

Bryan/College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization MPO Policy Board Meeting Minutes

June 1, 2022

Certification of Quorum

The following voting members were present: Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; Karl Mooney, Vice Chair, City of College Station; Andrew Nelson, Member, City of Bryan; and Bill Stockton, Member, Texas A&M Transportation Institute. MPO staff present were Dan Rudge, Bart Benthul, and Lisa Lyon who took the minutes. The sign-in sheets for the meeting is attached listing other attendees.

Welcome and Open Meeting

Nancy Berry, Board Chair, called to order the Policy Board meeting at 9:18 a.m. on June 1, 2022, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with pledges to the U.S. and Texas flags and was followed with an invocation by Dan Rudge.

Approval of Minutes from the February 2, 2022 Policy Board Meeting

Minutes from the February 2, 2022, Policy Board Meeting were considered for adoption. **A motion to approve the minutes was made by Karl Mooney. The motion was seconded by Andrew Nelson. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.**

Approval of Minutes from the March 7, 2022 Policy Board Meeting

Minutes from the March 7, 2022, Policy Board Meeting were considered for adoption. **A motion to approve the minutes was made by Andrew Nelson. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.**

MPO Staff Report by Dan Rudge

Regional Access Management and Traffic Impact Analysis Standards – There have been six opportunities for the development and engineering communities to attend electronic on-line meetings with Mr. Rudge and other representatives to walk through the standards, talk about them, and provide feedback on what changes they think are necessary. From those six meetings, only one substantive comment was received. Adjustments to the Regional Access Management Standards were made based on this comment and copies will be provided to all of the local jurisdictions. Over a six-month period the local jurisdictions will do reviews of new developments using the draft requirements to see where there may be areas of concern with

the access management standards. After that period, the Technical Advisory Committee will make any corrections that are necessary.

New Census Bureau Urban Area Criteria – Mr. Rudge provided information on the proposed changes by the Census Bureau that were included in the Federal Register notification.

The biggest change is instead of population being the most important factor, now census blocks are qualified as urban if they have greater than 385 housing units per square mile. The rationale for this change was the concern that at the census block level, if there are not a certain number of people that qualify, that information would have to be boxed out on that census block. Mr. Rudge showed slides that compared qualified census blocks in 2010 versus 2020 and the qualified blocks are significantly decreased. This is important to us because our urbanized area population was expected to be around 204,000, but with the new criteria there is a concern that population will not go over the 200,000 population threshold and our area will not become an MSA so we would qualify for less dollars. The argument for this change was in looking at the national average of 385 housing units, the average household size in the United States is 2.6. If you take 2.6 times 385, it gets you to the same number as population was before. The problem with that argument for us is that in Texas, the average household size is closer to 3. The Census Bureau rationale is that several other departments in the federal government are using housing units as opposed to population so it would better match other federal programs. The Federal Highway Administration is still allowed to use the 200,000 population threshold for whether or not you are a Transportation Management Area (TMA).

In qualifying urban areas, if they have greater than 4,000 housing units or 10,000 persons, there is no distinguishing between different types of urban areas. Previously there were metropolitan areas, micropolitan areas, urban areas, etc. Now, anything 5,000 or greater will be called an urban area. In the State of Texas, there will be significantly less urban areas with this change.

The maximum jump distance was 2.5 miles and is now being reduced to 1.5 miles. An example of a jump is along a particular corridor there are some census blocks that don't meet that first criteria but there is another one within 1.5 miles that does, so you can "jump" and collect that and consider that part of your urbanized area. The rationale for this change was the concern of overextending the urbanized areas so the miles were cut back to 1.5 which is what it was from 1950 to 1990. There will now be a number of census blocks disqualified and not counted.

Hops are no longer allowed over low-density areas which were typically city parks and things like that. Previously, if you had a census block that doesn't qualify, but the three census blocks on each side all qualify, the unqualified block was automatically brought in. Now, even if you have a census block that qualified on three sides but not on the fourth side, the census block that doesn't qualify will not be counted as part of your urban area population. There will be a number of census blocks that are not counted because with this change they no longer qualify.

