

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Buford Conference Room – Lane Council of Governments – 859 Willamette Street
Eugene, Oregon

May 13, 2010
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Alan Zelenka, Chair; Hillary Wylie, Vice Chair; Kitty Piercy (City of Eugene), Brian Pech (City of Coburg), Rob Handy, Pete Sorenson (Lane County), Mike Eyster, Greg Evans (Lane Transit District), Sonny Chickering (Oregon Department of Transportation), members; Gino Grimaldi (City of Springfield), Jeff Spartz, (Lane County) Mark Pangborn (Lane Transit District), Sarah Medary for Jon Ruiz (City of Eugene), *ex officio* members.

George Kloeppe, Byron Vanderpool, Andrea Riner, Ann Mortenson, Kathi Wiederhold, Jamon Kent (Lane Council of Governments); Savannah Crawford, Betsy Imholt, Rick Little (Oregon Department of Transportation), Marsha Miller (Lane County), Rob Inerfeld, Jessica Mumme, Kurt Yeiter (City of Eugene), Tom Boyatt, David Reesor (City of Springfield), Tom Schwetz, Price Armstrong (Lane Transit District), Dave Jacobson (Citizen Advisory Committee).

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Zelenka called the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) to order. Those present introduced themselves.

APPROVE APRIL 8, 2010, MINUTES

Mr. Eyster, seconded by Mr. Chickering, moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee held on April 8, 2010, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

Mr. Kloeppe stated that a draft letter addressed to State Senator Floyd Prozanski was at members' places. He said the letter expressed support of Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) for the position taken in a letter signed by Mr. Zelenka and addressed to Gail Achterman and John VanLandingham.

Ms. Wylie reported that she had spoken before the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) in Florence. She had testified that the Lane Metropolitan Policy Organization (MPO) would be anxious and willing to be the second pilot for the greenhouse gas planning. She shared with them some of their qualifications and that the MPO would need funding. She related that Ms. Achterman had indicated her support. She had also taken an update of Springfield activities to them and had "plugged" the EmX work and how the city had utilized American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. She said she also had talked to them about the project to redevelop Franklin Boulevard.

Mr. Zelenka thanked Ms. Wylie for providing testimony to the OTC.

Mr. Handy said he had wanted to specifically call out the MPO interest in the pilot program for greenhouse gas planning in the letter. He also wanted to call out a letter that he and Ms. Piercy had written regarding *Connect Oregon III* projects. He related that he and Ms. Piercy and Ms. Riner had gone to the Super Area Commission on Transportation (ACT) meeting and had participated in ranking projects from around the region. He had thought that the Lane MPO was very well-prepared and credited Ms. Riner and Lane County Transportation Planner, Celia Barry, with making this so. He said they had wanted to bump up the emphasis on rail in the region as well as transit.

Ms. Piercy related that they had brought forth recognition that none of the criteria had mentioned greenhouse gas reduction or environmental impacts. She felt that there was a lot of support for that. When she had attended the Oregon Metropolitan Policy Organization Consortium (OMPOC) meeting, there were other MPOs that were interested in supporting that point of view.

Mr. Zelenka asked Mr. Handy to provide some specific language for the letter. Mr. Handy responded that his intent was to add one sentence that would specifically call out the MPC interest in the pilot project in this area.

Mr. Kloeppe indicated that staff would make that adjustment and present it to the executive committee at its meeting later in the day.

Ms. Piercy said one thing that had been brought up at the MPOs was that the responsibility for greenhouse gas reductions had been placed on the cities by the legislation.

Mr. Zelenka commented that the Greenhouse Gas Task Force had discussed those types of jurisdictional issues.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Report from the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Mr. Jacobson noted that he had been forced by car problems to purchase a bus pass and ride the bus. He had been enjoying it and wanted to encourage more people to do so.

