

Bryan/College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization

MPO Policy Board Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2019

Certification of Quorum:

Voting members present were Commissioner Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; Councilmember Greg Owens, City of Bryan, 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 February 6, 2019, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with an invocation given by Mr. Dan Rudge followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

2. Public Comments regarding items not on the Agenda

No public comments were received.

3. Review and approval of December 12, 2018, Policy Board Minutes

Minutes from the December 12, 2018, Policy Committee Meeting were considered for adoption. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Owens. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stockton. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

4. Staff Report

Congestion Survey Results – Mr. Rudge thanked Commissioner Berry for encouraging county employee participation in the congestion survey. The survey now has over 5,000 respondents. The majority of respondents, with the exception of about 8.2%, would like to see either their taxes raised, their vehicle registration fees increased, or the gas tax increased to pay for additional roadway and other transportation infrastructure. There has been a very positive result from the survey and helps to build momentum moving forward to talk about the vehicle registration fee with the legislature, as well as other things if the Regional Mobility Authority is approved.

Texas Transportation Forum – Mr. Rudge attended the Texas Transportation Forum in early January. At the Forum, TxDOT stated there would be three deep water ports in the State of Texas; Brownsville, Corpus Christi, and Freeport. Houston was not mentioned due to the difficulty of maneuvering boats through the channel. The implications for our MPO is that the Houston Galveston Area Council is proposing a route named 36A which would connect Freeport to Hempstead. Route 36A would bring all of the freight traffic up State Highway 6

to get to Dallas/Fort Worth, etc. which would have a major impact on our area. It was also announced at the Forum that about 85%-90% of the growth occurring in the State of Texas is in the Texas Triangle. A small percentage of growth is occurring along the Mexican border. Areas in east and west Texas outside of the triangle are beginning to lose population to the Texas Triangle. With Bryan/College Station being in almost the epicenter of the Texas Triangle, it has major implications for us in terms of migration, growth, etc. so there is a significant need to continue to be as strategic as possible and continue to leverage our resources to be prepared for the growth we can expect.

Statewide Grant for USDOT Automated Driving Systems Pilot Projects – Mr. Rudge has been working with Paul Kaspar, and Dr. Katie Turnbull and Dr. Robert Brydia at TTI on a statewide grant request. Christopher Poe with TTI in Dallas is the developer of the grant. The two requests that have been identified for Bryan/College Station are: 1) to obtain funding for the Downtown Bryan Shuttle to continue operations, and 2) to obtain funding for an at-speed on-road autonomous vehicle test that would circulate between Texas A&M, Century Square, and Northgate. Based on the survey results for the Downtown Bryan Shuttle, it is hoped to increase the service area and make a longer loop. Our area would like to be the first one to do the at-speed on-road autonomous vehicle test which would operate at whatever speeds are on the current roadway, as opposed to being a low speed shuttle type system. This would be an on-system or on-street test, whereas other parts of the state are doing off-system or freight projects, so they would work collectively. There is no one else competing for the type of project being proposed by our area, so it will have stronger merit when being presented to the USDOT. Each group has been given about \$500,000 to develop their projects.

RMA Petition Progress – TxDOT Transportation Programming and Planning in Austin currently has no questions regarding the RMA Petition and are satisfied with it. The General Counsel's Office has not answered any questions on it as of yet. They are trying to get the General Counsel's Office to give their nod by the end of the week so preparations can begin for the public hearing.

Call for MTP Projects – This week, a call for Metropolitan Plan Projects will be issued. As part of the public involvement process, the call for projects will be publicized in The Eagle for citizens to give input on any local projects they are interested in that can then be considered as part of the process. The call for projects will be sent directly to all Technical Advisory Committee Members.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Activities – During a workshop following the last TAC meeting, TAC members became familiar with Decision Lens, which is a software tool used by the Texas Department of Transportation to rank projects based on a set of criteria. TAC members did like the way it works, so Decision Lens will be used in place of the excel spreadsheet format that was used for the last MTP update. If our MPO continued to use the spreadsheet method, TxDOT will still run each project through Decision Lens to decide whether or not it is a worthy project, so it makes sense for our MPO to use the same software. The TAC may change the criteria weighting somewhat.

