

**Morgantown Monongalia
Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board
May 17, 2019 minutes**

Members Present:

Chairman Jennifer Selin-City of Morgantown Chairman, Vice-chair Joe Statler-Blacksville, Treasurer Mayor Patricia Lewis-Granville, Brian Carr-WV DOH, Mayor Bill Kawecki-City of Morgantown, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line, Commissioner Edward Hawkins-Monongalia County, Ron Justice-WVU, Mike Kelly-Board of Education, Sean Sikora-Monongalia County

MPO Director: Bill Austin

Members Absent:

Dominick Claudio-Star City, Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover, Commissioner Tom Bloom-Monongalia County

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Chairman Selin called the Policy Board meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Public Comments

Ted Hastings, a partial owner of the parcel near the Greenbag Rd and Dorsey Ave intersection, expressed his concern over the proposed roundabout for the intersection improvement by DOH. He noted that a roundabout is not the best solution for this project, because 1) a roundabout at that intersection will be unavoidably small and therefore unsafe for vehicles traveling at high speed; 2) A more effective solution is to install a dedicated left-turning lane at on Greenbag Rd at the intersection, which was identified in the MPO's plan and will be much less expensive; 3) the proposed roundabout will unnecessarily impact the active use of adjacent land and significantly diminish the productivity of the farmland located adjacent to the intersection. Mr. Hastings further noted that improvements on Greenbag Rd cannot guarantee that commercial trucks will use Greenbag Rd rather than Brockway Ave, and that he is willing to work with the DOH to improve the intersection in terms of proving sidewalks and turning lanes. Mr. Hastings also noted that it will be incorrect for DOH to expedite the project without sufficient community input and to choose the roundabout option only for securing the federal funds which was designated for roundabout construction.

Mary Hastings, a partial owner of the parcel near the Greenbag Rd and Dorsey Ave intersection, also expressed her concern with the project. Mrs. Hastings noted that the farmland near the intersection has been used for industrial agriculture research on hemp seed. Her family has been investing in the top soil of the parcel. A roundabout at the intersection will bring negative impact on the environment, social environment economy, and business.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Austin noted that the minutes for the last meeting were included in the agenda package. Mr. Statler moved to accept the March minutes, seconded by Mr. Justice. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

4. Committee Reports

a. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Austin noted that Bill Rice, the Chairman of the CAC, is not able to attend the meeting today. Mr. Austin noted that the CAC recommended approval of all the proposed TIP Amendments except the Star City Interchange Project. The CAC did not have a recommendation on that project because the project information had not been available for public comment prior to their meeting.

b. Finance Report

Mr. Austin noted that while Treasurer Mayor Lewis is present at the meeting, she is not able to speak. Mr. Austin noted that Mayor Lewis had reviewed the finance statement and recommended approval of it. Mr. Kelly moved to accept the Finance Statement as presented; seconded by Mr. Justice. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

c. Executive Directors Report

Mr. Austin noted that Mountain Line Transit transmitted to MPO a list of roads which were identified by bus drivers as in poor condition. The MPO will relay this information to the Governor's SWAT Highway Response Team. Mr. Austin noted that this is an informational item and requires no formal action from the Board.

Mayor Kawecki noted that criteria used in categorizing poor conditions should be more explicitly defined. Some of the roads in the list are apparently in fair or good condition. Chairman Selin agreed and noted that specifics about the condition of the roads in the list will be helpful for DOH staff to identify effective countermeasures.

Mr. Bruffy noted that the list was developed by directly asking bus drives about the roads where they think improvement is needed. The scope of concern may cover wide range of issues, such as sight-distance, paving, land configurations, and etc.

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO will work with the Mountain Line to refine the list with more details, and pass on the comments to the DOH.

Mr. Austin noted that on Monday, 13th, the DOH held a public meeting for the West Run Project and the Van Voorhis project. The Van Voorhis project covers the segment from West Run Rd to Backer's Ridge Rd, instead of the segment from WV 705 to West Run Rd as identified in the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Mr. Austin noted that he has sent a letter to the DOH on this issue, noting that the project segment is not the MPO's priority.

Mr. Statler noted that regarding the relationship with Charleston, the MPO should avoid giving an impression of inability to reach a consensus on a project. He asked about the cause of this miscommunication.

