

WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Technical Advisory Committee
Minutes

Wednesday, July 9, 2008

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
Davis Powell – City of Wichita Falls, City Engineer
James Kelley – TxDOT, Area Engineer
Karen Montgomery-Gagné – City of Wichita Falls, Comm. Development Planner III
Tim Hertel – TxDOT, Director of Operations

MPO Staff:

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

Visitors:

Jerrie Sowards – Representative David Farabee’s Office
John Burrus – Director of Aviation, Traffic and Transportation
Michael Smith – City Council
Nora Hodges – Nortex Regional Planning Commission

Absent:

Mark Beauchamp – City of Wichita Falls, Traffic Superintendent

I. Welcome & Introduction

Mr. Barnett called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He welcomed everyone, thanking Councilor Smith for attending, and then addressed the first item on the agenda.

II. Review and Approval of the April 9, 2008 Technical Advisory Committee’s (TAC) Meeting Minutes

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the April 9, 2008 TAC minutes. None were received. Mr. Powell motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

III. Review and Comment Regarding the Transportation Policy Committee’s (TPC’s) April 23, 2008 Meeting Minutes - *No Action Required*

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the April 23, 2008 TPC minutes. None were received. The

board moved on to the next item of business.

IV. Report and Discussion on Current and Future Funding of TxDOT Transportation Projects

Mr. Brown reported to the committee that the Wichita Falls MPO has effectively spent all of its Category 3 money getting the Falls Flyover and the Kell West Main Lanes into construction. The Falls Flyover and Kell West were projects originally set to begin in 2015 and 2018, respectively. TxDOT is now trying to determine how to redistribute future Category 3 spending across the state. He added that the scenario approved by the Texas Transportation Commission added a small amount of Category 3 funding to everyone's budget. Currently, the WFMPO's balance is a negative \$8 million, but with the additional money the MPO received at \$4 million, it brought the balance to a negative \$4 million. Mr. Brown then informed the TAC Committee that he and Mr. Barnett will be traveling to meet with other Non-Transportation Management Area MPO's to discuss Category 3 funding and future distribution formulas. Mr. Brown stated that he hoped with the establishment of a formula, the debt will be repaid and the WFMPO will be able to start from ground zero. He explained that Category 3 funding needs to concentrate on congestion and that our MPO may have trouble competing against other districts for congestion money. Mr. Brown stated that he hopes to see a base amount of Category 3 funding for each district, though it probably would not be much, with the remaining money allocated as the Commission sees fit. This would require TxDOT to accumulate money for four to five years before they could do a project. Mr. Brown then discussed the next Category 3 funding project that would begin. That project would be the FM 890 / Airport Road project. Without counting the bridge across IH-44, this project would cost approximately \$6 million. TxDOT is hopeful they can use Proposition 12 Bond Funds to begin the job early. He stated they would use the same approach they are using now to find the funding for the project.

Mr. Powell asked about the specific location the FM 890 project would occur in. Mr. Brown explained which areas would be included and that it may have to be split into two sections to be more affordable but hoped it would be possible to do the whole project at one time.

Mr. Barnett stated that Mr. Tegtmeier and he traveled down to Austin for a meeting concerning Category 3 spending and distribution. Mr. Barnett stated that in a conversation with Mr. Tegtmeier he did not think the Falls Flyover and the Kell West Main Lanes counted against the MPO's Category 3 funding levels because there was no indication of this in the presentation shown to them while in Austin. Mr. Brown explained that one of the projects, most likely the Falls Flyover, did count against the Category 3 funding but the other one did not. Mr. Barnett suggested maybe it was the Kell West Main Lanes project that was not counted which helps the MPO stay out of a deeper hole.

Mr. Powell asked if the design for FM 890 had been completed or if it had been delayed. Mr. Brown said they had to stop the design process because even the consultant funding has taken a cut, but they will be looking at it again to determine whether they will continue using a consultant or use TxDOT resources to finish the design. However, before they can get to that point, they have to determine when they are actually going to be able to let the project so that they do not work on it too early instead of focusing on something else. Mr. Brown expressed hope that they would be able to find the funding so that the project does not continue to be delayed. If the funding becomes available in the Proposition 12 funds and others like it, they will try to start the projects immediately. He stated that he really feels the funding will surface once again, but it will be much more project specific as what will need to be done first.

