

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee Virtual Meeting via Zoom

March 3, 2022

11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Randy Groves, Chair; Lucy Vinis (City of Eugene); Sean VanGordon (City of Springfield); Joe Berney, Heather Buch (Lane County); Ray Smith (City of Coburg); Frannie Brindle (Oregon Department of Transportation); Caitlin Vargas, Don Nordin (Lane Transit District), members; Anne Heath (City of Coburg); Dan Hurley (Lane County), *ex officio* member.

Brenda Wilson, Paul Thompson, Kelly Clarke, Dan Callister, Ellen Currier, Drew Pfefferle, Rachel Dorfman, Syd Shoaf (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, (Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation), Metro Television.

WELCOME, CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Groves convened the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) and a quorum was established. He thanked Mr. Berney for serving as MPC chair during the past year and expressed appreciation for his leadership.

APPROVE February 3, 2022, MPC MEETING MINUTES

Mr. VanGordon, seconded by Ms. Vinis, moved to approve the February 3, 2022, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA/ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM MPC MEMBERS

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Ms. Buch announced that she had provided testimony to the Oregon Transportation Committee (OTC) on behalf of Lane County and thanked other local agencies that also provided testimony.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mr. Groves explained procedures for providing testimony during the virtual ZOOM meeting.

Rob Zako, Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST), presented a resolution for a better Central Lane Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). He listed a number of organizations had already signed the resolution. He said the plan was headed in the right direction, but goals without action were meaningless and the MPC was not seen as a body that had yet discussed how to spend about \$1.6 billion in the future. He recognized there were many technical federal requirements that staff was required to work on, but the MPC was a policy, not a technical committee, and its role was to set policy/priorities. He hoped to see a continuation of that work that could not be finished because of the federal deadline, but remained skeptical.

Mr. VanGordon indicated he had reviewed the resolution and noted that the term "provisional" plan had been used. While the MPC would be working through a number of issues in the future, the RTP was the current plan and not provisional. He said the resolution also raised questions about projects included in the plan and hoped BEST would continue to engage with local jurisdictions when they conducted their project planning work as there were many opportunities to provide input on jurisdictions' transportation priorities. He gave Springfield's Main Street project as an example of a current project that would provide those opportunities for public involvement.

Ms. Vinis thanked Mr. Zako for his testimony and the many organizations that shared the MPC's interest in exploring other ways to think about projects and regional planning.

Mr. Groves also thanked Mr. Zako, BEST and other organizations for their offer of assistance. He agreed with the need to connect goals and objectives with action items and outcomes.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Central Lane Planning Through 2026

Mr. Thompson briefly described the agenda materials developed in response to the MPC's desire to be continuously engaged in the RTP and related issues on a monthly basis, as well as receive an overview of regional transportation planning issues at all levels over the next four years. He reviewed a spreadsheet of state and local transportation planning activities on a quarterly basis over the next four years, including those points at which the MPC would be engaged.

Mr. Thompson stated the next federal deadline for an update of the RTP was in four years in the first quarter of January 2026. He said staff did not envision it happening that far in the future. He said in response to the MPC's request staff were planning on initial activities to review and update data. Sufficient time would be available to conduct the review in depth, with public engagement opportunities as appropriate. He noted that one of the most important implementation steps of the new RTP was establishing priorities for use of discretionary funding in competitive grants to local jurisdictions. The MPC would be engaged in that process over the next six to nine months. He asked for feedback and direction from committee members.

Ms. Vinis commented that it would be challenging to create a filter that could be agreed upon for establishing priorities and reviewing projects with respect to issues such as meeting climate and equity goals.

Mr. VanGordon observed that it was difficult to identify a common horizon toward which the MPC was heading with extensive detail included in the spread sheet. He did not object to establishing goals for the MPO's in the RTP and changing project applications to respond to those goals, but expressed concern about the MPC getting in specifics about projects or telling jurisdictions what should be in their transportation system plans (TSP) or rejecting an application because it was not going in the right direction. Those were policy decisions that the respective elected bodies should make.

Mr. Berney concurred with Mr. VanGordon. He said the MPC as a policy body should be able to envision the future without overriding local jurisdictions and instead provide direction and incentives in partnership with communities so local plans could be organized in a way that addressed the MPC's overarching goals.

