



**MINUTES OF THE ABILENE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD
February 15, 2013**

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 10:30 a.m., Friday, February 15, 2013, in the Abilene City Hall City Council Chambers, 555 Walnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

Members Present:

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene, Chairman
Councilman Joe Spano, City of Abilene
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County
Lauren Garduno, P.E., TxDOT, Abilene District Engineer

Members Absent:

Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County

Others Present:

Mr. Joe Clark, TxDOT West Region, MPO Coordinator
Ms. Darah Waldrip, TxDOT Public Information Officer
Mr. Chad Carter, City of Abilene City Engineer
Mr. James Condry, City of Abilene, Traffic & Transportation Administrator
Mr. James Rogge, City of Abilene Traffic Engineering
Mr. Alan Hufstutler, P.E., TxDOT Area Engineer
Mr. Mike Rains, City of Abilene Finance Department
Mr. Blair Haynie, P.E., TxDOT TP & P
Mr. Roy Wright, TxDOT Traffic Operations Director
Mr. Ben Herr, City of Abilene, CityLink General Manager
Ms. Chris Moscarelli, City of Abilene, Finance Department
Mr. Mike Vandervoort, National Federation for the Blind
Ms. Mary Kindrick, National Federation for the Blind
Ms. Debra Turner, National Federation for the Blind
Mr. Carl Kieke, Abilene Reporter-News
Mr. Stanley Smith, City of Abilene Legal Department
Mr. Mike McMahan, Chamber of Commerce

MPO Staff in Attendance:

Ms. E'Lisa Smetana, Abilene MPO Staff
Mr. Thomas Cook, Abilene MPO Staff
Mr. Dean Carter, Abilene MPO Staff

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Archibald called the meeting of the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Policy Board (PB) to order at 10:32 a.m. He announced that Judge Bolls and TxDOT District Engineer Lauren Garduno are not present but there was a quorum.

2. Consideration of Approval of the Minutes of the November 15, 2012 and the November 28, 2012 Meetings.

Chairman Archibald asked if there were any corrections, comments or considerations of the minutes as presented of the November 15, 2012 and the November 28, 2012 meetings. Hearing

none, the motion to accept the minutes of both meetings as presented was made by Councilman Spano and seconded by Judge Spurgin.

Motion carried.

3. Discussion and Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Abilene MPO Policy Board.

Chairman Archibald asked Ms. Smetana if the Policy Board election for Chairman and Vice-Chairman is held every year or every two years. She replied that the elections are for two-year terms. Chairman Archibald then noted that the last election was held in December 2010. He said there are no recommendations for these positions so he opened up the discussion on nominating candidates to the three Board members that were present.

Councilman Spano said he had no objections if Chairman Archibald remained as Chairman. Mr. Archibald replied that he would entertain that motion but asked that it be a joint motion with Judge Spurgin to continue as Vice-Chair.

Councilman Spano made the motion that Chairman Archibald continue as Chair and Judge Spurgin continue as Vice-Chair. The second was from Judge Spurgin.

Motion carried. The terms are effective as of today.

4. Discussion and Consideration of Approval on the Amended MPO/TxDOT/City of Abilene Planning Agreement.

Chairman Archibald noted that there are several amendments to this agreement. He then asked Ms. Smetana to discuss the specifics of these amendments. She explained that the Policy Board approved the MPO to move forward with the contract at their September 18, 2012 meeting. The current planning contract expired on September 30th, 2012. The City Council approved the contract on September 27th, and a revised agreement was sent out to the Policy Board on October 25th. On November 15th the Board was updated of the changes to the document, and then on December 7th it was sent to Austin for signatures.

On January 4th the MPO received an email from TxDOT asking for the four changes listed below:

- 1) Article 2, Responsibilities of the Department – Restore Article 2 as originally written in the TxDOT template;
- 2) Article 27, Procurement – Restore Section C as written in the TxDOT template;
- 3) Article 32, Lobbying Certificate - Restore Section C as written in the TxDOT template;
and
- 4) Modify the block in the top right corner to read as follows:

Contract # 50-XXXXF0013
Federal Highway Administration
CFDA # 20.205/20.505
Not Research and Development

MPO Staff and the City's Legal Department have made these changes. This is being brought back before the Policy Board for review and approval of these changes.

