



MINUTES OF THE ABILENE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD

April 18, 2017

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 18, 2017, in the City Council Chambers, Abilene City Hall, 555 Walnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

Members Present:

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene Mayor and Policy Board Chairman
Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County
Councilman Bruce Kreitler, City of Abilene
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County, and Policy Board Vice-Chairman
Mr. Stan Swiatek, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer

Members Absent:

None

Staff of Member Agencies in Attendance:

Mr. Bill Frawley Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)
Mr. James Oliver, CityLink General Manager
Mr. Casey McGee, TxDOT Abilene Area Engineer
Ms. Kelly Messer, City of Abilene Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Larry Wright, City of Abilene City Engineer
Mr. Dan Richardson, TxDOT Abilene Director of Operations
Mr. Michael Haithcock, TxDOT Abilene District TP&D Director
Mr. Brandon Vinson, TxDOT, Engineering Assistant
Mr. Michael Rice, City of Abilene Public Works Director
Mr. James Childers, City of Abilene Assistant City Manager
Mr. Dana Schoening, City of Abilene, Director of Planning and Development Services
Ms. Danette Dunlap, City of Abilene, City Secretary
Ms. Alaisha Guerra, City of Abilene, Communications Media Relations Manager
Mr. Cliff Hallford, TxDOT Project Controller II

MPO Staff in Attendance:

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

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Archibald called the meeting of the Abilene MPO Policy Board to order at 1:35 p.m. He noted that a quorum was duly present.

2. Consideration and possible action on the Minutes of the February 21, 2017 Meeting.

Chairman Archibald called for any additions or corrections to the meeting minutes as they were presented. Hearing none, he asked for a motion. Judge Spurgin made the **motion** to approve the minutes as presented with a **second** by Councilman Kreitler.

Motion carries.

3. Consideration and possible action on a Resolution of Support for a Transportation Alternatives Project – US 277 @ South Clack Street.

Mr. McRoy introduced the resolution explaining that the MPO is being asked to offer a resolution of support for a sidewalk project the City of Abilene will be submitting to the State under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) program. He discussed the program requirements, details about the anticipated proposal, and strategies to improve competitiveness.

Councilman Krietler asked if facilities other than sidewalks must also be included. Ms. Smetana answered that it could just be a sidewalk proposal but increasing the modes of travel makes a stronger application. He then asked where the children from apartments on Nonesuch Road attend school. Mr. McRoy answered Bassetti Elementary School.

Judge Spurgin asked about bus transport for those children. Mr. Oliver noted that bus transport is typically limited to areas farther than 2 miles from a school. Mr. McRoy added that in some cases federal funding for school buses can be provided closer when schools demonstrate children need to cross a hazardous road. Mr. McRoy was unsure of school bus service at this specific location.

Councilman Krietler indicated a desire for a sidewalk all the way to Bassetti Elementary School. Mr. McRoy responded that the proposed project is in an area of heavy pedestrian activity given the commercial and retail uses present. Mr. Krietler made a **motion to approve** the proposed resolution as presented with a **second** by Mr. Swiatek.

Motion carries.

4. Consideration, public hearing, and possible action on a project in the vicinity of Loop 322 @ SH 36 consisting of possible ramp relocation, closure/removal/reconfiguration of frontage roads, and turn back of portions of roadway to the City of Abilene.

Mayor Archibald introduced the item by discussing the historical layouts of frontage roads in the community and recent efforts to convert them from two-way to one-way. He stated that he has been a proponent of this. He then noted the pending development of a TSTC campus has prompted the currently proposed changes and that this proposal has been supported by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). He discussed how and when he became aware that the proposal included modifications to both the west and east side of Loop 322. He noted the need to place the item on the MPO's ten-year project listing but indicated that due to a lack of notification to area residents, a final vote should be taken at a future date following a public meeting.

Mayor Archibald then invited Mr. Swiatek to speak. Mr. Swiatek discussed previous neighborhood meetings from 2013. He estimated that 80-90% of the benefit relating to the previous project concept which would have cost between \$8-10 million could be achieved with the current proposal for about \$1 million. He stated the original concept was quite expensive for the benefit but that the TSTC development is a game changer. He emphasized that TxDOT cannot spend money for economic development but can for congestion relief and safety improvements. He stated that safety on frontage roads can be dramatically improved by going to one-way frontage roads. He then discussed project timing and how that influenced TAC and Policy Board (PB) meeting schedules. He stated the project needs to be moved up on the MPO's priority list to give TxDOT license to spend funds to develop a more detailed project scope.

Councilman Krietler questioned the need for urgency on the project at this time. Mayor Archibald responded that each building would eventually have a thousand students.

