



MINUTES OF THE ABILENE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD

March 17, 2015

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 17, 2015, in the Taylor County Courthouse, Commissioner's Court Meeting Room, 300 Oak Street, Abilene, Texas.

Members Present:

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene Mayor and Policy Board Chairman
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County, and Policy Board Vice-Chairman

Members Not Present:

Councilman Joe Spano, City of Abilene
Mr. Stan Swiatek, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer

Others Present:

Ms. Wendy Allen, WCTCOG Regional Services Director
Mr. David Caffey, TxDOT Abilene District Advanced Planning Manager
Mr. Joe Clark, TxDOT Regional MPO Coordinator
Mr. James Condry, City of Abilene Traffic & Transportation Administrator
Mr. Brian Crawford, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Director of Operations
Mr. Michael Haithcock, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District TP&D Director
Mr. Alan Hufstutler, TxDOT Abilene District Area Engineer
Mr. Jon James, City of Abilene Director of Development Services
Mr. James Oliver, CityLink Transit General Manager
Ms. Jessica Peña, TxDOT Abilene District Public Transportation Coordinator
Mr. Stanley Smith, City of Abilene Legal Department
Mr. Rob Woods, City of Abilene Asst. Public Works Director/City Engineer

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Ms. E'Lisa Smetana, Abilene MPO Executive Director
Mr. Dean Carter, Abilene MPO Transportation GIS Technician
Mr. Logan Chandler, Abilene MPO Temp Admin. Assistant

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Archibald called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. He remarked that this meeting would be the first to be held in the Taylor County Commissioner's Court. Chairman Archibald also mentioned for the record that a quorum was duly present for conducting the meeting.

2. Consideration of Approval of the Minutes of the January 20, 2015 Meeting.

Chairman Archibald asked the board if any changes or revisions were needed to the previous meeting's minutes as they were presented. Hearing no call for changes the motion was made by Judge Spurgin and seconded by Judge Bolls to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2015 meeting.

Motion carried.

3. Discussion and Any Action on Project Rankings for Potential Funding.

The board's attention was called to the listing of projects in the 3rd item of their agenda packets, which depicted a Technical Advisory Committee recommended ranking of the top ten transportation projects. Ms. Smetana stated that following some input from the Project Selection sub-committee, the Technical Advisory Committee had chosen to omit the SH 351 (Proposition 1 eligible) project among the original ten and replace it instead with the Antilley Road/CR 314 project. It was also pointed out that the US 83 interchange project previously considered as number 4 in the list had been moved down to the number 10 position, and every other project formerly listed below it respectively bumped up by one ranking. Explanation was provided that motive for assigning the rankings by the Technical Advisory Committee stemmed from their consideration over each project's feasibility for execution should funding become immediately available in part or in full.

Judge Spurgin raised a question over the Technical Advisory Committee's action to move the US 83 interchange project down in priority, and if the decision to do so was attributed to the large-scale funding estimated as necessary for the project. Mr. Haithcock was invited to speak briefly before the board on the subject of the project rankings pertinent to the Judge's question, and described the role of TxDOT in the complete process of planning and implementation for projects altogether. Mr. Haithcock generally outlined the role of TxDOT in collaborating with Abilene MPO, as he envisions, including project draft studies, analyses and preliminary scoping to cover a flexible range of options for implementation of work when funds become available. It was necessary as he described to first develop such a list of proposed projects for the purposes of guiding TxDOT in preliminary action and planning. He also mentioned that despite the newly decided number 10 ranking for the US 83 interchange project, it would soon be likely for TxDOT to hire an outside consultant within reasonable parameters of their current budget for the purposes of doing a feasibility study to determine if the desired work may actually be possible at a cost lower than the current projection of \$24.4 million. Judge Spurgin answered that understandably the US 83 interchange project had been on the table and planning horizon for around 12 years and conceded that its price estimations had considerably risen, while at the same time it remained an important issue in transportation planning that he hoped wouldn't continue to be overlooked. Mr. Haithcock stated his agreement, and reinforced the possibility for any of the 10 projects to be rearranged in their ordering once funds were more likely and if nature and scope of work was determined to be more accommodating. Ms. Smetana remarked that in the course of revising the top 10 list at the last Technical Advisory Committee meeting, much deliberation occurred when determining the appropriate ordering of projects toward shovel readiness at the availability of funds and multiple variables for doing so were considered.

Chairman Archibald made a comment on the similar nature of the US 83 interchange project to the Waldrop intersection on the opposite side of town, in terms of its configuration and possible impact. Judge Bolls raised a question about a previous project he had believed to be in connection with the Hwy 83/84 corridor, and whether or not current plans for the 83 interchange related to any previous work that had been carried out. Brief discussion followed. Chairman Archibald offered appreciation for the efforts of the Technical Advisory Committee in determining ranking for the top 10 projects listed and providing a reasonable starting point for the phasing and implementation of projects, while noting that re-prioritization and re-organization of the list was always possible. Calling for a motion to move forward with the project rankings for potential funding, Judge Bolls offered a motion which was then seconded by Judge Spurgin.

Motion carried.

4. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of a Resolution of Support for the City of Abilene's Transportation Alternatives Program Potential Project.

Consideration was next directed toward the proposal of a resolution of support for the City of Abilene's potential project sponsorship under TxDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Ms. Smetana gave notice of the schedule for the resolution to be presented before the City Council on their next meeting, for final validation as a project plan. She indicated that the present resolution before the board was based on the requisite by TxDOT that any project submitted for consideration must be verified as included within the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It was also noted that the Transportation Alternatives Program has taken the place of multiple programs previously offered by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), such as Safe Routes to School and Transportation Enhancement Programs among others, and presently focuses on funding alternative transportation related projects such as on/off road bicycle facilities, infrastructure for public transit, and mobility enhancement projects. There is \$52 million in federal funds currently available for all qualifying projects under the TAP. Ms. Smetana stated that the current potential project under proposal for TAP submission with the City of Abilene is called the US 277 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project, as discussed and developed with the assistance of a city committee.

Mr. James stood before the board to offer insight into the work done thus far by the City of Abilene on the plans to submit the US 277 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project. Information and data was gathered to supplement the plan schematics to illustrate engagement from and interest on behalf of the public and community. Survey results showed both bikers and non-bikers alike generally favoring a project that would heighten opportunities for bikers and pedestrians to better utilize these alternative modes of transportation in a safer manner throughout the city. Also the proposed project area was identified primarily as along US 277, a TxDOT roadway enhancing its credibility and likelihood as a qualifying project.

Judge Spurgin posed a question as to whether survey results captured respondents' preferences or intentions for enhanced bicycle facilities to be used recreationally or for general transit purposes. Mr. James responded that the demographics of the survey sample for which data was collected were split between several groups, in which around 2% constituted individuals who expressed negligence for the speed of vehicles/traffic conditions and ride a bike mostly always, around a third (33%) said they don't currently desire nor ever will desire to ride a bike, and still roughly 60% are "interested but concerned", willing to ride a bike but hesitant to do so frequently out of apprehension for safety. Seeing that a majority displayed an interest in bicycling yet refrain due to perceived safety issues, Mr. James pointed out that this included potential recreational users however also potential transit users who desire to get to places more effectively through the use of bicycles (school, home, trail/park areas off of roadways). Larger survey data also reflects a consensus of interested bicycle transit users, where 52% of respondents in a nationwide survey desire to bike more but don't due to concern for safety. It was further measured that due to the implementation of safer on and off road bicycling/pedestrian facilities in cities across the country, the percentage of children walking and biking to school rose from 12% to 16% between 2007 and 2012. Other local statistics and population characteristics for the Abilene community demonstrate that 1 in every 20 work-related cases of travel involve a mode of transport other than a car, where 1 in 14 households and families do not possess a motor vehicle or don't have regular access to one. From the needs present in the Abilene community, with a sizable concentration of lower income households comparable to the national average, well-implemented bicycle and pedestrian facilities would ensure accessible and reasonable transportation that meets the safety requests of people seeking better travel at levels applicable to them.

