

**MORGANTOWN MONONGALIA  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD  
January 23, 2014 Minutes**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councilman Wesley Nugent-City of Morgantown, Chairman Joe Statler-Blacksville Elwood Penn-WVDOH, Councilman Anthony Giambrone-Star City, Councilman Bill Kawecki-City of Morgantown, Mayor Patricia Lewis-Granville, Mike Kelly-Board of Education, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line, Commissioner Tom Bloom-Monongalia County

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover, Commissioner Eldon Callen-Monongalia County, Mayor Jennifer Selin-City of Morgantown, Randy Hudak-WVU, Councilperson Marti Shamberger-City of Morgantown

**MPO DIRECTOR:** Bill Austin

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** With a quorum present, Chairman Statler called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chairman Statler asked Mr. Austin to introduce the WVDOH representative. Mr. Austin noted that Mr. Elwood Penn is representing the West Virginia Department of Transportation in place of Mr. Carr who could not attend the meeting.

**II. Executive Session:** After the introductions Chairman Statler noted that the MPO Policy Board performs the Executive Directors review this time of year. He stated that the Policy Board would need to go into Executive Session for this purpose. Mr. Nugent moved to go into Executive Session in accordance with State Law, seconded by Mr. Kelly. Upon completion of the Executive Session Chairman Statler called the meeting to order and reported that the Policy Board has found Mr. Austin's performance during the last year to be satisfactory and the Board agreed to extend his contract for another year.

**III. Election of Officers:** Chairman Statler then noted that the MPO Bylaws requires the election of officers at the first meeting of the year. He then called on the Officer nominating committee to report their recommendations. Mr. Kelly reported that the nominating committee had recommended Councilman Giambrone for Chairman, Councilman Nugent for Vice Chairman, and Mayor Lewis for Treasurer. Chairman Statler then opened the floor for additional nominations. Mr. Bloom moved the nominations as presented by the Committee, seconded by Mr. Kawecki. There being no further nominations Chairman Statler called the question. The Policy Board unanimously selected Councilman Giambrone as Chairman, Councilman Nugent as Vice-Chairman, and Mayor Lewis as Treasurer. Chairman Statler thanked the Board for their support during his tenure and turned the gavel over to Chairman Giambrone.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Chairman Giambrone then opened the floor for public comments. Mr. Rocky Gianola introduced himself as representing his law firm and other property owners on the Mileground. Mr. Gianola stated that the Mileground business owners are concerned that there has been a mixed message about the area's desire for the improvements to the Mileground sent to Charleston. He also stated that there has been some confusion about the process for developing the recommendation for the Mileground improvements. He stated that the area should present a unified front to Charleston on these issues. He noted that the Chamber of Commerce has worked to develop a unified front on transportation funding in Charleston which has been a great success. He thanked Mr. Kimble, President of the Chamber of Commerce, who is present at the meeting for his work on that issue. He believes the Mileground property owners and the MPO should come together and develop a consensus on the issue

of which cross section should be constructed for the area. Mr. Gianola also noted that the Mileground property owners are concerned with safety and that the County already has a five lane road in Van Voorhis Road. At the conclusion of Mr. Gianola's presentation Chairman Giambone thanked Mr. Gianola for his comments.

**V. Approval of Minutes**-Chairman Giambone then introduced the approval of the Minutes. Mr. Austin stated that he had received two comments on minor changes needed for the Minutes, first Mayor Selin should have been reported as absent from the meeting and secondly the Finance Report presented was for October not November as stated in the Minutes. Mr. Statler asked that given information on an error in notification recently received he would also ask that Commissioner Bloom's absence from the meeting be stricken from the record. Mr. Nugent moved approval of the Minutes seconded by Mr. Bruffy. The motion was unanimously approved.

**V. FINANCIAL REPORT:** Chairman Giambone asked Mayor Lewis to present the Finance report. Mayor Lewis presented the MPO's November and December activities as follows:

-Beginning balance in November \$19,802.66 with expenditures of \$17,696.62 and one deposit of \$15,410.70 leaving a balance of \$17,516.74 at the beginning of December. December expenditures totaled, \$17,311.08 with two deposits totaling \$13,044.77 leaving a balance of \$13,430.31

Mr. Bruffy moved for approval of the financial report; seconded by Mr. Kelly. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

**VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Mr. Rice, Chair of the CAC, reported that the CAC had not met in January due to the weather. He stated that he and Mr. Austin had tried to find an alternative meeting date but failing that they had solicited input on the agenda by email. There were no comments on the agenda forwarded by the CAC. He did note that he had participated in the Monongalia County Day in Charleston and that he had manned the MPO's informational board while Mr. Austin was participating in other meetings. Chairman Giambone thanked Mr. Rice for his report.

