able to attend the meetings... that is a different tone than referenced at a policy level on these things. Chad said the word that popped into his mind was Czar... this was like our local transportation Czar and he is going to speak in Austin on our behalf and he is going to help guide and direct us who may not know exactly how to make these things happen at our level and that’s the way it hit me and regardless of who it is, because I think the world of Dennis and I think the world of Tedi. They are both very knowledgeable folks who have the best of our interests at heart, but I would say we need more information as to what they are even asking. We might be able to say yes to whatever it is they are asking, but I’m not sure what it is.

Troy Rother sugested flushing out a job description. Peter said well he thinks it is more of an interaction on the policy side of things, and we need to know what that interaction is. The informal side is not that big of deal but it’s the policy side that is concerning. Tim said I bet the way y’all described it Tedi would be fine with that. He thinks she is just using words that she maybe doesn’t recognize the wordsmithing that needs to happen but what you’re talking about is probably what would be what she would be okay with as a friendly amendment to whatever she wrote. But, Tim likes the idea of Dan going back and having a conversation with Teddi to make sure that our concerns are reflected in the letter. Paul said if he goes to Austin and says I’m here representing this, this, this... well are you really. In a sense do we want somebody representing the MPO on that kind of stuff. It’s okay to be educated and bring our focus that we already have projects that are ranked, but I wouldn’t want it to be introduced that way that I’m this regional representative representing all these agencies. The point is if he was representing the Chamber, why would we even be asked to comment. Tim said he thinks that is Tedi’s way of making sure everybody is okay with it, and if somebody isn’t okay, we go back and say please clarify. Chad said this reminds me of what we used to do when someone wanted to pose something to the MPO, they would come to this meeting and we would listen to them and we would have a Q&A and they would tell us things and then we would decide from there if that needed to then be an item at the Policy Board meeting. That was a requirement for the longest which I thought worked really well that you didn’t just present at the policy level until after you came here first. And so, I think that might be a conversation and just somewhere you could invite her to come to an open Q&A with us and she could tell us what she’s thinking and we could ask different questions and then decide where to go. Paul said so it sounds like maybe we should just ask Dan to go visit with Tedi to understand a little bit better about what our relationship is and maybe specifically. Dan asked if they were okay with what Paul suggested which is for Dan to go meet with Tedi and clarify some of this stuff and if he thinks it’s appropriate ask her to come to the next TAC meeting? Wendy said could you maybe ask for some kind of job description clarification beforehand so she can ask John and Margie to look over it? Peter said he doesn’t think there is one but I think to Wendy’s point though is sort of a discussion item for you that of all the agencies in town, the one that does the most lobbying in both Washington D.C. and Austin is BTD so we need to talk about not getting our positions crossed there.

In regards to the Major Thoroughfare Concept, Dan said we did get the final public meeting for the Major Thoroughfare Concept set up. It is Monday, April 17th from 5-7 p.m. at the Brazos Center. Dan’s hope is that after today when we talk about the concept in the workshop, that we have something he can present to the Board at the next meeting so they can say yes post it on the
website so that people can look at the map and come to the meeting and already know what is going to be presented. And then as part of our

For the Texas Innovation Alliance, there is a group called Cubic Transportation Group. They have a transportation platform that they would like to share with us and they’ve asked if we could potentially meet with them informally either the day before the day after a TTI conference on the 4th of May. Paul said so they affiliated with exactly who then? Dan said that is the name of the company. Paul said it is a for profit company and Dan can schedule to meet with them and share the date with everyone so that whoever is interested can attend the meeting.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.
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