Mr. Brown said the MPO area is in good shape considering what TxDOT has been able to build, and also what they may be able to build with any additional funding that is found for Category 3.

Mr. Barnett asked for any other comments or questions. None were received. The board moved on to the next item of business.

V. Recommendation to Forward 2008 Update of the Socioeconomic Data Collection and Forecast Study to TPC for Approval

Mr. Barnett informed the TAC Committee that the Socioeconomic Data Collection Forecast Study had completed the required 45-day public comment period. He stated that no public comments of any kind had been received. The Study will be forwarded to the TPC Committee on July 23rd for adoption. Mr. Barnett commented that once the Study is adopted he would begin developing the Request for Proposal for a consultant to assist in the 2010-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. He stated that in 2009 it will be time to update the MTP and that the Socioeconomic Study is a key part of that process. Mr. Arbeau commented that the Socioeconomic Study had been sent to Greg Lancaster at Texas Transportation Institute for review and comment. Mr. Arbeau stated that TTI has accepted the study data which will be used in updating the Travel Demand Model. He commented that TTI has already projected out to year 2035 for the model based on the numbers from the study.

Mr. Powell asked about the corridor, specified in the document on page 33 of the meeting packet in the second paragraph. This part of the document was concerned with the area west of Kemp bordered by Wellington, Fairway, and Southwest Parkway. Mr. Powell asked if Barnett should not also be listed along with Wellington since it changes names south of FM 367. Mr. Barnett stated he would address the issue and make the correction in the Technical Document.

Mr. Powell stated there were differences in the population estimates between the Socioeconomic Study, the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Abilene/Wichita Falls population comparison document included in the meeting packet. Ms. Montgomery-Gagne pointed out that the figures were taken from different governmental entities and each has their own way of calculating their population numbers. Mr. Barnett explained that the data in the Socioeconomic Study is the latest and most current data that BWR developed based on population statistics obtained from the Texas State Data Center and the Claritis Corporation. He explained that the data in the Socioeconomic Study examines population concentrations based on Traffic Analysis Zones within the MPO boundary, whereas the TIP population estimates are based upon census tracts located within the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area, which covers Archer, Clay and Wichita counties. Mr. Arbeau added that, depending on which polygon area and boundaries that you look at, the numbers differ substantially.

Mr. Barnett explained that the population comparison between Wichita Falls and Abilene was done in-house using data from the Texas State Data Center that had been further refined from the U.S. Census Bureau year 2000 Summary Files. The numbers between the three documents were not comparable because they were based on different methodologies of measurement looking at different geographic boundaries. Mr. Barnett recognized the differences and stated that he would go back and review the figures to see if any adjustments would need to be made. Mr. Barnett asked if there were any problems pertaining exclusively to the Socioeconomic Study. None were reported. Mr. Barnett asked for any other comments or questions. None were received. Mr. Brown motioned to send the document to the TPC Committee for adoption, and Mr. Hertel seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

VI. Review and Discussion of August 2008 TIP Revisions (Includes Revisions to FY 2008 Transit Programming)

Mr. Barnett guided the board to the August 2008 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Revisions. He explained that there were no Federal Highway revisions this time, but that the FY 2008 Transit portion was important to the new "Falls Ride" system which began operating on Monday, July 7, 2008. He pointed out that the budget numbers in the FY 2008 Transit Revision were the same budget numbers currently found in the FY 2008 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 Transit Grant. Mr. Barnett stated the TIP Revisions need to be approved so that FTA will finish processing the FY 2008 grant which includes approximately \$825,000 in carry-over funds for the past two year, some of which would expire in September 2008 if not programmed. The FY 2008 FTA grant contains line items for buying four new 30-ft., 10-yr., Low-Floor; 350,000 mile low-floor buses. These new buses will be able to carry three or 4 wheelchairs, which will almost double the current capacity. It is critical that these revisions are approved so that the carry-over funds are not lost. Mr. Barnett noted that this was the only revision to the TIP and that it was coming late in the fiscal year because of all the planning and logistical work that had to be done in order to launch the improved transit system. He asked for any questions or comments. None were received. Mr. Clark motioned to send the document to the TPC for review and approval. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

