

# MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

November 4, 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); Caitlin Vargas (Lane Transit District), members; Matt Rodrigues (City of Eugene), *ex officio* member.

Brenda Wilson, Paul Thompson, Kelly Clarke, Ellen Currier, Drew Pfefferle, Rachel Dorfman, Dan Callister, Syd Shoaf (Lane Council of Governments); Emma Newman (City of Springfield); Rob Inerfeld (City of Eugene); Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Sasha Vartanian (Lane County); Tom Schwetz, Andrew Martin (Lane Transit District); Bill Johnston (Oregon Department of Transportation); Garth Appanaitis (DKS Associates); Webb Sussman, Rob Zako, Kaarin Knudson, Terry Parker, guests.

## **WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

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

## **APPROVE OCTOBER 7, 2021 MPC MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the October 7, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

## **ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS**

Mr. Thompson asked that a request from the City of Eugene for a letter in support of a grant application be added to the agenda as Item 6.d. There were no objections.

## **COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

Rob Zako, Eugene, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST) executive director, announced that the Center for Appropriate Transport (CAT) was closing its doors after 29 years of promoting bicycle education, advocacy and innovation. He said BEST would assume responsibility for the building and CAT's assets as a community bicycle repair shop. The space would be leased to various non-profits to promote sustainable transportation and would be called the Nexus for Eugene Sustainable Transportation (NEST).

## **METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES**

### **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. The proposed revised Amendment Matrix was developed by the MPO, 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 noted that a public hearing on the matrix was held at the October 2021 MPC meeting. A 30-day public comment period concluded on October 31, 2021, and no comments were received. The Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) reviewed the matrix and recommended its approval by the MPC.

Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Vinis, moved to approve Resolution 2021-06 amending the FFY2021-2024 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

### **Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Congestion Management Process (CMP)**

Ms. Clarke stated that the RTP and CMP have to be updated every four years and updates have to address items within federal code and regulations to assure the documents continue to reflect the community they represent and plan for the transportation system to serve the community with all modes of travel through 2045. The update process began in March 2020 with a 2020 base year and a 2045 planning horizon. She reviewed highlights from the cover memorandum summary of RTP chapter contents that was included in the agenda materials. She explained the CMP was required of certain MPOs based on their size (greater than 200,000) and established a process to manage congestion and improve the transportation system's performance reliability. The MPO's CMP prioritized transportation options, travel demand management, operational improvements, and a number of other issues consistent with regional goals. She said both document updates were intended to reflect the community's values and direction and establish compliance with federal requirements. She said the public comment period was opened on October 29 and would remain open through November 30, 2021. The TPC unanimously supported the draft documents and staff would continue to incorporate feedback from the MPC and public into the next drafts. The intent was to seek approval from the MPC for the updates at its December 2021 meeting.

Mr. Thompson acknowledged that the RTP was a large document. It was released for public review and comment on October 29 and a public hearing would be held at this meeting; public comments would be accepted through November 30. Staff would take those comments and direction from the MPC into consideration for possible changes to the documents in preparation for presentation of revised documents at the MPC's December 2021 meeting. At its December 2021 meeting the MPC could adopt the RTP and associated documents as presented or postpone adoption in favor of additional discussion and public comment. He emphasized that there was still time for public review and comment on the documents prior to development of a final draft.

Ms. Brindle asked about the timeline for the next RTP update. Mr. Thompson replied that the MPO was under an air quality limited maintenance period until 2033 and was therefore required to update the RTP at least every four years. The next update period would start when the Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD) for the updated RTP was accepted by the U.S. Department of Transportation. If the RTP was adopted in December 2021 he anticipated that would occur in January 2022, which would require the next update by January 2026.

Mr. Berney opened the public hearing.

**Rob Zako**, Eugene, said he was speaking on his own behalf as there was insufficient time for BEST as an organization to review the documents and provide feedback. He identified the following concerns:

- Randy Papé Beltline Highway from River Road to Coburg Road - project too big to fit on financially constrained project list and placed on list of projects not to be build until 2045. Why design a project that will not be built for another generation?

- Springfield Main Street Safety Project - a good project with community support, why is it not in the plan?
- Highway 126 and I-5 interchanges - why are the projects still in the plan when they have not been built in the last generation?
- Most funds would be spent to benefit drivers but travel times and congested miles would still increase.
- Bus rapid transit - TransPlan identified a goal of 60 miles of BRT routes. Three segments have been built to date; the City of Eugene is considering another on River Road but Springfield has passed on another BRT corridor. The plan calls for five more lines at \$65 million each. Who are they intended to serve?
- Should invest more in bicycle and pedestrian projects.
- Mode share projected to stay much the same despite expenditure of funds under the plan.
- Safety - Is an interchange at Highway 126 and Main Street in Springfield a good idea where people cross the street?
- Equity - Plan does not address the needs of people who are younger, older, people of color, disabled or low income.
- Climate change - Plan says it meets the needs of climate change, but there is no mode share and efforts to promote changes in travel behaviors.

Mr. Zako acknowledged the efforts of staff to meet federal requirements and follow federal guidelines, but the plan was not much different from TransPlan, which was developed 20 years ago, and not taking the region in the direction it needed to go.

**Terry Parker** said she was vice chair of the League of Women Voters of Lane County, but speaking for herself as the organization had not had time to review and comment on the RTP. She said a 30-day comment period was too short for a document like the RTP and encouraged the MPC to consider extending to a 60-day period. She was also concerned about the outreach and notification process, which she felt did not adequately reach out to organizations and community groups with a history of civic engagement, and particularly an interest in transportation. She said in order to build trust in local government additional outreach to affected communities was required. She encouraged the MPO to increase its efforts to involve the public in the planning process.

Ms. Parker suggested that in addition to thinking ahead during the planning process it would be useful to think back. She said looking from the perspective of 2045 at the projects included in the RTP and the need to change the trajectory on emissions in the community might lead to different decisions about what was in the plan. She said the RTP did not go far enough to clean up the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region. With respect to safety, she said the plan could save lives by truly addressing climate change and addressing safety, instead of taking a "roads as usual" approach.

**Webb Sussman**, Eugene, said funding sources were going through major changes and the state did not have the resources to meet the matching requirements for many of the projects listed in the plan. Organizations involved in developing the plan needed to rethink their ranking systems going forward. The gas tax as a transportation funding source was going away and ODOT and localities needed to determine how they would shift to a new payment structure quickly. He said economic and business shifts, such as working remotely, would have major implications for downtown economic development, mode share, demand modeling and planning but that was not reflected in the plan. Listing long obsolete projects with longtime horizons seems to lock the plan into obsolescence. He said the outreach efforts for the RTP update process were inadequate. Planning cycles should be accelerated instead of slowed with horizons of two- to five-years instead of 20- and 50-year horizons. He said it was unacceptable to expect the public to review and comment on over 300 pages of documentation in less than 14 days. He said extending the

comment period another two weeks as suggested was unlikely to obtain feedback from the desired organizations and communities. He recognized that staff was not responsible for establishing the time constraints placed on the process and commended their hard work on the plan.

**Sue Wolling**, Eugene, commented that technology had made some amazing advances for which she was grateful, but observed that the RTP allocated by far the largest amount of funding on road projects for driving, while much smaller amounts were allocated for active transportation. The RTP also did not foresee changing the mode share over the life of the plan. The City of Eugene's Climate Action Plan called for decreased reliance on automobiles and for tripling the mode share for transit, walking and bicycling. She did not see how the RTP would help move towards those sustainability goals. She urged the MPC to closely review the plan and insist on one that looked forward to solving the problems of the future and not try to pave our way out of problems that resulted from the way things had been done in the past.

