



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

March 19, 2013

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

Members Present:

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene, Chairman
Mr. Herbert Bickley, P.E., TxDOT, Abilene District Engineer
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County
Councilman Joe Spano, City of Abilene

Members Absent:

Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County

Others Present:

Mr. Chad Carter, P.E., City Engineer, City of Abilene
Mr. Joe Clark, TxDOT MPO Coordinator, West Region
Mr. James Condry, Traffic & Transportation Administrator, City of Abilene
Mr. Blair Haynie, P.E., TxDOT TP & D Director, Abilene District
Mr. Ben Herr, General Manager, CityLink Transit
Mr. Alan Hufstutler, P.E., TxDOT Area Engineer, Abilene District
Mr. Carl Kieke, Abilene Reporter-News
Ms. Mary Kindrick, National Federation for the Blind
Mr. Brandon McClellan, Grants & Procurement, CityLink Transit
Mr. Mike McMahan, Chamber of Commerce
Mr. James Rogge, P.E., City of Abilene Traffic Engineering
Ms. Megan R. Santee, Interim Director, Public Works, City of Abilene
Mr. Stanley Smith, City of Abilene Legal Department
Ms. Debra Turner, National Federation for the Blind
Mr. Mike Vandervoort, National Federation for the Blind
Ms. Darah Waldrip, TxDOT Public Information Officer, Abilene & Brownwood Districts
Mr. Roy Wright, P.E., TxDOT Traffic Operations Director, Abilene District

Citizens Present:

Ms. & Mr. Jan & Bill Bedford
Ms. Marci Braden (from Congressman Neugebauer's office)
Mr. Paul Cannon
Ms. Sandy Ferguson
Mr. Texas Fitzgerald
Ms. Chris Kyker
Mr. & Ms. Ron & Bobbye McMillion
Mr. Jim Miller
Ms. Kellie Miller
Mr. Hector Montalvo
Mr. Jay Moseley
Mr. Geoff Murphy
Mr. Buddy Napier
Ms. Rosa Lee Prichard

Mr. & Mrs. Donald & Sylvia Saverance
Mr. Jerry Stausell
Mr. Mike Sullivan

MPO Staff in Attendance:

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

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Archibald called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He stated that Judge Spurgin could not be here today but a quorum was present. He then introduced Mr. Herbert Bickley, P.E., the new TxDOT Abilene District Engineer.

Chairman Archibald then asked the audience how many were in attendance for the discussion of the Loop 322, FM 1750 to Hwy 36 projects. No specific number was stated but several in the audience raised their hands. He then asked how many *may* consider speaking. Again a show of hands indicated several may speak.

2. Consideration of Approval of the Minutes of the February 15, 2013 Meeting.

Chairman Archibald asked for approval of the minutes of the February 15, 2013 meeting as presented. The motion was made by Councilman Spano and seconded by Judge Bolls.

Motion carried.

3. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the Abilene Urban Area Boundary Smoothing.

Ms. Smetana explained the purpose of adjusting or smoothing the Census Urban Area Boundary is to smooth out geographic irregularities, maintain administrative continuity, and to encompass fringe areas with residential, commercial and industrial, and/or national defense significance. It is also used in the FTA urbanized and non-urbanized eligibility guidelines. She said the boundary must include the 2010 designated urban area boundary, may include the entire 2000 smoothed boundary, and it should incorporate all of the urban elements. A Technical Advisory Subcommittee was formed comprised of Mr. Haynie, Mr. Hufstutler, Mr. Condry, Mr. McMahan, Mr. Clark, Ms. Smetana, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Carter. Two meetings were held and the final documents are due to TxDOT by April 30. This includes, for the first time, entering data directly into an on-line TxDOT system.

The Technical Advisory Subcommittee reviewed all of the streets and roads within the MPO boundaries and presented their findings and results to the full Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) at their March 5 meeting.

One important road under review is Air Base Road in Tye. The recommendation is to incorporate Air Base Road only and not the general area at the north end of Dyess AFB. She continued that we just received information from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that they will not allow a "donut hole" in the smoothing process. It has to include all of the area or none of it.

The recommendation is to leave this area out entirely and go back to the 2000 Census Area Boundary and incorporate only those areas of growth in the Tye area.

Chairman Archibald asked what are the advantages or disadvantages of leaving this in. Ms. Smetana said if this small “donut hole” area is smoothed in, it will be defined as an "urban" area, with the implication of promoting development. This potentially creates the possibility of Dyess being affected in the future by the Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) Commission. Currently Air Base Road is not in the urban area. The *perception* in Washington is that if this is "urban" this may affect (limit) base operations and Dyess could become a candidate for downsizing or closure. By including Air Base road it would then become eligible for additional potential future funding.

Chairman Archibald made the motion that the Policy Board accept the recommendation of the TAC to move the proposed smoothed boundaries to coincide with the Census boundaries, and in the event the Technical Advisory Committee wants to come back and change that then we will have another meeting in April and discuss and deliberate that in order to meet the deadline of April 30.

Ms. Smetana said that staff is recommending the proposed 2010 Smoothed Boundary Map that you see on the screen (the second map titled *2010 Smoothed Census Boundary* and included in the packet under Agenda Item # 3). This area does not leave a “donut hole” and therefore is in compliance with Federal Highway Administration regulations. The motion was seconded by Judge Bolls.

Chairman Archibald said the Policy Board will hear back from the Technical Review Committee only if they want to discuss this in an open meeting and we can deliberate it.

Motion carried.

4. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the Abilene Functional Classification.

Ms. Smetana said functional classification is done in conjunction with the Urban Boundary Smoothing. The functional classification is a grouping of streets and highways and serves two purposes: traffic mobility or land access. Every class feed into the class above it or below it. Collector and local streets provide access, while freeways and arterials move the traffic. Functional classification is useful for many purposes but three principle ones are: roadway design features, eligibility for federal funding, and to help local, state and federal transportation officials make informed transportation-related decisions. This also is due to TxDOT with the same deadline of April 30th. The same subcommittee also looked at this. They recommended some changes to the TAC at their March 5th meeting, and the Technical Advisory Committee recommended approval of the Functional Classification map as presented from the subcommittee. The maps are available if you would like to see them in more detail – we have the hard copies here and also in a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Condry explained the City has a Functional Classification system called the Thoroughfare Plan. The plan is adopted and modified by City Council, and is part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. It includes all of the city plus the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), approximately a five miles radius from the City’s boundaries. The City categorizes and defines roadways as Interstates, Expressways/Freeways, then Major and Minor Arterials, then Major and Minor Collectors, then Local streets. The FHWA defines roadways slightly different and we try to mesh ours with theirs. When we look at roadways and function, we look at spacing – you need to have sufficient roadways to carry traffic such as the expressways or arterials which carry long distances or out to

collectors. We also look at constraints. Although in a residential neighborhood, Shoreline Drive is classified as a collector street. The rationale is that if you look at the street system, you have Loop 322, a freeway/expressway on the east side, and Lytle Lake on the west side. In this area this is the only street connecting South 27th Street on the south end to Lytle Way on the north end. It functions as a collector and has been designated as such.

The motion to approve the Abilene Functional Classification was made by Councilman Spano and seconded by Mr. Bickley.

Motion carried.

5. Discussion on US 83/84 from Canyon Rock to Iberis Road and Loop 322 from Maple Street to FM 1750.

Chairman Archibald stated that only these two segments up to FM 1750/Oldham Lane would be considered today. The third segment, from Lytle Creek north to SH 36, will be discussed under the next agenda item.

Ms. Smetana said these two frontage road conversions were part of a study performed in May of 2007. The MPO along with TxDOT conducted several public meetings. There was another public meeting held on January 24, 2013, an affected property owners meeting held on February 26th, and a public hearing held on March 5th. There were 549 notification postcards sent out to residents, which represents property owners 1,000 feet on either side of the road from Iberis Road all the way to SH 36. About 20 flyers were posted in businesses along these corridors. Notices were also posted on the MPO's and TxDOT's websites, and media releases and emails were sent out. The information being presented today has not been presented to the Technical Advisory Committee. No action is requested at this time; this is an informational update only.

Mr. Haynie said six public meetings had been held in 2005 and 2006 when TxDOT solicited input for the frontage road conversions to one-way operation. TxDOT looked at all frontage roads at that point on all of the system including IH 20, Loop 322, US 83-84, US 83/277.

TxDOT looked at projects to do if/when funding became available. Approximately \$8 million dollars became available for this project, from the \$2 billion dollar special allocation from the Texas Transportation Commission. Just over \$4 million was given to the TxDOT Abilene District and just under \$4 million was given to the MPO. Mr. Garduno, the District Engineer at the time, said if the City and MPO wanted to move forward with the frontage road conversion project TxDOT would contribute their \$4 million. This was agreed to and the project is set for letting in August 2013 with construction starting later this year. The work consists of ramp modifications, frontage road widening and U-turns built at strategic locations. The goal is to improve frontage road safety, implement the findings of the Frontage Road Feasibility Study that was completed in 2007, increase operational efficiency, reduce intersection congestion, improve access to adjacent properties, and improve safety along these routes. Modifying some of the frontage roads and ramps configuration reduces the number of conflict points and thus are safer. This also reduces the chance of entering the ramps in the wrong direction.