VII. Review, Discussion and Recommendation of the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Barnett stated that even though roughly half of the Texas MPO's are utilizing 2-year UPWP's, the WFMPPO will continue to produce an annual UPWP. His reason for doing so was because of the volatility in federal funding. Recent federal rescissions were making it difficult to forecast planning projects further out than one year. Mr. Barnett briefly described the work done in developing the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program. He pointed out that he had updated the Mission Statement under Task 4, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, to better reflect the goals of the MPO. Mr. Barnett stated that changes in Tasks 1 through 4, for the most part, were minor and that most were concerned with Expected Products and Previous Work in each of the main Tasks. The exception, as in previous UPWP's, was Task 5 – Special Studies. Mr. Barnett outlined what he and his staff hoped to accomplish in Task 5, which included: identifying a suitable location for the downtown transfer station for "Falls Ride" and finding the funding to get it built; issuing the RFP to find a consultant to help with the 2010-2035 MTP update in 2009; finalizing updates to the Travel Demand Model and forwarding them to the Texas Transportation Institute; continuation of the in-house Beverly Drive, Avenue H and Kemp Street connector study and begin an investigative study of the viability of extending Lebanon Road north to connect with Seymour Highway to provide an additional minor collector to the Lawrence Road shopping area.

Councilor Smith asked about what kind of facility the "Falls Ride" Downtown Transfer Station would be like. Mr. Barnett explained that the facility will help support regional transit in that it will provide other area transit agencies such as Texoma Area Paratransit System and Sharplines a place to drop-off passengers wishing to use "Falls Ride" to get around inside the city limits of Wichita Falls. It will incorporate such amenities as bicycle lockers, rest rooms and climate controlled waiting areas. The building will contain a ticket sales counter that will allow people to buy transit passes or tickets. The building will serve as a connection point and allow people to do everything they need to do using transit buses. The building would be able to accommodate

up to five buses at a time for unloading and loading. If adequate space is found, they would like to provide a place for parking as well. More people are beginning to use the bicycle racks on the buses, and this building would really serve to enhance all modes of transportation.

Councilor Smith stated that he rode the entire Central route. He commented that it was impressive watching four buses arrive all at the same time and drop off their passengers who then immediately went to another bus or got on their bicycles. Mr. Burrus commented that they had been talking about potential spots because it would be important to allow access to the freeway and still be able to serve downtown. Councilor Smith asked if any thought had been put in to building near the bus station. Mr. Barnett said the issue is currently wide open. Possible locations have been discussed with Pat Hoffman, the City's Property Manager. Mr. Barnett stated that the response to the new system has been very positive.

Mr. Barnett directed the board to the Budget Summary page stating there were \$73,192.98 in FY 2007 carry-over funds for programming. He also estimated there would be \$30,470.97 left over at the end of FY 2008 that would carry over. Mr. Barnett stated that TP&P in Austin had directed him to use a base figure of \$170,000 for the estimated FY 2009 PL-112 allocation. Mr. Barnett stated the FTA Section 5303 Section 8 Funding forwarded to him by PTN in Austin would be \$43,393. Mr. Barnett stated that after adding all of these sums together, the total Transportation Planning Funds (TPF) for FY 2009 would be \$317,056.95. However, this amount was subject to change and the MPO would not know for sure until later in 2008. Mr. Barnett said he should get a letter from TP&P in Austin sometime in October/November letting him know exactly how much the MPO would be receiving.

Mr. Barnett asked for any other comments and questions. Ms. Montgomery-Gagne asked, concerning subtask 5.1, if the money listed for the "Falls Ride" Downtown Transfer Station was just for study and research or if there was any potential to actually fund the building. Mr. Barnett stated that planning funds would be used solely to find a suitable location and identify any other major funding available other than FTA funding. Mr. Barnett stated that he expects to use FTA transit grant funding for the majority of the capital expense of the new building. Mr. Barnett also told the Committee that there might be a chance to utilize some 4A or 4B funding to act as local match for the construction of the downtown station. None of the PL-112 or Section 8 money will be used for construction.