Mr. Jacobson related that the MPO CAC meeting of April 15 had featured a presentation by Tom Schwetz and Greg Evans on the EmX work. The CAC had asked questions and expressed concerns regarding how the EmX would affect the community and, in particular, the Title VI neighborhoods and the need for outreach to them and the effect of EmX expansion on businesses and neighborhoods. He said the CAC intended to take a trip to look at the planned next leg of the EmX. He stated that the CAC had also received a presentation on the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) map. He noted that there was a map on the site www.themppo.org that one could click on existing projects and look at information about them. He commended LCOG staff for the map and presentation they made about it.

Continuing, Mr. Jacobson stated that the CAC was conducting its annual review of the public participation plan and Title VI. He said they were looking at goals for the plan. He added that a subcommittee had met to work on the field trip the CAC planned to take.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no members of the public who wished to speak at this time.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

ODOT Passenger Rail Study

Betsy Imholt, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Rail Division, passed out materials regarding the draft goals for rail transportation. She said they wanted feedback on the goals for service between Eugene and Portland, noting that there was an online survey if people wanted to participate further. She recalled that they had discussed the goals at the Eugene Rail Summit, held in March. She reviewed the goals, which were to increase on-time performance, increase daily round-trips, and to reduce travel time. She highlighted potential routes. At present they were on the Union Pacific (UP) main line and were in conversation about their freight business and how the two rail services could continue to grow and what it would take to achieve the goals. The other line was a freight line that had seven different tenants on it. She said another idea was to create a whole new alignment, but there were issues with it going along Interstate 5. She reported that they intended to go to the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) in the next week to apply to do a \$10 million project, a Service National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which was really an alternatives analysis with some environmental assessment work. She underscored that without that document they would be precluded from competing for federal high speed rail money. She said they would also have to update the state rail plan as part of this.

In response to a question from Mr. Zelenka, Ms. Imholt explained that the state rail plan would assess both passenger and freight rail travel over the whole state. She said what they currently had was documentation of the state's policies regarding rail and some future forecasting of ridership and improvements that should be made over time.

Ms. Imholt stated that it would take plus or minus \$2 billion to meet the goals. She said this would require approximately \$400 million in state funding, but there was no money for it at the present time.

Mr. Evans asked if Ms. Imholt had an idea of when the second wave of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that was rumored to be coming would arrive. Ms. Imholt replied that the first round was awarded at the end of January and was \$8 billion and the next round would begin on May 19. She said there were "many different pots with many different requirements." They were applying for planning money for the analysis. She stated that another "pot" would be \$2.3 billion but they would not be eligible for most of it because the Service NEPA was not completed. She related that they had tried to make the case that because the area already had established rail corridors they did not need this document, but the government had made it clear that there would be no funding awarded without it.

Mr. Spartz did not think they should let the concerns about financial constraints prevent them from thinking long-term. He recalled that Ms. Achterman had stated at the Rail Summit that they should be thinking in terms of 50 years. To him that meant the most important element would be dedicated right of way. He averred that if they had to share rails with freight, they would face scheduling issues and the damage that freight caused to the railroad tracks. He did not believe they would be able to maintain high speed performance without dedicated right of way. He thought they should plan for the day they could have 200 mile per hour service to Seattle and how to get people from Eugene to Portland in one hour.

Mr. Sorenson questioned how much of this was aimed at passenger rail and how much it was aimed at reducing the freight traffic on Interstate 5. Ms. Imholt replied that there should be more lines. She said transportation planners would not want to limit freight's ability to use the rail system. She remarked that doing so would be a "no-win" for everyone. She noted that the west commuter rail system between Wilsonville and Beaverton shared track with freight and had a documented negative impact on the freight rail system in that corridor. She stated that their focus was on both passenger and freight trains. She noted that freight movement up the corridor was projected to increase by 80 percent in the next 20 years. She underscored that they needed to identify exactly what they were trying to achieve and then they could work on what it would take to get there.

Ms. Piercy commented that she had heard legislators indicate that having "higher" speed rail was a goal.

Mr. Zelenka thanked Ms. Imholt for coming. He felt that everyone was interested in having high speed service between Eugene and Portland and asked if the plan was to have Eugene serve as the south terminus. Ms. Imholt affirmed that this was what ODOT had in mind.

