

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

October 7, 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); Ray Smith (City of Coburg); Frannie Brindle (Oregon Department of Transportation); Don Nordin (Lane Transit District), members; Matt Rodrigues (City of Eugene); Dan Hurley for Steve Mokrzhisky (Lane County); Anne Heath (City of Coburg), *ex officio* members.

Paul Thompson, Kelly Clarke, Ellen Currier, Drew Pfefferle, Rachel Dorfman, Dan Callister, Syd Shoaf (Lane Council of Governments); Tom Boyatt (City of Springfield); Patricia Haley, Rob Inerfeld (City of Eugene); Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Sasha Vartanian (Lane County); Tom Schwetz, Mark Johnson, Andrew Martin (Lane Transit District); Bill Johnston, Mark Bernard, Theresa Conley, Adam Argo (Oregon Department of Transportation).

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

APPROVE JULY 1, 2021 MPC MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the July 1, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 8:0.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

Mr. Groves announced that he, Ms. Vinis and Ms. Buch had an opportunity to test ride electric bikes, one of the area's newer forms of transportation. He said it was a good addition to the community's mobility options.

Mr. Thompson reminded MPC members to submit responses to the Title VI survey.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There was no one wishing to speak.

Mr. Nordin joined the meeting.

AMENDMENTS TO MPC BYLAWS

Proposed Amendments to MPC Bylaws

Mr. Thompson reviewed the request from Coburg for amendments to the MPC Bylaws that would allow the City to appoint either an elected or appointed City official to serve on MPC. Coburg has indicated that

this would ensure a more manageable workload among their elected and appointed officials, and better ensure full attendance of the Coburg member at MPC meetings. He said representatives from Lane County, Eugene and Springfield were eligible to vote on the proposed amendments.

Ms. Buch, seconded by Mr. Groves, moved to approve the proposed MPC Bylaws amendments. The motion passed 6:0; Ms. Buch, Mr. Berney, Mr. Groves, Ms. Vinis, Mr. Moe and Mr. VanGordon voting yes.

Ms. Brindle noted that the Bylaws indicated representatives from Willamalane Park and Recreation District were voting members of the MPC, but those representatives were not present at MPC meetings. Mr. Thompson explained that Willamalane representatives were only voting members on issues pertaining to regional parks and recreation.

Mr. Smith thanked the MPC for approval of the Bylaws amendments. He said it would enable Coburg, as a small city, to fully participate in the MPC by appointing a knowledgeable member of his planning commission to attend meetings when he was unavailable.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Letter of Support for Connect Oregon Grant Program

Ms. Haley said the Connect Oregon Grant Program provided funds to invest in non-highway modes of transportation including aviation. The widening of Taxiways Juliet and Lima that connect to the Air Cargo Apron would allow for larger aircraft to utilize the facility, which had been a constraint in the past. This project would improve both cargo and passenger charter transportation, provide new economic development opportunities, and create new jobs. The project's estimated cost was \$2,000,000. If received, this grant would reimburse the airport \$1,400,000 and the rest will be covered by the Airport enterprise fund. She asked for MPC approval of the draft letter of support for the grant application.

Mr. Groves spoke in support of the request. He said the Eugene Airport served the entire region and increasing the capacity and functionality of the cargo area was critical in growing local businesses and jobs, as well as attracting new businesses and compatible industries. He said affordable housing was a concern in the region and jobs that produced wages that allowed people to afford housing was critical to continued efforts to make the region as competitive as possible. He hoped other committee members would join him in supporting the request.

Mr. Moe said as a Springfield city councilor his main goals were jobs and homes; economic development in cargo capacity would support those.

Ms. Buch also expressed support for the grant application. She noted that Creswell's Hobby Field Airport recently received \$3.3 million in funding and those transportation dollars were good for the region.

Mr. Berney said much of Lane County's work was providing for those who could not provide for themselves. It was essential to look not only at the supply of services, but the ability of people to demand those services with their purchasing power through jobs that provided meaning and hope for the future. He saw growth of regional airports as increasingly necessary and strategic.

