

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 3, 2021
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Joe Berney, Chair; Heather Buch (Lane County); Lucy Vinis, Randy Groves (City of Eugene); Sean VanGordon, Steve Moe (City of Springfield); Bill Johnston (Oregon Department of Transportation); Caitlin Vargas, Josh Skov (Lane Transit District), members; Anne Heath (City of Coburg); Dan Hurley for Steve Mokrohisky (Lane County); Rob Inerfeld (City of Eugene); Aurora Jackson (Lane Transit District), *ex officio* members.

Brenda Wilson, Paul Thompson, Ellen Currier, Syd Shoaf, Anne Davies, Rachel Dorfman (Lane Council of Governments); Emma Newman (City of Springfield); Megan Winter (City of Coburg); Tom Schwetz, Andrew Martin, Dan Callister (Lane Transit District); Sasha Vartanian (Lane County); Neil Moyer (Metro TV); Dennis Mitchell (DKS).

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Berney convened the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) and the roll was called and a quorum established.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There was no one wishing to speak.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Draft Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Plan

Mr. Thompson gave a brief overview of the ITS Plan, which had been updated along with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Congestion Management Plan (CMP). A copy of the draft ITS Plan was included in the agenda packet. He introduced Dennis Mitchell of DKS, a consultant who had assisted with the plan's update. He asked that a public hearing on the draft plan be held after the presentation, followed by adoption at the next MPC meeting.

Mr. Mitchell said the ITS Plan had six goals:

- Improve the safety and security of the transportation system
- Improve the efficiency of the transportation system
- Provide improved traveler information
- Develop and employ cost efficient ITS infrastructure
- Integrate regional ITS projects with local and regional partners
- Monitor transportation performance measures

Mr. Mitchell provided an overview of the five chapters within the plan. He said the final chapter was the deployment plan and contained a list of projects selected and supported by staff of all of the jurisdictions

involved, including Lane County, Lane Transit District, Coburg, Eugene, Springfield and Lane Council of Governments. He said there was a wide range of projects from construction to coordination and integration of systems. He explained the prioritization of projects that resulted in a list of 31 projects recommended for inclusion in the RTP. The criteria considered during the selection process included congestion, vehicle crashes and bicycle/pedestrian crashes. He reviewed the following categories into which projects were organized:

- traffic management and operations
- freeway management
- arterial management
- multimodal
- traveler information
- data management
- incident and emergency management
- maintenance and construction management

Mr. Mitchell pointed out that there was not a separate category for safety as safety was the primary benefits in all categories.

Mr. Berney opened the public hearing. He determined no members of the public wished to speak and invited questions from the MPC.

Mr. Skov stated he was pleased by and supportive of the plan. He observed that from the standpoint of trying to determine how to create a low carbon and equitable transportation system with more walking, biking and transit, it appeared that the funds to be spent were directed towards roads and freeways for vehicles with a relatively small amount towards multimodal projects. Mr. Mitchell replied that while projects were categorized by their main benefit, many of them overlapped several categories. He said ITS could only accomplish certain things; with respect to multimodal that could mean better detection of bicycles at intersections or automating flashers at pedestrian crossings. Those were relatively inexpensive compared to other types of projects. ITS could improve the overall efficiency of the system, which also benefited bicycles and pedestrians.

Mr. Berney asked what was driving development of the ITS Plan. Mr. Mitchell said the goal was to improve efficiency of the transportation system overall and achieve best use of the existing system through technology. He said the previous version of the plan, adopted in 2003, contained many projects and some were implemented but the reality was that many were not funded. The idea was to create the list of projects that jurisdictions wanted and get them into the RTP, while looking for other opportunities.

Mr. Berney asked if the plan included a zero carbon emissions goals. Mr. Mitchell replied that was not a part of the ITS Plan. Mr. Thompson added that the ITS Plan was a federal mandate in order to maintain the region's ITS data architecture consistent with the federal system in order to facilitate cross communications. He said a major goal was also efficient use of the existing system, rather than adding more physical capacity. Another benefit was reduction of congestion through more efficient use and therefore fewer emissions from idling.

Mr. Berney determined there was no one else wishing to speak and closed the public hearing.

The meeting went into recess at 11:30 a.m.

Mr. Berney reconvened the MPC meeting at 12:00 p.m. Mr. Gowing called the meeting of the LaneACT to order. The MPC and LaneACT were joined by members of the Oregon Transportation Commission and staff from ODOT and member jurisdictions.

