

MORGANTOWN MONONGALIA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
MARCH 20, 2014 MINUTES

Members Present: Vice-Chairman Wesley Nugent-City of Morgantown, Mayor Patricia Lewis-Granville, Major Jennifer Selin-City of Morgantown, Mile Kelly-Board of Education, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line, Joe Statler-Blacksville, Randy Hudak-WVU, Councilperson Marti Shamberger-City of Morgantown, Brian Carr-WVDOH, Commissioner Tom Bloom-Monongalia County.

Members Absent: Chairman Anthony Giambrone-Star City, Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover, Commissioner Eldon Callen-Monongalia County.

MPO Director: Bill Austin

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present, vice-chairman Nugent called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Public Comment

None.

III. Approval of Minutes

Vice-chairman Nugent then introduced the approval of the Minutes. Mr. Kelly moved to approve the January minutes as submitted; second by Mayor Lewis.

VI. Financial Report

Vice-chairman Nugent asked Mayor Lewis to present the finance report. Mayor Lewis presented the MPO's January and February activities as follows:

-Beginning balance in November \$13,250.36 with expenditures of \$17,725.34 and two deposits totaling \$13,610.50, leaving a balance of \$9,335.51 at the beginning of February. February expenditures totaled \$16,545.69 with two deposits totaling \$14,700.31, leaving a balance of \$7,490.13.

Mr. Bruffy moved for approval of the financial report as presented; second by Councilperson Shamberger. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

V. Committee Reports

Mr. Rice, Chair of the CAC, reported that the CAC had approved all TIP Amendments with two exceptions.

Mr. Rice noted that the first exception was the removal of the two way left turn lane project on Monongahela Boulevard between the coliseum and Shoney's. The CAC decided to keep this project and recommended that pedestrians and bicyclists needs to be accommodated, as supported by the MPO's complete street policy.

Mr. Rice further noted that the second exception was the project labeled as the WV7 and Brookhaven Rd Intersection project. The CAC found that the location of this project presented in the map is not

consistent with the project description provided by the WVDOH. The CAC, therefore, decided to make no decision on this project until the location of this project is clarified by the WVDOH.

Mr. Rice then stated that he has explained to CAC members about the procedural and functional differences between the county commission and the MPO and that the two entities do not necessarily share the same strategy in their business. He stated that the County Commissions initiative to fund improved maintenance of the roads within the County is completely different from the Chamber of Commerce's and MPO's initiative to find enhanced funding for new transportation facilities. Mr. Rice further stated that, as a personal note, he had distributed copies of the MPO by-laws to county commissioners in responding to a concern raised on the involvement of county commissioners in the MPO. The portions of the by-laws that describe the role of county commission in the MPO were highlighted. Vice-chairman Nugent thanked Mr. Rice for his report.

VI. Directors Report:

- a. Status of Mileground report to Policy Board-**Mr. Austin asked Mr. Carr to update the status of amending the report on the Mileground. Mr. Carr noted that the report that incorporates new information to be prepared by a contracting consultant will be complete and available for distribution in the April time frame. He acknowledged that this report has taken longer than people wanted and anticipated.

- b. Status of Ongoing TIP Projects-**Mr. Austin stated that he had asked the State about the status of five ongoing TIP projects. He described the projects as follows: The WV7 and Greenbag Rd Roundabout project had been contracted to a consulting firm for a study, and this project will be moving forward from there. The West Run widening project has moved to the design stage and was expected to be let this fall. Three projects are currently suspended until a new district design engineer is in place. They are: the Van Voorhis widening project, the University Ave and Collins Ferry Rd roundabout project, and the Patteson Plus One project. Mr. Austin added that the Patteson Plus One project is to add a turn line at the intersection of University Ave and WV 705, and it had been suggested that the project coordinates with WVU's Evansdale projects.

Mr. Statler inquired that since no policy board meeting is scheduled in April that if the Mileground Study is available for the board's review, if other portions of the Mileground project will be on hold until the report is approved by the Board in the meeting in May. Mr. Carr explained that amending the report needs to be approved by the Policy Board, in order to fulfill the environmental process required by the FHWA, and that the Mileground project can proceed only if the environmental process is cleared. Mr. Austin further added that the FHWA had made other comments on the environmental documents that WVDOH had submitted, and that the Mileground report addresses only part of those comments. He noted that the action of the MPO is not the only action required to move this project forward. Mr. Statler encouraged the board to consider a special meeting when the report is complete. Mr. Austin replied that he will either plan a special meeting in April or submit the report to the Board at the regular meeting in May, depending on the actual date the report is released.

Mayor Selin inquired about the nature of the new information to be presented in the amended Mileground report. Mr. Carr responded that the WVDOH had added more data to the original

report, including additional traffic count and a left-turn movement study, and had used additional modeling software to perform the analysis, and that the amended report will include those data, as well as most recent findings that are used in analyzing the corridor. He further noted that the WVDOH strives to provide the most updated information to the local community, and that since both alternatives are feasible, it depends on the local preference as to which one is to be implemented. Mr. Austin added that the original report was a planning level study, and the amending report is a design level study featuring more refined traffic projections and greater details. Mr. Bruffy pointed out that it is uncommon for a project to be revisited when the decision for that project had been made four years ago.

