



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

September 16, 2014

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board met at 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 16, 2014, in the Abilene City Hall, City Council Chambers, 555 Walnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

### **Members Present:**

Mayor Norm Archibald, City of Abilene Mayor and Policy Board Chairman  
Councilman Joe Spano, City of Abilene  
Judge Dale Spurgin, Jones County, and Policy Board Vice-Chairman

### **Members Not Present:**

Judge Downing Bolls, Taylor County  
Mr. Stan Swiatek, P.E., TxDOT Abilene District Engineer

### **Others Present:**

Mr. Joe Clark, TxDOT TPP  
Mr. James Condry, City of Abilene Traffic & Transportation Administrator  
Mr. Bill Frawley, Texas Transportation Institute  
Mr. Jon James, City of Abilene Director of Development Services  
Mr. Paul Norman, P.E., TxDOT (for Alan Hufstutler)  
Mr. James Oliver, CityLink General Manager  
Mr. James M. Rogge, P.E., City of Abilene Interim City Engineer  
Ms. Megan Santee, City of Abilene Public Works Director  
Mr. Stanley Smith, City of Abilene Legal Department

### **MPO Staff in Attendance:**

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

#### **1. Call to Order.**

Chairman Archibald called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He noted Judge Bolls should be joining the Board shortly but Mr. Swiatek is not able to attend today's meeting. He continued by stating this meeting is being videoed and will be replayed on the City's Channel 7 and also on the MPO's website.

#### **2. Certificate of Appreciation for Mr. Blair Haynie, Director of Transportation Planning and Development for the Abilene District Texas Department of Transportation.**

Mayor Archibald explained that Mr. Haynie could not be here today so we will wait until he is able to attend to honor him for his many years of service.

#### **3. Consideration of Approval of the Minutes of the May 20, 2014 Meeting.**

Chairman Archibald asked if there were any additions, deletions, or corrections to the minutes as they were presented. Hearing no changes the motion was made by Judge Spurgin and seconded by Councilman Spano to approve the minutes of this meeting.

*Motion carried.*

**4. Discussion on the Open Meetings Act and any action in connection thereto.**

Ms. Smetana said this is a follow-up from the September 20<sup>th</sup> request from Judge Spurgin that we look at this. At the April 15<sup>th</sup> Policy Board meeting we provided some additional documentation along with an email memo from Legal on the requirements and the way we need to conduct these meetings. The handout provides guidance on what constitutes meeting and also a quorum. Mr. Stanley Smith commented that the Legal Department has looked at these issues in many different ways. An Attorney General's opinion was requested to provide additional, clearer guidance but only a select group of individuals (e.g., City and County Attorneys) are authorized to request an opinion directly from the Attorney General. He suggested one alternative would be to contact the House Legislative Subcommittee. Mr. Smith continued that if a quorum happened to be present and did not ask any questions or participate in any way, they may still learn information that may help them to reach a decision later, and therefore this would be considered a meeting. As long as a meeting is posted at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting, it covers the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. Mayor Archibald said the safest way to proceed is to post meetings and state that a quorum may be present. It is not necessary to formally open and close any meeting, take minutes, and so forth.

*Discussion item only; No action was required or taken.*

**5. Discussion and Consideration of Approval of the Amendment to the FY 2014-2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).**

Ms. Smetana explained that this amendment applies only to CityLink and the Transit portion of the funding. The UPWP is basically the MPO's budget and is prepared months in advance of receiving notice of how much money we will be receiving for the fiscal year. Because of the unknowns, toward the end of the fiscal year we sometimes have to revise the numbers. There are four transit funding categories: Transit Planning Management, CityLink is revising downward the Transit Funding (Task 1.7), Transit Planning Data (Task 2.4), Short-Term Transit Planning (Task 3.3), and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) (Task 4.4). CityLink has only \$12,500 to program in the planning portion over the four different tasks. Section 5307 funds (\$10,000) and Local funds (\$2,500) are the only funding categories affected by this action.

Mayor Archibald moved to accept the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee to amend the budget summary to reduce Section 5307 transit funds by \$10,000 and Local funds by \$2,500, for a total reduction of \$12,500. Councilman Spano seconded the motion.

*Motion carried.*

**6. Discussion and Any Action on the FY 2015-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).**

Ms. Smetana explained that this is our Long-range Plan and is Federally required to be updated every five (5) years. We've held six public meetings and participated in other events trying to get public participation. We also held a Delphi meeting where we asked citizens and interested parties to participate to find out where they thought growth was going to occur and where they saw the future of Abilene going. We also formed a subcommittee of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that included Mr. Haynie, Mr. Hufstutler, Mr. Condry, Mr. James, and Commissioner Williams. We met on several occasions to discuss the existing MTP list of projects and put together a project list. The draft in the packet is the general draft that presented to the TAC. The TAC recommended approval of this project list. In addition we will be performing some travel time runs and some other things, which will be discussed shortly. The main concentration right now is to look at the projects on this list.

In our MTP process we are at the September 16<sup>th</sup> meeting asking the Policy Board to approve the draft list of projects. At the November meeting we will be coming back with a draft document for the Board to look at and another opportunity to again look at the projects and make sure they are in the order that the Board wants them in. In January we will submit the final document for approval. There will be additional public meetings in between these dates. The final document will be submitted to TxDOT on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

There are four types of projects: Baseline funding. These are projects that have a high probability of receiving funding to accomplish some of them. At this time we still do not know how much funding we will or may have, and some of these projects may get bumped to the Enhanced category. At this time please ignore the dates and funding amounts associated with the respective projects. Right now we are only concerned about the Board putting the projects in the categories and order they want them in. Once placed, we will analyze the cost because we have to consider a 4% per year inflation factor per project. On the second page these projects are also Baseline projects but these are grouped. This means they are small enough that they do not have a specific project ID associated with them. These are mainly routine maintenance and similar types of work carried out around the area and over time. **Each of the four categories also are classified as either short-term (generally expected to be completed within the first 10 years, between 2015 and 2024) or long-term (generally expected to be completed between 2025 and 2040).** The third category are the Enhanced projects. These are projects that need to be done, and we know they need to be done, but we don't have any identified funding source. It may come from a source such as the possibility of funds from the upcoming Proposition 1 (assuming it gets passed) or some similar not-usual type of funding. In the last MTP we used Prop 12 and Prop 14 funds to accomplish some of those projects. The last category is called Unfunded Illustrative. The top half is Unfunded New Capacity Projects and the lower half is Unfunded Short-Range Reconstruction and Rehabilitation projects. These are projects that we know will have to be done at some point in the future but we have no idea at this time where the funding may come from.

On the Baseline (first) page the US 83 main lanes are listed. This is a preventive maintenance grouped project that the TAC recommended pulling off the Baseline and moving it to the Grouped Projects page. The FM 89 (Buffalo Gap Road) project was on the list of top five (5) projects in 2009 or 2010 for the MPO. The TAC thinks this should not remain in the Baseline Projects category but moved to the Enhanced list, but this is a decision for the Policy Board to consider. US 277 is also a preventive maintenance project and should be moved into the Grouped Projects. The N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street project should be renamed to accurately reflect its proper name, Marigold Street.

Mayor Archibald asked Mr. Condry to explain why projects that are within the City are listed in the MPO's Long range Plan. Mr. Condry explained the MTP is a financially constrained document. As Ms. Smetana noted, we do not have accurate numbers at this time to know just how to rank or position projects. However we can calculate out approximately 25 years using historic funding as a general guide in what we may reasonably expect to receive. The funding is not just federal money – it also includes City and State money. Some local money will be used as a match for federal money. Part of the local money comes from the CIP allocation. In 2008 there was the possibility of some money coming forward and this is why FM 89 was included in the Policy Board's top 5 high priority projects. This project has two major elements – one was to have access management and the second was widening. Buffalo Gap Road in Abilene is the highest volume surface street road in Abilene from the freeway to Rebecca Lane. There is still growth going on to the south; part of the growth will use Buffalo Gap Road but other traffic will also shift and use other roads in the area also. These elements went into the decision at that time.

Some members of the TAC are concerned about the cost of storm pipe or culvert or whatever design would work to take care of drainage improvements that will have to be addressed, primarily on the west side of Buffalo Gap Road. Mayor Archibald noted that the Policy Board will have another opportunity to examine the projects and their order again in November and when they review the final document in January. There will be public participation meetings in November. Mayor Archibald said the Policy Board will leave FM 89 in the Baseline projects list at this time; they may decide to move it at a later date. The changes highlighted in red that the TAC recommended were approved by the Policy Board: the US 83 main lanes moved from Baseline to the Grouped list; US 277 is also preventive maintenance and can be moved to the Grouped list; and changing the name from N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street to Marigold Street.

Judge Spurgin made the motion that the Policy Board approve the changes that were noted in the red, and the name change from N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street to Marigold Street, but to do nothing with FM 89 (Buffalo Gap Road) which will be left alone for now. The second was made by Councilman Spano.

*Motion carried.*

Mayor Archibald noted that November 18 will be the Policy Board's next meeting.

Ms. Smetana briefly explained about Travel Time Runs. Many of the locations were received from the TAC where there may be some potential congestion. She introduced Mr. Bill Frawley, from the Texas Transportation Institute, who will be helping us perform these runs and also with the MTP process. We will be traveling the corridor during both peak and non-peak times to determine how severe congestion really is.

## **7. Discussion and Review of Transportation Projects.**

(By TxDOT Staff, City Staff, and CityLink Staff)

Mr. Alan Hufstutler, P.E., was not able to attend this meeting and asked Mr. Paul Norman, P.E., with TxDOT, to update the Policy Board. He described the status and progress being made on the following projects:

*Contract Paving: Loop 322 one-way frontage road (Lytle Creek to Maple) is slightly behind schedule. They're working on turn-arounds and ramps and should be completed in about two months, which will put them about 2 months behind the scheduled completion date.*

*J. H. Strain: IH 20 one way frontage roads is on schedule but some ride quality modifications are needed before striping and final touches are performed. This should be finished in October.*

*Reece Construction: bridge replacement on East 80 (BI 20-R) is completed and slightly behind schedule. There are some ride quality issues to take care of*

*J. H. Strain: one-way frontage roads by Abilene Regional Hospital – US 83 between Canyon Rock Road and south of Iberis Road is slightly behind schedule. The Iberis Road crossover was closed last week. They're working to complete the south end of the project and should have it completed in October.*

*FM 2404* (part is in Taylor County and part is in Jones County): widening up to Hodges. This project just started about two weeks ago and will take about four months. The Taylor County section has not started yet.

Mr. James M. Rogge, P.E. the Interim City Engineer, described the status and progress being made on the following projects (the complete details are in the packet):

The Miscellaneous Open Cut Repair Contract is about 80% spent. This contract has been renewed for another year.

The South 1<sup>st</sup> Street enhancement project is 99% complete and will be completed in the next day or so.

The Engineering Division recently repaired a section of Ambler Avenue and that bumped their contract up to 80%.

The Cockerell Neighborhood sidewalk project is about 70% complete.

Water Department Street Repair Contract is about 57% complete.

About 6 miles of new streets will be turned over to the City within the next 2 to 3 months from areas throughout the City.

Several projects are about 100% designed. We're just waiting on funding and manpower to complete them.

(NOTE: In the City's spreadsheet in the packet, it shows the Cockerell Neighborhood at 20% complete and the Engineering Division Miscellaneous Repair Work at 15% constructed).

Mr. James Oliver, the new General Manager of CityLink Transit, described the status and progress being made on the following:

We received 60 bus benches and 25 Simmie-seat bus stops (Simmie seat is a type of bus bench but smaller).

The City has requested that CityLink perform an analysis of ridership in some areas, specifically route 9 and some others that are extremely busy.

They were awarded an \$80,000 grant from TxDOT. They are working on an RFP to do a route study.

Our ED grant [Elderly and Disabilities] (Section 5310). This is more of a Capital grant. We are looking at updating our software as well as our AVL [Automatic Vehicle Locator] tracking so we can also see our busses. This would allow real-time scheduling and dispatching for the clients.

We are in a joint venture with Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) to purchase a 35' bus. We have need for a larger bus on a couple of our routes (specifically, Route 9 is one route). In this joint venture, DCTA is doing a lot of the necessary background work for CityLink such as writing the RFP.

## **8. Discussion and Review of Reports:**

- **Financial Status**

Ms. Smetana explained that we have received several billings and they have been submitted. We are up to the June billing; the July billing will be submitted shortly. Right

now the authorized amount is \$447,270.33. To date (as of the June, 2014 billing) we have spent \$205,702.08, leaving a balance of \$241,568.25.

- **Operation Report**

The full report is in the packet, but a few highlights include the Delphi Panel, were working on the project list and maps for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and compiling information and results from our survey

- **Director's Report**

- **Draft Federal Planning Regulations on Metropolitan Plans and Programs (FHWA-2013-0037-0001).**

There is currently a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) with a September 2<sup>nd</sup> comment period deadline. Due to the response they have extended this deadline to October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The document is massive as we are relying on the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and other organizations to review and disseminate how this will affect the MPOs.

- **TxDOT/TEMPO Supplemental Funding Program**

This is still in the draft very preliminary phase. The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) conducted a survey of small MPOs and found that they need about \$275,000 to \$450,000 just to the programs and projects that we are required to do each year. One of the ideas being considered is to use State Planning and Research (SPR) funds to help fund this gap or need that the smaller-budgeted MPO have. This would be a very detailed process and the MPOs would have to apply for these funds and document how the funds would be used. This is not authorized at this time; TEMPO is negotiating with TxDOT about this possibility. This could be a potential benefit to the Abilene MPO to do things such as special projects.

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

We're working with the City on their Bicycle Plan. We will bring you updates on how this is progressing.

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

No comments or suggestions were received.

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

No suggestions or comments were received.

**11. Adjournment.**

Chairman Archibald noted that the next meeting will be November 18 and, in particular, we will be looking at MTP projects. The meeting of the MPO Policy Board was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.