

WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Technical Advisory Committee
Minutes

Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Voting Members Present:

Lin Barnett – Wichita Falls MPO, MPO Director, TAC Chairperson
Allan Moore – TxDOT, Director of Construction
Danny Brown – TxDOT, Director of Trans. Planning and Development
Dave Clark – City of Wichita Falls, Dir. of Community Development
David Rohmer – Proxy for Tim Hertel, TxDOT Director of Operations
James Kelley – TxDOT, Area Engineer
Mark Beauchamp – City of Wichita Falls, Traffic Superintendent
Blane Boswell – Proxy for Davis Powell, City of Wichita Falls, City Engineer

MPO Staff:

Donnie Arbeau – Wichita Falls MPO, Transportation Planner II
Tammy Marlow – TxDOT, Funding Administrator

Visitors:

John Burrus – City of Wichita Falls, Director of Aviation, Traffic and Transportation
Jerrie Sowards – Texas State Representative Farabee's Office from District 69
Nora Hodges – Nortex Regional Planning Commission

Absent:

Karen Montgomery-Gagné – City of Wichita Falls, Comm. Development Planner III

I. Welcome & Introduction

The MPO Director called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He briefly explained how the new process for making public comments on agenda and non-agenda items worked and invited those citizens in attendance to participate. Mr. Barnett then informed the committee that Mr. Blane Boswell would be the acting proxy for Mr. Davis Powell and Mr. David Rohmer would be the acting proxy for Mr. Tim Hertel. Mr. Barnett then addressed the first item on the agenda.

II. Public Comment on Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Mr. Barnett asked if anyone from the public had signed up to speak on any agenda or non-agenda items. There were no speakers. Mr. Barnett then moved on to the next item of business.

III. Review and Approval of the January 14, 2009 Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC) Meeting Minutes

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the January 14, 2009 Technical Advisory Committee meeting minutes. There were none from the committee members, however, Mr. Barnett

addressed the request by Ms. Montgomery-Gagne concerning the Lebanon Road project, EJ-26, and why it was moved from a low priority to the highest "Medium" project in the MPO's prioritized project list for calendar year 2009. Mr. Barnett stated that he went back and listened to the tape from the October 22, 2008 TPC meeting and listed the reasons why the Policy Board moved EJ-26 from a "Low" priority to the top of the "Medium" projects in the prioritized list. The reasons given by the TPC were as follows:

- There is still plenty of open land and the opportunity is there to put in a connector from Lebanon starting at Seymour Road going north all the way to Seymour Hwy. (BU 277A), possibly as a 4-lane facility.
- A limited number of houses would be affected.
- The Right-of-Way should be acquired now while land is relatively inexpensive so that it can be used for the future build up of a roadway.
- The connector would indirectly feed into the new Maplewood extension.
- The entire Policy Board was in agreement that the land needed for the project should be acquired soon and that the project should be moved up in ranking.

He then asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Brown motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. Review and Comment Regarding the Transportation Policy Committee's (TPC's) January 28 and February 25, 2009 Meeting Minutes - *No Action Required*

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the January 28, 2009 Transportation Policy Committee meeting minutes. There were none. He then asked for comments on the February 25, 2009 TPC meeting minutes. There were none. He then moved on to the next item of business.

V. Review, Discuss and Forward FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program Amendments to the Policy Board Based on TxDOT Revised Funding Authorizations

Mr. Barnett informed the committee that in a letter dated January 21, 2009 from the TP&P Division of TxDOT in Austin; it was made known to him that the Wichita Falls MPO would receive its full Transportation Planning Fund (TPF) authorization for FY 2009 along with its full FY 2008 carry over funding amount. He stated the original amount of FY 2009 TPF funding was estimated at \$317,056.95, but that the actual amount, as indicated in the letter, was now \$398,280.50. Mr. Barnett informed the committee that he had programmed the increase of funding into two of the Special Projects subtasks located in Task 5.0 of the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program or UPWP. He stated that he moved \$20,000 from subtask 5.1 – the effort to locate a prime location for the downtown transit center – into subtask 5.3, along with some of the carry over funding, to RFP and hire a qualified consulting firm to study the Beverly Drive, Avenue "H", and Kemp Street thoroughfare connection. Mr. Barnett stated that he had also set aside \$41,280.50 for subtask 5.4 to conduct an investigative study of the viability of building a connector between Seymour Road, starting at the north end of Lebanon, going north to Seymour Hwy.

Mr. Barnett then threw out for discussion the proposition of rolling these two studies into one along with a study of the Rhea\Lawrence\Callfield Road intersection. His reasoning for combining all three areas into one study was because they are all concerned with increasing the north and south mobility of traffic in this section of Wichita Falls. He stated all three areas will need to be analyzed in terms of cost to acquire Right-of-Way, utility movements, estimated

construction costs and the impact on nearby businesses and residences. Mr. Barnett stated it was the MPO's job to present a clear and factual report so that the TPC and other decision makers could make an informed decision on how best to address these areas. He then asked the committee for their views on the subject.

Mr. Kelley asked if there were any previous studies that could be reviewed. Mr. Barnett stated that he did not have any in his office but that Mr. Arbeau had done some preliminary work on both the Lebanon Road extension and the Beverly Drive\Avenue "H"\Kemp Street connector. Mr. Brown agreed that all three locations warrant an investigation on how to increase mobility through them. He then asked Mr. Barnett how he would accomplish this. Mr. Barnett stated that he would eliminate subtask 5.4 and revise subtask 5.3 to include all three areas under one study to be accomplished by an outside consulting firm. Once the amendments to the FY 2009 UPWP were approved by the TPC, Mr. Barnett would utilize the TAC committee as a selection and oversight committee to administer the study. Mr. Barnett stated he should be able to get the RFP out on the street within 30 to 45 days.

Mr. Beauchamp made a motion to forward the amendments, with revisions, to the TPC for review and approval at the April 22, 2009 meeting. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VI. Review, Discuss and Forward ARRA Based Transit TIP Amendments to the Policy Board for Approval: Includes Four Replacement Buses and Purchase of Capital Bus Resources

Mr. Barnett directed the attention of the committee to the proposed transit amendments located in the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program. He informed the committee that \$1,340,000 was programmed into FY 2009 for the purchase of four (4) new 35-ft, 12-yr, 500,000 mile, low-floor buses and that the remaining \$430,192 would be programmed into FY 2010 for the purchase of additional capital bus resources. These capital items included: farebox system upgrades, replacement A/V security cameras, AVL/GPS locator units, automatic-stop street annunciators and bus route furnishings such as benches and shelters. He then directed their attention to the Transit Financial Summary page of the TIP where the totals for fiscal year's 2008 through 2011 were located. He commented that no state or local match money was required to accept the ARRA funding. He also stated that City Council had passed a resolution to accept the ARRA funding the day before on April 7th and that he, Mr. Barnett, had presented the ARRA transit grant application to the Texas Review and Comment System or TRACS for review and favorable comment. He stated that with these additional 4 buses combined with the FY 2008 order of 4 buses, Falls Ride would be able to modernize two-thirds of its existing fleet.

Mr. Barnett asked for comments. There were none. Mr. Clark made the motion to forward the transit TIP amendments to TPC for review and approval at the April 22nd meeting. Mr. Moore seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VII. Discussion of TxDOT 2009 Program Call for Proposals for Highway Projects to be Developed Under the Pass-Through Finance Program

Mr. Barnett began this topic by discussing how the MPO had considered using pass-through financing or tolling to complete the Falls Flyover project. He commented that even though funding became available to construct the Falls Flyover sooner than expected, there had been much interest several years back in this concept to complete the project. In the printed handout that was included in the meeting packet he pointed out that "projects must be on the state

highway system to be eligible to be developed under a pass-through toll financing agreement” and that there were seventeen eligibility considerations to be addressed when negotiating a pass-through tolling agreement. Mr. Barnett commented that even though it was very unlikely the MPO could come up with something in time for the May 12, 2009 deadline for submission, it was still important for the TAC committee to be thinking ahead for next year and to have one or two projects ready for submission. He then asked for a discussion of this issue.

Mr. Kelley asked if the “gap” project (TX-19, on US 82, west of FM 369) might not qualify as a pass-through financing project. Mr. Brown stated that only a small portion of that project was located within the MPO’s boundaries. He commented that it could still be done, but as a MPO supported project and not as a standalone MPO project. Mr. Barnett agreed and then asked if a Regional Mobility Authority or RMA would need to be formed to oversee a pass-through financing project. Mr. Brown stated that something along that order would need to come together to head the project.

Mr. Kelley then offered up FM 890 as a potential project for pass-through tolling. Mr. Brown agreed this road could be a candidate and that it was of higher priority than the north to south route along Wellington. He then discussed how the pass-through financing process works. First, a local entity must front all or a significant part of the funding needed to construct the project. Second, TxDOT will pay for the rest of the project. Then finally, TxDOT will reimburse the local entity, over time, for their part of the construction cost based on the number of vehicles that use the facility or the number of vehicle miles traveled over the facility. Mr. Barnett commented that in previous discussions there had been some thought given to two loops around the City; one in the northeast and one in the southwest, but that both were very long range thinking. Mr. Kelley commented that what made pass-through financing somewhat unattractive was the fact that it placed the burden of development and construction on the local entity, which usually means the City or the County or some combination of both must fund the project up front. Mr. Brown agreed stating that the entity would also be required to operate the facility. However, Mr. Brown stated that he had read that changes were being made to modify the language and rules governing the entity or RMA, although he wasn’t certain what all those changes would entail, they might preclude the entity or RMA from having to operate the facility.

Mr. Brown commented that it was too early to considered bonding money for the two loops around the City, but that they should be included on the long-range plan. He also stated the FM 890 project would be a good candidate and that even though the US 82 “gap” project was a very important project, it would be a challenge to find or form the right entity that could provide up-front funding for such a large project. It would have to be some combination of Cities or Counties. Mr. Barnett commented the US 82 “gap” project was important and that it tied freight movement directly into the La Entrada al Pacifico trade corridor. Mr. Kelley commented that it would become more obvious to the public as to the need for the “gap” project once the Kell West Main Lanes were completed.

Mr. Barnett stated that he and his staff would begin work internally and coordinate with other members of the TAC committee to begin developing a list of potential candidate projects for submission for the next pass-through program call. There was no other discussion on this issue.

VIII. Review and Discussion of MPO Director Evaluation Process

Mr. Barnett informed the committee that he had contacted Mr. Brown ahead of time and asked him to moderate this issue during today’s meeting since it concerned the MPO Director’s position and that he would have to abstain from the discussion other than to answer questions.

Mr. Brown informed the committee that this item came up for discussion during the last TPC meeting and that it needed to be addressed. He stated that a process needed to be developed so that the MPO Director can be evaluated by the MPO. Mr. Brown stated the MPO Director is a City of Wichita Falls employee, hired by the City, but if work is not getting done, reports are not being filed, then the MPO needs some way of communicating this to the fiscal agent, that being the City of Wichita Falls. He then discussed the research undertaken to compare other similar size MPO's to that of Wichita Falls and how they address this issue.

Mr. Brown asked everyone to take a few minutes to review the research and recommendations. He then talked about how the City hires, supervises, evaluates and terminates the MPO Director. He discussed how the Transportation Policy Committee or TPC wants some ability to provide input on the annual evaluation of the MPO Director. He was quick to point out that this was being requested by the TPC not because of any problems, but because the WFMPO By-Laws state that the TPC is required to evaluate the MPO Director. Mr. Brown stated that, in fact, the TPC was very well pleased with Mr. Barnett's past performance.

Mr. Brown referred the committee to the current contract between the State and the MPO which states, "The MPO Policy Committee shall have sole responsibility to hire, supervise, evaluate and terminate the Transportation Planning Director." He commented that this was not actually how the MPO operates. Currently, the MPO Director is evaluated by the City's Director of Aviation, Traffic and Transportation, which is the MPO Director's supervisor. Mr. Brown then asked the committee if there should be a clause added to recommendation Number 2, in the meeting packet, requiring the fiscal agent to consult with the TPC during the MPO Director's annual evaluation. Mr. Kelley agreed with this stating the TPC should have some say in the performance plan and in the evaluation. Mr. Moore, referring to recommendation 3(b) in the meeting packet, stated the contract should be reworded in such a way as to require the fiscal agent to seek input from the TPC and not the other way around. Mr. Brown commented that even though the words "performance plan" were not mentioned anywhere in the By-Laws or the contract, he felt the fiscal agent would want to consult with the TPC on both a performance plan and the annual evaluation of the MPO Director. He recommended adding this as one sentence to recommendation Number 2 of the meeting packet.

Mr. Brown asked for a motion to recommend to the TPC a change to the current contract between the State and the MPO, and to the WFMPO By-Laws, that would require the fiscal agent, that being the City of Wichita Falls, to consult with the TPC and allow input in the development of the MPO Director's performance plan and annual evaluation. Mr. Clark motioned to forward the recommendation to the Policy Committee. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

IX. Other Business:

A. Discussion & Overview of Progress on Local Transportation Projects – City and TxDOT staff (Quarterly Review)

TxDOT Report: Mr. Kelley reported that on the Falls Flyover US 82 westbound ramp braces were being welded and steel tied into place in preparation for the pouring of concrete on the deck by end of April or first of May; Kell West has 65% of the concrete paving down and the construction company was finishing up on the bridges; Loop 11 was waiting for electrical tie-ins for lighting, but otherwise was considered complete; all the off-system bridges were done, the Old Iowa Park road culvert bridge was waiting for hot mix, rail and stripes to finish;

there were several HES projects that had been completed; the annual seal coat program should get underway in the latter part of June; there were several concrete patch repair projects going on throughout the area; on US 287, from SP 325 to FM 368, a Novachip project will be done once the weather gets warmer; and there was a bridge maintenance repair program about to start that would include the Holliday bridges on the frontage road. Mr. Kelley commented that he had two additional projects to report. He stated that a contract had been let to fix bridge joints on several bridges and perform bridge maintenance and there was also another concrete patch repair scheduled for SP 325 in the cloverleaf area.

Mr. Brown asked about the estimated completion dates for the Falls Flyover westbound US 82 ramp and the Kell West main lanes. Mr. Kelley stated the US 82 westbound ramp should be finished by end of July and the Kell West main lanes should be done by fall of 2009.

City Report: Mr. Boswell reported the Maplewood Phase II extension project was nearly complete and the ground breaking would be April 23, 2009; 10th Street and Harrison received a new faux brick stamped concrete structure; traffic flow improvements on northbound Kemp at Callfield, Maplewood at Elmwood, Elmwood at Southwest Parkway, provide left turn lanes was complete; Gregg Rd. at Langford Rd. reconstruct existing street was nearly complete; Colonial Park drainage improvement was a little more than 60% complete with installation of storm sewer drains along Granada, Haiti and Antigua streets; the alley rehabilitation project was 50% complete; the 2009 street rehab project had contracts going out that day with work to begin soon; the Faith Village drainage phase II and III projects were scheduled to begin construction around June 1st and should last 18 months; the Holliday Creek Hike and Bike trail was still in the design phase and the 7th Street at MLK Boulevard intersection would receive upgrades to the ADA ramps to better serve the blind pedestrians that work at the Beacon Lighthouse and to improve the overall look of the intersection.

B. MPO Quarterly Financial Report (1st Quarter FY 2009 – October, November, December)

Mr. Barnett presented the financial report for the FY 2009 first quarter expenditures commenting that most of the expenditures were for advertising of the ARRA transit grant public hearings. He asked for comments or questions. There were none.

C. 2010 - 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update: Progress Report

Mr. Barnett reported that Kimley-Horn had informed him they were still waiting for the rest of the Travel Demand Model to be sent to them from the Traffic Analysis Section of the Transportation Planning and Programming division in Austin. He informed the committee that Kimley-Horn had been waiting on a release form from Austin so that they could acquire the rest of the data needed to begin work on the update to the Wichita Falls Travel Demand Model. The project leader for Kimley-Horn stated they were about 30 days behind schedule on that part of the MTP update, but that everything else was on schedule. Mr. Barnett informed the oversight committee that the next meeting with Kimley-Horn would take place on April 22nd at 2:00 p.m.

D. Other items

Mr. Brown asked if Ms. Marlow had contacted the Director concerning a letter of support for all of the ARRA based projects including both roadway and transit. Mr. Barnett stated that

she had and that he would get started on the letter immediately. The committee agreed that along with the "Plan A" projects the letter should include a reference to the "Plan B" project as well. The letter should be from the TPC and signed by the Chairperson.

X. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Irvan F. "Lin" Barnett Jr.
MPO Transportation Planning Director
Wichita Falls MPO