

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee Virtual Meeting via Zoom

January 6, 2022
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; Dan Hurley (Lane County), *ex officio* member.

Paul Thompson, Kelly Clarke, Ellen Currier, Drew Pfefferle, Rachel Dorfman, Dan Callister (Lane Council of Governments); Emma Newman (City of Springfield); Rob Inerfeld (City of Eugene); Sasha Vartanian (Lane County); John Marshall, Megan Winner (City of Coburg); Tom Schwetz, Andrew Martin, Mark Johnson (Lane Transit District); Bill Johnston (Oregon Department of Transportation); Rob Zako, Claire Roth (Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation), Sarah Mazze, Kaarin Knudson, guests.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Thompson explained that the election of officers would be held at the February 2022 meeting as the MPC bylaws specified that officers would serve a one year term, but did not specify a month for elections. Conducting elections at the February meeting would allow jurisdictions time to designate their MPC members for the coming year.

Mr. Berney determined there were no objections to holding officer elections at the February 2022 meeting.

Mr. Smith introduced Coburg Planning Commission member John Marshall who had been designated as his alternate to the MPC.

In response to a question from Mr. Berney, Mr. Thompson said staff was preparing a list of MPC members' participation in other groups and a list of activities at the state and federal levels that would impact transportation planning in the future. He said a discussion of the MPC's role and responsibilities and history of the MPO would be on the February meeting agenda.

APPROVE DECEMBER 2, 2021 MPC MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the December 2, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 10:0.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

None.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mr. Thompson noted that written comments on the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) had been submitted by the League of Women Voters of Lane County and copies had been provided to MPC members.

Sarah Mazze, Eugene, expressed gratitude for the public service of elected officials and MPO staff. She said the RTP did not sufficiently advance regional goals related to climate, safety and equity. She urged the MPC to progressively work on an updated plan that could be submitted by the end of the year.

Claire Roth, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST), highlighted the importance of thinking about current issues as only the precursors of what future generations would face. The RTP should serve the public interest and not be passive or based on antiquated values and assumption. She called on the MPC to adopt a better plan by the end of 2022. She also asked the committee to consider moving public testimony to the ZOOM format instead of calling in by phone, which was confusing and complicated for those not comfortable with the technology. She thanked committee members for their service.

Kaarin Knudson, Eugene, founding member of Better Housing Together, also expressed appreciation for the MPC's service to the community and region. She stressed the need for better public engagement around development of the RTP. She said the RTP did not accomplish the goals identified by individual communities and broadly as a region regarding safety, traffic congestion, equity, sustainability, economic development or community vitality. It did meet federal requirements, but the priorities should be revisited in 2022 to assure that investments were aligned with the priorities and goals established as a community. Much had changed and would continue to change and the transportation system needed to support that change and encourage robust transportation options for people.

Rob Zako, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST), also expressed thanks for the committee's service. He said the RTP as presented satisfies federal requirements, but should aspire to do more. Chapter 2 of the plan was good as far as it went, but vision without action was hallucination. He said the essential part of the plan was where public monies would be invested and there had not yet been a discussion of how to invest the \$1.65 billion over the next 20 years and which projects were priorities. Work was not done on serving regional interests. He listed the following points:

- Adopt the RTP as it satisfied federal requirements
- The plan was not fully vetted with respect to how well it served regional interests and some members of the public would consider it a provisional plan and not give it deference
- Every Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) amendment that came before the MPC would be scrutinized
- BEST and its partners were looking to engage the public regarding which investments did the most to advance shared goals since the MPO had not done so
- Direct MPO staff to support the MPC on public input to begin immediately as the plan was not yet fully vetted and complete a revised plan by the end of 2022 at the latest

Mr. Berney thanked speakers for their input and asked if there were comments from MPC members.

Mr. Smith agreed with speakers. He said Coburg was in the process of updating its Transportation System Plan (TSP), which was part of the RTP. He said during the process, which is costly and time-consuming, the City recognized that the TSP was being adapted to the potential of spending funds in a regional aspect and not truly addressing Coburg's issues, which were also regional issues. The I-5 bridge was an example as it did not allow for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. He agreed the proposed RTP was already obsolete, as

was Coburg's TSP and it should be recognized that the processes necessary to get projects done were overwhelming for smaller communities.

Mr. Groves concurred with the remarks from speakers and Mr. Smith. He said the MPC should approve the RTP as a provisional plan to satisfy federal requirements, then immediately begin the process of looking in depth at the plan from the perspective of 21st century needs.

Ms. Vinis also concurred with previous comments. She advocated that the MPC include the RTP as an agenda topic every month. She said there was a process component and a content component. That became complicated as each jurisdiction created its own TSP and the RTP simply consolidated those into one plan. That did not reflect true regional planning. The MPC was being asked to develop a filter that all could agree on that addressed issues like climate change, equity and safety to establish regional priorities. She said that would be a difficult challenge as MPC members represented their respective jurisdictions that were deeply invested in their own TSPs, but that coordination could be a game changer.

Mr. VanGordon supported ongoing, regular discussions of the RTP. He pointed out that jurisdictions did obtain public input when developing their plans. He was open to considering how to make that process more responsive and flexible. He said the MPC was trying to achieve some type of regional coordination while still giving jurisdictions the authority to govern their own cities. He was concerned when there were discussions about making policy decisions that explicitly contradicted the policy goals of individual jurisdictions. The RTP incorporated all of those individual plans and if people had concerns about individual projects they should address them to the individual jurisdictions. He agreed that better regional coordination was a good goal, but did not feel the MPC should be put in a position to enforce its will on a jurisdiction.

Ms. Brindle agreed with speakers' remarks and appreciated the comments from mayors of MPC member jurisdictions. She said regional commute patterns identified in the RTP had 65,000 people commuting to and from jobs within the MPO and 79,000 work trips into and out of the MPO. The challenge was to meet existing needs of communities, address all transportation modes and look to the future. Current trends in remote working and virtual meetings would help achieve regional goals and agreed that projects on the RTP list were reacting to the needs of individual jurisdictions. She said there was a Citizen Advisory Committee a number of years ago that provided feedback on MPO issues to the MPC and suggested that reestablishing a CAC might be considered as the MPC looked at revising the RTP.

Mr. Moe commented that the MPC had agreed at its December 2021 meeting to adopt the RTP as presented, but begin the process of updating the plan immediately.

Ms. Buch agreed with adopting the RTP and was committed to changing the process in the future to create a better plan.

Mr. Nordin reminded the MPC that Lane Transit District was in the process of selecting a new general manager and the consciousness expressed by MPC members and the public would need to be enforced on the new general manager. He said MPC members would be involved in the selection process.

Mr. Berney said the four-year timeframe for making decisions for a 20-year plan was too slow. He was pleased with the discussions around addressing climate change issues in the plan. He said the MPC was being asked to approve an RTP that met minimum federal standards in order to keep federal dollars flowing into the region. He felt the MPO should establish its priorities in the plan and if available pots of money did not meet those needs determine how that could be changed. He offered the example of a plan that included subsidizing the cost of financing electric cars and installing chargers across the county. He

doubted that there were funds currently available for that use. He appreciated BEST's offer to assist with public input.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Adopt Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

Mr. Thompson asked for adoption of the 2045 RTP and associated documents. At the December 2021 MPC meeting staff was directed to bring the plan forward for adoption at the January 2022 meeting and keep the public comment period open until December 10. All public comments received and staff responses were included in the agenda packet. He noted that the process of public input on the draft RTP began a year and a half ago and included public input on the goals, objectives, policies and performance measures. Staff also assured that the RTP project lists were consistent with locally adopted project lists in all local, regional and state plans, as is required under the federal regulations.

