

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

September 6, 2023

Certification of Quorum

The following voting members were present: Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; John Nichols, Vice Chair, City of College Station; James Edge, Member, City of Bryan; Peter Lange, Member, Texas A&M University; and Chad Bohne, Member, TxDOT Bryan District. MPO staff present were Dan Rudge, Bart Benthul, and Lisa Lyon. The sign-in sheet for the meeting is attached listing other attendees.

Welcome and Open Meeting

Nancy Berry, Board Chair, called to order the Policy Board meeting at 9:30 a.m. on September 16, 2023, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with an invocation by Dan Rudge and pledges to the U.S. and Texas flags.

Approval of Minutes from the August 16, 2023, Policy Board Meeting

The minutes of the August 16, 2023, Policy Board meeting were reviewed. Peter Lange made the motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by John Nichols. The minutes were adopted by a unanimous vote.

MPO Staff Report by Dan Rudge

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Discretionary Grant Program – Four bids were received from consultants for the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant. There was a tie for first place between two firms. To narrow it down to one firm, interviews with each firm will be conducted and are currently being scheduled. It is currently anticipated to start on October 1st.

The Mock Transportation Management Area Certification Review – the Mock Transportation Management Area Certification Review report was included in the Board's packet for their review. This mock certification was conducted by Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Overall, the comments and recommendations were very positive with no flaws in current processes. There were a few recommendations for improving specific items as well as commendations. A letter will be sent back in response to the final report explaining

what will be done to address their recommendations. The certification review is in November and they would like to meet with the three elected officials of the Policy Board individually sometime between 1 – 2:30 pm on Thursday, November 16th. Mr. Rudge will reach out to each of the Board members to get them scheduled. Another change with this certification review is that instead of doing a public hearing, they will hold a round table discussion with members of the Technical Advisory Committee as well as other people in the community. The round table discussion will occur on Wednesday, November 15th from 4-5:30 pm.

Freeport to Forth Worth Freight Corridor/36A Coalition Meeting – There will be a meeting with the 36A Coalition in a couple of weeks to discuss the Freeport to Fort Worth Freight Corridor. The Coalition is very interested in being a part of the group that approaches TxDOT to include this corridor as an important freight corridor in the State of Texas. A few years ago, staff wrote a Freeport to Fort Worth Corridor Study as part of the Unified Planning Work Program. The 36A Coalition reviewed that document and said they were in agreement with everything stated in the document and wanted to discuss how to move forward.

FY 2024 – FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program spells out to the MPO’s partners at TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration what the MPO intends to do with the dollars that they give us. The UPWP is broken down into a template using five tasks that are given from the Federal Highway Administration that never change. The special studies task is usually where we see the most flexibility in what the MPO is doing. In this particular UPWP, there are two projects to highlight. The first project is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. There is enough carryover funding to hire a consultant to prepare the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Staff believes this is a good recommendation because there would be a fresh set of eyes on the process that could tell where the MPO may improve some things. The second project is to update the Leveraging Local Resources document that was first prepared a few years ago. The document was very well received in the community, and it is a good way to explain what the MPO is doing, what the priorities are, and most importantly what the MPO is doing locally to leverage federal funds to improve the transportation network in Brazos County. If the UPWP is approved by the Policy Board today, it will move forward to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for their review.

John Nichols made the motion to adopt the FY 2024 – FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program. The motion was seconded by James Edge. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote.

FM 1179 Preliminary Design and Public Outreach Efforts Presentation

Juan Quiroz, District Planning Engineer for TxDOT-Bryan District, gave a presentation on the FM 1179 Widening project. Mr. Quiroz oversees all of the long-term planning projects (2-20 years out) within the Bryan District.

The FM 1179 project is being done in collaboration with the B/CS MPO to meet current and future traffic demand attributed to development growth in the area. This is a fundamental reason behind the project. The project is located from just outside of FM 158 to Easterling Drive along FM 1179. The project length is approximately 3.6 miles. There will be a roadway rehabilitation project that occurs ahead of this widening project which is anticipated to go to bid in 2026 which is approximately two years before this project. With that rehabilitation project, they will also be replacing the bridge at Wixon Creek.

TxDOT held a public meeting on July 27th from 4:30-6:30 pm at the Brazos Center. There were slightly over 300 attendees. They presented a lot of information, answered questions, and interacted with the public. They also had roll plats that presented the proposed design for the project. The official public comment period for the meeting ended on August 11th and approximately 106 comments were received. TxDOT has compiled the comments and is preparing them for the official record along with responses. Prior to the meeting, TxDOT proactively met with property owners along the corridor to talk about impacts to their property with respect to right-of-way acquisition or access.

This project is needed because there is a high crash rate along the corridor that exceeds the statewide average for similar roadways. There is also inadequate roadway capacity resulting in reduced mobility and increased congestion along the corridor. The need is a great way to identify the goals of the project. One of the goals or purpose of the project is to enhance safety along the corridor by upgrading the roadway design to modern standards. Another goal is to improve mobility and reduce congestion along the corridor to accommodate the current and future traffic demand. This project is looking 20 years into the future.

There are four main proposed improvements of the project:

- Widening of FM 1179 from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane roadway, two lanes in each direction.
- Construct a raised median with dedicated left turn lanes at strategic intersections.
- Construct roundabouts at Coyote Run Road and Merka Road/Steep Hollow Road.
- Construct a sidewalk wide enough for both pedestrians and bicyclists, also called a shared-use path.