Mr. Brown asked if the \$30,470.97 estimated carry over at the end of FY 08 had already been programmed for use in FY 2009. Mr. Barnett said it had not been specifically programmed, but was accounted for in Task 5 – Special Studies. Mr. Brown then inquired if there was an anticipated carry over at the end of 2009 or if all of the funds would be encumbered by that time. Mr. Barnett said, usually, there are around \$25,000-\$30,000 in carry over funds at the end of each fiscal year. He stated that he has tried to conserve funds because of the cost of the upcoming MTP update. Mr. Barnett did say that he would assume they would not have spent all of the money by the end of 2009. Mr. Brown expressed concern about losing money if they did not meet the minimum requirement of expenditures. Mr. Barnett said the \$30,470.97 is part of the FY 2009 budget, but at the end of the 2009 fiscal year there should still be money left over. Ms. Montgomery-Gagne asked if they were anticipating a small scale update for the MTP or a more in depth study like they received in 2005. Mr. Barnett said he budgeted \$100,000 based on what the MTP update in 2004/2005 had cost, but said it may only cost around \$50,000 or \$60,000. Mr. Barnett commented that with as extensive of an update as was done in 2005, plus the Bicycle Master Plan, it should not take as much time and resources to update the MTP. In 2015, however, the MPO may be looking at a more extensive effort to update the MTP.

Mr. Barnett finished by presenting the committee with the changes made in Appendix H, the Travel Budget. Due to the rising costs of fuel and other goods, he budgeted \$8790, which was up around \$600 from last year's budget. Mr. Brown asked about the ESRI training that cost \$4,000 and where it was. Mr. Barnett explained that was for the ESRI conference and that its location changed from year to year. MPO staff did not attend this year because it was in Mississippi. He stated that he did not know yet where it will be in 2009. Mr. Barnett asked for any other questions concerning the FY 2009 UPWP. None were received. Mr. Clark motioned to forward it to the TPC for review and approval. Mr. Powell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. Review and Discussion of Amendments to the WFMPO By-Laws Including: Member Proxy Voting and Public Comment Procedures

Mr. Barnett discussed changes that had been made to the WFMPO By-Laws after the document had been reviewed by the TPC Committee at the April 23, 2008 meeting. Under Article II, Section II-2 Members, Meetings, Voting and Procedures, it was recommended that there be an Order of Succession, using the list already in the By-Laws, in case neither the Chair nor the Vice-Chair were present. Further refinements to the By-Laws included: under Member Proxy, the TPC members may designate a proxy to exercise some or all of a member's authority in accordance with the requirements listed under paragraphs 1 through 6. Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 were added as new requirements based on guidance from the TPC. Paragraph 4 states: TPC members cannot act as proxies for other TPC members. Paragraph 5 states: The voting proxy shall be under the direct authority of the board member designating the proxy. Paragraph 6 states: There are no limits on the number of times a member can use a proxy. However, in the event that a member misses three consecutive meetings, the TPC may ask the respective governmental entity or agency to remove the member and to select a new member to replace them.

Mr. Brown asked if the proxy being there counted the member as present. Mr. Barnett replied that the proxy does not count the member as present. He also discussed the policy to send a letter to a board member after missing two consecutive meetings so that the board member would have the opportunity to attend the next meeting. Mr. Barnett then discussed the proposed procedures for public comments during TAC and TPC meetings on agenda items. Staff had researched various other Texas MPO's "Procedures for Public Comments" and an amalgam of was developed based loosely on the Lubbock MPO's procedures. Mr. Barnett then continued to read and review the new "Procedures for Public Comments" for the board. After much discussion and review, Mr. Barnett informed the board that he would take all of their comments on the procedures, rework them, and bring them back for review and discussion at the next TAC meeting in October of 2008. This item would not be included on the agenda for the July 23, 2008 TPC meeting.

IX. Other Business:

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

Mr. Powell began by saying that the projects had not changed much since last time. Projects included: Maplewood Phase II from Kemp to Lawrence Road, the widening of Lawrence Road, and the Transfer Station Bridge. Work continues on several street rehab projects as well. Mr. Powell also informed the Committee that the alley rehab project will begin in the next few weeks. There was further discussion about various projects around the city. The Committee

then moved on to the TxDOT report.

