



## POLICY BOARD MEETING

County Commission Chambers  
243 High Street, Morgantown, WV 26505

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024, 6 PM

### **Members Present:**

Chairman Joe Statler – Blacksville, Mike Kelly – Board of Education, Tom Bloom - Monongalia County, Mayor Bob Lucci – City of Westover, Ron Justice – West Virginia University, Steve Blinco – Star City, Bill Kawecki – City of Morgantown, Brian Carr – WVDOH, Sean Sikora – Monongalia County, Maria Smith – Mountain Line Transit Authority, Mayor Patricia Lewis - Town of Granville, Mayor Jenny Selin, Morgantown, Joe AbuGhannam - City of Morgantown, , Jeffrey Arnett – Monongalia County, Russ Rogerson - Morgantown Area Partnership

**Others Present:** Donna Hardy - WVDOH, Jing Zhang, Jackie Peate

**MPO Director:** Bill Austin, AICP

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### **1. Call to Order**

With a quorum present, Chairman Statler called the meeting of the Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMMPO) Policy Board to order at ~6:00 PM.

### **2. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Justice moved to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Mr. Austin noted that Ms. Smith noted some minor grammatical errors, which were fixed. With no further discussion, the minutes passed unanimously.

### **4. Committee Reports**

#### *a. Citizens Advisory Committee*

Mr. Austin stated there was a quorum at the last CAC Meeting. Everyone was supportive of items presented and unanimously recommended the items. The CAC reviewed an ongoing Electric Vehicle study that will be presented to the Policy Board at a later date.

#### *b. Finance*

Mayor Lewis provided the Finance Committee Update, and noted there was a minor mistake in the journal entry for Kimley Horn for December, but this has been fixed.

She provided the financial report for the month of January. The beginning balance in January was \$37,773.37, there were 4 deposits totaling \$69,689.93, 20 disbursements totaling \$30,972.16, leaving the ending balance at \$76,483.14. This carried over into February. There were 3 deposits in February totaling \$81,451.15, 19 disbursements totaling \$64,349.58, leaving the ending balance at \$93,587.71.

Mr. Justice moved to approve the Financial Report; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Commissioner Sikora asked where beginning balance was for January, and Mr. Austin stated it is at the top of the balance sheet, just in very small font. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

*c. Executive Director*

Mr. Austin stated that the MPO Staff has been busy with the Harmony Groove and Industrial Park projects and that the state is moving forward with these projects. Staff is working to schedule a Downtown Microsimulation Study Steering Committee Meeting in April. The State is working on a RAISE grant for Fairmont Road, and this grant has been submitted. Mr. Austin stated he will be meeting with DOH and FHWA to discuss the Harmony Grove Interchange project. Staff is working on a contract for AECOM to work on evaluating and doing a quality control check for the model for the Downtown Microsimulation Study. DOH is reporting the Van Voorhis and West Run Project are beginning construction this year. The MPO wrote support letters for the Brookhaven Rd. project. Staff got a NOFO for non-motorized vehicles connected paths, this is in the MTP and we will be in discussion with city and county for proposed trail. Mr. Austin noted he has been elected as the Chair of WVAMPO.

## **5. Presentation-WVDOH Traffic Engineering-Vulnerable Road Users Initiative**

Donna Hardy, PE, Assistant Director of Traffic Engineering for WVDOH made a presentation about Vulnerable Road Users at the March Policy Board Meeting. She began by providing background information on Vulnerable Road Users. A Vulnerable Road User (VRU) is a non-motorist including pedestrians, bicyclists, other cyclists, or persons using a mobility assistance device (ex: wheelchair). This also includes highway workers on foot. A motorcyclist is not considered a VRU. The VRU study is an assessment of the safety performance of a State with respect to VRUs as required by the Federal Highway Administration. The State has prepared a plan to improve VRU Safety. There are on average 66 VRU fatalities and serious injuries in West Virginia every year. WVDOH held several public meetings and sent out surveys for input as a part of developing the plan.

The Public Survey asked two main questions, with 648 total respondents:

- What Barriers Discourage You from Walking or Biking?
- What Do You Think Are the Most Promising Investments for Road Safety?

