



MINUTES OF THE ABILENE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD

November 19, 2013

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 19, 2013, in the Abilene City Hall, City Council Chambers, 555 Walnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

Members Present:

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene Mayor and Policy Board Chairman
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County
Mr. Doug Eichorst, P.E., TxDOT Interim Abilene District Engineer
Councilman Joe Spano, City of Abilene

Members Not Present:

Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Carter, P.E., City of Abilene City Engineer
Mr. Joe Clark, TxDOT West Region MPO Coordinator
Mr. James Condry, City of Abilene Traffic & Transportation Administrator
Mr. David Crymes, Taylor County Local Emergency Planning Committee
Ms. Kelly Daniel, TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator, PTN Division, Odessa
Mr. Ben Herr, City of Abilene CityLink Transit General Manager
Mr. Alan Hufstutler, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Area Engineer
Mr. John Mangalonzo, Business Reporter, Abilene Reporter-News
Ms. Chris Moscarelli, City of Abilene Finance Department
Ms. Megan Santee, City of Abilene Director of Public Works
Mr. Stanley Smith, City of Abilene Legal Department
Ms. Darah Waldrip, TxDOT Public Information Officer, Abilene & Brownwood Districts

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Ms. E'Lisa Smetana, Abilene MPO Executive Director
Mr. Thomas Cook, Abilene MPO Transportation Planner
Mr. Dean Carter, Abilene MPO Transportation GIS Technician

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Archibald called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. He noted that the meeting was formally posted and a quorum was duly present. Judge Spurgin was absent due to other commitments out of town.

2. Consideration of Approval of the Minutes of the September 20, 2013 Meeting.

Mayor Archibald asked if there were any corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes of the September 20, 2013 meeting. If not he asked for approval of the minutes as presented. The motion to approve was made by Councilman Spano and seconded by Judge Bolls.

Motion carried.

3. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the DRAFT Public Participation Plan.

Ms. Smetana began by explaining the plan currently in place was approved in June 2007. Staff and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) have created an update to the current plan. Ms. Smetana explained a couple of the highlights of the plan pertaining to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regarding using the plan in lieu of a separate Program of Projects (POP) if the grantee coordinates with the MPO and ensures the public is aware that the MPO's plan is being used to satisfy the POP public participation requirements. In addition, discussion was held over the change to the public review and comment periods on the adoption of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the TIP being expanded to 20 days and 10 days for amendments to either of these documents.

Ms. Smetana explained that the TAC had two suggestions for the DRAFT document: one was the suggestion to remove the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects (ALOP); however, the law states, "the listing shall be published or otherwise be made available in accordance with the MPO's public participation criteria for the TIP" so it needs to remain in the plan. A second suggestion pertained to informing the public as to when the review and comment period would begin and the process to do this. To address this concern a statement was added that "notification of the public comment periods will be placed at least 72 hours in advance in the same locations described above for MPO Transportation Policy Board meetings and in addition, notices may be placed in newspapers of general circulation, on the MPO website, or on local radio or television stations".

Ms. Smetana stated that this is a draft which will go out for a 45-day mandatory comment period once it is approved by the board. Any comments will be presented back to the Policy Board along with the final document.

Judge Bolls made the motion to approve this DRAFT Public Participation Plan so it could move forward for the 45 day comment period. Councilman Spano seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

4. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the DRAFT FY 2013 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects.

Ms. Smetana explained that included in the packets is a letter from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) explaining the process for submitting this report to them before public review so this is a draft that will allow the board to review it before it is submitted. Any comments from TxDOT, FHWA, or FTA will be presented back to the board in a future meeting.

