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

October 18, 2006

Present:

Lanham Lyne, Mayor, Chairperson	◆ Members
Dennis Wilde, NORTEX Regional Planning Commission	◆
Don Sheppard, Lakeside City	◆
Larry Tegtmeyer, TxDOT, District Engineer	◆
Woodrow (Woody) Gossom, County Judge, Vice-Chairperson	◆
Carolyn Askins, TxDOT, Transportation Planning Assistant	◆ Staff
Donnie Arbeau, Transportation Planner I	◆
James Kelley, TxDOT, Area Engineer	◆
Lin Barnett, MPO Transportation Planning Director	◆
Mark Beauchamp, Traffic Superintendent	◆
Danny Brown, TxDOT, TP&D Director	◆ Ex-officio
Darron Leiker, City Manager	◆
John Bendele, TxDOT, TPP Representative	◆
Rhonda Poirot, Senator Craig Estes Office	◆
◆ HNC	
Nora Hodges, NORTEX Regional Planning Commission	◆ Guests
Charles Elmore, City Council Representative	◆ Absent
Jeff Watts, City of Pleasant Valley	◆
Linda Ammons, City Council Representative	◆
Scott Taylor, Director of Public Works	◆

I. Welcome & Introduction

Mayor Lyne called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

II. Review and Approval of the July 26th Transportation Policy Committee's (TPC) Meeting Minutes

Mayor Lyne asked for comments on the minutes. None were made. Mr. Wilde motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Tegtmeyer seconded his motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Review and Comment Regarding the Technical Advisory Committee's (TAC's) October 4th Meeting Minutes - No Action Required

Mayor Lyne asked for comments on the minutes. Mr. Barnett commented that the majority of the TAC committee's time was spent prioritizing the 2006/2007 Transportation Roadway List of Projects.

IV. Review, Revision and Approval of the TAC Prioritized 2006/2007 Transportation Roadway List of Projects Generated from the September 2006 Environmental Justice Public Meetings¹

Mr. Barnett gave an overview of the history and the process behind developing the 2006/2007 Transportation Roadway List of Projects. He stated the list was developed from the original 2005/2006 List of Projects and contained 15 new projects for this cycle. The new projects were the result of two separate Environmental Justice Public Meetings held at Haynes Elementary and McGaha Elementary schools. Mr. Barnett stated the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) removed three projects from the list because they had been completed during the course of the year and that 13 other projects on the list were currently under construction. The remaining 66 projects were prioritized by the TAC committee according to their overall, regional importance to the Wichita Falls MPO area. One project, EJ-0, was left on the list to demonstrate to the public that it had been reviewed, but was considered to be "non-feasible" in the estimation of the MPO. The Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) was in agreement on the ranking of all of the projects except for EJ-23. The TAC committee had discussed recommending the MPO send a letter supporting the ownership of these streets be turned over the City of Wichita Falls in order to provide better maintenance. Mr. Kelley clarified the project nomination by stating that 5th and 6th Streets would make very good candidates for removal from the state's system.

Mayor Lyne suggested dividing this project nomination into two parts. The first part would contain 5th and 6th Streets and would move them to a "LOW" priority and the second part would contain Scott Street, but would remain a "MEDIUM" priority. Support for a letter to TxDOT asking for transfer of ownership to the City would need to wait until the Director of Public Works could have a chance to voice his opinion.

Mr. Barnett discussed the highest ranked projects pointing out that project WF-14, the bicycle/pedestrian trail from Hamilton Park to East Scott Street, had scored very highly on the list. Ms. Askins commented that word of the enhancement award should be available by November. Mr. Barnett also talked about some of the new projects that had come in from the public meetings and how two of them had scored quite highly. The rest of the discussion centered on the remaining projects and how they were ranked. There were no objections to their rankings.

Mayor Lyne asked for a motion to approve the revised list of projects. Mr. Sheppard motioned to approve the list as presented and revised. Mr. Wilde seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

V. Review and Discussion of Proposed Traffic Signal Optimization Program

¹ Upon Mr. Barnett's suggestion, Mayor Lyne moved this item to the end of the meeting to allow plenty of time to review and revise the list of projects.

