
TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE (TPC) MEETING WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

July 23, 2008

Present:

Woodrow (Woody) Gossom, Wichita County Judge, Vice-Chairperson	◆ Members
Charles Elmore, City of Wichita Falls, City Council Representative	◆
Dennis Wilde, NORTEX Regional Planning Commission, Director	◆
Jeff Watts, City of Pleasant Valley	◆
Larry Tegtmeyer, TxDOT, District Engineer	◆
Russell Schreiber, City of Wichita Falls, Director of Public Works	◆
Steven Halloway, Lakeside City	◆
Davis Powell, City Engineer	◆ Staff
Donnie Arbeau, WFMPO, Transportation Planner II	◆
Hailey Berend, WFMPO, Intern	◆
Lin Barnett, WFMPO, Transportation Planning Director	◆
James Kelley, TxDOT, Area Engineer	◆ Ex-officio
Jerrie Sowards, Rep. David Farabee's Office	◆
John Burrus, City of Wichita Falls, Director of Aviation, Traffic & Transportation	◆ Guests
Michael Smith, City Council Representative	◆ Absent
Lanham Lyne, City of Wichita Falls, Mayor, Chairperson	◆

I. Welcome & Introduction

Judge Gossom called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. Introductions were made around the room.

II. Review and Approval of the April 23, 2008 Transportation Policy Committee's (TPC) Meeting Minutes

Judge Gossom asked for comments and changes to the minutes. None were made. He then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Councilor Elmore motioned to approve and Mr. Tegtmeyer seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Review and Comment Regarding the Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC) July 9, 2008 Meeting Minutes - No Action Required

Mr. Barnett stated that the TAC Committee continues to work on the MPO By-Laws regarding

Term, Proxy Voting, and Conflict of Interest. He informed the committee that a new section on Public Comment Procedures had been added since the April 23, 2008 meeting and that all updates to the WFMPO By-Laws should be ready for review and approval by the October 22, 2008 TPC meeting. Judge Gossom expressed his wish for the public comment period to remain on the agenda at each meeting. A copy of the MPO By-Laws will be e-mailed to the board members for their review before the October meeting. Mr. Barnett briefly discussed some of the changes that had been made concerning the public comment section during the TAC meeting on July 9, 2008. Judge Gossom inquired as the reason for using the 51% threshold for establishing quorum and whether or not it might be in the best interests of the MPO to continue to use the 4/5ths standard. Mr. Barnett stated he used the 51% figure based on his research of other Texas MPO By-Laws. He stated that if the TPC felt it would be better to continue using the 4/5ths standard then he would reinstate it into the By-Laws. No other comments were received.

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

Mr. Tegtmeyer discussed Category 3, Urban Corridor Project funding and its future. He stated the local District has spent all of its Category 3 funding through 2020, assuming nothing significant happens between now and then. Mr. Tegtmeyer stated that TxDOT is preparing to adopt a new UTP (Unified Transportation Plan) which will incorporate 2020 into the planning horizon. Allocations up through 2020 will be included into the new plan. He explained that there are work groups being formed to develop new funding formulas for Category 3 and expressed his hope that the new formulas will be strictly related to congestion. He commented that Category 4, Statewide Connectivity funding, is being spent to develop US 277 as part of the states "trunk system". Three projects on US 277 have been let in the past few years between Wichita Falls and Seymour. Mr. Tegtmeyer stated that, currently, there are too many projects competing for the money that is available. TxDOT in Austin is working to prioritize those projects, but the remaining projects on US 277 do not rank very high on their list.

Mr. Tegtmeyer stated the District will replace 5 or 6 bridges during the next year due to available Category 6, Structure Rehabilitation funds. Mr. Barnett commented that even though there are funding shortages and an \$8 million negative amount in Category 3 funding for the WFMPO, the local TxDOT District has done an excellent job in pushing forward the Falls Flyover and the Kell West Main Lanes expansion. The District Engineer expressed his gratitude for the MPO Director's support and further explained that the negative \$8 million dollar amount in Category 3 would actually be reduced to \$4 million dollars based on Austin's new allocations.