Mr. Cook stated that this is a federally required report covering highway and transit projects for the just-completed fiscal year. The intent is to show transparency. Mr. Cook went on to explain that the Transportation Enhancement project on South 1st has the categories of Local Cost and Local Contribution. The Local Cost is the required 20% match in order to receive the grant. The Local Contribution is all costs above the combined first three funding sources (Federal, State, and Local Costs) up to the total project cost. The total amount spent in FY 2013 between highway and transit was \$10,320,526. There was a question regarding Transportation Development Credits (TDCs) in the last transit entry. Ms. Smetana explained that TDCs are not included because they are not considered hard cash. She said this report is also a draft and will also come back before the Board in January after we receive any comments back from the FHWA and FTA. Mayor Archibald made the motion to approve the draft and the second was made by Mr. Eichorst.

Motion carried.

5. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the DRAFT FY 2013 Annual Performance and Expenditures Report.

Ms. Smetana stated that this report is related to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and looks at our budget, where the money was spent during the year, and what we accomplished with it. This report is for the entire federal fiscal year – from October 1 through September 30, 2013. This is also a draft report so we may have comments back from FHWA, FTA, and TxDOT. Ms. Smetana also stated that the City is in the process of closing out the year-end books so it is possible the numbers may change slightly but we think these are the final numbers. Each of the five main tasks have a separate funding summary showing the amount budgeted, amount spent, the remaining balance, and the percent expended.

Ms. Smetana further explained that the Transportation Planning Funds (TPF) are the PL-112 that come straight to the MPO and also our FTA 5303 dollars. The FTA 5307 funds go straight to CityLink, and the Local Planning Funds are the matching funds for the 5307 funds. If the percentages are over or under by 25% or more there has to be justification as to why. Under federal law, this report and the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects do not have to be approved by the Policy Board. However, this allows the Board to see the report before its submittal.

Mayor Archibald asked for a motion to approve this report. Councilman Spano so moved and the second was made by Mr. Eichorst.

Motion carried.

6. Discussion and Any Action on the following transportation topics:

• **Railroad Quiet Zones**

Mr. Cook said that several months back Mr. Garduno and the Policy Board asked us to look into Quiet Zones. There were no citizen requests; it was more information and fact-finding. In June 2012 Ms. Carolyn Cook, with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in Austin, came to Abilene. We went to eight crossing sites in Abilene, three in Tye, and four in Clyde. She explained what options were available for each of the respective crossings. Mr. Cook stated that since 2006 the FRA has calculated the Nationwide Significant Risk Threshold (NSRT) Index. This determines the danger level at the 42,150 gated, non-whistle ban crossings in the U.S. It's based on all railroad companies in the U.S. and considers and includes every injury, fatality, and property damage train-vehicle crash nationally. Through a series of formulas, they arrive at the Risk Index, and this Index is applied at the local level at one or more specific crossing sites. The current NSRT Index is at 13,722. Abilene's Risk Index with horns calculates to 25,745.86, and the Quiet Zone Risk Index calculates out to 42,944.09. The FRA will not consider granting a Quiet Zone until our numbers are more in line with the NSRT. Ms. Smetana said the Technical Committee has recommended that we present these findings to the Policy Board. At this time based on our research, it's not feasible for quiet zones.

No further action was requested.

• **Elm Creek Pedestrian Crossing**

Mr. Cook said the subcommittee has been meeting and we have a rough estimate on what it would cost to put in a pedestrian bridge, and that number is about \$480,000. Yesterday we received information from Big R Bridges and they gave us an estimated range of \$215,000 to \$250,000 for a bridge 200 feet long and 8 feet wide. This does not include assembly, the abutments, placing the bridge, and other construction costs. The pedestrian crossing is in the process of being submitted for consideration in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

An extended version of this project includes sidewalks from US 277 at the north, down to the bus shelter at the Betty Hardwick Center, and four bus shelter pads. This version does not have any proposed funding.

Mr. Eichorst said the width of the current structure doesn't allow two lanes plus the barrier plus the walking path that are required to use the existing structure. Ms. Smetana explained that the current vehicular bridge is a Pan Girder bridge and a pedestrian bridge cannot be attached to this type of bridge without modifying the support structure. Mr. Hufstutler stated that on a Pan Girder bridge you have to extend the structure underneath – the columns and caps in order to add more base to it and to do so would have an impact on water surface elevation.