Mr. Barnett explained that this was an item brought up during the July TAC meeting, but was tabled until more information could be assimilated. Mr. Barnett stated that because the program would cost more than \$5,000 the Federal Highway Administration would need to give its approval before any funds were encumbered. He stated Mr. Beauchamp had put together a presentation for the board's consideration.

Mr. Beauchamp outlined for the board the costs of the program and how it would benefit both the City and the MPO concerning signal optimization studies within the MPO boundaries. He pointed out that based on what it cost to perform the Kemp Street/Southwest Parkway Traffic Signal Optimization Study, at a cost of almost \$59,000 and containing 23 intersections, and using a similar pricing structure, it would cost in excess of \$136,000 to complete an optimization study of 54 identified intersections if done by an outside consulting firm. Mr. Beauchamp stated that with this program he could perform the same task for \$34,224 and save the MPO over \$100,000 in consulting fees. Mr. Barnett commented that the tools (software) in the program were not relegated to optimization protocols only but could be used for gathering data to be used in Traffic Demand Modeling, Transit Route Modeling and updating the Traffic Generators Map, which is used extensively in projecting demographic shifts in area population by examining journey to work, journey to school and other origin/destination studies.

Mayor Lyne asked for a motion to approve going forward with the program subject to TxDOT and FHWA approval. Mr. Sheppard motioned to approve. Judge Gossom seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. Update and Discussion on SAFETEA-LU compliance issues

Mr. Barnett outlined his recent trip to Austin to attend the September 28th Association of Texas Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO) meeting. He stated that one of the agenda items at the meeting was to provide the MPO's with additional information concerning SAFETEA-LU compliance. SAFETEA-LU requires all MPO's to bring their Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) into compliance with the new transportation bill signed into law by President Bush on August 10, 2005. Also required, will be a new document entitled the Public Participation Plan, which is similar to the Public Involvement Policy.

At the meeting, a representative from the Federal Highway Administration informed TEMPO members that the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) must be completed by October 2007. Because of this, all 25 MPO's must have their TIP completed and ready for review by TxDOT (Austin) by May 1, 2007. The state deadline is actually July 1, 2007. The representative informed the TEMPO members that FHWA is considering asking all 25 MPO's to either use the TELUS database system to log in their TIP projects or to use a standardized Excel spreadsheet to record TIP projects. The reason for this is to eliminate mismatches and inconsistencies between the STIP and the 25 TIP's.

Mr. Bendele stated that if the Wichita Falls MPO decided to use the TELUS system then it would be an expense encumbered by the MPO. He also stated that the decision to use TELUS or utilize a standardized spreadsheet would be left up to the MPO. Mr. Barnett stated this item was for informational purposes only. There was no other discussion on this issue.

VII. Other Business:

A. Discussion & Overview of Progress on Local Transportation Projects – City and

TxDOT staff (Quarterly Review)

Mr. Kelley gave the TxDOT report first. He went through 15 different projects starting with the three Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects on IH-44 and US 287 (IH-44: from SP 325 to 8th Street; IH-44: at SP 325 interchange; US 287: from 8th Street to US 281) stating they were now complete. The Cypress Avenue bridge project was nearing completion. All that was left to do was the cleanup. The Falls Flyover was 72% complete using 50% of the time allocated for it, which puts the contractor ahead of schedule. There was some intersection realignment and signal work done on BU 287J at Scott St. and Galveston, which required some high mast pole installation. Overlays on SH 240 from Missile Rd. to SP 325 were complete. Culvert and shoulder work on FM 1740 from FM 171 to the Clay County line were 54% complete. The next four projects were collectively called the "Arby's Intersection" projects and had experienced a small delay in receiving one of the signal controller cabinets, but everything else was on schedule and should be completed very soon. Judge Gossom inquired as to how drivers would know not to drive up on the new curbing. Mr. Kelley stated there should be new striping to help prevent that occurrence. He then reported on the last two projects stating BU 287J from Loop 11 to a little bit west of IH-44 – widening of drainage structures – was nearly complete and that FM 367 from a little bit east of FM 1814 to a couple miles east of FM 1814 was waiting for hot mix to help improve the curves through that area.

Mr. Brown commented that Judge Gossom had asked for a presentation on the Traffic Management Center for ITS (first three projects pertaining to ITS) at the last TPC meeting. However, because of the anticipated length of time needed to revise and approve the 2006/2007 Transportation Roadway Projects list, it was decided to postpone the presentation until the next regularly scheduled TPC meeting.

