

# MINUTES

## Metropolitan Policy Committee Virtual Meeting via Zoom

December 2, 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, Don Nordin (Lane Transit District), members; Matt Rodrigues (City of Eugene), Dan Hurley (Lane County), Anne Heath (City of Coburg); *ex officio* members.

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); Sasha Vartanian (Lane County); Tom Schwetz, Andrew Martin, Cossette Rees, Mark Johnson (Lane Transit District); Travis Brouwer, Bill Johnston (Oregon Department of Transportation); Rob Zako (Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation), Sarah Mazze, Patty Hine, Keith Higgins, guests.

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

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

### **APPROVE NOVEMBER 4, 2021 MPC MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Groves, moved to approve the November 4, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Mr. Nordin arrived at 11:35 a.m.

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

Ms. Buch announced that at a recent Association of Oregon Counties meeting she was appointed co-chair of the Committee on Transportation and Economic Development.

Mr. Berney congratulated Ms. Buch for her position on the committee. He asked staff to provide a list of the boards, commissions and committees of which MPC members were participants.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

There was no one wishing to speak.

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

### **Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

Mr. Thompson said the draft RTP had previously been presented to the committee at its November 4, 2021, meeting, along with the related Congestion Management Process (CMP) and the Regional Transportation Plan Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD). The MPC had directed staff to extend the public comment period through December 10 and schedule a second public hearing on the RTP at the December 2 meeting. No changes had been directed to the draft document. Included in the cover memorandum were staff responses to the public comments received until publication of the December 2 meeting agenda packet. Two additional written public comments had been submitted after that publication and had been forwarded to committee members. Some minor editing changes had been made to the draft document and at the request of the City of Eugene three projects had been added to the draft list:

- Autzen/VO Campus Gondola/Aerial Tram Study
- Ferry Street Bridge Circulation Study
- Lower Coburg Road Traffic Flow Study

Mr. Thompson said once the public comment period was closed any final public comments and direction from the MPC would be taken to the staff advisory committee, which would develop recommendations for the MPC's consideration at its January 6, 2022, meeting.

Mr. Berney opened the public hearing.

Sarah Mazze, Eugene, Safe Routes to School coordinator, commended staff's work on the draft plan. She said the goals were excellent and the pedestrian and transit projects would greatly improve safety for people of all ages and abilities to get where they needed to go. She appreciated expansion of the performance-based approach to goals beyond those that were federally required and she hoped to see those goals met, particularly related to vehicle miles traveled and mode shifts. She said the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the lack of a complete network for active and shared transportation. A shortage of school bus drivers left parents concerned about their children walking to school because of unsafe conditions along their routes. She said a massive investment in the bicycle/pedestrian/transit network was needed and asked that those types of projects be given priority in local plans.

Rob Zako, Eugene, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST), commended the technical work of staff and said the document met federal requirements and could be adopted to assure federal transportation funds would continue to flow to the region. There were also goals that reflected community and future needs related to transportation choices, safety, economic vitality, equity and climate change. He said the main component of the plan was the list of projects, particularly the financially constrained list. He said there were planned projects that might never be built and it was perhaps more useful to look at projects that were not on the financially constrained list and therefore not eligible to receive federal funding. He noted the project between River Road and Coburg Road, with an estimated cost of \$700 million, was not on the financially constrained list and as such was ineligible to receive federal funding for construction. He wondered why ODOT and the City of Eugene were spending millions of dollars designing the project when it was ineligible to be built. He said another example was safety improvements along Main Street. It was a good project that was needed, but also was not included on the financially constrained list and ineligible to receive federal funding, while interchange projects on Highway 126 and 52nd and Main streets in Springfield were eligible for funding. He urged that the financially constrained projects list be significantly changed to better align with community goals. He said detailed comments would be submitted in writing.

Patty Hine, Eugene, a member of 350 Eugene, said she was a retired naval officer and during her career, when preparing a five-year budget plan, the plan had to reflect the ever-changing strategic landscape of the existing and emerging threats and be changed when threats changed. She said current plans had to be reworked and grounded in the new reality of an overheating planet. Decision-makers now had a moral responsibility to address that through their policies and projects. She said the RTP had good goals, but did not go far enough in achieving reduced congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and gave preference to extending legacy systems at the expense of funding game-changing projects that would address the problem. She said Governor Brown was leading the way on reduction of congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. A 180-degree change in direction, with major investments in transit, walking and biking and a complete transition to hydrogen and electric powered vehicles was needed soon.

There being no other speakers, Mr. Berney closed the hearing and invited comments from committee members.

Ms. Buch said she would have preferred more time to consider the updated RTP and agreed with Ms. Hine that local jurisdictions should speed up their work toward mitigating climate change. She understood that another update of the RTP would be done in four years and if so, the committee should devote some meaningful time to delve into issues more deeply during the interim. Mr. Thompson confirmed that another update was scheduled in four years and agreed that it was desirable to more deeply examine issues. He said during the next four years several of the local jurisdictions would be making significant reviews and updates of their transportation system plans (TSPs) in response to pending rule-making by the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) that would place new requirements on those local TSPs. Those local plan updates would occur in the next two years and provide an opportunity for a deeper examination of the RTP during the next four years.

