



243 High Street Room 026
Morgantown, WV 26505
(304) 291-9571
www.plantgether.org

Agenda

MPO Policy Board Meeting
1751 Earl Core Road
Morgantown WV
August 17, 2023

6:00 PM

1. Call To Order
2. Public Comment Period
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Committee Reports
 - a. Citizens Advisory Committee
 - b. Finance Committee
 - c. Executive Director Report
5. Transportation Improvement Program Amendment
6. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment
7. Other Business
8. Meeting Adjournment



243 High Street Rm. 026
Morgantown, WV 26505
(304) 291-9571
www.plantogether.org

Memorandum

Date: August 10, 2023
To: Policy Board Members
From: Bill Austin, AICP
Subject: August 17, 2023 Policy Board Meeting Agenda Items

This memorandum is to inform you of the items under consideration in the August Policy Board Agenda.

-Finance Report-Please note that the MPO issued a check in the amount of \$100,000 to WVDOH for the match for the Downtown Microsimulation Study. **Due to several issues and after discussion with WVDOH it was determined that the MPO could accomplish a contract with the selected consultant more quickly than WVDOH could by utilizing the MPO's On Call consultant contract.** We therefore stopped payment on the check which is reflected in the July Finance Report.

-TIP Amendments and Adjustments-MPO staff is requesting that the Policy Board amend the TIP to include suballocated STBG funding for the Downtown Microsimulation Study Scope of Work. The TTAC and CAC previously reviewed the scope of work for this project and the participating entities have provided the match necessary for the project. The details of the proposed TIP Amendment are below:

Downtown Morgantown Microsimulation Study Project Number STBG2023315D Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds suballocated to the MMMPO \$500,000-Federal Funds \$400,000 Local funds \$100,000

The TTAC and the CAC unanimously recommended approval of the TIP Amendment to the MPO Policy Board.

-Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendment- Please see the two memorandums and a letter from MRTC transmitted with the Agenda for detailed information on this item. The TTAC unanimously recommended approval of moving the Southern Bridge to Tier Two of the MPO's Priority List. The CAC recommended moving Southern Bridge to Tier Two of the MPO Priority List by a vote of 4 to 1. The TTAC did not express a preference for either alternative location for the proposed bridge. The CAC recommended Alternative 3 to the Policy Board. Four (4) members voted for the alternative and one (1) member abstained.



POLICY BOARD MEETING

Monongalia Board of Education
1751 Earl L. Core Road. Morgantown. WV. 26505

June 15th, 2023, 6 PM

Members Present:

Chairman Mike Kelly – Board of Education, Joe Abu-Ghannam - City of Morgantown, Tom Bloom - Monongalia County, Jeffrey Arnett – Monongalia County, Steve Blinco – Star City, Dave Bruffy – Mountain Line Transit Authority, Mayor Bob Lucci – City of Westover, Ron Justice – West Virginia University, Bil Kawecki – City of Morgantown, Delegate Joe Statler – Blacksville, Sean Sikora – Monongalia County, Mayor Jennifer Selin – City of Morgantown

Others Present:

Glenn Adrian – Enrout Prop. (MIP)

MPO Director: Bill Austin, AICP

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Chair Kelly 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

Commissioner Sikora moved to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Bloom. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Committee Reports

a. Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Mr. Austin noted there was a quorum at the last CAC meeting. They recommended the adoption of the TIP Amendments and the Downtown Microsimulation Study.

b. Finance Committee

Mayor Lewis was not able to attend the meeting. Mr. Austin noted her finance report was included in the agenda. The beginning balance was \$97,821.66, with one deposit of \$20,475.33, and 19 disbursements totaling \$20,898.39. The final balance was \$97,398.54.

Mr. Kawecki moved to approve the finance report as presented; seconded by Mayor Lucci. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

c. Executive Director

Mr. Austin noted that he and Chairman Kelly met with the Dominion Post and had a good conversation about the MPO and projects around the county. Mr. Austin also attended the Smithtown Road Design Study Meeting where the DOH was developing the scope of work for the project. He also attended the State Safety Plan Steering Committee Implementation Meeting. Mr. Austin said he mentioned keeping Brookhaven Road moving forward at this meeting.

5. Update on Harmony Grove Interchange-Glenn Adrian

Glen Adrian provided an update on the Harmony Grove interchange process. Interstate Justification Report and NEPA reports are required as part of this process and are moving forward. They were submitted to the DOH, who modified the reports, and then submitted them to the Federal Highway Administration. The FHA suggested adding 10 years to the original plan due to delays in approval, taking the project timeline from 2020-2040 to 2020-2050. Working with their consultants, HDR, and consultants from the MPO, they were able to speed up the process. Currently the data has been revised and engineers are working on putting it in the IJR with hopes of resubmitting it to the DOH, then to the FHA promptly. The FHA has 30 days to review document, propose questions, and potentially approve it.