**Kaarin Knudson**, Eugene, founding member of Better Housing Together, concurred with previous speakers that there had been insufficient time to review and offer meaningful feedback on an enormous amount of information and was therefore speaking for herself. She urged the MPC, as community leaders concerned with housing needs and the crisis being faced, to consider the opportunities relative to development patterns as it thought about investments in the transportation system. She said transportation systems existed to service the community and provide access to goods, services and destinations that were needed on a daily basis. She encouraged the MPC to look at current opportunities relative to housing to make sure the policies being developed that were integrated with transportation concerns were also moved forward in as solution-oriented ways as possible. Specifically, that would include sufficient resources allocated to active transportation modes, supporting walkable neighborhoods and safety within those neighborhoods and frequent access to transit for as many residents as possible. That would mesh with housing solutions that would allow the affordability crisis to be addressed and mitigate the many harms many in the community were experiencing because the transportation system and development pattern did not meet their needs.

There being no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Berney closed the public hearing and called for comments from MPC members.

Mr. Smith agreed with most of the comments made during public testimony. He said Coburg had experienced similar issues with outreach and notifications and had changed a number of things over the past years in response to public comments similar to those made during the public hearing. He said citizens were a resource for government and public input is essential to the planning process. He recognized the work of staff to address the federal requirements and felt it was time to be more progressive with transportation and global warming issues. New ideas and concepts should be incentivized by government to develop innovative transportation strategies that would address needs in the year 2045. He supported providing more time for public comment and improving the notification and outreach processes to gather informed input from the community.

Ms. Vinis also agreed that there had been insufficient time to review the large document and allow informed and invested members of the community to provide their feedback on the investment decisions set forth in the plan. She said it was a challenge to shift from business as usual when the plan included a list of legacy transportation projects that might not actually reflect the need to do things differently. She asked if a second public hearing on the RTP could be held at the December 2021 meeting and a decision on a new RTP draft, which could be significantly different, postponed until the new year.

Mr. Thompson indicated that a second public hearing could be scheduled for December 2, 2021. At that meeting, after the public hearing, the MPC could have the option of closing the public comment period and

adopting the RTP or continuing the public comment period and directing staff to bring back a revised draft for adoption in January 2022. The MPO was under some federal guidelines that prohibited it from proceeding with new federal funding for projects during the period roughly from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. He said there were projects in the next one to three months for which moving forward could be problematic and if adoption did not occur prior to July 1, 2022, another series of federal restrictions would be imposed.

Responding to comments about projects listed in the RTP, Mr. Thompson noted that the MPO was not responsible for determining what projects were on those lists; the intent of the 24-year long-range RTP was to inform the public about the regional needs identified by the individual jurisdictions within the MPO. The projects were not selected by MPO staff or an advisory committee; they were submitted by individual jurisdictions and ODOT. The RTP was required to list projects that were in local plans that were anticipated to use regional funds or were regionally significant and generally projects could not be removed from the RTP without being removed from local plans.

Ms. Vinis reiterated that her concern was to avoid adopting the draft RTP until there was an opportunity to incorporate any changes into a revised draft.

Mr. Groves agreed with previous comments and supported extending the timeline for public input at least to the December 2, 2021, MPC meeting or further. He recognized there were deadlines and consequences to those decisions. He wanted to see more robust targeted outreach to some of the groups identified during comments from the public and MPC members, including the business community.

Mr. VanGordon echoed the need for additional review and comment time and a second public hearing. He noted that the planning horizon was 2045 and each of the jurisdictions approached regional issues somewhat differently. It was important to find a balance between the desire to prioritize and do things differently and the "nuts and bolts" of how all of the plans worked together. Options should be painted with a broad brush over a 25-year timeframe as things changed during that period.

Ms. Buch also concurred with previous speakers. She pointed out that there were systemic issues at play, one of which was plans from different jurisdictions. Jurisdictions needed to determine if their own plans addressed future needs. She said it was likely that the plan would have been presented to the MPC earlier except for situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which were beyond staff's control. An earlier presentation would have provided expanded time for public input. Mr. Thompson explained the constraints the AQCD placed on the MPO during the one-year grace period allowed for updating the RTP and said consultants hired to facilitate the update process had missed deadlines and COVID-19 related staff reductions by partner agencies providing necessary data had delayed the presentation of a draft for public review. While no projects had yet been affected by the constraints imposed on the MPO, there were some that would like to move forward during January and February 2022 and would be impacted if the RTP was not adopted by then.