(At 10:40 a.m. Chairman Archibald said let the record show that Abilene District Engineer Lauren Garduno is now present).

Chairman Archibald asked if the "TxDOT template" was the form we originally used. Ms. Smetana replied that it is the original template that the Abilene MPO and the other MPOs used. The MPOs were allowed to modify the template to suite our purposes. TxDOT's Legal staff did not allow some of the changes we made and we are now restoring these items as directed.

Chairman Archibald asked if these changes had any impact on funding. Ms. Smetana answered that there is no direct connection to, or potential loss of funding. However, Article 27 – Procurement is a Maritime Administration Rule in the USC Code that requires MPOs to show that items procured were shipped on American ships. The problem that we, and most other MPOs have, is the lack of staff time necessary to track purchases from across the ocean and fulfill this requirement.

Mr. Archibald said that if this is part of the required TxDOT template, it takes this matter out of our hands and that we will have to add this back in. Ms. Smetana said this is correct, and the MPOs will have to decide how to address this issue.

There is no recommendations on this matter from the Technical Advisory Committee.

Chairman Archibald asked, when the changes are made and the agreement is sent back to TxDOT in Austin, will the MPO receive a copy of it? Ms. Smetana replied that we will receive a signed final copy.

The motion to approve the Agreement as presented, including incorporating these three Articles and the one contract information block (a clerical matter), was made by Judge Spurgin and seconded by Councilman Spano.

Motion carried.

5. Discussion on the Abilene Functional Classification and Urban Area Boundary Smoothing Process.

Ms. Smetana said there are two parts to this: the functional classification of the streets, and the urban area boundary smoothing process.

The functional classification is a grouping of streets and highways based on the type of service they provide – basically mobility or land access. There are three main classes of roadways: local streets, collector streets and principle arterial streets/highways, and each feed traffic into the level above or below it. Highways and freeways primarily promote high speed, high volume traffic mobility with very minimal or no property access. Local streets are lower speed, lower volume streets primarily promoting land access. Traffic flows from local streets onto collectors which generally intersect with arterial streets, and the reverse flow is also true. Functional classification is useful for many purposes but three principle ones are: access management plans/roadway capacity, eligibility for federal funding, and to help local, state and federal transportation officials make better decisions.

We receive an Urban Area Boundary from the Census every ten years. The MPO is designated the lead agency for boundary smoothing. We take the boundary we receive from the Census and “smooth” it out due to geographic irregularities, to maintain administrative continuity, and encompass the fringe areas that have residential, commercial, industrial and/or national defense significance. It is also used for statistical reporting in the FHWA's Highway Performance

Monitoring Systems (HPMS), an essential process for transportation planning.

The boundary smoothing process must include the entire 2010 designated Census boundary, it may include the 2000 smoothed boundary, and needs to incorporate all urban elements.

This allows the MPO to designate the respective classifications and incorporate the appropriate roadways with smoothing so there is no switching between urban and rural designations.

TxDOT provided training in Lubbock on Functional Classifications and Urban Boundary Smoothing on December 20, 2012. This year, for the first time, we will be using a new TxDOT software and will be entering the data online, instead of using hardcopy maps.

Here is the timeline needed to complete this project:

February 11–February 20, 2013	Subcommittee meetings
February 27, 2013	Packets out to TAC
March 5, 2013	Presentation to TAC
March 19, 2013	Presentation to the Policy Board
March 20 – April 20, 2013	MPO staff enters information into on-line system along with detail justifications
April 30, 2013	Due to TxDOT

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has formed a subcommittee. This item is presented for information only. The TAC Subcommittee will be analyzing the appropriate designations for the various streets, roads, and highways throughout the Abilene Urban Area - which roads are, or should be, designated as local, collectors, and arterials, and also they will be smoothing the Urban Area Boundary and bringing those recommendations back to the Policy Board.

6. Discussion and Any Recommended Action on the Overall Frontage Road Conversions and Potential Design Work Funding.

Ms. Smetana said this is going to be a three-part discussion. The TAC had a meeting with TxDOT on January 22nd to discuss the frontage road conversion and access management, mainly the South 1st Street project and SH 351. One of the issues we encountered is clarification from the Policy Board on the definitions of “frontage roads” because there is a significant difference between frontage roads along high speed highways and frontage roads in residential areas. The clarification is needed to know exactly which frontage roads need to be included or excluded

The second part of the discussion is some potential design work that TxDOT has some funding to do, and the third part is to discuss Iberis Road and US 83/84.

Ms. Smetana asked Mr. Condry to explain the differences between frontage roads. Mr. Condry explained that a map had been made about a year ago showing all of the frontage roads in the city. At that time all frontage roads were candidates to be converted to one way operation. He explained the differences between these two types of frontage roads and why they should be considered as two types and not all lumped together.

Frontage roads that function in a different capacity along street segments include:

- Buffalo Gap Road from Robertson Dr. to Arrowhead Dr. (east side)
- ES 11th Street from Judge Ely to Loop 3222 (both sides)

- S. 1st Street from Winters Freeway to west of Old Hwy 80 (south side)
- Arnold Blvd. from S. 1st Street to south of S. 7th Street (west side) and north side of S. 7th Street (east side)
- Arnold Blvd. from Military Drive to Hartford (east side)

Mr. Archibald asked Mr. Condry if Flintrock Drive should be considered a frontage road. Mr. Condry replied that it is a frontage road. The question is, does the Policy Board want *all* frontage roads to be converted to one way operation, or to focus on the ones along the higher-speed arterials and freeways?

Chairman Archibald said he means the frontage roads along the arterials and freeways, not the slower speed frontage roads in residential areas. He continued by saying that his concept of frontage roads are the type located along I-20, Loop 322, and Winters Freeway.

There was considerable discussion about the South 1st Street frontage roads along the west and south side of Winters Freeway. Mr. Condry said the concern here is the transition between the east-west portion of the frontage road and the north-south section. Where exactly do you draw the line? If the intent of the Policy Board is to include arterial frontage roads such as the one at South 1st, then some of the other frontage roads may need re-examination. If frontage roads such as Flintrock are not intended to be converted, then we need to consider them differently. They can be listed on maps and differentiated with different coding.

Chairman Archibald made the motion that these five locations are not to be considered frontage roads for purposes of conversion to one way operation. This was seconded by Councilman Spano.

Motion passed.

Mr. Haynie discussed Iberis Road and the results of a study a consultant did in 2006. At that time TxDOT held six public meetings to solicit input. This location at Iberis Road has 41 points of conflict in its current configuration. The consultant made the recommendation to close all three of the crossovers in this area (the crossover between the east frontage road and the main lanes, the one between the north-and southbound main lanes, and the one on the west between the main lanes and the frontage road). The consultant's proposal would not allow any access to the main lanes from the east or west frontage roads.

Mr. Roy Wright, Director of Transportation Operations for TxDOT discussed crash data. He explained that he pulled crash data from TxDOT's Crash Reporting Information System (CRIS) database for a five year period and found there were fourteen crashes in the short section of Hwy. 83/84 from 1/10 of a mile north and 1/10 of a mile south of Iberis Road. Seven of the fourteen crashes were in the Iberis median crossovers (not in the east or west crossovers at the frontage roads).

Chairman Archibald asked Mr. Wright how TxDOT determines which crossovers to close and which ones should remain open. Mr. Wright explained there are a lot of turning movements in this area leading to numerous crashes. He said several of the crossovers in this area are crossovers that do not lead into a subdivision or a private resident's driveway. He said the reason there are so many crashes at the median crossover is due to the traffic coming from Iberis Road and onto both frontage roads and the main lanes. Mr. Haynie noted that of the seven crashes at the median site, there were three fatalities. The problems are mainly due to the high speed limit and the high number of conflict points.

Mr. Archibald asked about access to the Lakes at Saddle Creek and the Saddle Creek subdivisions. Mr. Wright said the frontage road has to remain two-way operation for this short distance because the Lakes at Saddle Creek have no other access point in or out. Mr. Garduno said when the Lakes at Saddle Creek was developed in the 1990s this location was the only way for residents to enter and leave.

Mr. Haynie said TxDOT's proposed solution is to close the middle crossover which would take traffic down a short distance further, turn around and then exit into the Lakes at Saddle Creek development. This would reduce the number of conflict points from forty-one down to seventeen. He noted that he has had several conversations with many of the residents there and he will be having an informal discussion with them on February 26th at the Wylie Junior High School.

Mr. Haynie further explained that by closing the middle crossover, TxDOT proposes building a deceleration lane going south, just south of Iberis Road and an accelerating lane northbound to Iberis to allow drivers more time and distance to safely slow down, make a U-turn and proceed north. He drove this proposed route and it took less than one minute of additional time.

Chairman Archibald commented that the action that should be taken is to present to the public all points of concern, suggested options to date, and the positives and negatives of each.

There was considerably more discussion, questions, and comments, such as how emergency vehicles/responders would or may be affected by this change, other broad concepts and ideas and the advantages and disadvantages of each, but the information above represents the main points of this discussion.

Ms. Smetana then asked Mr. Haynie to explain about the design work on SH 351. He said TxDOT has received about \$2.5 million dollars to hire consultants to do design work. Some of the Abilene TxDOT money will be used for the SH 351 project involving an access management plan. He is working with Richard Burdine with the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) on this plan. The design work is anticipated to be finished this year.

Information only, no action was required or taken.

7. Discussion on South Clack Street at Elm Creek.

Ms. Smetana said the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is looking for further direction – should we be considering a separate pedestrian bridge, attaching a pedestrian walkway to the existing bridge, replacing the entire bridge (or one lane of it) and build in a safe pedestrian element, explore potential funding, or find other options?

There was some brief discussion with the result that the bridge should be on the south side of the Winters Freeway spanning the north and south sides of Elm Creek.

Chairman Archibald said he envisions something similar to the pedestrian lane on Judge Ely with a concrete barrier separating the pedestrians from traffic.

Ms. Smetana said this will go before the TAC on March 5th and we needed this direction to know how to proceed.

Information only; no action was required or taken.

**8. 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 is complete except for receipt of the final inspection report from Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR, Architectural Barriers Section); (3) FM 89 between US 277 and Richey Creek is proceeding. (4) I-20 Frontage Roads between Loop 322 and Pine Street – work is progressing well; (5) US Hwy 83 between FM 707 (Antilley Drive) and Iberis Road - base failure repair work completed about the end of January, with sealcoating around next mid-May; (6) Bridge replacement – on Old 80 about 1/8 mile east of Loop 322 over Rainey Creek. This project is expected to let in February with work to begin a couple of months after that. This will close on lane in each direction for about a year.

Councilman Spano asked Mr. Hufstutler about the status of removal of shrubs in the "median" between Buffalo Gap Road on the west and Flintrock Drive on the east. Mr. Hufstutler said he has met with all of the property owners along Flintrock Drive except for four, and he's still endeavoring to meet with those four. Some prefer a short fence, some a tall fence, and one wanted no fence. TxDOT is still planning for a March letting for this job. He said the property owners understand TxDOT is trying to provide something that has an acceptable level of maintenance consistent with the original agreement between TxDOT and the homeowners.

Mr. Chad Carter, the City Engineer, then described the work going on in the City of Abilene: (1) Water Department street and miscellaneous repair work: on-going throughout the city and throughout the year as they repair pavement cuts for water line work; (2) Engineering Division miscellaneous repair work throughout the City; (3) there are three projects in the design stage.