Mr. Statler asked about signage for trucks to not go up the hill past the schools. Mr. Adrian confirmed new signage will be installed within 30 days to help override the GPS telling them to go through on the Upper River Road. Commissioner Bloom thanked Mr. Adrian for installing the signs to help reduce traffic on the Upper River Road.

6. Update on Exit 155 Modification

Megan O'Reilly provided an update on the Exit 155 Modification. This has been broken up into two phases. She noted that Phase I of construction should begin within a year. West Ridge, along with the county and WVDOH have been working together to keep the process moving.

Mr. Justice asked about how the traffic will be reconfigured as cars exit the interstate. Ms. O'Reilly clarified this will be addressed in Phase 2.

Councilperson Kawecki asked about a timeline for the project. Ms. O'Reilly said design for Phase 1 should be in the next few weeks. Construction within a year. The timeline for Phase 2 will be determined once Phase 1 begins.

Mr. Statler raised concern about traffic backing up, and he suggested putting up temporary sticks or temporarily painting lines to aid with traffic flow. She stated she will relay this message.

Commissioner Bloom suggested that if everyone agrees verbally, to ask Mr. Austin to pass along concerns brought up by Mr. Statler. Everyone verbally agreed.

7. Transportation Improvement Program Amendments and Adjustments

Mr. Austin noted a TIP Amendment for the Mountain Line Transit Authority was left out. It has been duly advertised in the newspaper and on the MPO's website. Mr. Bruffy noted it included 4 different funding sources.

Mr. Austin then discussed the proposed TIP Amendments and Administrative changes to the MPO's TIP under the MPO's recently adopted policy. The TTAC and CAC both recommend passing this policy. Administrative changes include bridge reconstruction and refurbishment. These changes came due to a new STIP being implemented. The proposed TIP Amendment is to program the Right of Way acquisition and construction of the Smithtown Road/US 119 intersection. The Right of Way Phase is \$100,000, with \$90,000 in Federal Funds. The Obligation Date is 4/28/2024. The Construction Phase has \$ \$1,080,000 in Federal Funds and \$1,200,000 in total funds. The Obligation Date is 6/28/2024.

Mr. Austin noted the MPO is asking the DOH for better locational information, including a map for their TIP Amendments.

There were two motions to approve; one for Mountain Line and one for the Highway TIP Amendment.

Mr. Bruffy moved to approve the Mountain Line TIP Amendment seconded by Mr. Statler. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Selin moved to approve the Highway TIP Amendment seconded by Commissioner Bloom. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

8. Downtown Microsimulation Study Scope of Work

Mr. Austin noted that the next item was the scope of work for the Downtown Microsimulation Study for planning and traffic engineering services for the Morgantown Downtown Traffic Study. The purpose of the 'Downtown Traffic Study' is to recommend potential future reconfigurations of the downtown Morgantown transportation network based on a data driven process with additional input from the community and stakeholders. A draft of the Scope has been reviewed by the Study Steering Committee members. Kimley Horn has modified the Scope per those comments. This project is funded with \$400,000 of Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Funding. Part of MPO's suballocation are these funds. \$100,000 of funding coming from Monongalia County, City of Morgantown, Morgantown Area Partnership, and WVU. Mr. Austin noted that Mr. Gatlin raised a concern about the language including pedestrian safety in the TTAC meeting. The language will be adjusted to address this. Data collection is projected to begin in October when students are back in town. The TTAC and CAC both recommend passing this policy. If the Policy Board accepts this, the MPO will enter into a contract with the DOH for them to enter the contract with Kimley Horn to complete the work.

Commissioner Sikora moved to approve the Downtown Microsimulation Study Scope of Work seconded by Mr. Bruffy.

Commissioner Sikora asked about the list of ‘studies’ being done. Mr. Austin clarified the software being used will combine many studies and simulate how traffic would flow in Downtown Morgantown. It provides delay statistics, you can experiment with eliminating one-way streets, etc. There are many forms of analysis. Mr. Austin noted this is working on a minute-to-minute scale compared to the Regional Travel Demand model; this is a very focused project.

Councilperson Kawecky asked about the time frame. Mr. Austin noted that while we have data, there will be another data collection event in October. Once data is collected the Steering Committee will look at the preliminary report around the timeline frame of March-May. Mr. Austin said in about a year the Policy Board may be presented with alternatives, and they can begin discussion on which is best. He clarified a more walkable downtown may be a preferred outcome.