Mr. Smith echoed Mr. VanGordon and Mr. Berney's comments. He said there was a way to have overarching goals that provided an umbrella for local decisions. He used the example of the amount of work involved in Coburg's efforts to update its TSP in conformance with state mandates as well as taking into consideration the RTP, then feeling as though Coburg had to compete with other jurisdictions and agencies. The citizens of Coburg had also expressed a desire to have more engagement in the TSP update process. He preferred that jurisdictions be able to help each other address regional policies and achieve goals instead of feeling they had to compete against their partners.

Ms. Buch said the many activities reflected in the spreadsheet required MPC members to work collaboratively. She asked how smaller communities with fewer resources could be supported to meet the goal of updating the RTP. She also questioned whether the MPC, as a policy group, could achieve the goals and timelines when it only met periodically.

Ms. Vinis said there were certain federal deadlines that had to be met, but the MPC included very different communities and had to acknowledge their individual unique characteristics, needs and transportation plans while moving forward on significant regional goals. She said there should be a policy conversation about project categories and weighting related to deeper impact on specific goals such as greenhouse gas emissions or accessibility and equity. Such a policy direction might help smaller communities focus their efforts. She said the intent was to change trajectory and build toward the future; not all problems had to be solved in the next four years. It would be easy to become lost in the enormous list of activities and project details and miss the overarching goals of achieving healthier communities.

Mr. Thompson displayed the seven goals set forth in the new RTP and reminded the MPC that also adopted in the plan were objectives and performance measures that supported those goals. He said those could be expanded on in a future meeting to gain an understanding of how projects could be implemented. He noted that the RTP was trying to accomplish local and regional priorities while meeting reporting requirements on federal performance measures such as travel time reliability on the national highway system. That occasionally required balancing competing goals. He said the MPO did provide federal funds to jurisdictions to support their participation in MPO activities. More federal funds could be provided to assist their engagement in the federal process, but unfortunately federal funds could not be used to develop local TSPs or accomplish state requirements and activities. He said after the MPC agenda materials were published staff learned the MPO would be second instead of first to implement new Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) rules, pushing that activity out another year or two.

Mr. Groves suggested it might be appropriate to schedule a joint meeting between the MPC and LaneACT to see if there was a common understanding. He also acknowledged that while there was some turnover among MPC and ACT members, it would be beneficial to have some institutional knowledge of shared mission and goals.

Mr. Smith wanted to see the MPC establish good policies and discuss priorities specific to projects, smaller communities like Coburg had some anxiety about trying to meet new goals and requirements. He hoped new regional policies and goals would help Coburg move forward with its transportation planning efforts by providing clear guidelines.

Mr. VanGordon appreciated the conversation about how to balance multiple needs and the question of regional capacity and vision versus what local jurisdictions could achieve. He hoped the conversation would continue at the next meeting. He felt if a project approved by a local jurisdiction met the goals of the RTP it was not the MPC's role to approve or reject it.

Mr. Thompson said the section of his presentation that set forth each RTP goal and the objectives, performance measures and relevant federal requirements could provide a starting point for a more in depth discussion of priorities.

Regional Primary Funding Considerations

Mr. Callister said the MPO periodically opened a call for discretionary fund project applications and the next cycle would begin in the next few months. Approval of the new RTP and its associated goals in January 2022 would require updating the funding application forms to reflect the seven new RTP goals. He explained how the application would allow jurisdictions to explain how their project would meet a specific goal or goals. This would more firmly establish a connection between the RTP and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), which was required as part of the MPO's federal certification process.

Mr. Thompson reviewed the four funding considerations in the current application and asked for direction to replace those with the seven RTP goals. Staff could provide the updated application form at the next MPC meeting and that could be the basis for further discussion about whether a description of how a project addressed new objectives and performance measures should be included. The MPC could also discuss whether it wished to prioritize any of the goals, objectives and performance measures during this funding cycle.

In response to a question from Mr. Berney, Mr. Thompson said reduction of greenhouse emissions was addressed under the goal related to healthy people and environment, although it was not a standalone goal.

Mr. Berney felt reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should be an independent goal. He said many organizations had entire fleets that ran on clean energy and the Lane County Board of Commissioners was considering a net zero Lane County by 2050 that was business friendly. He did not see that priority in the RTP goals. He pointed out Russia's dirty oil and gas extraction and the amount of methane gas that was emitted and how it put in perspective how small, but important those greenhouse gas emission goals were.