Some of the residents at the south end of the project expressed concerns about closing the crossovers at Iberis Road. The consultant's recommendations was to close all 3 crossings (from the frontage road to US 83-84 south, US 83-84 north, and the crossing between the north- and southbound main lanes of US 83-84 in the median). Mr. Haynie held a Meeting with Affected Property Owners ("MAPO") at Wylie Junior High School on February 26th. Mr. Haynie stated

that there seemed to be consensus to close the median crossing and use the crossing 3/10 of a mile down the road. A deceleration lane would be built so traffic could safely slow down to make the U-turn and an acceleration lane would be built for cars to get back up to speed. This would reduce the number of major conflict points by eight, a significant safety improvement. At FM 707 on the north side, TxDOT will be building a U-turn lane. It was basically built earlier; now with the conversion it can be opened up for use.

TxDOT is also looking at constructing two U-turns at Industrial Blvd. and Loop 322. These are more involved because retaining walls will have to be built and they will be going to the "X" configuration on the ramps. At FM 1750/Oldham Lane another U-turn will be constructed.

Mr. Haynie said there was a consensus at the MAPO meeting at Wylie Junior High that these are good and acceptable solutions to the proposed changes.

Information only, no action was required or taken.

6. Discussion and Any Action on the Loop 322 Project from FM 1750 to SH 36.

Ms. Smetana said the MPO has received 16 letters discussing the Lytle Creek area. Most of the letters were supportive of the safety factors in the frontage roads but opposed to the proposed bridge structure.

Mr. Haynie specifically asked that his comments about the project limits be included in the record; the limits of this project segment are from Lytle Creek north to SH 36. The previous segment was from Lytle Creek south to Maple Street. He commented that like the MPO, TxDOT has received numerous letters largely in opposition. However he has also received several phone calls from area residents who expressed opinions supportive of these changes. They did not want to send in written comments because they do not want to be viewed as going against their neighbors.

What is proposed is to build a structure where the facility moves from a City-maintained to a state-maintained facility. A new frontage road would be built along the airport up to SH 36. Mr. Haynie asked Mr. Wright to look at crash records for the past five years between Maple Street and SH 36. Mr. Wright responded that in the past five years there have been 47 crashes in this area, with 43 of these occurring between S. 27th Street and SH 36. The crashes occurred on frontage roads, service roads, exit ramps, and near intersections. Chairman Archibald asked if Loop 322 was constructed before or after S. 27th Street, and was S. 27th Street intended to be a frontage road? Mr. Haynie replied that he did not know for certain but he could look into it.

[Mr. Haynie sent Mr. Dan Richardson, a TxDOT engineer, an email requesting this information. Mr. Haynie received Mr. Richardson's answers a short time later and are noted in Point #9].

Several citizens expressed their concerns and ideas on this project.

Chairman Archibald made the motion that the Loop 322 project from FM 1750 to SH 36 be sent back to the Technical Advisory Committee for their consideration and further recommendations, and that we also host a neighborhood meeting to allow more dialogue, more solutions, and more consensus building as we try to get all parties involved and continue to move forward, and to so this in a timely manner, hopefully over the next two or three months. Mr. Archibald said his statement was stated in the form of a motion. The second was by Councilman Spano.

Before the vote, Mr. Haynie recommended that the meetings should be Meetings with Affected Property Owners (“MAPO”) and not a public hearing. Hearings are very formal and legally do not allow for immediate interaction, while meetings permit questions and answers, allowing for good input, interactions and dialog.

Chairman Archibald announced that an issue will be coming up before the City Council in April - a potential 33 acre subdivision located at S. 27th and FM 1750/Oldham Lane. He said one of the priorities needed is a signalized intersection at this location.

Chairman Archibald then called for a vote on his motion.

Motion carried.

At 3:50 p.m. Chairman Archibald stopped the meeting for a short break. He formally called the meeting back to order at 3:55 p.m.