#### **VII. DIRECTORS REPORT:**

- a. Local Funding Initiative-Mr. Austin reported that he, Mr. Statler, Mr. Rice and other Policy Board members including Commissioners Bloom, Callen, and Mayor Selin had participated in the Chamber of Commerce's Monongalia County Day in Charleston. He stated that he felt it was a great success for the area. He noted that during these discussions the delegation had presented an outline for legislation that would allow County Commissioners to provide funding for transportation improvements. He stated that the initiative appeared to have been well received, and that a draft of the legislation had been forwarded to the Policy Board members for their review. Mr. Austin also noted that the MPO will be bringing the Policy Advisory Committee back together and the Mr. Kimble is a member of that group. He hopes that we will be able to meld the Chambers Transportation Committee activities n with that group.
- b. Mileground Widening Project Status-Mr. Austin stated that he had received a call from the Division of Highways concerning the Mileground Project. According to the DOH, the Federal Highway Administration has concerns about the disconnect between the MPO's

recommendation of a four lane cross section and the Division of Highways recommendation for a five lane cross section for the center portion of the project.

Commissioner Bloom stated that there was some confusion on the part of the County Commissioners about the status of the MPO's recommendation. He stated that he had read the Minutes of the March, 2012 Policy Board Meeting and that he felt that the Policy Board's recommendation may have changed at that time. He also stated that things have changed since the Policy Board last considered the issue and that the Board should reconsider the matter. He also asked that the DOH have a meeting in February to consider the decision. Mr. Austin stated that per his discussion with Commissioner Bloom he would provide the Policy Board with the information the Policy Board had considered in making their decision. He said that if it is the Policy Boards wish that of course we could have a meeting in February to consider the matter.

Mr. Penn stated that the MPO's recommendation had been based on a planning level study of the project, since the project had moved into the design phase additional issues had arisen with the four lane alternative recommended by the MPO including the potential operation of the roundabout proposed for the intersection of the Mileground and Hartman Run Road. He stated that the Division of Highways is having the analysis of the Traffic Operations group done on this project reviewed by Stantec, the same company that had performed the original analysis. It is DOH's intention to bring this information back to the MPO for consideration to assist in the reconciliation of the DOH's recommendation and the MPO's recommendation.

Commissioner Bloom stated that there was a concern that the MPO Policy Board is an advisory committee that may be overruling the interests of some elected officials. Also, the Board may have a different opinion now than when it was originally considered.

Mr. Bruffy clarified that for the Division of Highways to use Federal Funds, the projects have to be consistent with the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan and the Policy Board must approve the use of Federal funds for these projects or the State cannot use them. Mr. Bruffy stated that the Policy Board's review of the matter included a close look at safety and the amount of time that would be saved between the alternatives. He noted that the four lane alternative with a median when compared to the five lane alternative saves about 30 seconds per vehicle which over the years the project would be a tremendous time and money savings for the community. He also noted that the four lane cross section is much safer with about 40% fewer accidents than the five lane cross section.

Commissioner Bloom asked about the consideration of the impact of the proposal on the property owners. Mr. Bruffy stated that the information provided to the Board on the issue from Federal Highway Administration demonstrated that the four lane section with the median showed, with study's from four different states, that destination businesses such as law offices are not hurt by a median and that the four lane section is much safer.

Mr. Penn stated that the DOH is reevaluating the information from the design work and will be presenting this information to the Policy Board for its consideration in the March meeting. Mr. Statler stated that as Chairman he had directed Mr. Austin to begin developing the process for this reconsideration of this question with a meeting with DOH in Charleston. He stated that he believed the issue needs to be reconsidered and that the process should move forward.

Mr. Penn stated that the DOH will be presenting a complete evaluation of the project in the March meeting timeframe. Chairman Giambone asked Mr. Penn to clarify that DOH needed that amount of time to develop the complete picture. Mr. Penn verified that DOH needs that time.