The different types of bicycle facilities proposed within the US 277 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project were briefly described by Mr. James to demonstrate the variability of the project

characteristics under multi-use facility requirements per funding parameters, which include bike routes, lanes and paths. Sections of the proposed US 277 project were reviewed and discussed from an aerial map perspective with proposed routes, lanes and paths transposed and highlighted, to portray the full scope of work intended to better interconnect the area and provide safe routes to school for children attending Bassetti Elementary and Clack Middle school. It was also covered that other work for this proposed US 277 TAP project would include sidewalks, traffic triangles, signal improvements, and ADA ramps which would tie into a funded separate (Capital Improvement Program (CIP)) project currently underway by the City which includes a pedestrian bridge over Elm Creek and sidewalks leading to it.

Ms. Smetana remarked that the primary purpose of this resolution as presented to the board for approval was to ensure that the US 277 TAP project would be included in the Abilene MPO TIP, as well as amended into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan if needed. Chairman Archibald moved for a motion that the resolution be approved and the project included within the Abilene MPO's TIP if the proposal was selected for TAP funding. Judge Bolls seconded.

Motion carried.

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

Mr. Alan Hufstutler, City of Abilene Area Engineer, described the status and progress being made on the following projects:

Contract Paving: Loop 322 one-way frontage road (Lytle Creek to Maple) is nearing final completion, pending only a project and materials clean-up around the area as well as some touch-up work on the loop exit ramps following the icy/snowy weather. Final seal coat service is nearing conclusion.

J.H. Strain: one-way frontage roads by Abilene Regional Hospital / US 83 between Canyon Rock Road and south of Iberis Road is completed on all of the work phases. The project is presently in a vegetative establishment period.

J.H. Strain: Overlay on FM 2404 from US 83 to Taylor County Line—this project is complete.

J.H. Strain: Overlay on FM 2404 from FM 605 to 0.803 Miles North of CR 410—this side of the overlay project is waiting for better weather conditions, likely in May, for the placement of a final seal coat.

Contract Paving FM 613 Widening Project is slightly behind schedule on work. Tentatively the final seal coat for this project should be applied by May 15, 2015, while subgrade widening and base placement portions have been completed.

Traffic Signal: FM 707/1750; 1750 level up and overlay is an upcoming project. It is scheduled to be let in the spring.

Access Management on SH 351 and New Signalization on Hwy 351 and FM 2833 are upcoming projects scheduled to be let in the spring. Project planning and work-related items have gone to the Highway Intelligent Transportation Systems for these concurrent projects.

Replacement Bridge over UPRR on US 84 is an upcoming project scheduled to be let in the spring. An award letter is likely to be secured soon for funding toward the work, while a railroad agreement was recently acquired for permission to begin the project.

BI 20-R: East US Hwy 80 from near Newman Road to IH 20 Frontage Rd is an estimated 3-month project to be let in the Spring. Exit ramp from westbound I-20 to old Hwy 80 to be shut down temporarily for base failure repairs and preventive maintenance work.

IH-20 South Frontage Road Rehabilitation from Loop 322 to BI 20-R is a newly upcoming project scheduled to be let in spring. Widening of the frontage road will occur to permit two-way traffic flow, while current traffic will be re-directed to one-direction/one-lane.