Mayor Archibald said the best plan now is for this to be a part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Mayor Archibald asked Mr. James about the CIP process. Mr. James said the process kicked off this past month with a public hearing and that projects are currently being submitted. Over the next month or two it will be going through staff review and then in February going to the Planning and Zoning Commission. He continued that the Elm Creek project will be included as a potential project. He commented that he would like direction from the Policy Board as to how important they think this project is, especially given that we're going to have around \$1.5 to \$1.8 million. If we did the full project it would be roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the funds available. If we did just the bridge then that is about \$300,000 plus or minus. Mayor Archibald said he thinks we concur that this should be a priority and we'll look at the cost and have to determine how this priority matches up against other priorities later in the process.

No action was taken on this except to request that this project be considered a priority.

7. Discussion and Possible Action related to the Annual Performance Evaluation of the Executive Director.

Mayor Archibald announced that the Board was going in to Executive Session at the end of this meeting. The Board went into Executive Session at 2:50 p.m. When the Board reconvened at 3:27 he said no action was taken during the Executive Session.

**8. Discussion and Review of Transportation Projects:
(By TxDOT Staff, City Staff, CityLink Staff)**

Mr. Hufstutler, the Abilene District Area Engineer, discussed the status of TxDOT projects:

J. H. Strain – wrapping up the retrofit bridge rail on Loop 322 overlay (IH 20 to Maple) on schedule, with some final cleanup work.

Contract Paving – Loop 322 one-way frontage road (Lytle Creek to Maple) started last month and on schedule. Working on culvert widening, new exit ramp for Industrial from south bound Loop 322 and retaining walls for turn-a-rounds at Oldham and Industrial.

J. H. Strain – IH 20 one-way frontage roads on schedule, 50% complete; will start paving outside half of frontage roads between SH 351 and Loop 322 next week.

Reece Construction – bridge replacement on East 80 (BI-20 R) is on schedule; getting ready to place deck on Phase 1 so traffic changes still a couple of months down the road.

FM 613 widening and rehab between Buffalo Gap Road and Tuscola may be starting in early January.

J. H. Strain - US 83/84 one-way frontage roads project was awarded; probably won't start for another month and a half. This includes new signals at FM 707 and the frontage road.

Mr. Chad Carter, the City Engineer, discussed the status of the City of Abilene's projects:
Engineering Division Miscellaneous Repair Work 2012-2013:

We're repaving Robertson Drive from Arrowhead Drive to Buffalo Gap Road. Chimney Rock Road from Button Willow Creek to Buffalo Gap Road is being repaved and should be completed this month. This includes a sidewalk on North 6th Street from Willis Street to Mockingbird Lane. This should be completed this month.

Water Department Street and Miscellaneous Repair Work 2012-2013: This is just repairing utility cuts in the streets as they occur.

Miscellaneous Residential Streets, Phase 3: This includes the reconstruction of Richmond Street, Fairmount Street, Waldemar Street, Potomac Avenue, Leggett Drive, Buccaneer Drive and the South 7th Street and Leggett Drive intersection. This will wrap up this month.

Miscellaneous Seal Coat Projects 2013 – This will wrap up this month also. They are finalizing the paperwork but they are finished.

The BI-20 R (South 1st Street from Locust Street to Butternut Street, enhancement with landscaped medians project) – will begin after the first of the year.

Engineering Division Miscellaneous Repair Work – Fall 2013-2014 – Construction is about to begin on this.

He pointed out that about 17 lane-miles of new road is being added to the City system by private development, mainly subdivisions.