- c. Increased Staff Capability with Software Purchase and Upcoming Training-**Mr. Austin reported that the MPO had purchased the Synchro Light, a traffic modeling software used to analyze intersection and corridor operations, and that Mr. Zhang will undergo training for the software, so that the MPO will be capable of doing more refined the type of traffic modeling.

Mr. Austin further reported that in June MPO staff intend to attend a training sponsored by the WVDOH on accessing accident data and a training hosted by the FHWA on performance measures, as required by the Federal Transportation Reauthorization Bill which designated that assess the MPO's and State DOT's performance should be evaluated by establishing targets and evaluating the progress toward the achievement of the those targets. Mr. Austin also noted that he will attend a biannual conference on transportation planning in small and medium sized communities, which is hosted by the Transportation Research Board at Burlington, VT in July. As a personal note, Mr. Austin mentioned that he will take the second week of April for vacation.

VII. Auditors Recommendation

Mr. Austin reported that the MPO's auditor concluded their review of the MPO's books last month with two minor comments, which are the recommendation that additional signatory be designated by the MPO Policy Board for expense checks issued to the MPO Director and the recommendation that MPO's bookkeeping firm classify the MPO's expenses in a more consistent format for auditing purposes.

Mayor Selin moved a motion to appoint the current chairperson, Mr. Giambrone, and subsequent chairpersons, as the additional signatory for the MPO's account, seconded by Mr. Kelly. The motion was unanimously approved.

IIX. Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

Mr. Austin reported that Mountain Line requests that the TIP be administratively adjusted to include an increase in Section 5370 funding in the current fiscal year. Other amendments to TIP projects include:

- Inspection of I-68 bridge on Cheat Lake with total cost of \$660,000 in fiscal year 2015;
- New interchange on I-79 with increased funding by 22%, leaving total coast of \$14,000,000, which includes \$12,600,000 federal funds;
- Intersection realignment of the Beechurst Avenue/Campus Drive intersection to be a four-way intersection requested by the WVDOH and the WVU;
- Intersection improvement design report on US 19/WV17 with total cost of \$50,000.

Mr. Austin further reported on the proposed signal installation and lane modifications project on WV7 at intersection with CR 70 and CR7/22. He commented that after communicating with the WVDOH and the discussion at last TTAC meeting, it is understood that the location of this intersection was on Tyrone Rd, which was initially incorrectly described by the WVDOH as Brookhaven Rd. He added that it is this project that the CAC was referring to when they abstained from making any recommendation until the confusion is dispelled.

Next, Mr. Austin reported on the request for a the TIP amendment to remove the two way left turn lane on Monongalia Boulevard between Patteson Drive and Shoney's from the TIP. He noted that while no definite reason was provided by the WVDOH for the removal of this project, discussions at the TTAC meeting suggested that it may partly be because of the concerns with the potentially rising cost of accommodating pedestrian needs and the elimination of game-day parking capacity in the project area. He also noted that the CAC recommended to not remove this project and to ask the WVDOH to consider implementing the complete street policy along the corridor, which could mean, as for this project, providing wider shoulders to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety. He further noted that the TTAC recommended to remove this project, while expressing concern about the cause of the removal.

Mr. Austin asked Mr. Carr for any further comments on the TIP amendments report. Mr. Carr stated that the report was complete and no further comment was needed.

Mayor Selin asked to clarify the location for project on at Tyrone Rd and WV7. Mr. Austin confirmed that DOH was reporting that the project location is at the intersection of Tyrone Rd and WV7, and that the map presented to the Board was correct, but that the project description was incorrect. Mr. Carr concurred and added that the reason for the confusion is that the road name of this project used by the Charleston office is different from that used by local communities. Mr. Austin further raised his concern that the public had not been adequately informed about this issue and public confusion pertaining this project may exist.

Commissioner Bloom commented that the Board members should be provided with more opportunities to understand the pros and cons of each TIP project presented to the Board for vote. He also stated that he would be more comfortable if the decision making process of the MPO become more involved with the public. He noted that he felt the Board should have a briefing session similar to City Council's work session two weeks prior to being asked to vote on projects.

Mr. Austin noted that the TIP amendments were initiated from various agencies, such as the WVDOH, Mountain Line, and WVU, reviewed by the TTAC and the CAC, sent to the Policy Board as in the meeting package, and advertised in the Newspaper in ten days advance of the meeting. He also noted that the MPO is only authorized to vote for or against proposed TIP projects using federal funds, and the Federal process is not structured to participate in the discussion of design details for each proposed project. He also noted that the MPO cannot originate transportation improvement program projects.

Commissioner Bloom asked how areas without MPO's were involved in the process, do they have any say? Mr. Austin confirmed that in the absence of an MPO the Department of Transportation simply proceeds without any local approval.