Mr. Leiker made the report for the City. He outlined events taking place in the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Zone Number 2 stating the Maplewood Extension Phase 1 project was progressing smoothly and that TXU Utilities was currently relocating some of their electrical infrastructure. He stated this phase of the extension should be complete by the middle of November. Several retailers are planning to move into the area including the Academy sporting goods store, the Pets Smart store and a bridal store. The second phase will be to widen Lawrence Road and to extend Maplewood onto Kemp Street.

Judge Gossom asked if realignment of the Rhea/Call Field/Lawrence road configuration was still be considered. Mr. Leiker stated it would be looked at as a future project and Mr. Barnett confirmed this by citing that the project was ranked "HIGH" on the 2006/2007 project list at project number WF-6.

No other comments were made.

B. MPO Quarterly Financial Report (3rd Quarter FY 2006 – April, May, June)

Mr. Barnett referred the board members to the financial report in their meeting packets stating that he had received two additional PL-112 billings that put the MPO right up to the required 75% minimum expenditures. He stated billing number 12 for FY 2006 would put the MPO over the minimum threshold for expenditures. He then asked for questions concerning any of the expenditures.

Mr. Tegtmeyer inquired about funds not used during a fiscal year and whether or not they would rollover into the next fiscal year. Mr. Barnett stated they would. Mr. Tegtmeyer was concerned that if the funds were not used, the MPO would lose them. There was some discussion as to what uses Planning funds could be allocated towards. MPO planning funds can be used for any type of planning or study function just short of the design phase. They cannot be used for any type of construction or operation expense. As an example, Mr. Barnett and Mr. Arbeau described one of the project carryovers from FY 2006 into FY 2007 concerning the in-house study of a possible Beverly Drive, Avenue H and Kemp Street connection to provide a reliever route between Seymour Highway and Kell Freeway. Mr. Arbeau stated once the new aerials were available, plus the topography, then staff should be able to make an analysis and present the results to TPC. Mr. Barnett stated this was an example of how PL-112 planning funds can be used in the planning process to come up with some cost figures.

Mr. Wilde asked how much money per year was usually rolled over. Mr. Barnett stated that it was approximately \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year. Mr. Bendele explained in further detail that the MPO can roll funds for 2 years, but that the process works on the first-in, first-out or FIFO accounting process. This allows old funds to be spent first, which lets later allocations roll into the next fiscal year if they are not completely spent. Any funds not spent within the 2 year window are deposited into a General Transportation Planning Fund or GTPF (used statewide) and then are reimbursed back to the MPO based on population. The Wichita Falls MPO would eventually get some of those funds back, but the majority of them would go to the larger metropolitan areas of the state such as Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston or San Antonio.

There was no other discussion on this issue.

C. Transit Study Progress Report

Mr. Barnett outlined progress made thus far on the transit study. He commented on how the existing route deviation system had served the community well up to this point, but that it appeared that maybe the community was ready for a change to a different type of system. Mr. Barnett outlined three options that staff and the consultant were exploring. The first option was to continue using the route deviation system and expand upon it. The second option was to embrace fixed-route with complimentary paratransit, where both systems would be performed in-house by the Wichita Falls Transit System (WFTS) or, the third option would keep fixed-route in-house but contract out the paratransit to another transit provider. He then went over the conceptualized routes that were included in the meeting packets and how their realignment would benefit ridership within the City. Mr. Barnett also went over the benefits derived from establishing a fixed-route system pointing out that if people know they can depend on the transit system to get them to work, school or some other destination on time then they will be more likely to use it thus success of the system will spread by word of mouth, which in turn will help increase ridership which translates to higher fare-box revenues. The increase in fare-box revenues can then be reinvested back into the overall transit system to help pay for paratransit costs.

Mr. Tegtmeyer asked about additional transfer points. Mr. Barnett stated that the study would identify at least two, if not more, additional transfer points within the City. He commented that one of the goals was to reduce headways on buses down to 15 or 20 minutes on the fixed-route portion of the system.

D. Other

No items were brought up for discussion.

VIII. Public Comment on Anything Not on the Agenda

There were no public comments.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Honorable Lanham Lyne
Mayor Wichita Falls