Mr. Groves agreed with Mr. Berney and appreciated that he had raised those issues.

Ms. Vinis also agreed with Mr. Berney and said the issue of climate change and transportation's role as a contributor. She said those conversations could be bolder in addressing a triple bottom line with respect to investment of transportation dollars.

Mr. Smith said funding applications should include more details and justifications in order to inform decisions. Greenhouse gas was an increasingly important consideration. He was not certain it was necessary to prioritize the RTP goals.

Mr. VanGordon supported updating the application and requiring more details about projects. He said there were new state guidelines regarding the nexus of land use and transportation and cautioned that the updated forms should not send applicants in one direction and then have to be revised when those guidelines were issued.

Mr. Thompson summarized that the MPC approved of substituting the seven RTP goals for the current funding considerations in the project application form, with a more in depth discussion at the next meeting about how those would be implemented in the funding application. He asked for clarity in whether there should be a separate climate goal as previous MPC discussion had indicate there should not be one and

climate issues incorporated in a larger goal. Establishing a separate climate goal would result in amending the RTP. It could be called out specifically on the funding application instead of creating a separate goal.

Ms. Vinis said the MPC's scheduled discussion at the objectives level would provide an opportunity to apply a climate filter.

Ms. Buch agreed with Ms. Vinis. This was not the ideal time to change the RTP; however, a discussion at the objectives level could clarify what was meant by the goals and inform applicants about the project information that was being requested.

Mr. Smith said Coburg's update of its TSP had been stalled when extensive planning efforts were concluded and then new requirements arose. He said the RTP goals covered a wide range of issues and requesting greater detail in project applications; applicants should not have to contend with changing requirements for information.

Mr. Berney agreed that the process should not be slowed and the planned discussion of objectives could clarify how applications could demonstrate adherence to RTP goals.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Flexible Funding - Next Steps

Mr. Thompson provided an update on the MPC's discussions with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) about the priorities for use of IIJA flexible funding. The MPC had indicated that funding Scenario 2 was its priority. He said no new materials from ODOT regarding the four proposed scenarios would be presented and he assumed the MPC was still supporting Scenario 2. The agenda materials described a proposed public scenario identified as Scenario 2b that built on Scenario 2, but redistributed all of the funds allocated in Scenario 2 for the Enhance, Fix-it, and Maintenance categories (\$148 million total) to a new category titled "Local Transportation Funding." "Local Transportation Funding" dollars would then be directed to local jurisdictions across the state allowing those agencies to determine how to best use the funds to meet their community's specific transportation needs. He asked for direction from the MPC regarding support for Scenario 2b.

Ms. Buch said commissioners around the state through the Oregon Association of Counties had a fundamental priority of local dollars being allocated through local agencies. Mayors had the same priority. She supported Scenario 2b.

Ms. Vargas said Lane Transit District also supported Scenario 2b.

Ms. Vinis and Mr. Groves also supported Scenario 2b.

Mr. Berney agreed that local officials were most in touch with communities' needs and best suited to make decisions about the allocation of funds. He supported Scenario 2b.

Mr. VanGordon and Mr. Smith also supported Scenario 2b.

Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Berney, moved to submit a letter from the MPC in support of Scenario 2b. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Follow-up and Next Steps

- **ODOT Update**—Ms. Brindle reported that the LaneACT would discuss vision and strategies at its April meeting, with adoption potentially at the May meeting. She said the ACT would also receive a presentation on ODOT's Beltline project at its May meeting and there would be a discussion of funding opportunities, including for a local arterial and replacing of the overcrossing. She said Region 2 ACT chairs and co-chairs would meet on March 10 to prioritize the region's projects for the statewide OregonConnect funds.

Ms. Brindle said an interim area manager would be in place when she retired at the end of March until a permanent hire was made. She asked MPC members who were interested in being on the interview panel to contact her.

MPC members congratulated Ms. Brindle on her retirement and thanked her for her leadership and support over the past several years.

- **MTIP Administrative Amendments**—There were no questions.
- **Next Meeting/Agenda Build**—April 7 Virtual Meeting, May 5 Virtual Meeting, June 2 Virtual Meeting

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

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)