In response to a follow-up question from Mr. Zelenka, Ms. Imholt stated that the project before them would cost \$10 million. She said the required match was \$2 million and ODOT had identified where the money would come from, with a goal of providing a greater match to better the chances of receiving the money.

Mr. Zelenka echoed Mr. Spartz regarding having a dedicated right of way. He thought pursuing an alternative route would make a lot of sense. He ascertained that the open house was scheduled from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on May 18 and that they would present the same information and seek input.

Ms. Imholt said they were buying two new Talgo trains, due to arrive in 2012. She noted that they did not currently own any trains, but they had been able to purchase them because the commission had flexed highway ARRA funds. They felt fortunate to have been able to do so as other states had not been able to flex funds for rail.

Mr. Zelenka asked how much the trains cost. Ms. Imholt replied that they were spending \$36.6 million apiece for two trains without locomotives consisting of 13 cars with 286 seats in each car.

Mr. Kloeppe stated that the federally designated Cascadia Corridor went from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Eugene. He said the two new trains would be combined with trains owned by Washington and Amtrak. Ms. Imholt added that it had been a great partnership because Washington had not received all of the funding they had asked for but was still being asked to deliver the same program. She added that the Oregon ridership would likely never match the Portland to Seattle ridership and Washington had a dedicated funding source, a rental car fee that brought in \$20 million annually. She said the new trains had changed the relationship with Oregon because Washington now needed Oregon.

Mr. Evans asked if they had looked at the dedicated right of way that the State of Florida had made between Orlando and Tampa and other best practices that Oregon could replicate. Ms. Imholt responded that there were examples of this, such as the MAX line along Interstate 205. She stated that all of the consultants they were working with had done work in Florida and California.

Ms. Piercy said as they looked at acquiring right of way, they should make sure that they did not lose any. Ms. Imholt agreed that there were some lines that were at risk and they were trying to do a better job of getting ahead of this.

Ms. Piercy stated that she would be going to the American Public Transportation Administration (APTA) conference in Vancouver to be a voice for local rail travel. Mr. Evans added that he served on the High Speed Rail Committee.

In response to a question from Mr. Handy, Ms. Imholt said ODOT Rail had been a safety/regulatory entity. She explained that they charged the railroads a fee and sent inspectors out to monitor rail. She felt they were at a crossroads because they had been “beefing up” to take on the passenger and freight planning work. She added that they had managed the corridor through a contract with Amtrak, Washington also had a contract with Amtrak, and they worked together.

Mr. Zelenka said rail was very important to the MPC and they wanted to be well-positioned for the next round of funding.

Ms. Imholt said Eugene had been very helpful. She had particularly appreciated the efforts of Ms. Piercy and Brenda Wilson, Intergovernmental Relations Manager. She concluded her presentation by stating that the 124-mile route would prove to be a difficult line and they would be counting on Eugene to help keep moving the project forward.

Regional Policy Discussion

Mr. Zelenka referred to the Goals and Objectives included in *Attachment 1* to the **Regional Policy Set**. He suggested that they needed to be updated.

Mr. Grimaldi stated that there was a desire to frame issues at a regional level, to include citizen involvement, and to reflect the needs of the individual jurisdictions of the three cities, Lane Transit District (LTD), and the county. He suggested that the MPC discuss the policy set and identify changes if they felt they were needed. He thought the discussion would be a good way for them to know the regional partners’ thinking.

Mr. Zelenka highlighted the process that he and Mr. Grimaldi wanted to suggest, which included several iterations at the local level and then to return before the body for refinement and approval. He suggested that they have a conversation at the MPC and include the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) and the CAC. He wondered if they should do the first part at a regular meeting or at a special meeting.

Mr. Handy thought that by having conversations “early and often” they would achieve success. He wanted to put this item on every agenda.

In response to Mr. Zelenka, Ms. Riner indicated a public involvement chart on the wall that delineated the timeline and events that sought to bring in public input.

Mr. Evans preferred to conduct this business within the context of the regular meeting and not in a special meeting. Specifically, in regard to the objectives, he thought they could tease them out further in terms of groups of outcomes they would like to see. He said they needed to have objectives and criteria that would bring them back to the objectives and, ultimately, back to the goals.