The last one that doesn't apply to us at the current time is splitting large urban conglomerations, for example, splitting Washington, D.C. and Baltimore areas. For us in the future, it could mean separating Bryan/College Station from Houston because they are growing towards us.

If our area were to go over 200,000 population threshold, there is access to two new TxDOT funding categories; seven and nine. Although it varies from year to year, those two categories would allow for an additional \$5-\$6 million per year for transportation projects in Brazos County. Another impact of going over the 200,000 population threshold is the local governments would be required to participate financially to fund services of Brazos Transit. When the population is under the 200,000 threshold, Brazos Transit can be 100% federally and state funded and there is not a local match required.

According to the Census Bureau, the 2020 Census numbers are locked and will apply to Brazos County for the next ten years. If you challenge the numbers and they agree our area has been undercounted, they will do annual estimates and make corrections to the estimates; however, the 2020 number is locked.

Major Thoroughfare Concept Amendment Process – There is beginning to be some pretty significant development pressure on some of the dashed lines on the Concept map. The MPO has received requests from all of the local governments to take a look at how that Concept may be amended. The Technical Advisory Committee looked at the original draft at their last meeting and suggested a couple of corrections.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Discretionary Grant Opportunity – MPO's, counties, cities, towns, tribal lands, are all eligible to apply for this grant. They are suggesting the best way to strengthen the application is to partner. There are two types of grants available, the first being funds to develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan similar to the Vision Zero Concept here in the State of Texas. The first step is for Brazos County would be to ask for funds to develop a plan. The minimum grant that can be requested is \$200,000. Mr. Rudge requested a list of entities that should be involved in the development and there were 75 different organizations, 65 of which actually exist in Brazos County. Mr. Rudge has set up a meeting to talk about what that effort would look like and the plan for moving forward. The other type of grant is for entities that already have an existing Comprehensive Safety Action Plan. An Implementation grant can be requested to fund specific things in the plan.

Multiple Use Agreements on Public Rights-of-Way – Yesterday, Mr. Rudge provided TAC members with Multiple Use Agreements on Public Rights-of-Way to allow Brazos Transit District to begin to install bus stops and shelters. This requires all types of things such as indemnification, insurance, allows the cities the right to inspect where the locations are going to be and approve or disapprove. The agreement covers both sides to make sure the bus shelter and bus stop program is consistent with the needs and the safety as defined by the cities, the county and BTD.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment Three

In Amendment Three, two columns have been added to the Fiscally Constrained table in the MTP. One column is called additional funding provided by others. This data has not been captured before; however, both cities have made significant investments in doing design work for projects like 2818 and FM 158, so now it will show that the local governments are doing a lot of assistance. There are also things like right-of way and contingency that would be included

in this column The other column is called total project cost which adds construction costs and other project costs.

The other change is to the text of the document where it is explained what those additional costs provided by others are which ranges from preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and contingency. Even though locally we don't use bond financing, this is one of the columns in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) so the goal is to have it match exactly. Mr. Rudge met with TxDOT Bryan District staff and they did some calculations and discovered that additional project costs range from 15%-25% of construction costs. If it is known what the costs are going to be then it will be included in the MTP, and if not, it will be added as a 20% of construction costs estimate.

A motion was made by Karl Mooney to adopt the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment Three. The motion was seconded by Bill Stockton. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

FY 2021 – FY 2024 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Five

In FY 2022, 2023 and 2024, Brazos Transit District received additional funding for operating assistance for their paratransit services. Because it's an increase in the amount of money that they're receiving, it must be reflected in the Transportation Improvement Program. Also, in FY 2022, Brazos Transit District is using a portion of their operating assistance to purchase cameras for their buses which is an addition to the Transportation Improvement Program. The 15-day public comment period ended on May 31st at 5:00 p.m. and no comments were received. **A motion was made by Andrew Nelson to adopt the FY 2021 – FY 2024 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Five. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.**

Presentation on Brazos Transit District

Tasmina Kahdaker of Brazos Transit District gave a presentation to the Policy Board regarding Brazos Transit operations.

