



**MINUTES OF THE ABILENE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD**

October 22, 2019

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 22, 2019, in the South Branch Library Conference Room, 4310 Buffalo Gap Road, Abilene, Texas.

Members Present:

Councilman Shane Price, City of Abilene (*Policy Board Chairman*)
Mr. Carl Johnson, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County

Members Absent

Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County (*Policy Board Vice-Chairman*)
Mayor Anthony Williams, City of Abilene

Technical Advisory Committee Members Present:

Mr. Tommy Downing, Dyess Air Force Base Community Planner
Mr. Paul Norman, P.E., TxDOT Abilene Area Engineer
Mr. Greg McCaffrey P.E. COA Public Works Director
Mr. Charlie Thomas, P.E., City of Abilene Interim City Engineer
Mr. James Rogge, P.E. COA Engineering, Traffic and Transportation Administrator
Mr. Michael Warrix (AICP) COA Director of Planning
Mr. Bobby Sharpe, COA CityLink, General Manager
Ms. Elisa Smetana, Abilene MPO Executive Director
Ms. P.J. Sumner, WCTCOG Environmental Program Coordinator
Commissioner Randy Williams, Taylor County Commissioner

Staff of Member Agencies in Attendance:

Ms. Kelley Messer, City of Abilene First Assistant City Attorney

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Mr. Ed McRoy, Abilene MPO Transportation Planner II

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Rob Rae, Walter P. Moore Associates
Mr. Jonathan Avner, Whitman, Requardt & Associates
Mr. Kevin Lancaster, Whitman, Requardt & Associates
Mr. James Condry, Citizen
Mr. Kenneth Bradley, Citizen

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Price called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He announced that public comment could be taken on any item appearing on the agenda during the discussion of that item.

2. Consideration and action on the minutes of the June 18, 2019 meeting and August 5, 2019 workshop.

Judge Spurgin made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2019 and August 5, 2019 meetings as presented, with a **second** by Mr. Johnson. *Motion carried (3-0)*

3. Discussion and any recommendation of action on the FYs 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Project Listing. (Consultants – Walter P. Moore).

Ms. Smetana provided a brief introduction to this item noting that a Draft FYs 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) had been included in the packet. She then introduced Mr. Rob Rae of Walter P. Moore who provided a more detailed briefing. Mr. Rae observed that the current document is a first draft and that a number of changes are likely. He then went on to discuss: 1) final survey results 2) the financial plan 3) the project list and 4) the project scoring.

Mr. Johnson asked why 13% of survey respondents indicated it was difficult to get around in the Abilene area. Mr. Rae responded that the hardest thing for those without a vehicle was the transit system. He also noted that pavement quality and a lack of sidewalks were common responses.

Commissioner Williams asked if demographic information about the respondents was collected. Mr. Rae affirmed that there were questions asking for such information. He also noted that zip code information was requested.

When discussing the Financial Plan, Chairman Price asked how the funds from the TRENDS scenario for a 10% increase in vehicle registrations would be distributed. Mr. Rae stated that since this was a hypothetical proposition requiring initiation through the State legislature, it is not clear how such funds might be handled. It is however believed that if such funding becomes available, it will most likely be distributed to counties in their road and bridge funds.

In discussing the current Project List, Mr. Rae noted that projects which are highlighted are those which have not previously been included in the TIP or MTP. Ms. Smetana added that this includes the second phase of the I-20 project, which would be where the Judge Ely under/overpass would be. Mr. Rae remarked that TxDOT has estimated this to be a \$60 million project and they are requesting \$20 million in MPO category 2U funding. Ms. Smetana pointed out that the Policy Board has not yet acted on this request but they could do so in the MTP or the Ten-Year Plan. Mr. Johnson stated that action on this request is not required today. He noted that if approved by the end of the year, then the Transportation Commission can act on it by August of 2020. He added that once projects are on the long-range plan TXDOT staff can do work such as environmental studies, schematic drawings, and similar non-construction work. Ms. Smetana clarified that the additional phases of the I-20 project have been placed in the Unfunded List for now but may shift to the Funded List later.

At 1:55 p.m. Ms. Smetana noted a quorum of TAC members were present. She called a TAC meeting open as a result of this.

Chairman Price asked for additional information about a reference in the presentation materials about a project on US 277 connecting air bases. Mr. Rae indicated that in the August 5th meeting there had been some discussion about improving US 277 but it was unclear if all such projects had been captured. He was looking for confirmation of this. Mr. Johnson noted that a project in the Draft MTP on page 94 listed only as improving US 83 was a section of roadway also designated as US 277. He believed this explained the uncertainty.

When discussing prioritization and measures used in scoring, Mr. Johnson asked if the City Fugro data covered all City roads and how this compared to TxDOT paving scores. Mr. McCaffery confirmed that all City Streets had been included in the Fugro project. Mr. McRoy observed that the two measures were not identical in terms of methodologies so this could be an issue but the results are roughly equivalent which should allow for reasonable comparisons.