Mr. Tegtmeyer informed the board that our district will not have to "live and work with the current deficit". Once past the current UTP period, the debt will be forgiven and our district will be given a "fresh start". Judge Gossom asked if there was a plan to relieve build up along US 277 from 369 to the Holliday by-pass. Mr. Tegtmeyer stated the area was under review, but projects like that will not receive money from Category 4. Mr. Watts asked if the Seymour bypass would be completed. Mr. Tegtmeyer said all projects that are currently under construction will be finished, but any new projects along that corridor will be delayed. Councilor Elmore asked if there were plans for construction of an alternate route from Interstate 35 to US 281. Mr. Tegtmeyer stated there were no plans, but that TxDOT is looking at declaring a different section as an alternative route. Mr. Tegtmeyer stated the MPO process needs to start determining what the priorities are for the MPO area so that by 2020, when an allocation is available, the District Office will be able to move forward with priority projects. There was no further discussion.

V. Review and Adoption of the 2008 Socioeconomic Data Collection and Forecast Study to be used in the 2010-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Barnett began the discussion by noting that the Socioeconomic Study Forecast and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update are two very interrelated documents. The socio-economic data forms the foundation for forecasts and projections in the MTP Update. He added that the Socioeconomic Study had completed the required 45-day public comment period. He noted corrections made to the document and touched on the differences in population numbers when using various geographic boundaries like census tracts, census blocks, and/or traffic analysis zones. This was an issue brought-up during the TAC meeting.

The Socioeconomic Study will also be used to update the Travel Demand Model. Mr. Barnett asked for any other comments or questions. Mr. Arbeau added that he will develop a socio-economic packet with maps and graphs to help clarify the data collected. Judge Gossom suggested changing some of the darker map colors. Mr. Wilde motioned to adopt the Study. Mr. Halloway seconded the motion. The Socioeconomic Study was unanimously approved and adopted for use.

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

Mr. Barnett stated there were no Federal Highway revisions on the TIP this time. He made a point to express the importance of adopting the August 2008 TIP Revisions so that the FY 2008 Transit Grant could be processed prior to the deadline in September where there was a risk of losing \$825,000 in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. The City was looking to purchase four new 30-foot, 10-year, 350,000 mile, low-floor buses to modernize the "Falls Ride" fleet. Councilor Elmore motioned to adopt the TIP Revisions. Mr. Tegtmeyer seconded the motion. The TIP Revisions were unanimously approved.

VII. Review and Approval of the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Barnett explained to the board his decision to continue updating his UPWP on a yearly cycle, as opposed to a 2 year cycle. He stated that Tasks 1 through 4 have been updated to reflect what has been completed during the year. Task 5, Special Studies, is where the bulk of the changes occur such as the Socioeconomic Study. The main goal, under Task 5.1, is to identify a location for a downtown transit center and locate funding for its construction. Task 5.2 is for a consultant to assist in developing the 2010-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. Mr. Barnett expressed his hope that this MTP will not be as lengthy a process as in 2004-2005. Tasks 5.4 and 5.5 are carryover projects from FY 2007. These two projects, an in-house study of the Beverly Dr., Avenue H, and Kemp St. connection and an investigative study to determine how Lebanon Rd. could be connected to Seymour Hwy, would be analyzed to evaluate their feasibility. Councilor Elmore stated his appreciation to the MPO for putting these projects back in the UPWP. He stated that if they are not completed soon, they probably will not get done in the future. Lastly, Mr. Barnett reviewed the budget for the next fiscal year stating that the Texas Transportation Commission had approved the use of Transportation Development Credits for TxDOT to be able to provide local match. He stated this would allow the MPO to program \$73,192 of FY 2007 funds that had previously been rescinded in April 2008. Mr. Wilde motioned to approve the FY 09 UPWP. Councilor Elmore seconded the motion. The changes and document were unanimously approved.