Mr. Justice mentioned some of the streets around WVU technically have right of way to create two-way traffic. He asked if the model could demonstrate this two-way traffic, even though it is parking currently. Mr. Austin clarified the study can do this.

Mayor Selin noted that downtown traffic is congested, and this model would be great to find alternatives to help. She suggested an automatic pedestrian phase with signals.

With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

9. Appointment of Auditor Selection Committee

Mr. Austin noted the MPO needs an Auditor Selection Committee of at least three individuals. Mr. Austin and Mayor Lewis had already volunteered themselves for the Committee, and Mr. Austin suggested another Policy Board member volunteer. Commissioner Sikora volunteered.

10. Old Business

a. Suballocation Project Selection Policy

Mr. Austin noted this Policy was submitted to the Board in the May meeting. The Board requested more time for review. Meetings were held for questions and comments. Mr. Austin called the two Board members who had concerns, and the concerns were addressed in the new draft.

Mr. Justice moved to approve the Suballocation Project Selection Policy, seconded by Mr. Statler.

Mr. Statler thanked Mr. Austin and Staff for listening to his concerns.

With no further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

11. Other Business

Mr. Blinco raised concern about excessive grass and weeds in the community. He mentioned sidewalks, sides of roads, etc., look terrible and can cause safety issues. Mr. Blinco asked Mr.

Austin what can be done. He said there is not much they can do unless a tree or bush is blocking a view, and this can be reported to the DOH as a safety concern. Mr. Austin also suggested working with a Clean Communities Campaign to encourage cleaning up grass and weeds for safety.

12. Meeting Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Morgantown - Mon County Trans. Planning Org.
 Checking Account
 As of July 31, 2023

10:58 AM

08/09/2023

Accrual Basis

Type	Date	Num	Name	Memo	Class	Cr	Split	Amount	Balance
Centra-Checking (voucher checks)									92,311.22
Deposit	07/05/2023		Monongalia County	Deposit J Peate		√	Salary	2,083.33	94,394.55
Deposit	07/11/2023		City of Morgantown	Annual Match and Downtown Study Match		√	PL Funds Match	30,000.00	124,394.55
Deposit	07/12/2023		Monongalia County	Deposit Annual Match and Downtown Study		√	PL Funds Match	30,000.00	154,394.55
Check	07/14/2023	9561	City of Morgantown			√	Salary	-117.00	154,277.55
Check	07/14/2023	6133	Jing Zhang	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,674.82	152,602.73
Check	07/14/2023	6134	Jacqueline G. Peate	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,749.47	150,853.26
Check	07/14/2023	6135	J. William B. Austin	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-2,782.97	148,070.29
Check	07/14/2023	6136	ICMA. Retirement Corp			√	Salary	-2,158.69	145,911.60
Check	07/14/2023	941	IRS	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,974.36	143,937.24
Deposit	07/27/2023		West Virginia University	Deposit Downtown Micro Study		√	STBG Match	12,500.00	156,437.24
Check	07/31/2023	9562	Association of Metropolitan Planning Org	Conference Fees			Dues and Subscrip	-645.00	155,792.24
Check	07/31/2023	9563	Centra Bank - Mastercard	Parking fees for staff			Travel & Ent (Trav	-1,817.34	153,974.90
Check	07/31/2023	9564	Fringe Benefits Management Company				Salary	-386.92	153,587.98
Check	07/31/2023	9566	WVDOH	VOID: Downtown Microsimulation Study GJ		√	STBG Match	0.00	153,587.98
Check	07/31/2023	9567	Public Employees Insurance Agency				Salary	-3,488.32	150,099.66
Check	07/31/2023	6140	Jing Zhang	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,626.77	148,472.89
Check	07/31/2023	6141	Jacqueline G. Peate	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,678.06	146,794.83
Check	07/31/2023	6142	J. William B. Austin	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-2,785.79	144,009.04
Check	07/31/2023	6143	ICMA. Retirement Corp				Salary	-2,158.69	141,850.35
Check	07/31/2023	941	IRS	Electronic Transfer			Salary	-1,928.48	139,921.87
Check	07/31/2023	07312	WV Dept of Tax and Revenue	Electronic Transfer			Salary	-446.00	139,475.87
General Jour	07/31/2023	16RRI	WVDOH	For CHK 9566 voided on 08/07/2023		√	STBG Match	-100,000.00	39,475.87
Total Centra-Checking (voucher checks)									39,475.87
TOTAL									

Morgantown - Mon County Trans. Planning Org.
 Checking Account
 As of June 30, 2023