PRESENT: Robert Van Brocklin, Chair; Julie Brown (Oregon Transportation Commission members)

Jeff Gowing, Chair; Claire Syrett; Keith Weiss; Paul Thompson; Doug Barrett; Rob Zako ; Shelley Humble, Woody Woodbury, Sarah Mazze, Aurora Jackson (LaneACT members)

Travis Brouwer, Sonny Chickering, Erik Havig, Cooper Brown, Karen Rowe, Erik Havig (Oregon Department of Transportation); Becky Taylor (Lane County); Denise Walters (LCOG); Chris Henry (Eugene); Dan Callister (LTD)

Joint Agenda Item with Lane Area Commission on Transportation (ACT)

Ms. Wilson welcomed everyone and outlined protocols for the joint virtual meeting.

Mr. Berney thanked OTC Chair Robert Van Brocklin for meeting with the MPC and LaneACT. He hoped the conversation would help initiate open communications with the OTC.

Mr. Van Brocklin thanked Mr. Berney and Mr. VanGordon for reaching out and requesting the meeting and expected there would be more to follow. He recognized ODOT personnel who were also in attendance. He described his background, education and experience. He said things that had influenced the pace of connectivity included HB 2017, which earmarked all of the Enhanced funds and changed the dialogue with ACTs. The COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact because the OTC was no longer able to hold its meetings around the state, which allowed its members to meet in person with ACTs, MPOs and representatives of local government. He had requested that OTC Commissioner Julie Brown act as liaison between the OTC and all 12 ACTs. He said the commission currently had a vacancy, but once it was filled he intended to ask another commissioner to also be an ACT liaison and involved in local government outreach.

Mr. Van Brocklin described a number of changes that had occurred, both on the OTC and within ODOT, since he joined the commission in 2017. He listed a number of projects that had resulted from HB 2017 earmarking of Enhance funds within the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). He said that was a significant change from the traditional process in which the OTC consulted with ACTs and obtained their input on projects. He said the recently approved 20-24 STIP, which was subject to refinement, included a significant allocation of funds to Non-Highway projects, which included transit, pedestrian and bicycle. He looked forward to a productive conversation on transportation and hearing the thoughts of MPC and ACT members on their issues and priorities.

Ms. Brown said she was pleased to be a liaison to ACTs and explore the role of ACTs in the future and discuss the many transportation needs across the state and within regions. She said she was the general manager of a transit agency and would make efforts to participate in ACT meetings as often as possible. She said it would be helpful to her and the other ACT liaison on the OTC if ACTs would reach out when there was a critical issue that needed to be addressed. She looked forward to future conversation.

Mr. VanGordon said he was a member of both the LaneACT and MPC. He said much of the discussion with OTC and ODOT focused on relationships with the ACTs. He asked how OTC viewed its relationship with MPOs across the state. Mr. Van Brocklin said the OTC recognized the importance of the MPOs as

critical partners. The relationship varied from MPO to MPO and there tended to be a strong and active connection between ODOT and MPOs.

Mr. Brouwer said ODOT saw MPOs as key partners and there was a growing recognition of the need to strengthen that connection through actions such as increasingly incorporating MPO members in some discussions at OTC workshops. He said MPOs were technically independent bodies not chartered by ODOT or the OTC, as were ACTs, but they had an important role within metropolitan regions constituting 60 percent of the state's population.

Ms. Brown said she was involved with both her MPO and ACT in southern Oregon and over the years had been frustrated with those bodies had acted independently of each other, such as establishing different project priority lists. The opportunity to work together and concentrate on a project was lost when that occurred. Cross membership between MPOs and ACTs helped to foster that collaboration and leverage funding for projects. She said sometimes the OTC could also help leverage funds for a project.

Mr. Van Brocklin commented that more federal resources had been available in the past; with less federal commitment now there was a higher level of local match required. Large projects in the past such as the Portland light rail line to Gresham had only required a 10 percent local match. A higher level of federal commitment allowed people to coalesce easily around projects with high costs, small local matches and huge positive impacts. Without that level of federal investment enormous pressure was placed on state and local governments. He noted that Congress had not raised the federal gas tax since 1993. The Oregon Legislature had just taken courageous bipartisan action to increase the state's gas tax by six cents. That type of action was needed at the federal level.

Ms. Syrett pointed out that the Central Lane MPO and LaneACT sought coordination and worked well together. There was cross membership and agreement had been reached on a number of projects, such as transformation of the Franklin Boulevard corridor. Both bodies also participated in the United Front initiative to work with Oregon's congressional delegation to advocate for funding of projects. She said from the perspective of the LaneACT, frustration related to communications and responsiveness from OTC and ODOT on local priorities like the Beltline interchange. She was encouraged by the appointment of an OTC liaison to ACTs.

Mr. Van Brocklin appreciated Ms. Syrett's comments and said the OTC also desired better communication and coordination. He said the MPOs and ACTs were the primary way to understand different parts of the state and a high quality dialogue with the commission and through ODOT was the way to achieve that. He said Ms. Brown, as a local leader who dealt with the issue regularly in her work, would be a valuable asset in promoting candid communications.