Mr. Rae showed a copy of the current project ranking list with the scores obtained thus far. Ms. Smetana noted that this is not final yet and public participation is still open. Additional projects may need to be added and scored before a final list can be generated.

Mr. Rae then discussed the next steps in the process. Ms. Smetana indicated she hoped to have a final document for the December 17, 2019 Policy Board meeting. She noted there is some wiggle room if needed. Mr. Johnson requested to receive the Final Draft at least one week ahead of the Policy Board meeting.

Chairman Price opened the floor to any member of the public who would like to offer comments. Seeing no one and having no further motions or discussion pending, he closed the item.

No action taken.

4. Discussion and any recommendation of action on an update to the Ten-Year Plan.

Ms. Smetana introduced the item. She noted that the new TxDOT Unified Transportation Program (UTP) had been approved and the MPO's Ten-Year Plan had been in place since June 18, 2018. In the Draft Plan presented, she pointed out that projects highlighted in green at the top of the page already have dedicated funding sources. She then highlighted the two projects at the bottom of the page noting that the \$40 million I-20 Project is using State funding so no MPO funds are being requested. The bottom project is the I-20 project that TxDOT has requested \$20 million in MPO funds. She pointed out that if this \$20 million is programmed for 2025 then a running deficit will exist until 2028. An estimated \$8 million would then be available for programming to 2029. She noted that funding amounts and project costs would be adjusted annually as needed based on future UTP's.

Judge Spurgin asked for clarification of overpass actions intended on the I-20 project between SH 351 and Pine Street. Mr. Johnson confirmed that this project would replace the existing Pine Street overpass/interchange as well as potentially add an under/overpass for a crossing of Judge Ely and a possible extension of frontage roads over the railroad tracks in this area. Comments were made suggesting rewording of this project description to include a general reference to bridge work allowing either over or underpass facilities.

Ms. Smetana asked if there was a desire to designate projects with the remaining \$8 million. Mr. Johnson supported programming all of the remaining funds indicating potentially picking from the highest scoring projects able to be constructed with the available amount. Ms. Smetana added that programming these funds might be good given the potential for federal rescissions.

Mrs. Smetana indicated she would bring this item back to the Policy Board at the December meeting. This will give staff the ability to score projects further and give the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) a chance to make a recommendation.

No action taken.

5. Discussion, status, and review of the Travel Demand Model (TDM). (Consultants – Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP)

Mr. Avner provided the Board with a briefing on:

- 1) What is a Travel Demand Model (TDM)?
- 2) Why it matters and what you can do with it?
- 3) The Abilene Travel Demand Model.

Chairman Price asked about the timing for implementation of the model. Ms. Smetana answered that the model would not be ready in time for the adoption of the MTP. She did indicate however that it would be available for updates and to help with future changes to the MTP.

Discussion Item. No action required.

6. Discussion and any action on amending the By-Laws. (TAC Proxy Voting)

Ms. Smetana explained that a quorum for the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consists of seven voting members with at least one member from the City of Abilene, one member from TxDOT and one member from any other agency. She pointed out that the bylaws currently allow some voting members to be a designee of an organization whereas others require a person occupying a specific position. The proposal is to allow positions to designate a person who can fill the role of the primary should they be unable to attend a meeting. Ms. Smetana indicated she intended this to be a predesignated person and not someone who just shows up at the meeting spur of the moment. This proposal would hopefully help with attendance issues.

Mr. Johnson asked if a designee would be denied if they showed up at a meeting and they had not completed a form in advance. Ms. Smetana said that she would not deny them but she wants a formal process establishing who the designees are.

Judge Spurgin asked if a designee for a TAC member could be a Policy Board member. Ms. Messer stated she thought this might not be a good idea citing Open Meeting Act concerns.

Commissioner Williams indicated some concern with potentially having individuals attending who are not familiar with the materials given their technical nature. Mr. McCaffery responded that it would be the member's responsibility to select a designee they can trust.

Mr. McCaffery added that quorum issues with the TAC had put added time pressures on the MPO Staff and the consultants when there had been a need for TAC deliberations. He indicated this proposal would be a way to facilitate TAC action so staff can provide documents to the Policy Board.

Ms. Smetana noted that in addition to establishing a designee the Policy Board may wish to also consider the membership of the TAC since there are some people that are not attending the meetings. She added that changing the requirements for a quorum might also be an option. Ms. Messer pointed out that since this is not a committee subject to the Open Meetings Act the need for a quorum is really only there to ensure that the Policy Board can get good recommendations and it is not a legal issue. Commissioner Williams stated that having a requirement for a quorum is a matter of best practices.