Mr. Sorenson commented that a reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) would be one goal.

Ms. Wylie said as they planned at the local level and received citizen input, it was important to emphasize local and jurisdictional input and planning.

Mr. Zelenka suggested that a small group get together and start the conversation. He proposed that the group consist of Mr. Grimaldi, Mr. Kloeppe, Ms. Riner, Mr. Jacobson, and himself. He hoped to have that conversation in order to bring it back in the June or July timeframe as planning would begin in the next week.

Ms. Piercy recommended having the goal discussion first.

Mr. Zelenka ascertained that there was support for bringing the TPC and the CAC in on the discussion.

Amendment to the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP)

Ms. Riner stated that the amendment was on behalf of the City of Springfield joint project with LTD on Franklin Boulevard. They were requesting a public hearing.

Mr. Boyatt considered the project to be one of the most exciting projects he had worked on. He said it was not a highway project, it was a community-building project that covered all of the major modes of transportation – vehicles, pedestrian, bicycles, and transit. He stated that it was a partner project with ODOT, LTD and Springfield joining in an application for ARRA funds. He related that they had not received the money because the project had not met the NEPA threshold, similar to the situation faced by the rail project Ms. Imholt had discussed. He explained that their analysis would cost about \$1 million and it would include more design work. He said the City of Springfield and the Springfield Economic Development Agency, the urban renewal district for Springfield, and LTD had pulled together \$400,000 for the project. He requested another \$400,000 from funding that had originally been programmed for Pioneer Parkway. He said combined with ARRA money, the Parkway Overlay and the Hayden Bridge Overlay, and the current good bidding environment, ODOT had not needed the Surface Transportation Program – Urban (STP-U) and was requesting that it be reprogrammed by the MPC to the proposed transportation project.

Mr. Boyatt highlighted the project, which was on one of four major east/west connecting corridors. He said the project would add sidewalk and bicycle facilities that were currently not available in the Glenwood area. He declared that they needed to get these types of projects ready to go in order to take advantage of federal funding they could obtain.

Mr. Eyster asked if the planning would include utility infrastructure. Mr. Boyatt affirmed that it would be a good idea to incorporate utility needs in the NEPA process.

Ms. Wylie recalled that she had served as board chair for LTD when they were first planning for the implementation of EmX. She said at that time the sentiment was to wait until the Glenwood/Franklin Boulevard area was redeveloped. She observed that a lot of time had passed since then and it was an exciting project that she felt they needed to move forward.

Mr. Zelenka considered Glenwood to be a “diamond in the rough.” He ascertained that the plan for the bicycle path was to have a riverfront continuation of the path through the entire Glenwood area. He thought the plan meshed perfectly with Eugene’s vision for its portion of Franklin Boulevard becoming a multi-way boulevard.

Mr. Chickering said they had been meeting with the city about the process and had participated in the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) 1 application. He stated that they would be meeting in the next week to discuss the TIGER 2 application, though the match money would be higher for it. He felt that one important point was that adding the federal STP-U money into the project

created the federal nexus they needed to get into the NEPA process. He said it would also become the trigger for ODOT to participate in a more robust manner and to put more resources into the project. He added that the section of Franklin Boulevard was still an ODOT highway segment and they were talking about a transfer.

Mr. Zelenka opened the public hearing. There were no members of the public who wished to provide testimony and he closed the public hearing. He stated that the amendment would be on the agenda for the next MPC meeting as an action item.

Beltline Facility Plan Update

Ms. Crawford provided a power point presentation on the Beltline Facilities Plan. She stated that they had a substantial public participation process and had arrived at ten different alternatives for improving the function of the segment of Beltline Highway between Coburg Road and River Road. She reported that there were 90,000 trips per day on that section of road and this number was projected to be 120,000 per day by 2030. She said the evaluation criteria for alternatives were in MPC member packets.

Ms. Crawford explained that the alternatives ranged from lower cost/ lower footprint alternatives to higher cost/higher footprint alternatives. She said they had reviewed Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM) as a component to the process. She stated that they had looked at increasing transit and bicycle/pedestrian modes on a region-wide basis. She related that they found that this approach would not solve the Beltline congestion alone, but it was something they would incorporate in any future alternatives.