5. FY 2018 – FY 2019 Unified Planning Work Program Amendment Two

The relocation of the MPO offices prompted the need for a modest increase in funding. To cover increased costs due to security deposit, rent, and moving related expenses, \$8,505 in carryover funds are being added to Task One. The changes to the UPWP included: 1) adding a sentence about moving the office on page six under Subtask 1.1 Program Administration, 2) changing the funding tables for 2019 Task 1.0 Funding and 2018-2019 Task 1.0 Funding on page eight, and 3) changing the Budget Summaries on pages 22 and 23. Councilmember Owens made the motion to adopt the changes to the FY 2018 – FY 2019 as stated. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stockton. The motion carried by a unanimous vote. Mr. Rudge extended the invitation to come and see the new offices.

6. FY 2019 – FY 2022 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Three

In the past the Policy Board gave approval to put \$13 million toward improvements on State Highway 6. Even though the \$13 million couldn't accomplish much construction, it allowed our area to leverage an additional \$50 million from TxDOT in Category Four Statewide Connectivity funds. Now, the Texas Transportation Commission has awarded our area an additional \$102 million of Category Twelve Strategic Initiative funds (or Texas Transportation Commission Discretionary funds). This brings the grand total to \$174 million for improvements to State Highway 6. In addition, there is a second phase that will come to the Policy Board at a later time that will bring the total up to \$212 million. As part of Brazos Transit District developing their Transit Asset Management Plan, they were able to obtain funding in the amount of \$14,050,000 through a BUILD grant to replace approximately thirty buses; twelve BTM buses and 17 Texas A&M University diesel buses. Bus replacement was one of the top five unfunded priority projects. Although there still is not enough funding to complete the bus replacement project, it will make a major impact and will decrease maintenance costs by removing buses that are in constant need of repair. These are the additions being made to the FY 2019 – FY 2022 by adopting Amendment Three.

The BUILD grant will be available in FY 2019 to purchase buses. It will take about a year after they are ordered for them to be received. Funding for the State Highway 6 project is programmed for FY 2022. The letting date may slide a bit due to the large amount of design work. TxDOT's intention is to not have to purchase right-of-way except for possibly some clips at the interchanges. After public involvement, they will prioritize goals of the project from the most important to least important and during the design phase, once they funding is depleted, whatever has been designed will get funded and whatever didn't make it because of the way it was ranked will not be constructed.

Dr. Stockton made the motion to adopt Amendment Three to the FY 2019 – FY 2022 Transportation Improvement Program as presented. Councilmember Owens second the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

7. Revised Policy Board I-14 Resolution

Mr. Rudge provided the Policy Board with a copy of the amended I-14 Resolution which was different than the one previously included in the Policy Board meeting packet. The changes to the resolution were highlighted in yellow. The resolution number was changed from 2019-08 to 2019-10. A “whereas” was added at the bottom that says the TAC concluded the proposed US 190/State Highway 6 routing does not satisfy the criteria as outlined for them to consider. The current alignment that is proposed does not follow a direct path; therefore, does not make sense. The TAC looked at several different alignments. Originally, it was considered to bring it in on State Highway 21; however, that causes significant environmental justice concerns. The TAC decided to go for language that was more general, and under Section 1, the wording was changed to “a new alignment that provides connectivity” as opposed to connections. Mumford Yard was changed to Brazos Rail Yard which is the official Union Pacific name. The statement “and the RELLIS Campus in Brazos County” was added to “makes connectivity to both the Brazos Rail Yard in Robertson County and RELLIS Campus in Brazos County, passing through eastern Brazos County and connecting to the State Highway 30 corridor...” Section 2 is to make sure we’re not saying this has to be the alignment, because there is a NEPA process that must be followed and there are numerous cultural, historical, archeological, environmental and other reviews and analysis that goes into deciding the final alignment. Commissioner Berry made the motion to accept Resolution 2019-10 which adopts a preferred alignment for I-14 through Brazos County. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Owens. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

