



**MINUTES OF THE ABILENE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD
October 18, 2022**

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 18, 2022, in the City Council Chambers, Abilene City Hall, 555 Walnut St., Abilene, Texas.

Voting Members Present:

Mr. Glenn Allbritton, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County (Policy Board Vice-Chairman)
Councilman Shane Price, City of Abilene (Policy Board Chairman)
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County

Voting Member Absent:

Mayor Anthony Williams, City of Abilene

Staff of Member Agencies in Attendance:

Commissioner Brad Birchum, Taylor County Precinct 3
Mr. Scott Chandler, P.E., City of Abilene, City Engineer
Mr. Billy Dezern, TxDOT, Transportation Specialist
Ms. Nellie Doneva, City of Abilene, Videographer
Mr. Michael Haithcock, P.E., TxDOT, Abilene TP&D
Mr. Max Johnson, City of Abilene, Director of Public Works
Ms. Kelley Messer, City of Abilene, First Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Bobby Sharpe, CityLink General Manager
Mr. Bryce Turentine, P.E., TxDOT Abilene Area Engineer
Mr. Bryce Wade, TxDOT Abilene Environmental Specialist

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Ms. E'Lisa Smetana, Executive Director

Others in Attendance:

Ms. Hannah Gokingco, (ATCPHD) Abilene Taylor-County Public Health District Data Analyst
Mr. Bill Minter

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Price called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He stated that public comments would be taken on any item appearing on the agenda during the discussion of said item.

2. Consideration and Take Action on the minutes of the August 16, 2022 meeting.

Judge Bolls made a **motion** to approve the meeting minutes as presented, with a **second** by Judge Spurgin. *Motion carried (4-0).*

3. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion, and Take Action on the amendment to the FY 2022/2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Ms. Smetana presented the proposed first amendment to the (UPWP) Unified Planning Work Program. Ms. Smetana detailed the three items requiring review: 1) The inclusion of the 2021 Planning Emphasis Areas to be utilized in the development of the Metropolitan and Statewide Planning and Research Work Programs. 2) The incorporation of the "Safe and Accessible Transportation Options" for work-programs and allotting funding to increase safe accessible options for safe travel modes for people of

all ages and abilities. 3) The need to update the fiscal-year-end to more closely match actual spending patterns. Ms. Smetana spoke of the changes to the document, that were detailed in the packet, which included the update of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act section, Planning Factors update, addition of Task 4.3 Complete Streets and the update to the Budget Summary.

Ms. Smetana reminded the board this had been presented to the (TAC) Technical Advisory Committee on Sept. 27, 2022 and TAC recommended approval with the changes presented. Ms. Smetana said that the document would be forwarded to TxDOT after board approval.

Mr. Allbritton made a **motion** to approve, with a **second** by Judge Spurgin. *Motion carried (4-0).*

4. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion, and Take Action on the FM 1082 Fort Phantom Hill Dam Road Project (CSJ 0972-03-021). (TxDOT Michael Haithcock)

Mr. Haithcock (TxDOT) introduced himself and began with a safety minute "#EndTheStreakTX" (traffic fatalities). Mr. Haithcock said he believed the FM 1082 Fort Phantom Hill Dam Road Project would be a beneficial step in helping "End the Streak". Mr. Haithcock referred the board to the schematics provided in the packet and advised the board on the three primary reasons TxDOT likes this project: 1) Safety with allowing separation and distance between FM 1082 and Fort Phantom Lake; 2) The road relocation would enable easier road and bridge maintenance; and 3) FM 1082 will not have to be closed during construction. Mr. Haithcock said the project was environmentally cleared on October 7, 2022 and two virtual public meetings had been held. One meeting was held on March 24, 2022 and one on July 7, 2022. He noted the completion of the full Archeological Study and informed the board that the Abilene District's water subject matter expert had conducted multiple site visits and communication before making the determination that no wetlands were present; just in-stream vegetation. This finding will allow the work to be covered by a nation-wide permit #14 issued by the United States Army Core of Engineers. Mr. Haithcock detailed the right-of-way, the addition of an eight-foot chain link fence, and the utilities involved in the project (AEP, Taylor Telecom, and Taylor Electric). Mr. Haithcock said that TxDOT is hoping to hire a consultant for the PS&E (plans, specifications and estimate). He stated that the proposed schedule is: Notice to Proceed on November 2022, Design Conference on December 2022, Ready to Let on April 2023, and Let to Construction on August 2023. Mr. Haithcock said that the budget is approximately \$7 Million for this project. Mr. Haithcock requested board approval of the project thus enabling the schematics to be sent to Austin.

Ms. Smetana said the full presentation was included in the packet for this agenda item and for the next agenda item.

Councilman Price thanked Mr. Haithcock for holding the public hearings and for listening to the requests made. The floor was opened for discussion and question.