He asked that the Policy Board consider a Resolution stating that the Board is reconsidering the matter. Mr. Statler noted that such a Resolution would be out of order given that this is an informational item. Mr. Kelly and Mr. Statler both stated that they believe the Policy Board should reconsider the issue since there has been change on the Board. Mr. Kelly stated that as one of those who voted for the recommendation he would be willing

Mr. Bruffy also noted that the next portion of the project to be constructed will be the portion down Easton Hill and that the center section is not up for construction for about two years so there should not be a need to rush the review. Mr. Penn noted that the DOH is in the process of completing the environmental study on the project which includes both the center section of the project and the portion of the project down Easton Hill, the work on the next section of the project, the Easton Hill portion cannot be performed until the environmental study for both legs is completed.

Mr. Bloom also noted that the County Commission was seeking a legal opinion concerning the issue of more than one Commissioner attending MPO Policy Board meetings. After additional discussion it was the consensus of the Policy Board that Mr. Austin work with the Division of Highways to design a process that allows the Board to consider the matter in the March timeframe.

- c. Downtown Operations Study-Mr. Austin stated that the MPO will need to take into account the Downtown Traffic Operations Study when designing the process for consideration of the Mileground. He stated that this study has been underway for some time and that the Study director, Dr. Nichols, had agreed to appear before the Policy Board at the March meeting to discuss the project. He stated that he felt that both the Mileground Project and the Downtown Operations Study deserved careful consideration and that neither issue should distract from the other.
- d. West Virginia MPO Association-Mr. Austin noted that the Directors of the eight MPO's across the State have met and agreed to form an MPO Association. He stated that they have agreed on a set of bylaws and the first formal meeting will be held in Morgantown at the Airport on February 18<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM. Chairman Giambone encouraged MPO Policy Board members to attend the meeting.

## **VIII. TIP AMENDMENTS**

Mr. Austin stated that the MPO had received several FY 2014 TIP Amendments from the Division of Highways the amendments included additional funding for right of way acquisition for the purchase of right of way for the portion of the project on Easton Hill. He noted that the original funding for right of way only included purchasing Easton School and the additional funding would purchase the remainder of the right of way. He noted that the TIP Amendment would bring the right of way acquisition to \$11,390,000 of which \$9,112,000 would be Federal funds. Mr. Austin then noted that the additional TIP Amendment requests from DOH were for resurfacing projects on WV 100, Kingwood Pike (CO 81),

Dorsey Avenue (CO 81), and South Pierpont Road (CO 67). None of the resurfacing project required Federal Funds. He also noted that WVU had asked the MPO to include an evaluation of the structure of the PRT and funds for repairs in the MPO's TIP for FY 2015. The project is currently programmed to be completely funded by WVU. WVU asks that the MPO include the project in the TIP with the hope that they will be able to be reimbursed for this work by the Federal Transit Administration.

Mr. Nugent moved approval of the TIP Amendments, seconded by Mayor Lewis. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **X. FY 2014-2015 MPO Work Program**

Chairman Giambone then asked Mr. Austin to discuss the Projects to be included in the MPO's Work Program for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Austin stated that a list of projects for the upcoming Fiscal Year had been included in the Policy Board's agenda at the last meeting. Mr. Austin said that in addition to the MPO staff normal activities including staff support to the various boards and work on the Vanpool and transportation finance issues, staff is proposing to include ongoing bicycle and pedestrian planning activities, the preparation of intersection and corridor studies for projects included in the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Bridge Location Study. Mr. Austin stated that the work program had been developed as a result of the Policy Board Retreat and numerous request for input.

Mr. Kelly moved to approve the FY 2014-2015 UPWP, seconded by Mr. Nugent. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### **XI. Informational items:**

Mr. Austin then presented the Policy Board with three informational items. The first item was a draft of the Morgantown Monongalia Bicycle Plan Route Map. He Stated that Mr. Zhang has been working on a draft of the bicycle plan with the Bike Board and that it will be presented to the public at a public meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup> from 4 until 7. The meeting will be held at the Morgantown Public Safety Building.

The next item Mr. Austin presented was the MECCA 911 Accident Summary he stated that MPO staff had requested this data from MECCA 911 for use in identifying accident prone locations. He stated that the data was very incomplete and therefore not useful.

Mr. Austin then noted that the MPO had collected data on pedestrian activity on the Mileground and the Policy Board had been provided a summary of the data in the agenda packet.

#### **XII. Other Business**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.