Seventy three percent of participants said that lack of facilities discourage walking and biking, while sixty three percent of participants said that unsafe areas to cross traffic discourage walking and biking. Sixty nine percent of participants said that more pedestrian infrastructure is the most promising investment for road safety, while fifty nine percent of participants said that more bike infrastructure is the most promising investment for road safety. The State's Crash Data showed that in Mon County, there were 8 identified High Injury Networks. It was found that seventy one

percent of the drivers involved with incidents were men. Seventy three percent of the VRU's involved in incidents were men. The top two VRU activities in fatal and serious injury crashes were pedestrian crossing mid-block at 32.5%, and pedestrian walking in travel lane at 23.6%. These crashes tend to occur at nighttime, and impairment played a role in many of these crashes. The Strategies and Next Steps include providing VRU accommodations along the High Injury Network and High-Risk Segments, educating road users on VRU safety, reducing vehicle speeds in areas with high VRU presence, updating crash reports for more specific VRU details, and a bi-annual reviews of VRU crash data and the status of strategy implementation. WVDOH is also focusing on improvements for Brookhaven Rd and Exit 155, in addition to other high priority projects and areas of need.

Commissioner Bloom asked about the Smithtown Rd Project, and Ms. Hardy clarified it is in the design process, and construction and ROW will occur after design concludes.

Mr. Kawecki asked about bump outs on the Walnut St. potential project design shown in the presentation. Ms. Hardy said the design is conceptual. He also asked about the use of cameras by WVDOH. WVDOH uses these cameras for analysis and safety. Mayor Selin asked if Morgantown will see more crosswalks, and Ms. Hardy said these are included in the VRU.

Mr. Kelly asked about the signage project and if there will be differing signs for cars versus trucks for safety. Ms. Hardy said WVDOH is looking at this, and the WV511 app has more truck specific information.

Upon discussing the Other Projects of Interest, Mr. Blinco expressed disappointment that the Exit 155 has been pushed back from Spring to Fall. He was disappointed in the delays, and was very concerned about how the traffic backs up on the interstate and causes safety issues. Mr. Blinco asked if the panhandlers are part of the data, as there are many near Exit 155, and stated this exit is the entrance to Morgantown. Commissioner Bloom asked how there are temporary lights elsewhere, and how to get the temporary lights for Exit 155 until the project can be completed. Ms. Hardy stated she is not an expert in signals so she cannot give a proper answer. Commissioner Bloom brought up the temporary lights on 119, and asked why this cannot happen for Exit 155. Mr. Carr stated that was an emergency situation and Exit 155 is a different category. He said WVDOH has to be aware unintended consequences, and they cannot throw lights up for that period of time without going through the proper channels and analysis. Mr. Austin stated they are looking at a Syncro Model which analyses how to avoid backing traffic up. Once this is completed temporary signals may go in, but you have to get the signal timing right with the amount of traffic at Exit 155. Mr. Carr said there are FHWA requirements they have to abide by as it is an interchange. Ms. Hardy will bring back the feedback from the Policy Board to the WVDOH. Chair Statler asked about putting sticks up to make sure people cannot switch lanes. Mr. Carr stated this may not help the situation (he cannot give an exact answer), but that better signage would help. Ms. Hardy stated that speeding is the biggest problem with safety, and they are addressing this issue. Mayor Selin asked if they are looking at expanding widths of sidewalks and shoulders, and Ms. Hardy said that they are. Mr. Carr said to keep in mind that wider shoulders can encourage speeding, and mentioned it is a balance to keep traffic calming but create space for pedestrians. Mr. AbuGhannam asked about using the Clover Leaf design, and Ms. Hardy said they tend to avoid this design as it takes an enormous amount of Right of Way to complete.

## 6. TIP Amendments and Adjustments

Mr. Austin stated that the TTAC and the CAC both unanimously recommended approval of the TIP Amendments. The Amendments and Adjustments are as follows:

West Virginia Department of Transportation-Division of Highways (WV DOH) has requested the following TIP amendments:

- West Run Road (GO BOND 4): Total cost increase, Federal ID change. Federal ID: STP0671010D. Construction. FY2024. Improve intersection. Federal Funds: \$1,958,674, Total Funds: \$19,586,739
- Morgantown Industrial Park Access Rd: Move the ROW phase to state funded. Federal ID: STBG2023313D. Right-of-way. FY2024. Construct new road and bridge. Federal Funds: \$0, Total Funds: \$2,500,000

Mr. Blinco moved to approve the WVDOH TIP amendments; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Mountain Line Transit Authority (MLTA) has requested the following TIP amendments:

- Revenue Rolling Stock Replacement 5339 (for purchase of revenue producing vehicles)
  - FY 2024: Adjust federal funding from \$403,808 to \$212,455, Local funding from \$100,952 to \$53,114.
  - FY 2025: Adjust federal funding from \$153,000 to \$453,486, Local funding from \$38,250 to \$113,372.
  - FY 2026: Adjust federal funding from \$153,000 to \$150,000, Local funding from \$38,250 to \$37,500.
  - FY 2027: Adjust federal funding from \$153,000 to \$150,000, Local funding from \$38,250 to \$37,500.