Mr. Groves, seconded by Mr. Moe, moved to approve the Letter of Support for the Connect Oregon Grant Program. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Matrix

Mr. Callister said the TIP was a document the MPO maintained that committed federal funding to programs and projects over a four-year period. He said details of projects often needed changes as delivery progressed. The TIP included descriptions of which types of project changes required federal level approval and which could be approved by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), referred to as the Amendment Matrix. The proposed revised Amendment Matrix were developed by ODOT and federal agencies to allow for fewer project revisions that required federal approval. That would benefit the MPO by expediting more types of project changes, resulting in fewer project delays. He briefly reviewed details of those project revisions as set forth in the agenda materials. He said two significant changes that would no longer require federal approval were canceling of a project and changes to the threshold of a project's total cost that would trigger the need for federal approval. He said a public comment period was open and would conclude on October 30 and asked that a public hearing be held. He said approval of the revised Amendment Matrix was scheduled for the MPC's November 2021 meeting.

Mr. Berney opened the public hearing. There was no one wishing to speak and the hearing was closed.

In response to a question from Mr. Groves, Mr. Callister said no comments had been received to date.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Public Transportation Division (PTD) Engagement in the MPO Planning Process

Ms. Conley said the goal of the project was to strengthen multi-modal, multi-jurisdiction collaboration and coordination between PTD and MPOs around the state. She said recommendations were presented to the Oregon MPO Consortium (OMPOC) in July and were being discussed with individual MPOs. She used a slide presentation to review proposed next steps to improve engagement in the MPO planning process:

- Increase RTC engagement at MPO TAC level and consider RTCs as ex officio members
- Invite RTCs to attend USDOT certification reviews
- Continue to engage RTCs in UPWP review and increase engagement during UPWP, TIP, and RTP development
- Encourage transit agency attendance at Quarterly Meetings
- Increase RTC attendance at MPO TAC meetings
- Increase internal education on MPO planning process, PTSAP, TAM, MTIP/STIP and related reporting
- Increase RTC coordination with ODOT Region MPO Liaisons
- Schedule MPO roundtable update at RTC staff meetings
- Increase RTC and transit agency engagement at Quarterly meetings
- Collaborate on STIP Narrative and at statewide TIP quarterly meetings

Mr. Smith was pleased with the increased RTC involvement and improvements to the communications process.

Ms. Vinis appreciated the strategies to improve engagement and communications. She suggested a flow chart to identify the different entities involved in the process. She noted that the Central Lane MPO had often extended invitations to ODOT representatives to participate in local activities out of a desire to work more closely with ODOT and clarify regional priorities. She said USDOT's direction to increase collaboration and coordination was very much in line with the MPO's wishes.

Mr. VanGordon appreciated efforts to increase collaboration. He said the challenge was to continue with those efforts and remove silos between organizations and assure that information was freely exchanged.

Mr. Smith concurred that removing silos and walls between agencies and staff would improve the planning process and make it easier for small jurisdictions like Coburg, with limited resources, to deal with multi-jurisdictional transportation issues and projects.

Mr. Bernard described his background and said as an RTC his role was to assist communities like Coburg with transportation matters.

Mr. Thompson emphasized that the purpose of the proposals was to get ODOT's PTD more involved in the MPO process at the staff level. He clarified that action from the MPC would be required to place the RTC on the MPO's Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) as an ex officio member, as suggested in the proposed next steps. He requested direction from the MPC on that proposal.

Mr. Smith supported the idea of an RTC's involvement in the MPO planning process and facilitation of communications among member jurisdictions and ODOT.

Ms. Brindle explained that a major component of Mr. Bernard's role as an RTC was to communicate with all of the funding streams - both state and federal - related to transit. She said there was a lot of complexity involved in those funding sources and Mr. Bernard could provide clarity and assist jurisdictions in navigating among those sources to move projects forward. She agreed it would be helpful for the RTC to be a member of the TPC, regardless of voting status.

Mr. Berney suggested pilots to evaluate the most efficient and effective way to accomplish the desired collaboration and coordination of planning processes.

