



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

April 21, 2020

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 21, 2020, in the City Council Chambers, Abilene City Hall, 555 Walnut Street, Abilene, Texas. *This meeting was closed to in-person attendance due to COVID-19. A telephone/video conference software was used for public participation.*

Members Present:

Councilman Shane Price, City of Abilene (*Policy Board Chairman*)
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County (*Policy Board Vice-Chairman*)
Mr. Carl Johnson, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County
Mayor Anthony Williams, City of Abilene

Members Absent

None

Staff of Member Agencies in Attendance:

Mr. Paul Norman, P.E., TxDOT, Abilene Area Engineer (via remote access)
Ms. Kelley Messer, City of Abilene First Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Charlie Thomas, P.E., City of Abilene Interim City Engineer
Mr. Bobby Sharpe, General Manager, CityLink (via remote access)
Ms. Shawna Atkinson, City Secretary, City of Abilene
Ms. Nellie Doneva, City of Abilene Videographer

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Ms. E'Lisa Smetana, Abilene MPO Executive Director
Mr. Ed McRoy, Abilene MPO Transportation Planner II

Others in Attendance:

None

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 and he announced the phone numbers and participant IDs needed for telephonic access to listen to the meeting or to speak on agenda items.

2. Consideration and Action on the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Johnson made a **motion** to approve the February 18, 2020 minutes as presented, with a **second** by Mayor Williams. *Motion carried (5-0).*

3. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion and a Public Hearing, and Take Action on an amendment to the FYs 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Ms. Smetana presented the item noting the MTP was approved on December 17, 2019 but on March 5, 2020 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) presented comments on the Plan which

necessitate some amendments. She noted that a public review period was held from April 7th to April 17th and a public hearing is to be conducted during today's meeting. She noted that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has not made a recommendation on this item since no meeting was held due to COVID-19. She then described the proposed changes to the document and reported that a copy of the proposed changes was sent to our FHWA representative. Ms. Smetana noted that she has received word back from FWHA indicating the changes will satisfy the comments they had made on the original document.

Chairman Price opened a public hearing and invited anyone who wished to speak on this matter to call in using the telephone conference line. After waiting for responses and confirming with staff that there were no indications of individuals logged into the speakers telephone conference line he closed the public hearing.

Mayor Williams made a **motion** to approve the amendment to the FYs 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) as presented, with a **second** by Judge Bolls. *Motion carried (5-0).*

4. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion and a Public Hearing, and Take Action on the FINAL amendment to the FYs 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Smetana presented the item explaining that after an initial public review period had been completed a project was added to the program. This necessitated holding another public review period which was held from April 7th to April 17th concurrent with the public review of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). She noted that no comments have been received to date and a public hearing is to be conducted during today's meeting.

The added project is identified in a blue font in the document provided in the Board packet. She noted that the added project is currently under way. It has been added to the FYs 2019-2022 TIP in case change orders or other factors might necessitate it being included in the TIP. She then provided the Board with a detailed briefing of all changes from the previously presented draft noting that in addition to the other changes a revision date had to be corrected on some projects to reflect a May revision versus the February date previously listed.

Chairman Price observed that a recommendation from the TAC was not included. He then opened a Public Hearing and invited anyone who wished to speak on this matter to call in using the telephone conference line.

Judge Spurgin asked about the notification process used for the meeting since it was closed to physical attendance by the public. Ms. Smetana reported that all notifications had followed currently applicable guidelines for this contingency.

After waiting for a response and confirming with staff that there were no indications of individuals logged into the speakers telephone conference line, he closed the Public Hearing.

Judge Spurgin made a **motion** to approve the FINAL amendment to the FYs 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as presented and discussed with a **second** by Mayor Williams. *Motion carried (5-0).*

5. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion and a Public Hearing, and Take Action on the FINAL FYs 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ms. Smetana presented the item noting that this was originally due in June but has recently had its due date extended to July. Changes from the draft document including the addition of two projects required an additional public comment period similar to what was done for the previous two agenda

items. This additional public review period was held from April 7th to April 17th.