Chairman Price asked if Ms. Smetana recommended expectations for designees be added into the Bylaws? She responded that she is only asking for the words "or designee" to be added in the applicable positions.

Chairman Price asked if anyone from the Policy Board or TAC had any issues with the positions listed having a designee. Judge Spurgin said he was comfortable with the proposal.

Chairman Price asked that the word "or" be added so that all positions would be listed as "or designee". Ms. Messer suggested a change to use the words, "City of Tye Public Works Director or designee" in order to clarify this position. In discussing the base representative Mr. Downing suggested using the term "Dyess Air Force Base Civil Engineer or designee".

Judge Spurgin made a **motion** to approve the change to the By-Laws as proposed with the changes to said document as discussed, with a **second** by Mr. Johnson. *Motion carried (3-0).*

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

TxDOT: Mr. Norman reported on two active construction projects. The South First/East Highway 80 project is nearing completion. Crews are finishing up the section between Butternut St. and Treadaway Blvd. The US 83/84 from FM 707 to the US 83/84 Split project is about 3 months ahead of schedule. Widening at the south end is done and cable barriers are being installed. Frontage roads are being worked on before the overpass is started at the Remington/Clark intersection. The exit ramp to FM 707 is now under construction.

City of Abilene: Mr. Thomas reported that all of the 2015 Bond projects set for construction in 2019 have been completed. In addition he noted completion of a Catclaw/Rebecca intersection project, a Safety City parking lot improvement project, an APD Training Field Driveway and Parking Lot project, and a 2019 Pioneer Drive project. He stated that the design work for a number of new 2015 Bond Projects are between 90 – 95% complete. These projects include S. Willis, N 6th, Butternut, T&P Lane, and a CBD concrete project. They anticipate these projects to be bid in January or February. This will complete the 2015 Bond program. He added that a street project to realign Honey Bee near the lake is about 50% designed. A Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) sidewalk project is approximately 15% designed. Finally, he reported that the Ridgemont Dr. reconstruction project is approximately 50% complete.

Mr. Rogge reported that the City had applied for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) School Zone Flashers grant. He stated they anticipate hearing back on funding in December.

City Link: Mr. Sharpe reported expansion of the On-call Zone has resulted in an increase in ridership. Ridership has increased from 183 in May to 485 in September. CityLink has completed construction of a bus shelter at S 7th Street and Corsicana. Finally, he reported that a lighting project has been completed at the bus yard.

8. Discussion and review of reports:

- Financial Status

Ms. Smetana stated that a Financial Report was included in the meeting packet. Billings from May through August have been included. September billing is still outstanding as we work to close out the fiscal year. Authorization to date is at \$465,441.52 with expenditures of \$210,149.75 leaving a remaining balance of \$255,291.77. The first work order for 2020 authorizations has not yet arrived.

- Operations Report

Tasks, Training Sessions, Meetings

Ms. Smetana noted that this report covers the time period from June 12 through October 11, 2019 so there are more items listed than typical.

- Director's Report

Future Work Tasks

Ms. Smetana wanted to point out that the Travel Demand Model and long range plan should be completed in 2020. She also pointed out that the APER and ALOP for 2019 are being worked on and as usual these must be approved by FHWA before they are released publicly.

A TIP update will be done in May. She also informed the Board that FHWA will be performing a non-TMA audit of our MPO in the beginning of 2020. She pointed out that this is not required but it is something the federal government has been doing for some time now around the State.

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

Mr. Kenneth Bradley advocated for protected bicycle lanes in Abilene. He noted that 90% of drivers operate safely but 10% are deadly. He stated that these lanes are needed so we can ride safely. He stated that the number of cyclists can increase if they are safe.

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

None Received.

At 3:42 p.m. Ms. Smetana requested a motion from TAC members to adjourn the TAC meeting. Commissioner Williams made the **motion** to adjourn with a **second** by Mr. Rogge. The TAC meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

11. 551.072 (Deliberations about real property) Discussion and any action on the lease of the MPO's office space.

Chairman Price recessed the Policy Board into Executive Session at 3:43 p.m. pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, with the following issues discussed during the closed session: § 551.072 (Deliberations about real property) Discussion and action on the lease of the MPO's office space.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 4:10 p.m. Chairman Price reported no votes or actions were taken in executive session. Chairman Price noted that they are considering a new lease for the MPO offices at its current location.

Ms. Smetana stated she is seeking input from the Board on how to proceed. Chairman Price stated that based on the discussion during the Executive Session he believes the recommendation is to go forward with a month-to-month lease at the MPO's current office location.

Judge Spurgin made a **motion** to proceed with a month-to-month lease with a **second** from Mr. Johnson. *Motion carried (3-0).*

12. Adjournment.

Mr. Johnson made a **motion** to adjourn with a second by Judge Spurgin. *Motion carried (3-0). Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.*