VIII. Other Business:

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

City Report: Mr. Powell touched on several construction projects currently underway in and around the City. He mentioned the widening of Lawrence Road and the congestion it is bringing to that corridor. He also pointed out the construction at the Transfer Station Bridge. Judge Gossom asked why the transfer station had been closed. Mr. Powell explained that the roadway from the scales to the main building was rebuilt to better handle the traffic. Mr. Powell said the annual mill-overlay project for various locations around the City was 92% complete. He mentioned the pending construction project for 10th Street at Speedway/Harrison. Mr. Powell also discussed the Colonial Park drainage improvements and the Alley Rehab program that will improve many locations around the City. There was no further discussion.

TxDOT Report: Mr. Kelley began his report with the last ramp of the Flyover that remains incomplete and the concrete overlay project on I-44. All of the lanes of I-44 are being readied to open in the near future. The Loop 11 project is going very well, but hit a small barrier due to an easement issue with a landowner. The Kell West project had been making significant progress, but unfortunately, the construction company had to redo a number of the processes they had already completed. Some of the structures previously built needed to be corrected. Mr. Kelley stated that several Novachip projects would be occurring throughout the City. Mr. Kelley also informed the TPC that one of their major asphalt providers had declared bankruptcy. With the rising costs of oil, refineries are now focusing more on gas production due to higher profit margins. Due to the shortages in materials, this has caused a dramatic increase in the cost of doing asphalt work. Mr. Tegtmeyer added that there is also a lack of availability in the additives that TxDOT uses to increase the performance level of asphalt. He stated the cost of asphalt has increase 50% in the last month. This affects all the construction projects within the district including: Kell West and Loop 11. There is a need to start looking for alternatives to using asphalt that are more economical. Mr. Kelley stated that TxDOT has the money to buy what they need to finish the current projects, but no company is willing to sell in the smaller quantities that they are using.

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

Mr. Barnett informed the committee that the MPO was on track to spend the minimum 75% of its allocation. Mr. Tegtmeyer asked about the funds that carryover and what happens to them. Judge Gossom also asked what happens if the MPO does not meet their minimum threshold, does the money get reallocated. Mr. Barnett stated that if that were to happen, the funds would get placed in a general transportation fund and redistributed to the other MPO's based on their populations and need. There was no other discussion.

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

Mr. Barnett began by acknowledging John Burrus' leadership on this project. He reviewed the changes commenting the Transit system had added an additional route, the Connector, to provide a connection with the temporary downtown transfer station. He stated that "Falls Ride" had increased ridership by 40-45% during the initial kick-off when the public rode for free. The new temporary transfer station is located at 4th and Burnett, but will likely change once a permanent location is established. Staff expects the number to fall slightly, but not to the previous levels they were before. Mr. Burrus added that after the FTA Triennial Review is completed, they will continue to refine the system to provide

responsive service to meet the community's ever changing needs. Judge Gossom asked what assistance was available for people that could not figure out how to get around on the new system. Mr. Burrus stated there is a number, 761-RIDE, which people can call to receive assistance and there is also better communication (and signage) at the major transfer points. Mr. Burrus also discussed the new administrative assistant position they are hoping to add. Judge Gossom asked about advertising options for the buses. Mr. Burrus said that they are considering bus wraps as part of the new advertising initiative. Mr. Tegtmeyer asked if they are considering branding the buses with a new color or color scheme, something prominent. Mr. Burrus indicated they are looking into doing this, especially on the new buses. Mr. Burrus added several additional options that they are considering for the system. Finishing the discussion, Mr. Barnett added that the new system is meeting its ADA requirements and standards with few problems. There was no further discussion.

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

It was determined that the comparison will be looked at after the Abilene MPO completes the update to their Socioeconomic Data Collection and Forecast Study.

E. Other Items

There were no further items to discuss.

IX. Public Comment on Anything Not on the Agenda

There were no public comments made.

X. Adjourn

Honorable Lanham Lyne
Mayor Wichita Falls