Ms. Vinis suggested that the RTP be a recurring item on MPC meeting agendas in the future to provide an opportunity to address various components of the plan over time. She asked how decisions were made about which projects were on the financial constrained list and the implications of being on that list.

Mr. Thompson said the MPO's RTP was required to include all of the anticipated projects, plans and studies anticipated over the horizon of the plan that were reasonably expected to be funded. Each agency and local jurisdiction was asked to verify anticipated revenues for their projects on the financially constrained list, including from local, state and federal sources. A statewide group met every three or four years to develop a long-range projection of almost every source of revenue to provide boundaries within which the financially constrained project list was developed. He said the MPO was required to produce a plan that contained projects that were needed and could be achieved with reasonably expected revenue. For illustrative purposes, the RTP could contain additional projects that would be included in the adopted plan if additional resources became available. He clarified that projects on the illustrative list were not ineligible for federal funding; they were eligible for federal funding if additional dollars became available.

Mr. VanGordon said he was open to the idea of more discussions of the RTP during the next four years and was ready to move forward with adoption of the plan as required for the region. He thought the list of projects was the beginning of the conversation, not the end and recognized that a significant amount of public input had been obtained on projects as they emerged from planning efforts of local jurisdictions and agencies. He was not comfortable with the MPC exerting influence over plans adopted by local elected bodies, but felt it was appropriate for MPC members to return to their own bodies with feedback and suggestions.

Mr. Smith agreed that local planning efforts should be supported by the MPC and the RTP should be examined on an ongoing basis instead of just when an update was due every four years.

Mr. Nordin commented that Oregon would be receiving a significant amount of funding for transportation issues and most agencies and jurisdictions had plans in place for projects. He felt the RTP should be submitted to avoid missing a deadline. The anticipated transportation funding could change many things and the next four years would be a very dynamic period. He asked if staff had begun to look at how the new funding could be used.

Mr. Thompson said the next agenda item would address the new federal legislation and associated funding. Staff had begun discussing the new funding at a high level and he anticipated within the next 12 months the MPC would begin considering priorities for the use of future funding. He said periodic reviews of the RTP could occur and expected adoption of new LCDC rules in May 2022 would allow staff to provide a more comprehensive look at how plans would need to reflect those changes.

Mr. Moe supported adoption of the RTP. He was pleased that a more frequent examination of the plan would occur in the future, including those transportation issues raised during the public hearing and new state initiatives.

Ms. Buch commented that more frequent and in depth looks at RTP components would help build institutional knowledge prior to the next update.

Mr. Berney said the timeframe for change was becoming exponential and it was no longer possible to take a leisurely look at plans every four years.

Mr. Thompson said the RTP, along with the CMP and AQCD, would be presented to the MPC for adoption at its January 2022 meeting. He committed to providing the MPC with a timely update on what the future would look like for local and regional plans once new state rules were adopted and guidance related to reauthorization of the federal transportation legislation was available.

Mr. VanGordon asked staff for a list of all the things occurring at the state and federal level that would impact transportation planning in the future.

Mr. Berney noted that a list of the various groups and bodies on which MPC members served had also been requested.

### **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Implications for Oregon**

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Assistant Director Travis Brouwer presented an overview of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, focusing on the following areas:

- \$1 TRILLION for infrastructure
- \$567 billion for transportation
- Surface transportation portion includes:
  - Reauthorization of surface transportation programs
  - New programs for resilience and climate
  - Special funding for bridges and EV charging
  - Over \$100 billion in discretionary grants for roads, transit, rail, airports, ports and other modes
  - All over five years (2022-2026)

Mr. Brouwer used a chart to illustrate the \$1 billion in additional funding over five years for Highways/Special Programs, representing a 38 percent increase, and \$200 million in additional funding for Public Transportation, representing a 35 percent increase. He said ODOT was required to obligate all of the funds provided for each fiscal year by the end of the fiscal year or it would be lost. He explained how quickly the process would need to proceed in order to have projects ready. He also compared the new federal funding to the funding provided through HB 2017, noting HB 2017 was 2.5 times larger.

Mr. Brouwer reviewed new funding that would be available for mitigating climate change, resilience, bridges, safety, improving active transportation and local programs. In the local programs category \$200 million in additional funding would be available for cities, counties, and metropolitan planning organizations for safety, bicycle/pedestrian, bridge, and other community priorities. Some additional flexible funding would be available for purposes other than the programs to which Congress had dedicated funds.

Mr. Brouwer said the Oregon Transportation Commission had been briefed on the tight timeframe for updating the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) with the goal of adopting a funding allocation strategy in March 2022 in order to begin the process of scoping and selecting projects and initiating the design and environmental review processes so the federal timelines for obligation of funds could be met. Input from stakeholders and the public was being sought on how funds for programs and flexible funds should be spent. He said allocation scenarios would be presented to the OTC at its January 2022 meeting and a robust outreach approach would solicit input on those would from January through March. He said stakeholders and advisory committees would be asked to respond to the following questions to inform development of scenarios:

1. Given the investments already made in the STIP and the federal infrastructure bill, how should the OTC allocate flexible funding to best advance the OTC/ODOT Strategic Action Plan and the state's transportation goals?
2. Do the priorities expressed in 2020 – particularly strong support for public and active transportation and Fix -It – remain? Or have these priorities changed in some ways?
3. What are the specific priorities for investment of funds in public and active transportation?

Mr. Brouwer invited questions and comments from committee members.

Ms. Buch asked how ODOT would determine the division of funds between urban and rural areas of the state. Mr. Brouwer replied that some of that was determined by allocations in the legislation through direct allocation to urbanized areas. That division also differed by each program. Allocations were also based on the applications ODOT received and the needs that were identified. He said the OTC wanted to assure a good geographic balance between urban and rural areas and regions of the state.

Mr. VanGordon asked the OTC to be bolder with its transportation vision. There were gaps in the current system and he hoped that the use of funds would be flexible and strategic rather in silos. Mr. Brouwer said ODOT recognized that funding silos created difficulties because most projects spanned multiple silos. He said ODOT was seeking solutions and invited suggestions.

Ms. Vinis supported existing priorities and agreed with Mr. VanGordon that there were gaps in funding and gaps in transportation systems, such as connections between active transportation and transit.

Mr. Nordin said there were currently regulatory problems related to autonomous vehicles and there could be opportunities for research and development work. There were currently many pilot programs around the

world and he hoped to see future discussions with the state about clearing a pathway for the use of autonomous vehicles.

Mr. Smith agreed with Mr. VanGordon that funding silos created challenges to moving some projects forward. He shared an example of a City of Coburg project that would have benefitted from more flexibility in funding options. He said that commuter traffic avoiding Beltline divided Coburg for active transportation. Greater versatility was needed for projects that addressed a number of transportation modes and issues.

Ms. Brindle agreed with the problems created by funding silos and cited a number of examples of ODOT projects, such as bridges, that could benefit if funding had greater flexibility.

In response to a question from Mr. Berney, Mr. Brouwer said there were about 500 gas stations in Oregon and while there were more EV charging stations, they were not well distributed. \$52 million was allocated to expand the charging network. He agreed that broader deployment across the state was needed.

Mr. Berney said there were equity firms with an interest in partnering with governments to accelerate the deployment of charging stations. He could provide that information to ODOT and encouraged the agency to look for opportunities to leverage public dollars to bring in private investments to create an electric highway. Mr. Brouwer said the west coast electric highway was a public/private partnership with a private vendor designing, building, operating and maintaining the system. Private vendors were also bringing their own funds to the table. The projects were not yet financially viable and did require a public subsidy, but that was primarily the capital costs of infrastructure. Financial viability would increase as the use of electric vehicles increased.

Mr. Thompson summarized comments from MPC members:

- Continuing support for active transportation/transit investments
- Breaking down funding silos and seeking ways to move projects forward that required funding from several different silos

In response to a question from Mr. Thompson, Mr. Brouwer recommended providing the MPC's initial comments to the OTC at its January meeting, with comments at the February and March meetings directed more specifically to the various scenarios under consideration.

Mr. Berney asked for clarification on the relationships among the MPO, MPC and Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) and specifically whether the MPC's role was advisory or policy-making.

Ms. Wilson explained that LCOG was the MPO of record, having been designated as such by the governor. The MPC was created to determine transportation priorities and to look at other issues within the MPO, such as cable television, parks and land use issues as appropriate. She said staff could provide information to clarify roles and responsibilities. Over the years the authority granted to the MPC by the LCOG Board of Directors to determine transportation priorities within the metro region had grown. Each year the LCOG Board required a report on MPC activities during the previous years and LCOG staff provided updates on MPC activities at monthly LCOG Board meetings. She said the Board would face a major decision based on 2020 census data about possible expansion of the MPO boundary, which might include Junction City.

Mr. Berney noted that several MPC members had expressed an interest in more information about the MPO governance structure and asked that the item be placed on the January 2022 meeting agenda.

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

- **ODOT Update**—Ms. Brindle reported the LaneACT strategies subcommittee would meet on December 6 to discuss strategic investments and review a list of projects in play on the state system. The LaneACT would meet on December 8 and receive Mr. Brouwer's presentation on new federal transportation funding. She congratulated the MPO on its obligation of federal funds for 2021; the federal requirements had been met or exceeded, making it eligible to receive redistribution of funds from other entities that were unable to spend their federal dollars.
- **MTIP Administrative Amendments**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—January 6, 2022 (virtual meeting). Agenda items for future meetings included a presentation by Travis Brouwer of ODOT on scenarios being considered by the OTC, a discussion of the MPO governance structure, and invitation to the newly appointed OTC member to attend a meeting of the MPC.

Mr. Berney said it had been an honor to serve as chair of the MPC for the past year. He adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)