10:55 AM
 08/09/2023

Type	Date	Num	Name	Memo	Class	Clr	Split	Amount	Balance
Centra-Checking (voucher checks)									98,225.83
Check	06/15/2023	9552	Dominion Post	TIP		√	Public Notices	-162.24	98,063.59
Check	06/15/2023	9553	Public Employees Insurance Agency			√	Salary	-2,211.34	95,852.25
Check	06/15/2023	9554	Retiree Health Benefit Trust Fund			√	Salary	-140.00	95,712.25
Check	06/15/2023	9555	Service Plus			√	Accounting (Accounting	-158.50	95,553.75
Check	06/15/2023	9556	Dominion Post			√	Public Notices	-72.90	95,480.85
Check	06/15/2023	6120	Jacqueline G. Peate	Error correction from May		√	Salary	-829.84	94,651.01
Check	06/15/2023	6121	Jing Zhang	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,620.18	93,030.83
Check	06/15/2023	6122	Jacqueline G. Peate	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,745.46	91,285.37
Check	06/15/2023	6123	J. William B. Austin	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-2,670.77	88,614.60
Check	06/15/2023	6124	ICMA. Retirement Corp			√	Salary	-1,716.99	86,897.61
Check	06/15/2023	941	IRS	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-2,066.94	84,830.67
Deposit	06/27/2023		WVDOH	Deposit		√	PL Funds (Funds)	18,464.28	103,294.95
Check	06/30/2023	6125	Jing Zhang	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,620.18	101,674.77
Check	06/30/2023	6126	Jacqueline G. Peate	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-1,745.45	99,929.32
Check	06/30/2023	6127	J. William B. Austin	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-2,670.76	97,258.56
Check	06/30/2023	6128	ICMA. Retirement Corp			√	Salary	-1,716.99	95,541.57
Check	06/30/2023	941	IRS			√	Salary	-1,887.54	93,654.03
Check	06/30/2023	063023	WV Dept of Tax and Revenue	Electronic Transfer		√	Salary	-428.00	93,226.03
Check	06/30/2023	9557	Centra Bank - Mastercard			√	Internet	-118.81	93,107.22
Check	06/30/2023	9558	Fringe Benefits Management Co			√	Salary	-386.92	92,720.30
Check	06/30/2023	9559	J. William B. Austin	Mileage for Charleston		√	Travel & Ent (Travel and	-209.08	92,511.22
Check	06/30/2023	9560	West TV			√	Public Notices	-200.00	92,311.22
Total Centra-Checking (voucher checks)									92,311.22
TOTAL									



Memorandum

Date: August 2, 2023

From: Bill Austin, AICP

To: MPO Committee Members

Subject: Proposed Southern Bridge

This memorandum is to inform the MMMPO's committees about a proposal from the WVDOH Division of Highways (WVDOH) for the construction of a new bridge across the Monongahela River in the vicinity of and to connect to the roadway network of the Morgantown Industrial Park (MIP). According to WVDOH, this proposed bridge would be constructed in addition to the Harmony Grove Interchange. The primary purpose of the bridge is to provide a new employer, Mountaintop Beverage with access to I-79 as quickly as possible. A map identifying the potential locations for this bridge as well as diagrams showing the potential traffic impacts of the alternatives are included with this memorandum.

Background

The MMMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan includes the construction of the Harmony Grove interchange to provide MIP with access to I-79. MPO Staff conducted a feasibility study to determine if this interchange should be included in the urban area's transportation plan in 2018. That Study also looked at alternatives to the interchange including construction of a bridge south of the Westover Bridge. The MTP includes this bridge but it has not been a priority for the MPO's Policy Board and was included in the "Funded by Others" category of the MTP.

WVDOH has been working with the owners of the MIP and Mountain Top Beverage to develop the Harmony Grove Interchange. This process has been slow due to a variety of factors including the need for approval of the interchange from the Federal Highway Administration. Due to the long time it has taken to develop the Interchange Justification Report (IJR), WVDOH has been concerned that the interchange cannot be constructed quickly enough to meet the needs of Mountain Top Beverage. Stating that they can construct a bridge faster than they can get approval for and construct the Harmony Grove Interchange, WVDOH proposed the construction of a new bridge and connecting roadway while keeping the Harmony Grove Interchange moving forward for eventual construction. WVDOH has had a preliminary design study performed to evaluate potential locations for the proposed bridge.

Process

MPO staff respectfully recommends that the MPO's committee members consider the question of whether or not a new bridge should be considered in two parts:

- 1) Is there a need for a new bridge south of the existing Westover Bridge? Answering this question is key for determining whether or not the MTP priority list should be amended to include this project in a tier higher than

the “To be funded by others” category and a subsequent TIP Amendment. Staff recommends that the Policy Board consider the proposed land uses in the area from applicable Comprehensive Plan(s) and similar issues when looking at this question.