Mr. Kelley discussed the various projects TxDOT is working on including: the Falls Flyover remaining ramp closure, the IH-44 re-pavement, the Kell West extension, and the Loop 11 project. Mr. Kelly also discussed the dates these projects are estimated to be completed.

B. MPO Quarterly Financial Report (2nd Quarter FY 2008 – January, February, March)

Mr. Barnett reviewed the spending expenditures for the MPO spent over the last quarter, which was a total of \$51,879.13. He stated that a large part of this quarter's expenditures was for the Socioeconomic Data Collection and Forecast Study. The MPO had currently spent 45.47% of its Transportation Planning Funds for the year.

C. Wichita Falls Transit System D.B.A. "Falls Ride" – Plan Implementation Report

Mr. Barnett presented the new transit booklets for "Falls Ride" to the board. He stated that the overall acceptance of the new system by the public has been very good. The new Connector Route (purple) has been very full with standing room only, and the other routes have also seen an increase in passengers. Mr. Burrus said during the two days since the kick-off, the system is carrying 40-50% more passengers. Mr. Barnett continued by saying the next phase to begin would be finding the physical location and the funding for the new downtown transfer station. Mr. Barnett asked for any other comments or questions. Councilor Smith said the large map at the temporary transfer center and at Sikes Senter was very well done. One suggestion that he heard people discussing was to have a small sign at each bus stop along each route presenting the route times. Mr. Burrus stated they were already in the process of looking into this very issue.

D. Population Comparison – Abilene and Wichita Falls (TPC Request)

Mr. Barnett discussed the reasons for doing a population comparison between Abilene and Wichita Falls. He stated that it came about as a TPC request from the last TPC meeting on April 23, 2008. The population comparison was done using Texas State Data Center data as it pertains to Metropolitan Statistical Areas. He stated the comparison looked at how current populations compare and how future population growth is expected to develop in Abilene and Wichita Falls. Ms. Montgomery-Gagne discussed how important it is to cite the resources used to support the population estimates and forecasts since there are so many ways to calculate them. Mr. Barnett informed the board that he had wanted to do the comparison based on the Socioeconomic Studies of both cities but that Abilene had not yet completed theirs. Mr. Brown commented that the conclusion should be rewritten to address a more direct comparison between Abilene and Wichita Falls. Mr. Barnett stated that he would go back and rework the report to include a comparison based not only on MSA's but also on "place" otherwise known as "city limits". There was no further discussion.

E. Area Signage Discussion (City Councilor Request)

Councilor Smith discussed the need for additional signage that would help people find their way to the City's various museum, entertainment and historical areas. He asked who the City worked with to install signage on IH-44 and the major US Highways so that people trying to visit Wichita Falls' entertainment and historical sites would be able to navigate the downtown area. Councilor Smith expressed the desire to increase tourism in Wichita Falls by placing signage that would advertise main attractions present in town at places such as the entrance/exit to the Municipal

Airport and at the entrances into the City. Mr. Kelley said that TxDOT would have to look at each request individually because there are specific requirements. If a facility does not generate enough traffic, signage cannot be placed on certain highways. Councilor Smith suggested even placing a generic sign that lists downtown attractions. Mr. Kelley stated that signage could be placed on the City Pride signs at the entrances to the city. Mr. Burrus asked Councilor Smith how many museums were located downtown and if they could create a museum district with a sign for the district instead of treating each museum individually. Councilor Smith said that talks about a museum district had been discussed. A suggestion was made to look into logo signage. Councilor Smith asked if there was someone at the local TxDOT District that he could speak with about signage. Mr. Kelley provided him with the contact information.

F. Other Items

Mr. Burrus commented that since the transit system was now fully underway with the new transit plan, he would like to see work begin on the MPO Bicycle Master Plan. Mr. Barnett asked if there was any available funding from either TxDOT, through enhancement grants, or through the City. Mr. Clark said that the City was going to begin the search for funding to complete this plan.

X. Public Comment on Anything Not on the Agenda

Ms. Sowards reminded everyone about the reception on July 30, 2008 for the Texas Transportation Commission and their staff. The reception would be held at the MSU Museum of Art from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. No other comments were received.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

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