Ms. Smetana provided a detailed explanation of the changes from the original draft. As a part of this explanation she reported that two projects currently in the FYs 2019-2021 TIP have been added to the FYs 2021-2024 TIP in case they are not completed and need to be carried over into the new TIP time frame. This will hopefully limit complications should such an event transpire. She identified the two added projects as a frontage road along Hwy 83/84 between FM 707 and Antilley Road and the Hwy 83/84 project at Remington/Clark Road establishing an overpass at this intersection. She also pointed out that a handout provided to the Board clarifies revision dates originally shown on some of the projects. Revision dates are not needed on these because they are brand new projects.

Chairman Price opened a Public Hearing and invited anyone who wished to speak on this matter to call in using the telephone conference line. After waiting for responses and confirming with staff that there were no indications of individuals logged into the speakers telephone conference line he closed the Public Hearing.

Mayor Williams made a **motion** to approve the FINAL FYs 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as presented and discussed, with a **second** by Judge Bolls. *Motion carried (5-0)*.

6. Receive a Report, Hold a Discussion, and Take Action on the Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP).

Ms. Smetana introduced the item noting that a recent review by the MPO staff indicated some changes are needed to this mandated document. Mr. McRoy then went on to describe the legal basis for the requirement, the 4-Step process used to evaluate LEP needs in the Abilene MPO Area, key concepts related to LEP services, the rights of those seeking LEP services, and the proposed local plan for monitoring and providing these services. Mr. McRoy noted that due to the COVID-19 situation a recommendation from the TAC was not available but TAC members had been provided copies of the plan. No comments from TAC members had been received.

Judge Spurgin asked if translation applications on smart phones should be considered. Mr. McRoy responded that he used such a program on his own phone. Ms. Smetana said that all options will be utilized as available. Judge Bolls asked about the technical nature of materials discussed in the MPO, the heavy use of acronyms, and if certified translators might be needed in the future. Mr. McRoy agreed that the competence of translations in a professional and technical environment is an important matter to consider. He noted that there are not universally accepted standards for interpretation services such as a national or state certification even though there may be private entities providing something like this. He stated should there ever be a question or complaint related as to this in the future, a case by case review and determination based on the relevant facts of the situation would likely be needed. Chairman Price asked about American Sign Language. Mr. McRoy said that the MPO would need to accommodate this should someone make such a request.

Mr. Johnson made a **motion** to approve the proposed Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan as presented, with a **second** by Judge Bolls. *Motion carried (5-0)*.

7. Hold a Discussion on 2020 meeting dates.

Ms. Smetana presented this item requesting input from the Policy Board members. Mr. Johnson stated that he had a conflict on August 18 but would be available August 25. Chairman Price confirmed with the other Board members that August 25, October 20 and December 15 are acceptable dates and directed Ms. Smetana to act accordingly.

Discussion only – No vote taken.

8. Discussion and review of transportation projects.

(By TxDOT Staff, City Staff, CityLink Staff)

TxDOT - Mr. Paul Norman called in and provided a report on the following projects:

US 83/84 from FM 707 to the US 83/84 split - Project includes a grade separation. Subgrade widening is complete. Intersection improvements at FM 204 (Remington/Clark) are now being constructed. Completion is expected in 2021. US 83 Frontage Roads from US 277 to Loop 322 – This is a resurfacing project expected to begin in May. Project work will be done at night. SH 351 Sidewalk from Treadaway to IH-20 - Project will construct sidewalks, install pedestrian signals and make ADA improvements. Project is expected to begin construction in May. US 83/84 interchange to N. 10th Street – This is a project to upgrade lighting. Project began last week.