Public Works in the Design Phase:

Cockerell Neighborhood sidewalk – plans are nearly complete and the E. North 13th Street from Treadaway Boulevard to 16th Street – plans for both are almost complete; Cobb Park - Westwood - Richland Street Rehabilitation (North 3rd Street and North 5th Street); The South 11th Street sidewalk from Treadaway Boulevard to Elmwood Drive – design has not started yet but hoping to have the design completed by this coming summer. Industrial Boulevard improvements from Treadaway Boulevard to Buffalo Gap Road - we're about 20% complete with this design. We will also do some work in front of Sayles Boulevard adjacent to Cooper High School.

Mr. Herr, the CityLink General Manager, discussed the status of CityLink's projects:

–FTA Triennial Review on Tuesday and Wednesday, November 12 and 13.

–Review in progress regarding modifying select bus routes, especially Route 5.

–New Program: Day Passes for customers and organizations. A \$2.50 Day Pass provides unlimited travel all day on all CityLink fixed routes.

Ms. Kelly Daniel, TxDOT Public Transportation Coordinator, PTN Division

Ms. Daniel briefly discussed the new changes in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) federal legislation and funding bill as it pertains to FTA Section 5310 (the Elderly and Disabled) funds and processes.

Informational only; no action was required or taken on these items.

9. Discussion and Review of Reports:

• **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana said the MPO's financial status is included in the packet. The bottom row shows (as of September 2013), the year-to-date total amount authorized, \$483,353.72, total expenditures of \$251,194.57, with the total remaining balance of \$232,159.15 to carry over into FY 2014.

• **Operation Report**

Some of the major activities the MPO staff completed from September 19th through November 8th, 2013 are listed below. The full list is included in the packet.

- Revised draft Public Participation Plan (PPP)
- Revised draft Project Selection Process (PSP)
- Reviewed and analyzed saturation traffic counts for accuracy
- Wrote Annual Performance and Expenditures Report (APER)
- Wrote Annual Listing of Projects Report (APL)
- Assisted CityLink with their documents and preparation for the FTA Triennial Review on November 12 & 13

• **Director's Report**

Meeting Dates for FY 2014

The next meeting date is scheduled for January 21, the day after the Martin Luther King holiday. We will be sending the dates out to everyone to put on your calendars.

Priority of MPO Mobility Projects

The Policy Board selected five projects on July 15, 2008 as their top priority. The Technical Advisory Committee formed a subcommittee to look at other projects and see what future projects to recommend to the Policy Board.

MPO Projects

A complete list is included in the packets of projects the MPO is working on or participating in. The long-range plan, or Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is due in January 2015. Staff will be working very extensively on this over the next several months as we need to get the information to TxDOT so we'll be able to have a travel demand model for the long-range plan. The Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) will be due in February 2014 and we'll be looking at some new projects to include in it.

Informational only; no action was required or taken on this item.

10. Opportunity for Members of the Public to Make Comments on MPO Issues.

Mr. David Crymes, Chairman of the Taylor County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) asked the Board to keep in mind evacuations – not just moving people out and away from disasters and hazardous incidents but also bringing in responders from other areas to Abilene. He continued that we also need to keep in mind the elderly and those who are less mobile who have huge transportation needs and their families may not be there to take care of them during a disaster.

No other comments were received.

11. Opportunity for Board Members or MPO Staff to Recommend Topics for Future Discussion or Action.

Ms. Smetana explained that in Austin there was training on performance measures which is now a requirement under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) legislation.

More will be coming in the future on this. There is also a software that TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Institute developed called TRENDS (Transportation Revenue Estimator and Needs Determination System) which will allow you to analysis different projects and roadway investments. This will be useful in the development of the long-range plan. This Thursday (July 21st) the City is having their City University and the MPO has been invited to hold a mock MPO Policy Board meeting instead of a City Council meeting.

No other suggestions or comments were received.

At 2:50 p.m. Mayor Archibald announced that the Board was going in to Executive Session to discuss the annual performance evaluation of the Executive director. The Board reconvened at 3:27 p.m. Listed under Item #7.

No action was required or taken.

12. Adjournment.

With no further business, Mayor Archibald adjourned the MPO Policy Board Meeting at 3:29 p.m.