- 2) If the answer is yes to the first question, the MPO’s committees should consider recommending a potential general location for the proposed bridge. The Policy Board can only recommend a general location since the complex engineering study needed for the construction of the project may identify issues with any precise location that may be identified.

Bridge Alternatives

WVDOH originally proposed three alternative bridge locations for consideration. **All three locations were estimated to be by WVDOH’s draft Study of the project to cost between \$64 million and \$71 million. At this level of study these costs are essentially the same for all alternatives.** A map showing the general locations of all three alternatives is attached. (Please note the maps are illustrative, final location would be determined through detailed study.) For the purposes of this preliminary evaluation all alternatives are proposed to be 40’ wide with 12’ lanes and 8 foot shoulders. Any constructed facility may differ slightly from this standard due to the requirements of the final design.

-Alternative 1-is a bridge crossing the Monongahela south of the Morgantown Lock on the Monongahela and north of the BFS gas station on Don Knotts Boulevard. This alternative would connect to River Road and include reconstruction of River Road.

-Alternative 2-This alternative would cross the Monongahela at Greenbag Road. **WVDOH and the MIP agreed to take this alternative off of the table due to the elevation of the proposed bridge and the impact to the MIP street network.** It is included in the attached documentation for informational purposes only.

-Alternative 3-This alternative would intersect with Don Knotts Blvd. north of Hazel’s House of Hope and connect to the southern portion of the MIP street network at Rail Street. This alternative would include an at grade intersection with Smithtown Road.

Traffic Impacts of the Alternatives

MPO staff prepared a preliminary evaluation of Alternatives 1 and 3 using the MPO’s regional travel demand model. This analysis provides an order of magnitude estimation of each alternative’s impact to the surrounding roadway network. It should be noted that this model does not take into account any potential changes to land use spurred by the enhanced access provided by the new bridge. The model is consistent with the growth projections used for the Harmony Grove IJR. Please see the attached stick diagram traffic maps for the overall estimation of each bridges impact on the traffic network.

Alternative 1: A review of the projections indicates that Alternative 1 would have the greatest impact on downtown Morgantown’s street network. The proposed bridge at this location would divert traffic from the south seeking to use the existing Westover bridge. The model shows that traffic on Don Knotts Blvd. south of the existing bridge would grow significantly from the existing approximately 16,000 vehicles per day (vpd) to over 22,000 vpd. This is not a particular concern for the area since the existing cross section of the Boulevard in this segment has enough capacity to handle the increased traffic volume now and the volumes projected for 2050.

Of some concern is that this alternative would significantly increase traffic on Dupont Road. If this alternative were implemented today the model estimates that volumes would increase from about 1,200 vpd to 4,400 vpd. In 2050 the volumes would increase from 3,800 vpd in the no build scenario to 8,200 vpd in the build scenario.

It should also be noted that this proposed bridge is in the approximate location evaluated for a new bridge as part of the MPO's 2018 Morgantown Industrial Park Access Study. While neither the MPO in 2018 nor WVDOH now propose that any structure would take any property outside the existing Don Knotts Blvd. right of way the proposal to locate a bridge at this location did raise objections from the residents of the City of Morgantown's First Ward.

-Alternative 3-This alternative primarily benefits the residents of Monongalia County and Preston County south of Greenbag Road and the MIP. The model anticipates that the impact to Smithtown Road would be negligible. The model estimates a small impact on the Westover Bridge and the downtown Morgantown Street network.

Pros and Cons of Each Alternative

WVDOH's feasibility study analyzed the "Pros and Cons" of each alternative. Below are the issues for Alternatives 1 and 3 identified by this Study. (Note staff has slightly modified the language from the report for readability-staff took all care not to change the meaning.)

Alternative 1:

Pros-

- Mitigates impact to River Road
- Potential to be constructed in phases
- Provides separation of industrial/through traffic and residential traffic
- Shorter and smaller bridge
- Improves school intersection and overall connectivity
- Provides best overall impact to the existing Bartolo Bridge
- Traffic and safety improvements with grade separated connection to US 119
- Grade separation aligns with 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan controlled access for US 119
- Potential to address White Park access (with pedestrian bridge)
- New roadway would meet MPO urban standard
- Turn lanes on bridge unlikely

Cons-

- Potential opposition from residents of First Ward
- Most earthwork
- Closest to Morgantown Lock
- Bridge construction more likely to interfere with channel navigation
- Most traffic control required during construction
- Two structures required
- Ramps for grade separation requires retaining walls
- Least direct connection for Mountain Top Beverage to I-68
- Approximately 8% slope on bridge
- Requires most redesign of adjacent intersections
- More geotechnical issues

Alternative 3

Pros-

- No structure takes required
- Alternative access to Smithtown Road avoids problematic intersection