Brazos Transit District (BTD) currently provides fixed routes, paratransit, community circulators, and demand and response. They provide transit services to over 21 counties in the Central and East Texas regions. They currently have nine fixed routes in the B/CS area. They were doing fare free services during COVID; however, this has ceased and they are currently implementing fares. In 2021, their fixed routes provided 176,365 passenger trips in the B/CS region. They have 53 vehicles in the urbanized area and 757 trips per weekday for last year.

For expenses, they have three funding categories; State Urban Funds, Federal 5307, and Federal 5339 Capital. Ms. Khandaker showed the breakdown of operating expenses since 2019 as well

as the Capital Competitive grants they have received. They have received an increase in their capital improvement funds and their operating expenses have somewhat decreased. They currently have 16 New Flyers for fixed route, three Universal Glaval for Demand and Response, 3 Lonestar Promaster for Demand & Response, 4 Aerotech Cutaway for Demand & Response, 3 A&M Proterra for Fixed Route, and 24 A&M Gillig for Fixed Route. All vehicles are ADA accessible. BTD has a number of facilities including the Roy Kelly Garage, Roy Kelly Office Building, Transfer Point, and the BTD Main Property which includes the shop, bus wash, fuel island, CCC building, and operations building.

In looking at ridership from 2019 to 2021, there was a decrease because of COVID; however, comparatively from 2019, there has been an increase of 30% since 2020, but we are still not up to pre-pandemic numbers.

They have been working on a bus stop and shelter project. As part of that process, they collected peer transit reviews, on-board surveys, looked into the existing trips that are provided, and identified locations where there are a high numbers of boardings and alightings. Ms. Khandaker showed an example of an on-board survey administered back in 2020. They also did a tabling event in Downtown Bryan where they administered surveys as well. They received over 200 surveys. The summary of the on-board surveys show that around 43% of passengers take public transit five times a week, 20.3% wouldn't have been able to make a trip without public transit, 31.8% were traveling to work, and 36.1% of passengers were using public transit due to not having a personal vehicle.

In regard to the bus stops and shelter project, they looked at various demographic data: existing jobs, projected population density, and projected housing density. After putting all the data together, they used GIS and created a transit needs index which ranked the proposed stops from 1 to 3. The ranking number shows the amenity category notating if there will be a stop, a shelter, or just a stand-alone stop with a bench. The analysis resulted in 242 total locations identified with a total probable cost of a little over \$3.2 million.

The question was posed by a board member regarding whether costs including pull-outs where the bus would not stop traffic. BTD explained that the cost did not include any bus lanes or pull-out bays as it is the opinion of BTD that these create a more dangerous situation. Their plan going forward is to continue to stop on the road which they feel causes less of a problem because drivers will become trained to the fixed stops and will be able to anticipate the bus stopping. Mayor Nelson asked if BTD would provide professional engineering analysis that he could share with citizens. There are six currently existing shelters that were recently replaced. The next step is to get input from both cities. BTD is prepared to share the GIS locations for the proposed placement of stops and shelters for their review and input.

BTD recently acquired three new Promaster vehicles as well as eight new Dodge Voyagers which will replace their demand and response vehicles. These vehicles are completely wrapped and ADA accessible.

BTD was recently awarded Transit System of the Year for 2022 by Federal Transit Administration for Region Six. They were in competition with all the transit agencies within five states.

There were several questions asked about microtransit. BTD has been researching microtransit solutions. They are doing an on-line simulation with Via this week. As that progresses, they will update the Policy Board and Technical Advisory Committee of any new developments.

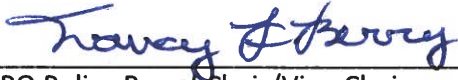
Mayor Nelson expressed his appreciation for all that BTD does to provide mobility for all residents in the community.

Adjourn

There will not be a Policy Board meeting in July due to lack of actionable agenda items. Due to Policy Board scheduling, it was requested that future meetings start at 9:30.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

ATTEST:



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



Dan Rudge - BCSMPO

8-3-22

Date