Judge Spurgin asked if prior notification had been made of the FM 1082 Fort Phantom Hill Dam Road Project being addressed in this meeting and if the agenda had been emailed to the public, specifically including those individuals who voiced opposition or concern. Ms. Smetana replied that the email notifications were sent in the same manner they always are. She qualified that many of the names and email addresses are private, thus no individual identifications of all of the recipients is possible. Ms. Smetana reminded the board this FM 1082 Fort Phantom Hill Dam Road was previously approved as a project in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Smetana said TxDOT was asking for additional approval and support to move forward with the project.

Judge Bolls concurred with Judge Spurgin at the lack of citizen attendance on this agenda item. Judge Spurgin spoke of possibly tabling the decision until the next Policy Board Meeting and asked what impact a delay would have on project scheduling. Mr. Allbritton responded the project could still proceed if delayed but it would be proceed at risk. Mr. Allbritton noted the utility relocation has an approximate completion time of one year and we are already pushing that. Mr. Haithcock advised that

they are in the process of hiring a consultant and they would be unable to start until they have a contract. If the project is tabled, Mr. Haithcock does not believe we could reach the Let to Construction date of August 2023 but it would possibly be December 2023 and that would place them into a new fiscal year. Judge Spurgin spoke on the accommodations that had previously been made to be inclusive to the public, prior participation, posting of meetings notification and concluded with he does not see that delaying the project would be necessary. Judge Bolls concurred with Judge Spurgin. Judge Bolls spoke on the need to move forward on the project. Councilman Price concurred and stated he is comfortable with moving forward on the project.

Judge Bolls **made** a motion to approve as presented, with a **second** by Mr. Allbritton. *Motion carried (4-0).*

5. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion, and Take Any Action on FM 89 between FM 707 and Buffalo Gap TX. (Taylor County Commissioner Brad Birchum – Precinct 3)

Commissioner Birchum began his presentation by addressing FM 89 traveling south from Abilene city limits to Buffalo Gap. The Commissioner noted the current and rapidly expanding population, the five housing developments proposed and in process, safety concerns, and the lack of an improved shoulder or turning lane. He said his concern is for the safety of the cars and especially for the school buses that are forced to stop on a 70 mph roadway with no room for a vehicle to avoid or go around a stopped vehicle. Commissioner Birchum spoke on the need for left-hand turn lanes and improvement to the roadway shoulders on Buffalo Gap Road (FM 89).

Councilman Price opened the discussion about this becoming a potential future project. Mr. Allbritton (TxDot) noted that some of areas identified by Commissioner Birchum are not located within the Abilene MPO Boundaries and the project would require multiple funding sources. Mr. Allbritton spoke of the required research and review of speed limits, accident history, and the difficulty involved in creating individual left-hand turn lanes for each of the intersections Commissioner Birchum identified. Mr. Allbritton said that with the many housing expansions within the area, this could be a continuous project for those areas located within the Abilene MPO Boundaries. Ms. Smetana informed the Policy Board that the Technical Advisory Committee is currently researching a possible boundary expansion and that the current Travel Demand Model does partially include Buffalo Gap. The proposed Abilene MPO Boundary expansion when matched to the Travel Demand Model would place most of the area noted by Commissioner Birchum within the Abilene MPO Boundaries; thus allowing possible future funding, if the board approved the expansion and the projects.

Judge Spurgin asked for clarification and if road classification (e.g.: number of driveways, distance between driveways) would govern the project. Mr. Allbritton explained that speed limits would be a consideration along with other criteria. Judge Bolls asked Ms. Messer for specifics on a recusal. Ms. Messer detailed the specifics and stated that it would be safe to abstain (rather than recusal) and she was under the impression this was just a discussion with no action taken. Councilman Price asked Ms. Smetana to confirm that there was no specific action to be taken at this time. Ms. Smetana confirmed stating this is a discussion of possible future projects only. She said that she is hearing from the Board that staff is to include, as appropriate, potential projects through the normal Project Selection Process.

No action taken.

6. Receive an Update, Hold a Discussion, Take Action on MPO Staffing (Tabled)

Councilman Price noted this project was tabled at the last meeting. Councilman Price **made** a motion to remove it from the table with a **second** by Judge Spurgin. *Motion carried (4-0).*

Ms. Smetana gave an update on staffing. She informed the board that she had selected a candidate to fill the Office Assistant III position as a part-time employee; she also noted that interviews for the Transportation Planner was being addressed. She is hopeful the Abilene MPO would be fully staffed

in the near future. Ms. Smetana went over funding concerns with hiring three full-time positions. Ms. Smetana stated that no action would be required from the board at this time on this matter. Judge Spurgin thanked Ms. Smetana for working so hard to meet the current staff funding without using carryover funding.

No further action taken.