Ms. Brindle said she had reviewed the document briefly and while there had been extensive outreach efforts, some groups such as the LaneACT and Lane County Roads Advisory Committee, both of which were key stakeholders involved in transportation matters, may not have been aware of the opportunity to comment. She noted that data from the recently completed 2020 Census would likely affect the MPO boundaries, but was not mentioned in the RTP.

Mr. Smith said the City of Coburg, although not required to, had a transportation system plan (TSP). He shared difficulties experienced by staff and local officials in obtaining information from outside agencies

and consultants and gathering public input. He said the process was halted because the information to modernize the TSP was not available.

Mr. Berney supported comments from the public and MPC members. He said it was critical to provide more time for public comment and a second public hearing and to consider that input prior to voting on the RTP. He said the MPO might want to rethink its outreach strategies and expand the idea of who critical constituencies were as related to transportation planning, particularly the business community.

Mr. Thompson said the Census Bureau had yet to process and publish a subset of data that was specifically for MPOs and therefore that information could not be used in the current RTP update process. He said projects on the RTP project lists were an amalgamation of local plans, and federal regulations require the MPO's RTP to be consistent with all of the currently adopted local plans. The area in which the MPC could have an impact on shaping future projects was outside of the RTP process, during the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) process where MPC determines how the MPO's annual funding would be used by establishing priorities and project criteria. That could promote change in the short term.

Based on the MPC's discussion, Mr. Thompson suggested extending the public comment period through December 10, 2021, to allow staff time to consider input and prepare a draft document for the January 2021 meeting. A second public hearing would be held at the MPC's December 2, 2021, meeting. A memorandum summarizing any changes to the draft would be provided in the agenda materials in lieu of including a full version of the document.

Mr. Berney determined there were not objections to Mr. Thompson's suggestions.

#### **Follow-up and Next Steps**

- **ODOT Update**—Ms. Brindle reported the LaneACT was scheduled for November 10, 2021, and Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) engagement and ACT refocus would be discussed, along with revising and clarifying the roles of the OTC, ODOT and ACTs. Once approved by the OTC, a new work plan and charter template would be provided for ACTs to use if they wished. She said the ConnectOregon application deadline had passed and reviewing and prioritizing of projects was under way. There were four projects in Lane County and within the MPO a project at the Eugene Airport would be considered. She expected the four ACT chairs in Region 2 would meet and rank projects for the region.

#### **2045 Regional Transportation Plan Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD)**

Ms. Clarke said the AQCD was tied to the RTP update, but presented as a separate item and a standalone resolution. She provided background on why an AQCD was required for the 2045 RTP because the area had not meet air quality standards in 1987. The area was redesignated to attainment in 2013, but the MPO was required to have a plan in place that monitored air quality and assured plans and projects did not contribute to air quality deterioration. She explained implementation of the plan and asked that a public hearing be held.

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

Mr. Thompson said the AQCD adoption would be scheduled in conjunction with adoption of the 2045 RTP.

## **Letter of Support for City of Eugene Grant Application**

Mr. Inerfeld stated that the City of Eugene was considering applying for a grant from the Federal Rail Administration under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI). He said previously the City had received an MPO grant to build sidewalks on Prairie Road and Maxwell Road between Highway 99 and the Maxwell Road bridge over Northwest Expressway. He said both the tracks and land that Prairie Road crossed were owned by railroads. The City intended to build a sidewalk outside of the gate arms, which was the standard approach. However, the railroads were requiring the City to rebuild the rail crossing at a cost of about \$1 million. The grant would help bridge the funding gap. The project would provide a critical pedestrian connection between two neighborhoods. He said the grant application was due November 29, 2021.

Mr. Thompson said the City was requesting the MPC's authorization to the chair to sign a letter of support for the project if the City decided to move forward with the grant application.

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to authorize the MPC Chair to sign a letter of support for the City of Eugene's grant application should one be prepared. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

### **Follow-up and Next Steps (continued)**

- **MTIP Administrative Amendments**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—December 2, 2021 (virtual meeting)

Mr. Berney adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

(Transcribed by Lynn Taylor)