Mr. Zako appreciated Mr. Van Brocklin's desire to collaborate. He shared the technical definition of collaboration that indicated public participation ranged from less impact to greater impact on decisions, from inform at one end and empower at the other end, with consult, involve and collaborate in between. He asked where in that range the OTC wanted to see its engagement with ACTs and MPOs. At this point the engagement seemed to be closer to inform with the OTC and ODOT making decisions then informing.

Mr. Van Brocklin agreed that was at the core of the conversations the OTC had initiated about the emerging role of ACTs.

Ms. Vinis said ACTs and MPOs were eager to build a stronger communication and better understanding with the OTC and ODOT. She concurred with Ms. Syrett's comments. She said lack of federal commitment had been a problem in the past, but there was now a new administration with an enormous

commitment to infrastructure and it was important to be positioned to make the most of that opportunity to improve and re-imagine what infrastructure should be.

Mr. Van Brocklin agreed that the country was closer than it had been in some time to see significant additional federal commitment, which would present a huge opportunity. He said infrastructure in the United States today required that federal investment as most states had limitations like a balanced budget requirement of bonding caps that prevented them from replacing lost federal funding with state and local dollars. He applauded President Biden's efforts to invest federal funds in infrastructure at the necessary level.

Ms. Brown said that local governments were at a disadvantage when opportunities arose as often funding was targeted to "shovel ready" projects. It was hard to imagine what the future should look like when jurisdictions and agencies had been coping with limited resources for so long. She said to prepare for new federal funding opportunities it was essential to update and coordinate state and local priorities, particularly with the potential for a return to earmarking.

Mr. Brouwer described the current status of federal legislation and noted that even though large increases in funding were being proposed, that had been preceded by many years of flat or declined federal funding. He was optimistic about prospects for passage of some form of federal legislation that would provide more resources.

Mr. Van Brocklin asked MPOs and ACTs to contact Mr. Brouwer if they felt that local priorities were not being recognized or understood by ODOT.

Mr. Groves agreed with the comments from Ms. Vinis and Mr. Zako. He indicated he was particularly interested in collaboration on safety issues and efforts to reach Vision Zero. Safe roadways were essential not just for vehicles, but also for pedestrians and bicycles. Beltline bisected and divided a neighborhood, creating problems for Safe Routes to Schools and he hoped the community could work more effectively with the OTD and ODOT to address those types of challenges.

Mr. Van Brocklin stated that safety was a major concern for the OTC and he hoped to have a longer conversation on that subject.

Mr. Brown said ODOT was restructuring its safety team to be more efficient and use available resources to greatest effect. He identified some of the issues that were being addressed and as the OTC and ODOT redefined how it would engage with ACTs there would be opportunities to address that subject more explicitly.

Mr. Berney thanked Mr. Van Brocklin, Ms. Brown and members of the MPC and LaneACT for participating in the discussion and looked forward to future conversations. He said deferment of public investment in a variety of public interest from housing to mental health to transportation. He said Lane Transit District had recently presented to the MPC its plan for achieving net zero emissions by 2045. He asked what the OTC was specifically doing and how was local expertise being used to support the entire Oregon transit system in achieving net zero emissions.

Mr. Van Brocklin, as a volunteer, thanked all of those on the MPC and LaneACT and Commissioner Brown who also volunteered and gave their time to Oregon. Regarding climate, he noted that ODOT had established a climate office and was making specific priority investments in that. There was now an employee payroll tax that was funding investments in transit, which was a positive step in addressing greenhouse gas and was a priority in the OTC's Strategic Action Plan.

Mr. Berney indicated he had offered to connect the climate office with two institutional funds but there had been no movement towards that yet. Mr. Brown said he would follow up on that. He said a centerpiece of the Strategic Action Plan was how emissions were being addressed and how entities around the state could work together more effectively on key issues.

Mr. Van Brocklin said he was a strong advocate for electrification and saw positive movement in that direction from government and private industry.

Ms. Buch remarked that local governments and agencies had local expertise to offer on transportation and infrastructure, but were not sure what avenue to use to make that available. If that expertise was to be used to serve the community and the state well, it was important to know how best to make that available to ODOT staff and get feedback. If something was not a priority for the OTC or ODOT it would be helpful to know that too. She hoped there would be productive conversations in the future about the opportunities that could be realized through better engagement of the OTC, ODOT, MPOs and ACTs.

Mr. Van Brocklin thanked everyone for a very useful conversation and hoped for future discussions, including ones with senior ODOT personnel and local elected officials.

Mr. Berney asked staff to schedule another joint meeting with the MPC, ACT and the OTC/ODOT.

- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**— July 1, 2021 (virtual meeting)

Mr. Berney adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

(Transcribed by Lynn Taylor)