Improved travel time to developments using Smithtown Road
Most direct connection to I-68 for Mountaintop Beverage
Suitable area on western side of river for bridge constructability

Alternative 3 (continued)

Cons-

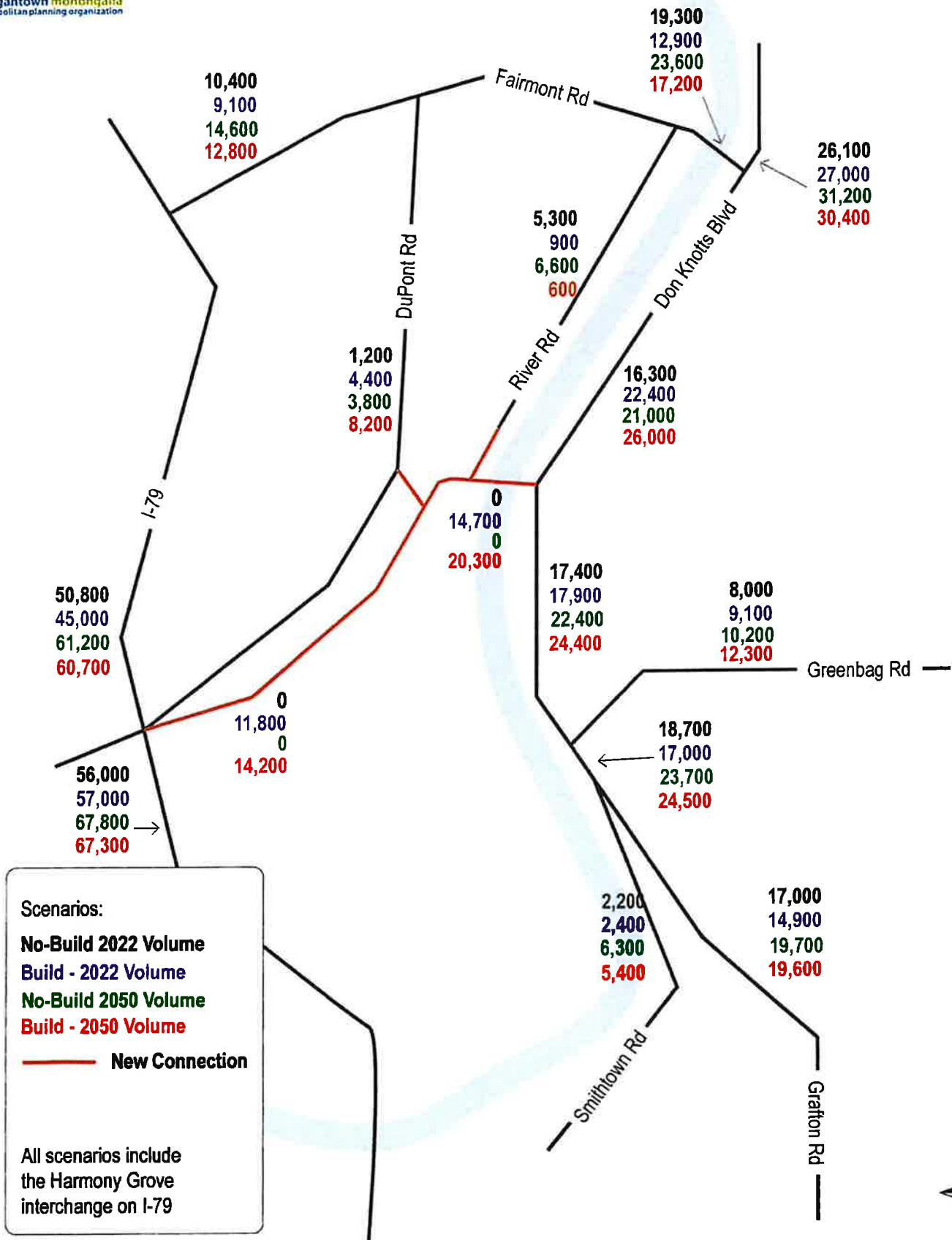
Adds at grade intersection for area MMMPO has identified for widening
Limited benefits for local network beyond Smithtown Road
Redundant with I-79 and I-68 after Harmony Grove Interchange is completed
May require turn lanes on bridge
Long and tall bridge
Crossing FERC gas line
Relies on using existing industrial park access roads
Widen US 119 for turn lanes

Conclusion

This memorandum has sought to summarize information prepared by WVDOH's consultant's and MMMPO Staff concerning a proposed "southern bridge" in an accessible manner for the MMMPO's committees. It is respectfully requested that the MPO's Committees make a recommendation on this item to the Policy Board.