TxDOT is anticipating approximately 39 acres of right-of-way to construct the proposed improvements.

A typical section in the existing condition is a two-lane roadway, with approximately 11-foot-wide lanes and three foot wide shoulders on each side. Two typical sections are being proposed for the improvements. South of Merka Road/Steep Hollow Road, there are two lanes of traffic in each direction with a raised median in the middle and a shared-use path with a buffer along the corridor. They have also proposed curb and gutter with open ditch drainage throughout the corridor. North of Merka Road/Steep Hollow Road (a shorter segment), they are proposing two lanes of traffic in each direction with a center two-way turn lane (no raised median). There will also be a shared-use path with the open ditch drainage configuration.

There have been a lot of comments regarding raised medians. Mr. Quiroz showed two roadway configurations, one with raised medians and one without. The one with raised medians clearly had less conflict points for a vehicle to encounter. Each conflict point is at risk for an accident, so the big takeaway is the reduction of conflict points. The second takeaway is improved traffic flow. When looking at crash data, there were instances where vehicles were veering into the opposite lane. There were no head-on collisions, but it opens the door for that potential risk. Raised medians act as a physical barrier between opposing traffic flow along the corridor. Traffic volume will increase over 20 years as growth and development occurs, so raised medians will be a safety benefit to improve the mobility along the corridor and reduce congestion. Nationally, raised medians have shown to reduce crashes by up to 27%. Locally, TxDOT looked at two raised median locations recently constructed but with enough years of information to establish a crash rate: along Texas Avenue in College Station and along University Drive. The crash reduction rates were up to 65%.

Another feature that has had many questions are roundabouts. Again, similar to raised medians, roundabouts reduce the number and severity of crashes because of their configuration and the way traffic flows through that configuration. Incidents are at angles instead of perpendicular which reduces the severity of crashes. When comparing a signalized intersection to a roundabout, there is a significant 78% reduction in crashes. The other type of traditional stop-controlled intersection design (stop controlled on the intersecting side street with main street traffic continuing through intersection) there is potentially up to 82% of a crash reduction rate. These numbers are quite significant in terms of safety and a roundabout can be really effective in terms of reducing crashes. A plus of a roundabout is improved traffic flow. The operation of the intersection is much more efficient when you're using a roundabout because essentially through traffic can flow through the roundabout and the intersecting legs don't always have to stop if there's no oncoming vehicles.

Mr. Quiroz showed the proposed roundabout configurations for Coyote Rune Road and Merka Road/Steep Hollow Road. At Coyote Run Road, they are proposing a roundabout that will allow through traffic on FM 1179 to flow through that configuration and obviously the intersecting roadway traffic on Coyote Run can come up to the roundabout and then decide which direction they want to go to and incorporate themselves into the roundabout and move through that configuration. On Merka Road/Steep Hollow Road, the roundabout configuration allowed TxDOT to combine the two offset roadways which is a big improvement. This roundabout also avoids some major constraints they may not be obvious such as a cemetery, Emmanuel Baptist Church, and businesses and buildings. The roundabout will also slow traffic in that area, which has been a concern from citizens.

During the fall of 2023 into Spring of 2024, TxDOT will refine the schematic and conduct required environmental studies. As they progress through refinement of the design, TxDOT is planning more public involvement in the summer of 2024. After that, once they receive environmental clearance, they will move into right-of-way acquisition, adjust utilities, and develop detailed construction plans. Fall of 2028 is the anticipated construction start date.

There were some important comments received regarding four intersections: Oak Forest Drive, Thornberry Drive, Riverstone Drive, and Copperfield Drive. Because of this, TxDOT will take a closer look at these intersections to see what type of improvements can be made at those locations. TxDOT continues to have meetings with affected property owners along the corridor. They have also had meetings with developers with regard to potential residential developments along the corridor. They are meeting with emergency response services to discuss the areas that they serve and the routing that they use to get there. They are also meeting with Wixon Utility District regarding their water tower infrastructure. TxDOT is open to receiving comments at any time regarding the project.

There was a concern regarding ranchettes beyond Copperfield Drive and their inability to turn left. Mr. Quiroz responded that the roundabouts that are close to those locations provide an opportunity for those vehicles to change direction. They have also provided a few strategic locations for traffic to change directions. They have double checked to make sure the roundabouts can accommodate trucks with trailers.

There was also a concern that it is very difficult to make U-turns without a loop and this may force traffic into Miramont and some of the other neighborhoods. Mr. Quiroz responded that this was something they are looking at and they are aware of those issues. They are looking at several options for those locations including Copperfield Drive.

Adjourn

The October Policy Board meeting was rescheduled from October 4th to October 11th due to scheduling conflicts.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

Meeting: Policy Board

Date: 9/6/2023

Name	Agency
Juan Quiroz	TXDOT
John Nichols	City of College Station
Dennis Christensen	RMA
BILL OLIVER	WTRW
CHAD BROWN	TXDOT
Doug Marino	TxDot
Dwane Peters	Brazos County
Debbie Albert	TTI
JAMES EDGE	CITY OF BRYAN
Paul Kasper	City of Bryan
JASON SEMPER	CITY OF COLLEGE STATION
Terry Maholek	HNTB
TO MARLOW	BRAZOS TRANSIT DISTRICT
Prarthana Banerji	Brazos County
Shana Hanson	KLI Technologies

ATTEST:

Nancy J. Berry

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

10/11/2023

Date

Dan Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO