

WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Technical Advisory Committee
Minutes

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Voting Members Present:

Lin Barnett – Wichita Falls MPO, MPO Director, TAC Chairperson
Danny Brown – TxDOT, Director of Trans. Planning and Development
Dave Clark – City of Wichita Falls, Dir. of Community Development
James Kelley – TxDOT, Area Engineer
Mark Beauchamp – City of Wichita Falls, Traffic Superintendent
Tim Hertel – TxDOT, Director of Operations

MPO Staff:

Carolyn Askins – TxDOT, Transportation Planning Assistant
Donnie Arbeau – Wichita Falls MPO, Transportation Planner II

Highway Needs Committee Members:

Visitors:

John Burrus – City of Wichita Falls, Director of Aviation, Traffic and Transportation
Barbara Lingle – Executive Secretary, Texas State Representative David Farabee
Arnold Oliver – Citizen
Denny Jones – Lighthouse Teknologies, Owner

Absent:

Joe Anderson – TxDOT, Director of Construction
Karen Montgomery – Gagné – City of Wichita Falls, Comm. Development Planner III

I. Welcome & Introduction

Mr. Barnett called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. and welcomed everyone present. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

II. Approval of the January 18th TAC Meeting Minutes

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the January 18th TAC minutes. None were received. Mr. Clark motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Hertel seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

III. Review and Comment Regarding TPC's January 31st Meeting Minutes - No Action Required

Mr. Brown asked if the Wichita Falls MPO submitted a letter of support for the Military Airport Grant for Municipal Airport. Mr. Barnett replied the MPO had submitted that letter of support. Then Mr. Brown asked whether the MPO received any feedback concerning the 2006 Transportation and Environmental Planning – APA Excellence Awards. Mr. Barnett said the MPO had not heard anything since submitting its application. The awards will be presented in the summer of 2006.

IV. Review, Discussion, and Recommendation of the 2006 Kemp Blvd. and Southwest Pkwy. Traffic Signal Optimization Study Final Report

Mr. Beauchamp went through a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation put together by Kimley-Horn & Associates regarding the Traffic Signal Optimization Study. The Traffic Superintendent went through the processes for developing the study and all the steps involved with seeing it through to completion. Mr. Beauchamp made a point of noting that public perception of the study and changes to the system were given a very high priority and closely intertwined. Examples of this were the intersections at Kemp & Kell where multiple adjustments were needed to ensure public perception reinforced the forecasted improvements.

Mr. Beauchamp used comparison data between pre-study and post-study Travel Time Runs to show the quantitative improvements to the system along the two main corridors. He felt the overall benefit to the system was “very great”. Average travel times were reduced along both Kemp Blvd. and FM 369 (Southwest Pkwy.) which was the ultimate goal of the study. After the study, a typical driver now saves an average of 2 minutes per day, 10 minutes per week, and 9 hours per year driving these corridors. Section 8.1 of the TSO Study outlines the time and financial savings.¹

An additional task of the TSO Study was to evaluate the need for new signalized intersections at Kemp & Westgate, Kemp & Elmwood, and FM 369 & Stone Lake. Warrants were run for each location and compared “into” the whole system. The only location that “barely” met the minimum threshold on 1 warrant was FM 369 & Stone Lake. Because of the delay factor for traffic entering on FM 369 and along the main corridor, Kimley-Horn did not recommend adding a signal at this time.

Mr. Beauchamp finished off his presentation by discussing further the signal phasing modifications at Kemp & Kell intersections. The new system runs a modified (3 phase / 4 phase) arrangement with much more flexibility than previously available with the old “dedicated, one-trick pony” arrangement. Now, it can change phases to handle increased traffic during peak hours. Callfield / Rhea / Lawrence also received phasing arrangement revisions to improve safety for traffic turning left into the interior of the intersection. Lastly, Mr. Beauchamp mentioned that two-way progression was also improved along Callfield Rd. from Lawrence Rd. to Maplewood Ave.

¹ Section 8.1 of the TSO Study lists an estimated annual delay savings, in vehicle hours per year, of \$1,932,190. The benefit-to-cost ratio was considered extremely favorable in light of the fact that the study cost was less than \$60,000.

Mr. Brown asked if the Traffic Division received any public comments since the completion of the study. Mr. Beauchamp responded that most of the complaints received were due to sensors (equipment) malfunctioning. Mr. Clark inquired about improvements for the intersections at 9th & Kemp and 10th & Kemp. Mr. Beauchamp stated the cycle length at these side street intersections was dramatically reduced and side street traffic delay has been significantly improved. Mr. Brown brought up the issue of the new dedicated right-hand turn lane at Maplewood & Midwestern. Mr. Beauchamp indicated that he received both positive and negative comments from that modification. However, as drivers become more familiar with the new arrangement, he felt the benefits would become more apparent. This ended Mr. Beauchamp's presentation.

Mr. Oliver asked if it was possible for the City to take what was learned from the study and apply it to other signalized intersections within the City. Mr. Beauchamp indicated that the City was already taking steps to apply those best practices and methodologies to other locations. Adding to this topic, Mr. Barnett asked that TAC members begin thinking about new corridor studies for FY 2007. Then, Mr. Barnett asked for any additional comments or changes to the revisions. None were made. Mr. Kelley motioned to approve the final report, as presented, for forwarding to TPC for approval. Mr. Clark seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VI. Presentation, Discussion, and Recommendation of the Wichita Falls MPO Website

Mr. Arbeau and Denny Jones introduced the new Wichita Falls MPO website www.wfmmpo.com and the new Wichita Falls MPO logo. The main features and pages of the site were highlighted. One issue that Mr. Brown and Mr. Hertel were interested in was the site linking to the TxDOT ITS system to see current traffic conditions. It was agreed that once available, the ITS system and the WFMPO web site would be linked. Mr. Hertel indicated that a timeline for that is unknown. Some minor changes were noted concerning TAC and TPC contact lists. Mr. Arbeau indicated that those would be corrected. As well, additional work was still needed to verify that all the features on each page are functioning properly. Mr. Arbeau stated those would all be addressed prior to the next TPC meeting.

Overall the committee was "very satisfied" with the new web page and logo. Mr. Barnett asked for additional comments or changes to the web site. None were made. Mr. Brown motioned to approve the Wichita Falls MPO website, with revisions, for forwarding to TPC for final approval. Mr. Beauchamp seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

As a side note, Mr. Barnett mentioned to the committee that the domain names www.wfmmpo.org and www.wfmmpo.gov would also be purchased before the site went live. This will enable the WFMPO to redirect all web traffic to www.wfmmpo.com should someone enter a wrong address or extension.

V. Review, Discussion, and Recommendation of the May Transportation

Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Barnett discussed a revision to the 2006-2008 TIP on page 30. The Section 5307 revision was for the new FTA Grant (approved). Mr. Clark motioned to recommend the revisions, as presented, for forwarding to TPC for approval. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VII. Progress Report on the Texas Urbanized Mobility Plan (TUMP) for 2006

Mr. Barnett began by informing the committee that not only are “new construction costs, but all reconstruction costs” for existing facilities will need to be included as part of the TUMP study for our area. It covers a 40 year period from 1990 to 2030. He continued by stating that these will need to be broken down by agency (City, County, State, MPO, Federal, and so forth). Then Mr. Barnett went over how the Texas Urbanized Mobility Plan for 2006 was derived from the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plans developed by the 8 largest MPOs (TMAs) in Texas.

The Texas Congestion Index (TCI) for Wichita Falls is 1.05 for the base year of 2000. Under the No-Build scenario the TCI for Wichita Falls will grow to 1.10 by 2030. However, with the financial constrained MTP our TCI would increase to 1.07 over the next 24 years (till 2030). The TTC (Texas Transportation Commission) set a goal for the Wichita Falls area to achieve a TCI below 1.05 for 2030. The unconstrained Needs-Based Plan will bring us back to 1.05, or less, by 2030. Mr. Barnett stated that this is the main target and goal of the plan. He continued by informing the committee that the Draft TUMP for our MPO must be complete by May 5th, 2006.