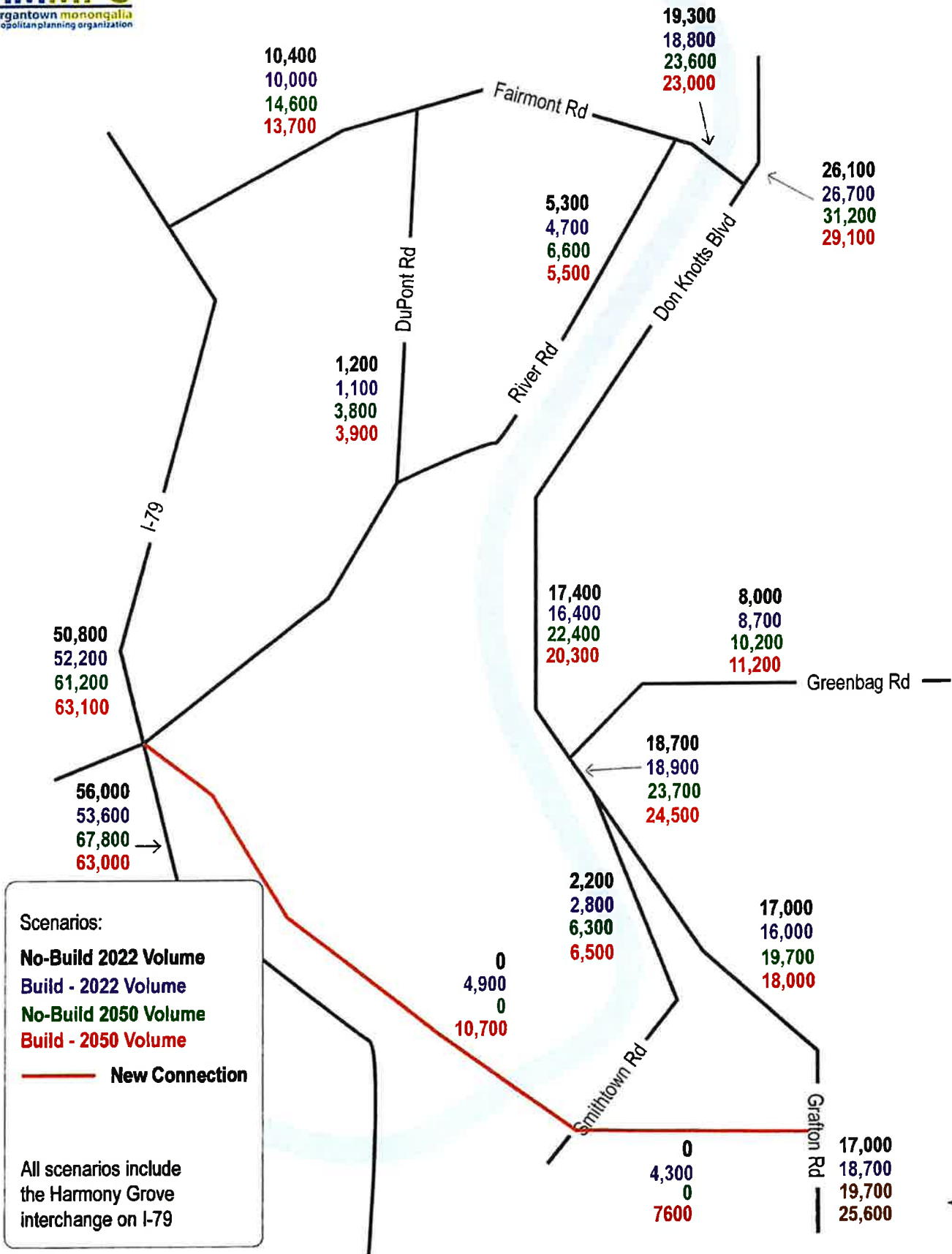
Preliminary Bridge Evaluation Summary - ALT 1



Not drawn to scale



Preliminary Bridge Evaluation Summary - ALT 3



Not drawn to scale

WVGES All Mining Map





August 10, 2023

P.O. Box 282
Morgantown
West Virginia
26507-0282

Dear Mr. Bill Austin and the Morgantown-Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization,

The Monongahela River Trails Conservancy (MRTC) Board of Directors would like to provide additional factors to consider when debating if and where to construct a new bridge to serve the Morgantown Industrial Park. The Monongahela River Trails Conservancy, is a 501c3 non-profit organization that manages and maintains a 48-mile rail-trail system. *We have concerns about both proposed bridge locations. This bridge, which will have to go over the rail-trail, will likely close trail in the construction area for years and the proposed locations could have negative long-term impacts to the rail-trail and trail communities.*

The Smithtown Road connection is a more direct route, more expensive, and is located in an area that is prone to landslides. Our concerns are a result of on-going experiences with improper planning, stormwater failures, and increased development in this area that have resulted in landslides across the rail-trail. MRTC has spent tens of thousands in clean-up and restoration on a 2.5-mile section of the rail-trail below Smithtown Road. In such an unstable area, a bridge would need careful geo-technical planning and construction to secure it as well as protect the area around and below it.

The second option, between the Morgantown Lock and BFS, would add traffic, pollution and noise to the riverfront gateway to the Wharf and Downtown Districts of Morgantown, WV. It would impact adjacent neighborhoods and businesses without considering the plans and vision that local leaders are moving towards- an attractive and thriving riverfront for recreation, businesses, and community events. Public planned and recent investments include trail lighting, removal of trash from behind the lock and dam, and river access and park improvements that include a new recreation rental facility.

This bridge is a major expense that will provide no more community benefit than the current plan of the Harmony Grove Interchange. It may take longer to build than anticipated due to location challenges. By comparison, construction on the Wellsburg Bridge over the Ohio River has shut down a section of the Brooke Pioneer Rail-Trail at the construction site. The Wellsburg bridge had a time frame to be complete in three years. *Construction began in April 2018 and to date, the bridge construction is not complete and the rail-trail remains closed 5 years later.*

Closing a section of trail for the duration of construction diminishes its success and positive impact in a community. It disrupts commuter transportation routes, exercise routines, and attractiveness as a tourism destination. Any closure would be detrimental to trail usage and local economies. If this bridge is to happen, we hope that a practical, family-friendly detour of

the rail-trail will be planned as part of the construction. If the rail-trail has to be closed for construction, we will establish an agreement that will pay a \$500 fee to MRTC for every day the trail is closed which is our standard fee. In addition, we will put an agreement in place that protects the future of the rail-trail from damage as a result of added landslides and stormwater issues due to the new bridge.

We hope you will take these concerns into consideration when deciding if and where, a new bridge will be constructed to serve the Morgantown Industrial Park.

Sincerely,



Ella Belling, MRTC Executive Director

On behalf of the Mononongahela River Trails Conservancy Board of Directors

MRTC Board Vote on the above comments-

Yes Votes- Christiaan Abildso, Robin Barnett, Dave Harshbarger, Steve Kite, Gary Marlin, Steve Selin

Abstain- Edwin 'Doc' Parks

Absent- Jeff Arnett



Memorandum

Date: August 10, 2023
To: Policy Board Members
From: MPO Staff
Subject: Public Comments on Proposed Southern Bridge

This memorandum is to inform the Policy Board of public comments concerning the proposed amendment of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan to include a Southern Bridge prior to the August meeting. The comments received are summarized below:

- Bob Schroer: Requested information about the Policy Board Meeting on the 17th to hear about the 2 bridge options. Staff provided him with meeting information and informed Mr. Schroer about the Public Comment Period at the beginning of the meeting.
- Valerie Wright: Asked if the meeting on the 8th (TTAC) was open to the public. Staff provided her with meeting information and clarified that the public is allowed to 'sit-in' but not allowed to comment.
- Jamie Summerlin: Asked about the next meeting and if there will be a DOH representative present. We provided him with information about all meetings in August, that a DOH representative is on the TTAC and Policy Board, and that there is a public comment period at the beginning of the Policy Board meeting, and the public is allowed to 'sit-in' but not allowed to comment at the TTAC and CAC.
- Mrs. Betty Wiley President, Dunkard Creek Watershed Assn., Inc.
Treasurer/Secretary, Upper Monongahela River Assn., Inc. expressed the following concerns in an email:
 1. The bridge quite possibly won't even be finished before the interchange is complete, thereby negating its entire reason for existing.
 2. Even the ostensibly hasty planning and designing of this bridge gives the impression of disaster waiting to happen.
 3. The cost of what may reasonably be called a "boondoggle" is a considerable waste of money in this state, West Virginia, where our needs are great: we need our existing streets and highways and bridges to be upgraded. Money should not be wasted.
 4. One of the positive aspects of Morgantown and the region is our rail-trail along the river, and the construction of the proposed bridge would be damaging to the trail and might result in its closure for a long period of time. Like it or not, the trail is important to a lot of people, and has a growing economic impact. This asset should not be squandered.



5. The political machinations at work here are very troubling.

- Rick Landenberger: Asked for maps that show the various bridge options. Staff sent him the informational memo written for the MPO's committee.
- Wallace Venable: Expressed concern that none of the proposed bridges connecting Mountaintop Beverage with I-68 would be used once the Harmony Grove Interchange is completed, and that there will be elevation issues.