Mr. Justice moved to approve the MLTA TIP amendments; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ausitn stated the Administrative Adjustments were as follows:

- Exit 152 NB and SB Ramps (AC PAYBACK). Construction phase. Federal ID: HSIP0119502D. - funding decrease
- Burrough St (AC PAYBACK). Construction phase. Federal ID: STP0592002D. – funding increase
- Rubble Run I-Bean. Engineering phase. Federal ID: STBG0071165D.- funding increase
- Dellslow Arch. Engineering phase. Federal ID: STBG0007341D - moved to 2025 and funding increase
- Smithtown W-Bean ROW. Federal ID: STBG0073098D - funding changes to \$0 for both state and federal funds

The following projects will be removed from the MMMPO TIP Highway Project Table, because their funds have been obligated:

- Smithtown Rd Traffic Signal. Construction phase. Federal ID: HSIP0119502D.
- Smithtown Rd Traffic Signal. Row of Way phase. Federal ID: HSIP0119501D.
- Dunkard Ave Sidewalks Phase V. Construction phase. Federal ID: TAP2018216D.
- US 119 Morgantown Lighting. Construction phase. Federal ID: NHPP0119493D.
- Interstate 68 Overpass. Row of Way phase. Federal ID: NHPP0119513D.
- Greenbag Rd (GO BOND 4). Construction phase. Federal ID: NFA2317022D.

These were informational items.

### **7. Draft Unified Planning Work Program**

Mr. Austin stated that the UPWP for FY 2024-2025 is similar to the draft UPWP presented to the Policy Board in January. The UPWP proposes that both the City of Morgantown and the Monongalia County Commission would be asked to provide \$20,000 in match for the upcoming fiscal year. The propose budget includes a 5% cost of living increase for MPO Staff.

Since the January meeting staff has modified the draft UPWP to include the following items:

-Hiring a consultant to prepare a preliminary design/feasibility study for the proposed pedestrian overpass on Don Knott's Boulevard. The City of Morgantown will be providing the entire local match needed for this project.

-Preparation of a pedestrian safety study for University Avenue from Pattenon Drive to Boyers Avenue in Star City by MPO Staff. This project is a priority for Star City and the City of Morgantown.

-Modify the budget to accommodate a 14% increase in the cost of medical insurance for staff. Staff received the notification of this change on March 8th. Previously staff had budgeted for a 10% cost increase.

Both the TTAC and CAC unanimously recommended approval of the UPWP.

Commissioner Sikora moved to approve the UPWP; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### **8. 2018-2022 Crash Report**

Mr. Austin stated to find the report on crashes in the urban area for the period 2018 to 2022 included with the agenda. The report was prepared from data provided to the MPO by WVDOH. The report identifies high incident locations and corridors in the area in the recommendations section beginning on page 7. The reports appendices also include extensive mapping that may be accessed from the MPO's website [www.planttogether.org](http://www.planttogether.org). Both the TTAC and CAC unanimously recommended adoption of this report.

Mr. Blinco moved to approve the 2018-2022 Crash Report as presented; seconded by Commissioner Bloom. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### **9. Community Garden Program Update**

Mr. Austin provided an update on the Community Garden Program. Since the Policy Board approved the MPO's Agreement with the City of Morgantown for the Community Garden Project MPO and City Staff have been seeking applicants for the program. As of this time there has been one incomplete application for the program. Also, due to the fact that no Policy Board members volunteered to serve on the applicant selection committee, MPO Chairman Statler appointed Andrew Gast-Bray and the MPO Executive Director as the MPO's members of the applicant selection committee. The City of Morgantown appointed Planning Director Rickie Yeager and Katherine Millette of the City's Public Works Department to represent the City on the selection committee. Due to a lack of qualified applicants the application date was extended until April 22.

### **10. Executive Directors Review**

Chairman Statler moved the Policy Board in an Executive Session.

Once the session was complete, Chairman Statler stated they are pleased with Mr. Austin's performance and that the board decided on a 5% raise for him as the Executive Director. Mr. Austin thanked the board, and thanked them for the feedback they provide.

### **11. Other Business**

Commissioner Bloom stated they have received \$1.5 million through Senator Mansion from the Infrastructure Bill for Harmony Groove.

Commissioner Arnett said his office is on Greenbag road and he was approached by appraisers, meaning they are moving forward with the project.

### **12. Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.