Mr. Brown stressed the importance of putting the TUMP and TCI into “layman’s” terms for public consumption. Mr. Barnett agreed. Mr. Barnett commented on the need to follow-up with Kevin Hall, TTI, to look at TCI level of service and how reconstruction costs would affect the TUMP. As well, total project costs like property acquisition costs must also be included into the overall projection. Once again, Mr. Barnett assured the committee that he would develop and present a clear and concise overview of this process to TPC.

No other comments were received on this issue.

VIII. Other Business:

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

City Report

Mr. Taylor, Director of Public Works, forwarded an update to Mr. Barnett. Design work continues on the Maplewood Extension from Lawrence Rd. to Kemp Blvd. for drainage improvements. A proposal is being prepared to widen Lawrence Rd. to add a continuous left-turn lane from Callfield Road to Gregg Road.

Construction will commence in August or September of 2006. Mr. Clark added that this project is funded.

TxDOT Report

ID 1, 2, 3 - Mr. Kelley mentioned three ITS projects.

ID 4 – Safety lighting project at Fairway Blvd. & Kell Blvd.

ID 5 – Bridge replacement at Plum Creek on FM 171.

ID 6, 7 – Safety lighting and illumination.

ID 8 – Cypress St. Bridge project is substantial complete.

ID 9, 10 – Direct connect has been great progress. All storm sewers are done. All drill shafts are in. All foundations are poured.

ID 11, 12 – Seal coats that are part of the summer Seal Coat Program.

ID 14 – Upgraded guardrails and SDTs for Loop 11.

ID 15 – SH 240 overlay. Pre-construction meeting is done. Scheduled to begin construction in June 2007.

ID 16 – Seal coat.

ID 17 – FM 1740 Safety Bond Project. Work has begun on the culverts.

ID 18, 19, 20, 21 – BUS 277A Exit ramp to 6th Street. Includes the whole intersection area. Project has been awarded to JL Steel.

b. MPO Quarterly Financial Report (1st Quarter – October, November, December)

Mr. Barnett discussed expenses for the 1st Quarter of FY 2006. No comments were received.

c. Other

Mr. Barnett stated the Transit Study consultant selection process would begin that same day in the afternoon. He also indicated that the Multi-County Regional Transit Plan is underway. The next meeting is scheduled for May 27th at 2 pm at NORTEX.

Mr. Brown made the suggestion that the City and TAC begin prioritizing various corridors for future signal optimization studies. Mr. Burrus agreed. Then Mr. Brown inquired as to the status of the City's proposal for enhancement funding for the Hike & Bike Trails. Mr. Burrus responded by stating that City Council was preparing to look at appropriating funds for the section near E. Scott Street. He also said that City Council made completing the loop section of the trail a high priority using various financing methods, apart from TxDOT funding. Mr. Barnett added that he would contact Mr. Taylor to ensure that TxDOT staff had an opportunity to review the application prior to submittal.

Mr. Clark inquired about the application to rename the overhead freeway in honor of Lloyd Ruby. Mr. Burrus explained that the application was turned down for a number of reasons and, since then, it had been resubmitted.

IX. Public Comment on Anything Not on the Agenda

Mr. Oliver inquired whether the City or TxDOT ever considered lighted street name signs for busier intersections. Mr. Burrus felt that the idea had merit and that City staff needed to look at the issue more seriously. Next, Mr. Oliver directed a question to Mr. Clark concerning City Ordinances and whether a requirement existed for businesses to display proper street numbers and addresses in visible locations. Mr. Burrus felt that the idea should be brought before the Traffic Safety Commission and forwarded onto the Wichita Falls BCI. The committee agreed that the issue had merit and supported any action to move the issue forward.

X. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

Lin Barnett
MPO Transportation Planning Director
Wichita Falls MPO