Mr. Kelly suggested the interested Policy Board members sit on in the TTAC and CAC meetings and discuss proposed projects with those committee members, which provides them an opportunity to get familiarized with those projects prior to the Policy Board meeting.

Mr. Bruffy added that there are also local improvement funds managed by district office that are used for local improvements and that these funds are not listed in the TIP as projects.

Mayor Selin inquired if the MPO has the opportunity to review the plan for a project before it is implemented. Mr. Austin responded that more detailed project information is usually provided to the MPO for review when a project has a significant impact on local communities, such as the one on University Avenue and Collins Ferry Road, and MPO is provided with limited information on projects with relatively smaller impact. Mayor Selin also asked if more information could be provided by the WVDOH on the proposed TIP projects, and that there should be more active communications between the MPO and WVDOH so that local intersects and concerns are recognized and addressed. She noted that on occasion the DOH has changed the design of a project, such as the inclusion of a sidewalk on a road without notifying local officials and the local officials end up being the ones who receive the phone calls about the changes from the public.

Mr. Carr noted that for most TIP amendments projects, WVDOH had limited information available to present to the Board for vote. He also noted that a project is divided in several phases, and as the procedure requires, it cannot proceed to the later phases unless its first phase is approved by the Board. He further noted that Public opinion is sought for projects with substantial impacts.

Mr. Statler commented that priority should be given to intersections which have higher crash-fatality frequency and rate. He also pointed out that for decisions previously made by the Board members, there should be an awareness that the Board members made their decisions based on the best information available to them at that time, and it is inappropriate to judge the correctness of those decisions in the light of the new information which emerges after those decisions were made.

Mayor Selin moved approval of the TIP Amendments, except for the removal of the two way turn lane project on Monongalia Boulevard, seconded by Mr. Kelly. The motion was approved. Commissioner Bloom abstained.

Mr. Kelly moved approval of the signal installation and lane modifications project on WV7 at intersection with CR70 and CR7/2, with the assumption that the project location is at the WV7 and Tyrone Rd, "Pioneer Rocks", intersection, seconded by Councilperson Shamberger. The motion was unanimously approved.

No action was taken on the item for the removal of two way turn lane project on Monongalia Boulevard.

IX. Downtown Operation Study Presentation

Mr. Austin introduced the draft Downtown Operations Study presentation by Dr. Andrew Nichols. He noted that the Study had originally been requested by the downtown businesses in 2008-2009. The MPO had requested that the Study be performed in 2010 and the initial data collection for the Study was performed in 2011. He noted that this is an informational item only and that no action on this item is requested at this time.

Dr. Nichol's introduced the Study noting that the primary purpose of the Study was to examine the possibility of turning the one-way street pairs, particularly Spruce Street and High Street into two-way streets. He described the data collection and modeling effort that went into developing the Study. He noted that making this change would require several changes to other streets and intersections throughout downtown which he described in his presentation. He noted that he examined an "ideal" alternative which would require numerous changes to the street network and but which would most likely have unacceptable impacts on the downtown and two primary "realistic" alternatives that only differed on how they treat the intersection of University Avenue and Willey Street. He also noted that any of the alternatives would require the loss of several parking spaces.

Dr. Nichol's stated that ultimately it would be possible to make these changes and that they would likely not increase or decrease the amount of congestion but simply shift it around. He noted that it might be able to make these changes as well as improve traffic operations if the community were willing to look at the acquisition of some property for traffic improvements. He stated that if the community felt that the results of this draft Study warranted further investigation that additional modeling would be needed to completely identify which improvements would be necessary to minimize the impact on downtown while improving the access to downtown businesses.

Primary concerns from the Board members on this study included: the number and the accessibility of downtown parking space, the impact of pedestrian traffic in the WVU's downtown campus, and the impact of changing High Street and Spruce Street to two-way streets.

X. Adoption of Draft Bicycle Plan

Mr. Austin stated that the MPO staff had been developing a bicycle plan, as recommended in the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. The plan was based on the framework established by the Greater Morgantown Bicycle Plan and intended to be implemented in a cost effective manner. He further stated that, once adopted, the recommended bicycle network of this plan will be loaded into the PROVIS, an online project mapping platform hosted by the state DOT, through which the proposed bicycle network routes can be identified and incorporated into planning and designing analysis at district offices.

Mr. Austin also noted that the Bicycle Plan Steering Committee, the TTAC, and the CAC had reviewed the plan and recommended it to the Policy Board for adoption.

Mr. Bruffy mentioned that the state legislature had recently modified the law pertaining to bicycling on the street. He asked that if any part of the plan is not consistent with the recently modified bicycle law. Mr. Austin responded that there is no conflict between the proposed bicycle plan and the bicycle law recently modified.

Mayor Selin moved approval of the draft bicycle plan, seconded by Mr. Bruffy. The motion was unanimously approved.

XI. Other Business

Mr. Kelly inquired about status of proposed Monongahela bridge project. Mr. Austin responded that the RFQ is scheduled is budgeted for upcoming fiscal year. He stated that the RFQ for the Study should be coming to the Policy Board in the May-June time frame.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 PM.