City of Abilene - Mr. Charlie Thomas briefed the Board on the following projects:

CBD Concrete Street Repairs – Contract was awarded in December. Construction began in March. This project is 10% complete. S. Willis St. from S. 32nd St. to S. 14th St. – The contract was awarded in March. Construction is expected to begin around May 18. N. 6th St./Leggett Dr. from N. 1st St. to Grape St. Project is under construction and is 45% complete. Butternut St. from S. 1st St. to Treadaway – Contract was awarded in May. Construction has begun. Project is 5% complete. T&P Lane from ES 11th St. to E. Hwy 80 – Project contract was awarded in March. Construction is anticipated to begin in May following a gas line relocation. Sayles Blvd. – The design work is 90% complete. Bids award is expected on May 28. Ridgemont Dr. from Rebecca to Clack St. – Project is complete. Ridgemont/Rolling Green Traffic Signal Bids were opened on April 28. Bid award is anticipated on May 14. Griffith Rd. reconstruction from EN 10th to Marathon Rd. – Design is 70% complete. A shallow water line was discovered that requires relocation. Bids are anticipated in December. Work Zone Area S15 Resurfacing - Bid was awarded February 27 and construction is expected to begin on Apr 27. Work Zone S6 & S24 Micro-Surfacing Project is under construction and 40% complete. Work Zone N10 and N3 Resurfacing Contract was awarded in February. Construction is expected to begin in May. John Knox St. – Bids were received on April 9. Construction is anticipated to begin May 4. Village Dr. Bids were received on April 9. Construction is anticipated to begin May 4. S. 23rd St. and Barrow Concrete Intersection Design is 95% complete. Bids are expected in May. Concrete Valley Gutters Project Various Locations – This project is complete. TASA Sidewalk Project Texas/US 277/Clack – Design is 100% complete. Bids are expected in June. Construction is expected to begin in July.

CityLink - Mr. Bobby Sharpe called in and briefed the Board on the following items:

COVID-19 - CityLink is sanitizing busses nightly and is disinfecting high touch areas multiple times during the day. Lobby seating has been removed. A nine passenger limit per bus has been established on the highest ridership routes with a small bus following to ensure no one is left behind. Loading is being done from the back and spacing has been established from bus drivers. Personal protective equipment has been provided to drivers. A 50% reduction in ridership has been experienced but full service is still in place. If needed, a reduction in service plan is ready for implementation. Automated Vehicle Location - CityLink is reviewing quotes. This service will allow passengers to track bus arrival in real time. Regional Transportation Coordination - CityLink has submitted a grant request for planning funds from TxDOT. Funds will be used to update the mandated 5-year Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning (RCTP) document.

9. Discussion and review of reports:

- **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana said a financial summary for FY 2020 updated through March 27th is included in the

board packet. Billing for January has been received showing an expenditure of \$26,992.08. Work Order #2 has been received showing an authorization of \$56,997.71. Total authorization in FY 2020 to date is \$264,667.16 with expenditures being \$136,134.84 leaving a balance of \$128,532.32. She noted that this report does not include carryover funds which are expected to be included with a third work order in the future.

- **Operation Report - Tasks, Training Sessions, Meetings**

The Operation Report is included in the packet. The MPO staff has been working on the FYs 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) amendment, the FYs 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment, and a new FYs 2021-2024 TIP. In addition, the PM1 Safety Targets were updated, 2045 network and demographic inputs were provided for the travel demand model (TDM), a draft Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) update was created, a review of draft 2019 traffic counts from TxDOT was conducted, preliminary research on the MPO Boundary Review has been initiated and research into meeting procedures relating to the COVID-19 emergency was done.

Judge Spurgin asked about COVID-19 effects related to traffic counts. Ms. Smetana responded that traffic counts are conducted on a specific day. When it is known that there is an unusual event or situation, counts can be delayed or moved to limit the impacts from that situation. She said she did not have specific information relating to COVID-19 but she assumes they might try to do the same thing.

- **Director's Report - Future Work Tasks**

MPO Staffing

A part time office assistant position description was created and posted. A few applications had been received for this position. Due to COVID-19 impact however, most City of Abilene job postings have been placed on hold.

MPO Lease

A lease is still in process with legal staff to finalize details. We are awaiting a response from the landlord to changes proposed by the City legal staff.

MPO Boundary Expansion

Ms. Smetana reported that with the COVID-19 limitations in place, we have not arranged for a meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee subcommittee on this matter. MPO staff is however gathering information and working on background research.

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

None.

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

None

12. Adjournment.

With no further matters on the agenda, Chairman Price adjourned the meeting at 2:25 P.M.