Judge Bolls stated he was surprised by the inclusion of the west side and noted concern with protecting the integrity of the rural-type neighborhood here. He stressed a desire to allow residents to commute through the neighborhood as needed but to also keep the volume of other traffic down. He also expressed concern with the continued presence of two-way traffic on the east side. He then referenced Lubbock as an example of dangerous two-way access roads.

Mr. Swiatek responded by stating that, "... TxDOT's skin in the game is improving safety. Two-way frontage roads are not as safe as one-way frontage roads. That's a fact." He stated that TxDOT will have a public meeting to take public input but that without the safety aspect of this he could not spend TxDOT money on the project. He noted that the two-way on the east side would not occur until after Navajo. Before this the ramp distance would be extended allowing traffic calming and then traffic would be brought to a stop condition. He stated this is much safer than most two-way frontage roads which have a yield condition. He asserted that the TSTC site is basically landlocked and this is an optimal but not perfect answer. He reemphasized that without a safety component he can spend TxDOT money elsewhere in the district to achieve more safety. He acknowledged some residents are opposed to this answer but some are not. He stated, "TxDOT's priority is safety. TxDOT's priority is through traffic. Convenience is very low on our priority list." Without this he indicated he could not expend cash or resources in staff.

Judge Bolls reemphasized the need for continued discussion on the matter. He acknowledged the State's emphasis on safety and expressed concern with the level of danger today from texting.

Councilman Krietler asked if moving forward only on the east side would be insufficient as a safety component. Mr. Swiatek said he did not have an accident history at this intersection adequate to show a hazardous condition allowing him to spend money here. Councilman Krietler then asked if even anticipating the huge increase in activity from the pending campus if Mr. Swiatek would still not consider moving the exit ramp back to be a sufficient safety improvement. Mr. Swiatek responded that until there is an accident history here there cannot be an improvement but that there is an accident history on the other side. He went on to note this was a golden opportunity to move forward and optimize the expenditure of money. He explained that waiting until the future to do the other side would be more expensive. He also expressed the opinion that waiting to do the other side until after an incapacitating injury or fatality would be too late.

Judge Spurgin, in speaking about the east side, said he supported moving the ramp back but he had concerns with two-way traffic on a frontage road. He then asked about signalization and turn arounds at the intersections of Hwy 36 and Oldham Lane. Mr. Swiatek stated those things can be looked at and considered in more detail if this project is raised in priority. Judge Spurgin asked about making the east side one way and continuing the frontage road farther south to eliminate the landlocked aspect of the campus site. Mr. Swiatek indicated his preference for this but that the two-way design was a concession to the City and TSTC that they could live with. When asked Mr. Swiatek answered that he believed the traffic into the campus was expected to have a 50/50 split from the north and south. Judge Spurgin then stated his support for more public input.

Mayor Archibald proposed that another public meeting and public hearing served by notification to the residents in the area is needed. He proposed a date of May 10, 2017 at 1:30 PM in this room. The other members indicated this date appeared to be good. Councilman Krietler asked on a point of order if a public hearing must be held today because of the posting for this meeting. Ms. Messer affirmed the point of order. Mayor Archibald then opened the public hearing announcing however that he may need to leave at some point due to a prior scheduling commitment.

Public Hearing Begins.

Five individuals spoke to the Board.

Speakers:

Tracy Kennedy Asked about the number of accidents on the west side. Suggested extending the current frontage road to Oldham Lane. Expressed concern with increased traffic through the neighborhood.

Glen Dromgoole Expressed concern about a lack of information provided to the area residents.

Randi Krause Asked about and expressed concerns with increased traffic through the neighborhood. Expressed concern about a lack of information provided to the area residents.

Jerry Stansell Concern with impacts to the intersection of S 27th St. and Oldham Ln.

R.C.Holliday Concern with safety at the intersection of S 27th St. and Oldham Ln. Expressed concern with increased traffic through the neighborhood. Expressed desire to leave roads on west side alone.

Public Hearing Halts Temporarily - Mayor Archibald leaves for a prior commitment. Judge Spurgin assumes the Chair.

The Public Hearing resumes.

Three individuals spoke to the Board.

Speakers:

Lea Henson Expressed concern about a lack of information provided to the area residents. Expressed concern with increased traffic through the neighborhood. Expressed specific concern with impact on Shoreline Rd.

Rochelle Johnson Expressed support for TSTC campus. Stated she is not concerned about the impact of one-way traffic on the Expo Center but she is concerned that the one-way traffic will result in horse trailers moving through the neighborhood. Expressed concern regarding safety of the intersection of Loop 322 and Hwy 36.

Rick Denbow Expressed support for two-way traffic on east side so students to the new campus will have adequate access.

Judge Spurgin asked if there were any additional speakers. Seeing none he closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Krietler made a **motion** to send the item to the TAC asking them to consider changes only on the east side frontage road.