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

Mr. Hufstutler discussed the status of several TxDOT projects: (1) FM 2833 (E. Lake Road) from SH 351 to Jones County Line – all work was completed with the exception of the final seal coat and pavement markings. The hot rubber final seal coat has to be applied in acceptable weather conditions. This part has been suspended until May 15, 2013, or earlier if TxDOT deems weather conditions are favorable. (2) Fort Phantom Hill Visitor’s Center received the final inspection report from the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR, Architectural Barriers Section); the corrections have been made and they are ready to close out this project. (3) FM 89 by Coronado’s Camp is waiting for warmer weather to finish up. (4) I-20 Frontage Roads between Loop 322 and Pine Street – work is progressing well; (5) US Hwy 83 between Antilley and Iberis Road – waiting for warmer weather for sealcoating to be applied. (6) TxDOT is about half way through the projects at the State School. (7) Bridge replacement on Old 80 about 1/8 mile east of Loop 322 over Rainey Creek - this project is expected to start work in late April or early May. This will close one lane in each direction for about a year.

Mr. Chad Carter, the City Engineer, described the work going on in the City of Abilene: (1) Water Department street and miscellaneous repair work: on-going projects throughout the city and throughout the year as they repair pavement cuts for water line work; (2) Drainage Street and Sidewalk Improvements (see chart for specific locations and details). (3) Engineering Division miscellaneous repair work throughout the City; (3) Public works projects in design phase: there are three projects in the design stage.

A more detailed and complete list of projects is in the packets.

Mr. Brandon McClellan with CityLink reported that all ten paratransit vans have been received. CityLink is issuing an RFP for an Automated Voice Annunciator System. They are preparing to buy approximately 20 bus shelters. At this time they don’t know the exact locations where they will be installed.

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

8. Discussion and Review of Reports:

- **Financial Status**

- **Operation Report**

- **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana presented the financial information and emphasized three points. The first point is this is the first time the MPO has had money removed after it was given to us. Three hundred sixteen dollars was removed from a work order due to an error on the spreadsheet that TxDOT sent to us. When New Braunfels became an MPO based on the Census designation there was still debate on whether they would be separate or part of the San Antonio MPO. The spreadsheet given to us showed New Braunfels was part of the San Antonio MPO and there was a \$50,000 decrease to San Antonio's budget that had to be accounted for. To correct this most other MPO's budgets were also decreased while San Antonio's increased by \$49,966.00.

The second point the February billing - we are a bit behind but we expect to get this completed in the next few days so we can submit the February 2013 billing.

The third point is the balance of \$117,188.26 does not include the carryover amount of \$282,179.72. This is a piece of it but not the full amount. We did not want you to think \$117,188.26 was the full amount of funding – we still have carryover funds we haven't obligated yet.

Abilene's total funding for FY 2013 is \$201,361.00 and the projected funding for FY 2014 is \$191,687.00, a decrease of \$9,674.00. Future funding levels are projected to continue to decrease statewide, not just the Abilene MPO. Midland-Odessa became a voluntary Transportation Management Area (TMA) and the increase in funding to the TMA is not reflected in the 2014 figures yet. If or when this occurs, it means even less money because TMA money comes off the top and then the rest is divided statewide.

- **Operation Report**

Ms. Smetana stated the detailed Operation Report is from February 12th through March 15th, 2013. The detailed list is lengthy and is included in the packet but a few highlights include: The TxDOT/FHWA Functional Classification and Urban Area Boundary Smoothing projects; writing a draft Project Selection Process; prepared data and maps on South Clack Street at Elm Creek; Overall Frontage Road Conversions; updating the Public Participation Plan; extracted data, prepared 540 mailing labels for post card notification for US 83/84 and Loop 322 Frontage Road Conversion meetings and hearings; verifying 2010 traffic counts; and attended the Texas Transportation Forum in Dallas.

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

Mr. Haynie said he sent an email to Dan Richardson to find out when the frontage road was built. Mr. Richardson's response was, the west frontage road between SH 36 and S. 27th Street was built at the same time as the southbound lanes, under CSJ 2398-01-009 (CSJ = Control-Section-Job, TxDOT's accounting system). The construction occurred during 1967 through 1969. Loop 322 was originally built as 2 lanes but was widened to 4 lanes about 1998 or 1999. He said he will make sure this information is passed along at the MAPO meeting.

No other comments were received.

10. Opportunity for Board Members or MPO Staff to Recommend Topics for Future

Discussion or Action.

No other suggestions or comments were received.

12. Adjournment.

With no further business, Chairman Archibald adjourned the MPO Policy Board Meeting at 4:17 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 21, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.