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

Mr. Herr with CityLink reported that five paratransit vans arrived this week. Five more will arrive next week and complete the order for ten new paratransit vans. He has an RFP in draft form for a Voice Annunciator System. Currently it is being reviewed by the City Legal staff. CityLink is preparing to buy some bus shelters

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

9. Discussion and Review of Reports:

- **Financial Status**
- **Operation Report**
- **Director's Report**
 - **Public Meeting on US 83/84 and Loop 322 Frontage Road Conversions**
 - **MPO Office Relocation Update**
 - **Texas Transportation Forum – Austin, Texas (February 17-19, 2013)**

- **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana presented the financial information. She said \$250,038 was spent in FY 12, \$211,819 was allocated leaving a deficit of \$38,219. This deficit was covered by using

current carry-over funds. Unless funding changes or some other changes occur we expect to use carry-over funds for the next several years. The current remaining balance is \$282,179 which will be carried over into 2013. The initial estimate for FY 13 allocations is projected to be reduced by about \$10,000 to \$11,000 which, if this is correct, will make our allocation closer to approximately \$201,818.

For FY 2013 we've processed the October and November billings. The authorized amount is \$201,677. At this time we are at \$163,876. This is only the allocation we have to date and does not include any carry-over funds.

The FY 13 Indirect Costs are going up from the 2012 amount and will be \$21,615 (approximately 9% to 10% of our allocation). We are working with the City to try and capture some of the benefit the MPO provides to the City to try and reduce this amount. Ms. Smetana said Ms. Chris Moscarelli with the City Finance Department is present and available to answer any questions.

- **Operation Report**

Ms. Smetana stated the detailed Operation Report is for the period of November 16th, 2012 through February 11th, 2013. The detailed list is lengthy and is included in the packet but a few highlights include: partnering with TxDOT on the Loop 322 project and the January 24th public meeting; Ms. Smetana and Darah Waldrip, the TxDOT Public Information Officer were interviewed on KWKC Radio's "The Professor" talk radio program explaining the Loop 322 project; we packed and moved to our new location; prepared maps and attended training.

- **Director's Report**

- **Public Meeting on US 83/84 and Loop 322 Frontage Road Conversions**

Notification postcards were sent to 549 residents (this represents 1,000 feet on both sides of the project), and flyers were posted in 19 businesses along the project on January 14, 2013. Darah Waldrip and E'Lisa Smetana discussed the meeting/project on "The Professors" talk radio show on January 15, 2013. In addition, media releases and emails were sent out.

Approximately 50-60 people attended the meeting. Most people in favor of making the frontage roads one-way, but the main concerns expressed were:

- Proposed closure of Iberis Road cross-over
- Proposed bridge cross-over at Lytle Lakes
- Access to property
- Safety

In the near future, we will be meetings with individuals and accept public comments through February 3rd. TxDOT will hold a Public Hearing on March 5th and public comments will be accepted through March 15th.

- **MPO Office Relocation Update**

We've relocated to 402 Cypress Street, Suite 519. We have a new main MPO phone number – 325-437-9999, and we still have our individual direct lines.

- **Texas Transportation Forum – Austin, Texas (February 17-19, 2013)**
Staff will be attending this Forum in Austin.

One very important point that will occur at this Forum – Judge Spurgin will be officially honored and will receive the TxDOT Road Hand Award. He will join an elite list of only about 222 recipients to receive this award.

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

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

Mr. Mike Vandervoort, with the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) thanked Ben Herr and CityLink for all of the projects they are working on to help the blind community, especially the Voice Annunciator System. Mr. Vandervoort also thanked Mr. Chad Carter for his work in helping the blind community get across intersections safely.

Chairman Archibald thanked Mr. Vandervoort for his comments and also for his continuing assistance in working with the City, the MPO and TxDOT to help make Abilene more accessible for everyone. He also thanked CityLink for their efforts to make these services available.

Ms. Smetana said the MPO received an internet comment after the US83/84 and Loop 322 public meeting that was held, pertaining to the crossover at Iberis Road and also proposed bridge in the Lytle Creek subdivision area. These concerns will be addressed at the upcoming public meeting on February 26 at 6:00 p.m. at Wylie Junior High School.

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

Judge Spurgin mentioned a project at FM 3034 at Hwy 83/84 and 277, outside of the MPO boundary. Additional acceleration and deceleration lanes are needed but funding has been an issue. Increasing slow-moving heavy truck traffic crossing the main lanes north of the City is compounding the problem.

12. Adjournment.

With no further business, Chairman Archibald adjourned the MPO Policy Board Meeting at 12:05 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 1:30 p.m.