Motion dies for a lack of a second

Ms. Smetana noted that if this project is approved the MPO ten-year plan would also need to be amended. She then asked for confirmation if the project would be treated as a grouped project. Mr. Swiatek responded in the affirmative.

Judge Spurgin asked how the scope of this project should be described on the MPO ten-year plan. Ms. Smetana deferred to Mr. Rice to respond. Mr. Rice stated the scope would be a review of traffic components of the frontage roads on both the east and west sides between Oldham Lane and Hwy 36. When asked about the project cost he remarked that the amount could vary up or down based on the final project scope. He agreed that a \$1.2 million would be a good placeholder amount.

Judge Spurgin questioned if the agenda language on Item Four was sufficient to allow the Board to take action on amending the ten-year plan. Ms. Messer indicated she thought it would be better to do this at the next Board meeting. When asked, Mr. Swiatek confirmed that TxDOT could continue its work on the project without an amendment to the ten-year plan today. He then reiterated that TxDOT was responding to a City request and was acting as a partner in support of the Policy Board.

Judge Bolls made a **motion** to Table the item until a called meeting on May 10, 2017 at 1:30 pm in the Council Chamber of City Hall, Abilene TX with a **second** by Mr. Swiatek.

Motion carries. (3 In-Favor Bolls, Spurgin, Swiatek, 1 Opposed Krietler)

5. Consideration and possible action on an amendment to the FY 2016-2017 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Ms. Smetana reported that the UPWP is developed early in the year before funding amounts are known. Changes are therefore periodically needed. She detailed the proposed changes identified in the packet materials and asked if any members had questions.

Councilman Krietler made a **motion** to approve as presented with a **second** by Judge Bolls.

Motion carries.

6. Consideration and possible action on a DRAFT FY 2018-2019 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Ms. Smetana reported that the draft of this document is due on June 1, 2017 and the final is due on August 1, 2017. She clarified that this is in essence a budget document for the MPO for the identified fiscal year. Ms. Smetana provided a brief synopsis of the document noting that the included expenditures are based on FY 2017 funding levels along with projected carryovers. She noted that one addition was the inclusion of a potential sidewalk study.

Councilman Krietler asked about a project listed to map sidewalk waivers and deferrals. Ms. Smetana explained that this was done in FY 2016 -2017 for the Planning Department.

Judge Spurgin asked about the item referring to the Travel Demand Model. Ms. Smetana explained that Mr. McRoy is currently working to capture the 2015 base year street networks. She noted that the next step would involve demographic data. She expressed a probable need to obtain outside assistance to complete this phase of the project.

Councilman Krietler made a **motion** to approve with a **second** by Judge Bolls.

Motion carries.

7. Discussion and Review of Transportation Projects.

(By TxDOT Staff, City Staff, CityLink Staff)

TxDOT - Mr. McGee briefed the Board on the following projects:

I-20 bridge replacement at Hwy 351- Demolition of the west-bound bridge will begin on May 28. Councilman Kreitler read a letter from a resident expressing certain concerns and frustrations related to access limitations due to construction activity. In response Mr. McGee and Mr. Swiatek discussed access options for residents and the current project schedule. Mr. Swiatek stated, "It's not a two year project. ...It was originally scheduled for 19 months. Our contractor has come in with a second recommendation. Right now his goal is eleven months." He then added that incentives and disincentives have been included in the project related to project completion times. He finally noted that the bridges were past their useable life and needed replacement. Councilman Krietler reminded the other Board members that, "That's the bridge that a big chunk just fell out of one day."

Winters Freeway pavement rehab - From TxDOT Office to S 7th St. Letting should be in late April.
Southwest Drive intersection pavement replacement Letting should be in June 2017

City of Abilene - Mr. Wright updated the Board on the following projects:

CBD Hotmix,	N 3 rd St.,	S 20 th St,
Hardwick,	Ambler,	Elm Creek Pedestrian Bridge,
Transformer Trail,	Seal Coating,	Jennings Dr.
32 nd and Buffalo Gap		

CityLink - No Report

8. Discussion and Review of Reports:

• **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana reported that the January Billings have been submitted. The remaining balance is \$164,141.41. The expended amount is \$70,551.59. February and March billings have been received and will be included in at the next regular Board meeting.

• **Operation Report**

This was included in the packet materials. Ms. Smetana highlighted and complimented TxDOT staff for a recent Car Fit event.

• **Director's Report**

No report.

Judge Spurgin raised a concern with the readability and quality of the graphics being displayed on the monitors and other screens. Ms. Smetana stated she would look into this.

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

Ms. Smetana summarized an email from Mr. Vandervoort which was handed out at the meeting.

Mr. Vandervoort then added that people with disabilities can have difficulty with existing notification methods in finding information on public meetings. He also stressed a need for all parties to communicate.

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

None

11. Adjournment

The meeting was **adjourned** by Judge Spurgin at 3:40