Oregon Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Argo used a slide presentation, a copy of which was provided to committee member, to describe the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) update process, which would involve a wide range of stakeholders. He said the OTP was the umbrella guiding policy plan over a 20-25 year horizon. Within the OTP were the modal and topic plans that were strategic and included tactical implementing actions. The time was right for an OTP update; the last official adoption was 2006, with some amendments occurring over time. There had been many changes since then, both in transportation planning and people's lives. The intent was to put more emphasis on transportation system users.

Mr. Argo described the decision-making process used during the update and explained how the assessment of trends and topics and scenario planning would guide the update. Foundational goals were:

- Safety
- Transportation options
- Efficient freight movement
- Fuel efficiency/reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions
- Equity
- Transportation funding sufficiency
- Mobility
- Land use management

Mr. Argo said topics addressed during the update would be informed by interviews with stakeholders. Key drivers of change included social equity, climate change, population and labor force changes, industry composition, emerging transportation technology and resiliency/disaster planning. He explained the scenario planning process and shared a preliminary timeline for the update, with a draft plan expected in July 2022 and a final version by November 2022.

Mr. Berney left the meeting at 12:45 p.m. and Mr. Groves assumed chairing the meeting.

Ms. Vinis expressed her appreciation for an informative presentation. She was pleased and reassured that climate change and evolving technology were prominent topics in the planning process.

Mr. VanGordon also appreciated the presentation. He stressed that when planning for the future, jurisdictions were facing more challenges than ever before in an environment with more technology changes that required much greater flexibility. The higher level plans were, the less rigid they needed to be. Painting with a broad brush a framework that jurisdictions could work within would provide that flexibility.

Mr. Smith agreed with Ms. Vinis and Mr. VanGordon. He appreciated the message and multiple facets that would be considered. Scenario planning was an important direction to pursue. He also concurred with Mr. VanGordon's comments about a higher level plan that provided a framework and direction while encouraging local flexibility.

Ms. Buch said it was a fascinating time to update the plan because of the many issues that emerged during the past two years.

Mr. Thompson asked if broadband, which had an impact on changes in the workplace and could enable economic activities in rural areas, would be addressed and whether ODOT was considering partnering with state agencies and other entities to invest in broadband as a possible solution to some issues. Mr. Argo replied that ODOT was currently involved in a project to develop a statewide broadband strategy as broadband was critical to dynamic management of an intelligent transportation system (ITS) in the future, resiliency and e-commerce, all of which were components of the OTP update.

Mr. Groves agreed with the need to increase resiliency of the transportation system. He said in times of emergencies the transportation system not only helped emergency responses into an affected area, it also helped with the evacuation of people. Capacity was critical to success of those operations.

Mr. Smith concurred with Mr. Groves. He said an issue confronting Coburg was that it straddled a transportation artery - Interstate 5 - that presented a barrier to broadband and other utilities crossing the freeway. That was a pertinent issue to address. Planning ahead by placing conduits to facilitate future development was important.

Mr. Argo said when the updated OTP was adopted, it would be immediately followed by an update to the Oregon Highway Plan and broadband should be considered part of that as an integrated system element. Gaps such as the one described by Mr. Smith would need to be identified for strategic investment to remove barriers.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**—Ms. Brindle reported that the Delta Highway/Beltline project was almost completed with operational improvements to that interchange. More improvements

were planned on the north side of the interchange when funding became available. The River Road to Delta Highway NEPA phase was being completed, and then the project would be ready for funding. She said the federal infrastructure bill could provide some funding for portions of the project and grants would also be considered. She said safety improvements on the Highway 126-B project in Springfield were funded by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) from \$10 million targeted specifically to pedestrian safety. Springfield was one of four locations to receive funding. Much of the work had been completed at this point. Work on illumination would be completed close to the end of the year.

- **LaneACT**—Ms. Brindle said the LaneACT chair would be attending a statewide meeting on October 13 with the OTC with the intent to discuss the OTC's ACT refocus efforts around communication and engagement. Proposed ACT policy revisions would also be discussed. MPOs would also be involved in the discussions with ACTs at the local level. The LaneACT would have its regular meeting on the evening of October 13. She described the agenda items to be discussed at that meeting.
- **MTIP Administrative Amendments**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—November 4, 2021 (virtual meeting)

Mr. Groves adjourned the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

(Transcribed by Lynn Taylor)