**7. Discussion and review of transportation projects.
(TxDOT Staff, City Staff, CityLink Staff)**

TxDOT – Mr. Bryce Turentine presented on behalf of TxDOT. Mr. Turentine began with the planned projects for 2023 to 2026 advising that all listed planned projects are on track and schedule. He noted that Site 1 and 2, US 83 and FM 3034, are meant to be a single project letting at the same time. On Site 2, FM 3034 would be from US 83 to Brick Road, not to FM 600, which would clarify and explain Site 10 project limits which run on FM 3034 from Brick Road to FM 600. He went over each of the planned projects in detail. Mr. Turentine then addressed the current projects: Site 1, Ambler Avenue (SH 351) is anticipated for completion in November. Site 2, the safety improvement installation of illumination on BI 20-R (South 1st Street) at Leggett Dr. to Ross Ave. has let and should begin in early 2023. Sites 3 & 4, Buffalo Gap Rd. (FM 89) are approximately 20% complete, construction has limited the roadway to two lanes (one in each direction). Sites 5 & 6, (FM 600 and FM 1082) rehabilitations are near completion. Sites 7 & 8, on FM 89 and FM 707, are safety improvement projects consisting of adding turn lanes. Those projects are nearing completion. Sites 9 & 10, on IH-20 consisting of an overlay is approximately 20% complete.

City of Abilene - Mr. Scott Chandler presented on behalf of the City of Abilene noting that the 2022 Work Zone paving is nearing completion. North 6th and Cypress Street improvements (around the hotel site), progress has been hindered due to the hotel erecting fencing along Cypress Street, so they are currently coordinating with the hotel. The EN 10th St. Improvements from Treadaway to Judge Ely are underway. The continuation from Treadaway to Loop 322 will open for bid soon. The South 14 Street Project, which consists of placing railroad ties and smoothing the area with concrete panels, is 95% complete. Mr. Chandler noted that the projects will be rolled out in an orderly manner to assist with bidding. The Five Points Roadway Project was bid at 3.5 million dollars. The Honeybee Road Project will be opened for bid in the next week. The following is the order of opening bids: Maple Street Project (Carriage Hills to Loop 322); EN 10th Street Project Phase 2 (Judge Ely Blvd. to Loop 322); and North 5th Street two way traffic conversion Project to remove some signals along the corridor and also re-building and rehabbing the signals at Pine Street and Grape Street. All those projects should be out for bid and construction started in December 2022 or January 2023.

Mr. Chandler stated that street resurfacing projects for 2023 currently includes two work zones S11B/S9C and N2A/N2B. Two more design projects are a DCOA (Development Corporation of Abilene) Project on South 27th Street, which will be improvements from Barrow Street to Danville Drive and a South 14th Street Walkability Project that is a sidewalk from Pioneer Street to Willis Street, letting in May of 2023. He noted that simultaneously they would be working on the Maple Street projects. He stated that currently they are determining the number of phases of the project and the order to let. He stated that they met with the Street Advisory Committee who suggested rebuilding some concrete intersections: South Willis at 7th, Pine and North 10th, North 18th at Kirkwood, and if funds allocated allow N 14th at Westwood. A meeting is scheduled for November with the Street Advisory Committee to select one additional work zone resurfacing project for 2023. Mr. Chandler said they would be analyzing the street inventory, which was last inventoried in 2021, to make recommendation for maintenance to meet the Payment Conditions Index (PCI).

CityLink - Mr. Bobby Sharpe provided an update on the automated voice announcement system for the buses. The hardware has been received and they have met with the vendor to schedule installation. This project should be operational in a few weeks. Mr. Sharpe spoke of the two large buses that were

ordered in December 2021. He noted they are still on schedule for delivery in January 2023 in spite of supply chain issues.

8. Discussion and review of reports:

Ms. Smetana reviewed the following reports included in the packet.

Financial Status - Ms. Smetana advised for FY 2022 the August and September billings are still outstanding. Ms. Smetana said that for FY 2023 that started October 1, 2022, we have not received the first work order yet. TxDOT is waiting for the money from the Federal Highway Administration before distribution can take place. Ms. Smetana noted that she would answer any questions on the financial report, no questions asked.

Operation Report – Ms. Smetana advised that the Full Operations Report is in the packet for the dates August 13, 2022 to October 11, 2022. Ms. Smetana noted this stretch of time was overtaken with reports and attempting to staff the MPO vacant positions.

Director's Report

Ms. Smetana advised no update at this time.

9. Opportunity for members of the Public to make comments on MPO issues.

Chairman Price opened the floor for any public comments. Mr. Bill Minter said he is a member and former president of the Steamboat Cycling Club. Mr. Minter mentioned that Ms. Kathy Strong who is a member of cycling club, helped organize a bike education series of meetings for recent immigrants who may have a job requiring them to get to work on a bike. Mr. Minter discussed passage by twenty-seven cities of the three-foot safe passing ordinance and the lack of signs on main roads without a shoulder noting bikes may use the full lane.

10. Opportunity for Board Members, Technical Advisory Committee Members, or MPO Staff to recommend topics for future discussion or action.

Chairman Price suggested the 2023 Calendar for the next meeting.

11. Adjournment.

With no further business, Chairman Price adjourned the meeting at 2:34 p.m.