Mr. Eyster asked if there was a reason they did not consider Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for the Beltline Highway. Ms. Crawford replied that they had not specifically decided not to include transit; this was a high-level look at alternatives. She said they had discussed with LTD staff where to move after the planning process was concluded.

Ms. Crawford reviewed the low-build and medium-build alternative concepts.

In response to a question from Mr. Spartz, Ms. Crawford stated that they had not yet estimated the reduction in Beltline trips that a parallel alternative route, one of the medium-build alternatives, to Beltline in that area would make.

Ms. Crawford continued her presentation and highlighted some of the larger-build projects. She stated that the highest cost project included more bridge across the river and auxiliary lanes.

Mr. Spartz asked what the range of estimated costs were between the smallest alternative and the largest one. Ms. Crawford replied that they had not arrived at cost estimates at this point.

Mr. Chickering commented that the investment for ramp metering would be modest, but building a bridge would be very expensive. He said road widening costs varied depending on land use designations and roadway acquisition. He thought the lower end costs would be in the \$25 to \$30 million range and the higher end costs could be as much as \$200 million.

Mr. Handy expressed concern that they were asking for solutions when the “purpose and needs statement” had not been identified. He opined that they were off track.

Mr. Pangborn said they would not want to preclude an option as they look forward of having an EmX corridor through there. He underscored the importance of exclusive right of way. He acknowledged that realistically they would not be able to build the corridor within the next five years, but he wanted to ensure it was a viable option into the future.

Mr. Evans echoed this. He was also concerned about Beltline Highway west of the Delta Interchange. He stressed that the Bethel area of town was growing and the highway was rapidly coming to a point of gridlock. He likened the alternatives for this stretch of the Beltline Highway to a “band-aid on a gunshot wound.”

Ms. Piercy said it was important to make the road safer. She felt that addressing transportation issues moved the dial on other issues.

Mr. Zelenka agreed that the Delta/Beltline intersection was unsafe and needed to be fixed. He asked what it would take to include transit and a BRT corridor into the plan as part of the next steps. Ms. Crawford reiterated that this was part of their discussion with LTD. She said thus far they had assumed that the northbound arterial bridge would provide good connectivity for a transit route.

Mr. Schwetz underscored that the next step in this process was to enter the NEPA process and the first step for this would be scoping. He said this would be the point at which they would introduce the concept of the BRT traversing the freeway.

Mr. Chickering pointed out that at the level of analysis they were conducting, they had to take an assessment of which components of the corridor would “move the needle” in terms of helping congestion and safety issues. He related that the consultant had been given the task of assessing a variety of potential solutions. He said what they had found was that adding transit did not “move the needle” enough to spend their time or effort on it at this point. He thought it would happen in the next round.

In response to a question from Mr. Zelenka, Ms. Crawford estimated that the NEPA process would take two to five years. She said they had a couple million dollars to fund the process, but they did not have the full amount needed.

Mr. Sorenson asked if they had considered looking at a limited access highway with extensive use. He questioned whether looking at one segment was really the solution. He observed that to reduce congestion they should reduce cars on it or increase capacity. He asked what percentage of the traffic was regional in the sense of moving freight from Highway 126 to Interstate 5. He wondered if closing access to it would facilitate the movement through. Ms. Crawford replied that she would have to get back to him regarding the percentage.

Mr. Sorenson asked if closing access to Beltline Highway was an option to be discussed. Ms. Crawford replied that they had not discussed this as an option because there was so much traffic using those interchanges and they were not sure where they would go.

Mr. Chickering remarked that in general ODOT was not looked upon favorably if it moved highway traffic onto local roads.

MPO Planning Calendars

Mr. Zelenka pointed out that the Planning Calendars were in member packets.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**

There was no update at this time.

- **Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) Administrative Amendments**

The MTIP amendments were included in member packets.

- **Next Steps**

Future agenda items:

- Regional policy discussion
- The calendar for public involvement
- The MTIP action

The meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)