Mr. Thompson said the RTP included an entirely new performance-based planning and policy framework, supported by a new set of performance measures. He agreed with observations that those measures might not achieve the region's vision in 25 years. He said the performance-based framework in the new RTP should inform local jurisdictions' reviews of their TSPs and regional discussions of revising the RTP. He said staff was beginning to develop a pathway for moving forward over the next four years. He said the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) was currently developing rules that would require jurisdictions to revise local TSPs and that work could also inform revisions to the RTP. He said the U.S. Department of Transportation had published on December 30, 2021 a new set of eight planning emphasis areas for MPOs and state DOTs to consider during their next planning cycles:

- Tackling the Climate Crisis – Transition to a Clean Energy, Resilient Future
- Equity and Justice⁴⁰ in Transportation Planning
- Complete Streets
- Public Involvement
- Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET)/U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Coordination
- Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) Coordination
- Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)
- Data in Transportation Planning

Mr. Smith said he would support the RTP, recognizing that it was already obsolete, as was Coburg's TSP. He hoped that new federal guidelines on areas of emphasis would help inform future planning efforts at the local and regional levels. He said Coburg's staff and council truly believed in planning, but it was a major undertaking to continue to update plans. Planning tended to be reactionary to the swift changes the community was undergoing as the town grew and commuter traffic exploded. He looked forward to a process that would result in an RTP that was useful. He also urged a regional discussion of priorities and investments that would benefit the most people.

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Groves, moved to approve Resolution 2022-01 adopting the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization 2045 Regional Transportation Plan. The motion passed unanimously, 10:0.

Adopt Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD)

Mr. Thompson provided a brief overview of the AQCD, which was a federally required document to accompany the RTP, and would reset the federal timeline and assure federal dollars could continue to flow

to the region. He noted the MPO was only under a limited maintenance plan for small particulate matter, meaning the MPO's air quality goals had been achieved and compliance would be maintained. He said there were no public comments received and all agencies involved in the required interagency consultation had approved the draft document.

Mr. Moe, seconded by Mr. Groves, moved to approve Resolution 2022-02 adopting the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization Air Quality Conformity Determination for the 2045 Regional Transportation Plan. The motion passed unanimously, 10:0.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Flexible Funding Priorities

Mr. Thompson reviewed a draft of comments to be provided to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) at its January 2021 meeting. Comments were based on the MPC's discussion at its December 2021 meeting with ODOT Assistant Director Travis Brouwer focused on priorities for the flexible federal funding under the IIJA legislation. The MPC was encouraged to provide input to the OTC on the subject as frequently as possible.

Mr. Groves, seconded by Mr. Moe, moved to adopt the draft comments to the OTC.

Ms. Buch, Mr. Smith and Mr. Berney agreed there was a need to provide coordinated message at the state level on a regular basis.

Mr. Thompson said the draft comments had been written for oral presentation at the OTC's meeting and suggested that if approved by the MPC, they be modified slightly as a letter signed by the MPC chair and submitted quickly to be included in the OTC's agenda packet. He asked the MPC to also designate someone to deliver the comments as oral testimony at the meeting.

Mr. Smith asked for the opportunity to modify the comments to include Coburg's safety concerns before moving forward.

Mr. VanGordon agreed that both oral and written testimony should be provided to the OTC. He said the comments should also be submitted to the LCDC rule-making committee.

Mr. Thompson said the agenda item was developed in response to the OTC's consideration of priorities for flexible federal funding and would need to be submitted quickly in order to be in the OTC's agenda packet for its next meeting. He also heard an interest from MPC members in presenting a consistent and repeated message to the OTC around the region's needs, priorities and concerns. He said staff could develop that as an additional message. He noted staff was trying to schedule a meeting between the MPC and the newest OTC member and suggested that message could be introduced then.

Mr. Smith urged that regional needs and priorities be a monthly topic for the MPC to assure a consistent and coordinated message from the MPC to the OTC. He asked how quickly modifications could be made to the proposed testimony.