Mr. Rob Woods, City of Abilene Asst. Public Works Director/City Engineer, described the status and progress being made on the following projects:

Public Works projects presently underway include water-cut repairs as overseen by the water department as well as street repairs directed by the engineering division, each roughly in the 15% completion stage. Current private development work is allocated across a variety of projects, presently receiving base-labor and grading while moving through preliminary and starting stages. Design Phase public works projects ready for movement to implementation stages include the Corsicana Sidewalk Project and EN 13th Street from Treadaway to Judge Ely, as well as Industrial Blvd improvement from Treadaway to Buffalo Gap Rd, which have received comments and reviews and are prepared for project bidding advertising by mid-April. Of notable consideration remains the planned design for the Pedestrian Bridge at Elm Creek and Clack St project also, which is pending comments regarding released proposals toward the end of next week.

Mr. James Oliver, General Manager of CityLink Transit, was present at the meeting however had no updates on the status or progress of any such related projects.

6. Discussion and Review of Reports:

• Financial Status

Ms. Smetana noted that the financial status depicts the start of FY 2015 new total report, not including carry over funds left over from the end of last FY 2014. For the 2015 totals thus far, Work Order authorizations have been received in the totals of \$52,536.00 from the FTA 5303 and \$127,464.00 from the FHWA PL 112 for a total sum of \$180,000.00. Billings #1-3 for October-December 2014 have been submitted covering the start of this fiscal year, while the January 2015 Billing #4 is pending submittal but still reflected within total expenditures list; expenditures thus far cover \$92,246.48 deducted from the work order sum of \$180,000.00, leaving a remaining balance of \$87,753.52. Indirect costs were pointed out for the awareness of the board, as reflected across the last four years including FY 2015, and reported to possibly go down from a projected total of \$31,921.00 for this FY to around a more manageable \$23,091 for FY 2016.

• Operation Report

The full operation report is available in the agenda packet, but a few highlights were condensed to the board for brevity. Among these included the MPO's hiring of new temporary employee Logan Chandler and a description of his employee training administered under office procedures and MPO functions, and an update that the final draft document of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) had been completed and submitted. Work has further continued with the City of Abilene on behalf of the Bicycle Plan, for which meetings were held and pertinent information and data have been gathered through public input as well as collision report data from the police department. A new time-keeping system, KRONOS, has been implemented for the City of Abilene and is expected to kick off around May 2015. Other work included preparing agendas and

minutes for TAC and Policy board meetings and attending to various other requests.

- **Director's Report**

- **City of Abilene's Bicycle Plan**

The City of Abilene has been working on an update to their Bicycle Plan since September of 2014, while the MPO has helped facilitate the planning process. The City is presenting the plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission on April 6th and City Council in May.

- **Annual Project Listing and Annual Performance & Expenditure Report**

Draft Annual Performance and Expenditure and the Annual Listing of Projects Reports have been completed and submitted on Dec. 18, 2014 for FHWA/FTA review. Notification was provided in late February that these were accepted as submitted, and will be presented at the next meeting.

- **Urban Area Boundary and Functional Classification**

On October 29, 2014 FHWA evaluated the Urban Area Boundary that was submitted by the MPO and made changes. FHWA also evaluated the Functional Classification submitted by the MPO and recommended changes last year on May 12, 2014. Currently the changes are not available in a format convenient for review by the policy board, however are likely to be available in coming months.

- **TxDOT Statewide Freight Plan**

Under MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century) legislation, recommendations have been drawn out for the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to encourage states' development of plans for guiding freight investments related to needs of the freight industry. Through the State plan as advanced by TxDOT, all district MPO's have been required to rank related projects for their areas. Abilene MPO will be presenting its list of proposed freight plan projects, selected during a March 6, 2015 sub-committee meeting, at future meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board for final confirmation of the list as the desired projects.

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

No comments or suggestions were received.

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

Judge Spurgin raised a brief question to Ms. Smetana regarding the status of a contract for review with the City of Abilene on the Employee Policy. Ms. Smetana answered that legal opinion had recently been received on the matter and following discussion with Human Resources, more information would be available in the upcoming May meeting.

9. Adjournment.

The meeting of the MPO Policy Board was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.