Mr. Austin noted that the miscommunication probably occurred when DOH staff was including it as a GO-bond project, mistakenly assuming that the drainage project on Van Voorhis Rd, which was completed earlier, was the Van Voorhis Rd project proposed in the MPO's MTP, and that the requested Van Voorhis project is a different segment other than the the drainage project.

Mr. Austin noted that the MTP proposed that the Van Voorhis Rd from WV 705 and West Run for intersection improvements, roadway widening, and sidewalk. The engineers working on the project agree with the MPO's scope of work and the segment that needs improvement.

Mr. Justice noted that there is no guarantee that a project in the the GO-bond list will be constructed. The MPO should strategically work with the DOH to promote the projects in the area for the second-round of funding from the general obligation bonds.

Mr. Austin noted that the letter sent to the DOH also addressed the issue of Beechurst Ave project. The Beechurst Ave project was initially developed from the MPO's 2013 Long Range Transportation Plan and confirmed in the MPO's 2017 MTP Update. The project has been downsized from a full widening project to a spot improvement project. While the DOH conducted a study along the Beechurst Ave from 8th St to Pleasant St, the proposed improvements are only for the Beechurst from 8th St to 6th, which is not what the MPO requested. Given the amount of current funding for the project is enough to address the issues identified in the corridor. The project, as proposed by the DOH, will likely be cancelled because it is too short.

Mayor Kawecki noted that while it is important to maintain a healthy relationship with DOH, the MPO should be concerned when requesting them to do a project correctly. It is the obligation of the MPO and the DOH to invest in transportation infrastructure in accordance with the interest of the community, and the MPO deserves full attention and patience from the DOH.

Chairman Selin asked if the Van Voorhis Rd project in the MTP include any sidewalks. Mr. Austin noted that it includes sidewalks as well as landing pads on steep terrain to meet ADA requirement.

Mr. Justice asked about the schedule for the West Run project. Mr. Austin noted that there are some details needed to be worked out with Mountain Line Transit near the Bartlett House, a homeless shelter on West Run Rd. Besides that, the project is ready for construction.

Mayor Kawecki noted that the re-construction of Stansbury Hall for the WVU Business School will bring opportunities to improve the segment of Beechurst Ave and the nearby area.

Chairman Selin expressed her concern on the discrepancy between the expectation of the community and the actual improvements accomplished by the DOH.

Mr. Austin noted that the consultant for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Study will hold a public meeting on 20th to solicit community comment on the proposed improvement for pedestrians and cyclists. The consultant will also attend the WVU Safety Day event on 21st.

Mr. Austin noted that MPO staff attended FHWA/WVDOH/MPOs conference and WV MPO Association meeting. Mr. Austin noted that he was again volunteered to serve as the Chairman of the association.

Mr. Carr noted that the Mileground project will complete its right-of-way acquisition process in August, which will immediately followed by relocating utility poles. Because utility relocations involves outside agencies, the DOH cannot specify an exact timeline for that phase. It is expected that the DOH will begin the construction work on Mileground Rd in the summer of 2020.

Mr. Carr noted that the Collins Ferry project has completed design and right-of-way phase, and the project is moving forward to construction. The DOH has completed the construction of TWLTL project on Mon Blvd from Boyer Ave and Patteson Dr.

The DOH is working on the WV 705 resurfacing project. The first phase of the project is to repair the sidewalks that do not meet ADA requirement. Federal regulations require the DOH to provide curb ramps whenever streets, roadways, or highways are altered.

Mr. Justice noted that the road condition on Holland Ave from the Westover Triangle to the Westover Bridge has been in a poor condition for decades. It is a main road connecting Morgantown to the I-79 through Westover. Failing to maintain this route is an embarrassment to this community.

Mr. Carr noted that it is probably because the DOH has to repair, even replace, the sidewalks along that segment of Holland in order to comply with ADA requirement, before the travel lane can be altered for improvements. Given the steep terrain in that area, the cost of sidewalk improvements might prevent the DOH from doing a roadway improvement project.

5. Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

Mr. Austin noted that WV DOH has proposed several TIP amendments. They are: 1) the Morgantown Pedestrian Improvement Design Study on WV 705; 2) the I-79 Access Preliminary Investigation and Environmental Study; 3) I-79 Halleck Rd Overpass Construction; 4) Caperton Trail Drainage Construction; and 5) a modification on the I-79 Star City Interchange Improvement.