Mr. Thompson said the document could be edited and provided to MPC members via SharePoint.

The motion passed unanimously, 10:0.

ODOT Project Priorities

Mr. Thompson said ODOT had asked the MPO and LaneACT (Area Commission on Transportation) to prioritize a set of ODOT projects so those priorities could be considered for federal and other funding investments over the next several years. A list of staff prioritized projects was included in the agenda packet. Projects were identified as Tier 1 and Tier 2 priorities, with no priority recommendation for one project that was outside of the MPO.

Ms. Brindle reviewed the status of each of the projects that were on the ODOT system and noted that there had been some investments in each of them over previous years. Mr. Thompson added that the staff recommendations were informed by Eugene staff indicating that two Beltline projects and the two Highway 126 projects fell partly or wholly within the City of Eugene and the Beltline projects were higher priority for the city.

Ms. Buch was pleased to see projects for smaller communities on the list. The Coburg and Creswell projects would benefit many people in the region and were definitely needed.

Mr. Smith appreciated seeing the Coburg Interchange project in Tier 1 of the priorities. He said Beltline was also important for Coburg and having an arterial bridge would help offset problems and safety concerns. It was very important for local jurisdictions to continue to present their priorities to decision-makers in the future.

Mr. Nordin offered his support for the Beltline arterial bridge as it would facilitate transit system connectivity.

Mr. VanGordon was pleased with the regional list of priorities, particularly the Beltline and Creswell projects. He asked if the LaneACT would receive the MPC's list of priorities. Mr. Thompson replied that the list of projects would initially be presented to the LaneACT without the MPO recommendations for priority. As the MPC's representative to the LaneACT he would represent those priorities during the ACT's discussion. He noted that the priority recommendations were for expenditure of dedicated highway improvement funds on ODOT system projects and did not counteract the MPC's priorities for flexible funding on non-highway projects.

Ms. Buch, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved approval of the recommended list of priorities to be presented to the Oregon Department of Transportation. The motion passed unanimously, 10:0.

FFY 2021 Annual Listing of Federal Obligations

Mr. Callister said the MPO was required to provide an annual listing of federal obligations to satisfy federal requirements. The list included all MPO projects that had federal funds obligated during FFY 2021. He said a total of \$34.7 million was obligated and 59 percent of that was obligated to Lane Transit District projects. \$3.1 million in MPO discretionary funding had also been obligated. The term "obligation" meant that there had been a commitment of those funds by the federal government to specific project with an authorization to begin spending those funds. He said the MPO had been working with ODOT on ways to improve its timely obligation of federal funds and the MPO was on track to meet requirements for use of funds.

Mr. Berney left the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and Mr. Groves assumed the chair.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**—Ms. Brindle said the next LaneACT meeting was scheduled for January 12. Agenda items included appointment of ACT officers, discussions of Highway 126W safety improvements and the list of ODOT system projects. Prioritization of those projects would be considered at the ACT's February 2022 meeting. Another discussion topic would be consolidation of ODOT public transportation funding programs.

Mr. VanGordon thanked ODOT for their efforts to keep roads clear during winter weather. Mr. Groves echoed those comments.

- **MTIP Administrative Amendments**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—February 3, March 3, and April 7 virtual meetings

Mr. Thompson said that the current practice was to conduct MPC meetings via ZOOM and provide ZOOM access only to members, staff and presenters in order to maintain security because of security problems encountered during the first ZOOM meeting. He referred to comments from the public about the challenges of providing input via phone at the meetings and asked if the MPC wanted to change the current practice.

Ms. Vinis said while there had been a problem at the first meeting, there had been many improvements in ZOOM since then. The Eugene City Council used ZOOM for its meetings and had not encountered problems moving from attendees to participants. She supported making the ZOOM meetings accessible for all attendees.

Ms. Buch and Mr. Smith agreed with Ms. Vinis.

Mr. Groves adjourned the meeting at 1:16 p.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)