8. Policy Board Concurrence on Including Jones Butler Bridge to the FM 2818 Project Using Category Two Funds

Because the FM 2818 project involves Category Two funding which is available to all jurisdictions in Brazos County, TxDOT wanted to make sure all jurisdictions were comfortable with developing a bridge for Jones Butler Road and spending additional Category Two funds on the project. In the agenda packet provided to the Board, there are twenty different versions of alternatives developed by TxDOT for that area, and it was decided that the option being presented is the best one that meets all needs. The solution that optimizes safety, access and at the lowest possible cost is to construct a bridge for the main lanes over Jones Butler Road and not provide direct access to FM 2818. It would be incumbent on the City of College Station to construct an extension of Jones Butler Road to its intersection with Holleman Drive. The bridge project would require an additional \$5.5 million in Category Two funds. Instead of cutting off access to property owners, they are now provided a direct connection to Jones Butler as part of this process. Putting a connection to Jones Butler on the system gives students yet another way to get to Texas A&M Campus, and so it has the potential to help alleviate some of the concerns on Holleman Drive, as well as moving traffic after large events on campus. Before TxDOT spends several hundred thousand dollars on design work, they wanted a voice vote of concurrence from the Policy Board that this solution was acceptable and their willingness to spend additional Category Two funds to accommodate this change to the FM 2818 project.

The addition of the Jones Butler bridge solves an access problem as well as an operations problem because it provides an additional way to get across FM 2818 and to campus and will take some pressure off of the Holleman Drive interchange. It does not affect the overall plan for FM 2818 through George Bush that was reviewed by the Policy Board last year. Councilmember Owens moved to approve the addition of the Jones Butler bridge as part of the FM 2818 project and to commit additional Category Two funds to the project. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stockton. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

9. Presentation on the FM 158/William J Bryan Parkway Improvements

Mr. Paul Kaspar gave an overview of the project and then introduced Brandon Boatcallie with Binkley and Barfield who is the design engineer for the project, who gave a presentation. The project construction by TxDOT is MPO funded; however, the project design was funded by the City of Bryan from their Capital Budget. The project limits are FM 158/William Joel Bryan Parkway from State Highway 6 on the east side of Earl Rudder Freeway to Texas Avenue. Part of the project deals with having a city park in the middle of a major commuter roadway that is moving traffic from one side of town to the other, but still making the park accessible for all users. It is currently a very auto-centric roadway with some pedestrian facilities; however, there are not a lot of considerations on how to get pedestrians safely to the park. In its current state, the corridor is not bicycle friendly so they also looked at ways to try and improve that. This is a corridor with housing, a park, a Historic District, and a business district, so the project tries to accommodate all those uses. When the design was started, a decision was made to go underground with utilities, so it has been a challenge to consider that in placement of where to put shared use paths, lighting, and other things on the corridor as utilities are being converted from overhead to underground. Public engagement was a focus early on and currently there is only a schematic design contract with Binkely and Barfield. Over the next month or so, the design contract will go back to the City Council to consider for plan specs and engineering. The process they used was a way to gather public input, talk about it in public meetings, meet with stakeholders, and make sure everybody was mostly on board with what they were proposing before it went to design.

Mr. Boatcallie gave an overview of the public meetings and the comments that came out of them (both on a chart and map). During the February 2018 public meeting, the major safety concerns from the public were: congestion, poor visibility, non-signalized intersections, speed of traffic, turn lanes, lack of lighting, pedestrian conditions, lack of crosswalks, signalized intersections, bicycling conditions and others. The public's most important aesthetic elements were lighting, trees and planting, and developing a gateway to downtown. There was a follow-up meeting in April 2018 in which they presented some design concepts. It is important to note that there are four different zones along the corridor: Historic, Park, Residential, and Business. They also looked at crash data and cost to the city because of crashes through the process.

The major design concepts that were brought forward in response to concerns from the public were raised medians, roundabouts, lane width reductions, speed limit reductions, the addition of traffic signals and pedestrian hybrid beacons, shared use paths, limited

landscaping improvements, overhead utility conversion to underground, and continuous lighting.

Mr. Boatcallie showed the proposed schematic that was shared with the public at the last meeting which was last month along with detailed sections of the same schematic. They are currently working on the final report that TxDOT will use as part of their NEPA process. They will be discussing construction documents and scoping with the city very soon, and then will begin design. There is a website for the project which is wjbproject.com as well as a dedicated phone line and email to answer questions. The schematic drawings can be viewed on the website. It is hoped that construction will begin in September or October of 2020. There may be some activity before then if utility relocation begins ahead of time.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 am.

Tracy J. Perry

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

ATTEST:

Dan Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO

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Date