Mr. Austin noted that the information is presented for a consideration of provisional approval upon completion of the required public comment period, assuming that the MPO receives no adverse public comment relating to proposed amendments. If opposing comments are received, the amendments will be referred to the Policy Board for further discussion.

The TTAC and CAC unanimously recommended approval of these TIP Amendments, except the Star City Interchange Project. The CAC did not have a recommendation on the project because it had not been available for public comment prior to their meeting.

Mr. Justice moved to approve the amendments as presented, pending the completion of public comment period with no opposing comment; seconded by Mr. Statler. Mr. Bruffy questioned the accuracy of the project cost for the Halleck Rd overpass construction. Mr. Carr noted that the project cost is probably only for its engineering phase. With no further discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

6. Adoption of Performance Measures and Methodology

Mr. Austin noted that a draft of the MPO's planned performance measures was provided to the CAC and TTAC at the March meeting. Since then MPO staff has made some minor changes to the evaluation method. Mr. Austin noted that the MPO must adopt the performance measures, including the impact evaluation methodology, at the May meeting to satisfy federal requirements. Mr. Austin noted that the evaluation is not meant to prioritize the projects in MTP. It is used to evaluate the impact of MTP projects to the goals of performance measures established by the State. Mr. Jing Zhang, the MPO's Transportation Planner II, made a brief presentation on the proposed methodology for evaluating the MPO's performance measures.

Mr. Carr noted that performance measures only apply to interstate highways, non-interstate highways, and roads in the National Highway System (NHS). Mr. Austin noted that improvements on non-NHS roads might, to some extent, contribute to the State performance measures, especially regarding to congestion mitigation and safety.

Mr. Justice moved to adopt the performance measure methodology and the evaluation; seconded by Commissioner Hawkins. With no further discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

7. Public Involvement Policy Amendment

Mr. Austin noted that a recent proposal to amend the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan raised the issue of refining the MPO's Public Involvement Policy. Two matters were identified during the discussion of this issue. The first is to make sure that the members of the MPO's Committees are aware of any public meetings associated with proposed projects or changes to the MPO's MTP and TIP. The second is to identify the process needed to amend the MPO's MTP, particularly the fiscally constrained Tier One Project List. The TTAC and the CAC unanimously recommended the adoption of the proposed amendment. The CAC also recommended to require a two-step process for a project which is proposed to be amended to the MPO's tier one project list. The process includes 1) an amendment to the MPO's non-tier-one project list with a 30-day public comment period and 2) an amendment to the MPO's tier-one project list with a 45-day public comment period. Mr. Austin noted that this recommendation would require a change to the MTP's policies which has not been reviewed by the TTAC or advertised to the public.

Chairman Selin noted that the Policy Amendment will provide a clear process for MTP amendment and hence improve the planning process of the MPO.

Mr. Justice expressed his appreciation to committee's input on this issue. He noted that updating the public involvement policy is not a pressing issue for the MPO at the moment and suggested to table this discussion until the next policy board meeting. By doing so, board members will have more time to digest and evaluate the proposed changes.

Mr. Justice moved to defer the discussion of Public Involvement Policy Amendment to the Policy Board Meeting in June; seconded by Mr. Statler. With no further discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

8. Update on Status of Bicycle and Pedestrian Study

Mr. Austin noted that this item has been discussed at an earlier time of the meeting.

9. Other Business

Mr. Statler noted that proposed changes in the Public Involvement Policy would require a complete review of the MPO's Bylaw and suggested to establish a Bylaw Review Committee to perform this task. Chairman Selin agreed and proposed that policy board members, who are interested in serving on the Bylaw Review Committee, contact her within in week. Mr. Statler noted that he is willing to serve on the Committee.

Mr. Justice expressed his appreciation to Ted Hastings and Mary Hastings for their comments on the Greenbag Rd-Dorsey Ave intersection improvement project. He noted that potential impact of the project to adjacent property owners should be fully considered. Chairman Selin agreed and noted that the farmland adjacent to the intersection is productive, providing valuable contributions for the community in many aspects. Intersection improvements should avoid significantly diminishing the productivity of the farmland.

11. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM.