

MORGANTOWN MONONGALIA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
NOVEMBER 21, 2019 MINUTES

Members Present:

Chairperson Jennifer Selin, Treasurer Mayor Patricia Lewis-Granville, Steven Blinco, Star City, Commissioner Tom Bloom-Monongalia County, Brian Carr-WV DOH, Commissioner Edward Hawkins-Monongalia County, Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover, Councilperson David Harshbarger-City of Morgantown Ron Justice-West Virginia University, Bill Kawecki-Mayor of Morgantown, Mike Kelly-Board of Education, Commissioner Sean Sikora-Monongalia County

MPO Director: Bill Austin

Members Absent: Vice Chairman Joe Statler, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Selin noted that the minutes of the last meeting were included in the agenda packet. Mayor Kawecki moved to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Bloom. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

4. Committee Reports

a. Citizens Advisory Committee

Bill Rice, Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee, noted that the CAC recommended approval of the proposed TIP amendments. He noted that combined with previously committed funds, the River Rd project will cost approximately \$10 million. The project is expected to improve River Rd from DuPont Rd to Westover Bridge to meet the state standard of accommodating truck traffic.

Mr. Rice noted that the CAC recommended adoption of the pedestrian and bicycle plan. The Committee supports the complete street concept and believe the plan will be of benefit to the community.

b. Finance Report

Mayor Lewis presented the Finance Report for October as the following:

-- Beginning balance in August \$27,078.82 with expenditures of \$34,939.18 and three deposits of \$55,248.76, leaving a balance of \$47,388.4 at the beginning of November.

Commissioner Bloom moved to accept the Finance Report as presented; seconded by Mr. Kelly. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

c) Executive Director Report

Mr. Austin noted that he will meet DOH staff in Charleston to discuss STIP development process, statewide funding formula for TIP projects, and groupable project. The meeting is on December 2. He will also attend a meeting of WV MPO association in Huntington, WV, on December 5.

Mr. Austin noted that he has received a letter from the DOH regarding the Mileground Project. The letter is included in the agenda package. Mr. Kelly suggested posting the letter on the MPO's website. Mr. Austin agreed.

Commissioner Bloom expressed his concern over this letter, noting that the DOH should have more specific schedule for this project which has been a high priority for this region. The project delay is disappointing and unacceptable. Commissioner Bloom noted that the County Commission has scheduled a meeting with DOH tomorrow to discuss go-bond projects in this region. Mayor Kawecki noted that the City of Morgantown is supportive to the go-bond projects and is willing to work with the County and DOH to implement those projects.

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO will update its Metropolitan Transportation Plan next year. It has been tentatively discussed that the MPO coordinate with the County, the City of Morgantown, Start City, Westover, and Granville in their effort to update their comprehensive plans. Using transportation as a unifying factor will help to develop more consistent and effective plans in the region.

Chairperson Selin agreed and noted that such coordination will make the planning process less expensive and more productive for everybody.

5. TIP Amendments

Mr. Austin noted that the WVDOH requested TIP Amendments, which include adding River Road Slide Repairs to FY 2020 TIP and deleting US 19 Beechurst Avenue-Campus Drive Intersection Project from FY 2020 TIP. The DOH has requested that a large number of projects be moved by Administrative Adjustment for the FY 2020. Two major projects to be adjusted are Van Voorhis Road GO Bound Project and Greenbag Road GO Bond Project.

Mayor Kawecki moved to approve the TIP Amendments as presented; seconded by Mr. Kelly. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

Mr. Austin noted the changes to be made in the TIP under the MPO's administrative adjustment procedure.

Commissioner Bloom asked about the delay of the Greenbag Rd project as shown in the TIP amendment. Mr. Austin noted that it might be caused by additional environmental concerns for the project.

Commissioner Bloom noted that many projects that are important to the community have been pushed back. He noted that those delays are frustrating and there is lack of appropriate justifications.

Mr. Carr noted that financial constraint is the common cause of project delay. Project delays in the past can have ripple effect on subsequent projects in the TIP. He noted that it is a statewide issue and the DOH is working to improve the project delivery process. Mr. Carr noted that potential environmental impact is a major consideration for project involving federal funds.

6. Adoption of Bicycle and Pedestrian study

Commissioner Bloom made a motion to split the vote on the adoption of Bicycle and Pedestrian Study into two parts: the pedestrian portion of the plan and the bicycle portion of the plan; seconded by Commissioner Howkins. Commissioner Bloom noted that the board is not allowed to debate on this motion according to the Robert's Rules of Order followed by the MPO.

Mr. Kelly, Mr. Blinco, Commissioner Bloom, Commissioner Howkins, Councilperson Goodwin, and Mr. Justice voted for the motion. Chairperson Selin, Mayor Kawecki, Mayor Lewis, Councilman Harshbarger, Commissioner Sikora, and Mr. Carr voted against the motion. The motion did not have the majority of the votes. The motion failed.

Mr. Austin noted that the plan is a complete inventory of bicycle and pedestrian needs for the urban area. It identifies potential projects to improve bicycle and pedestrian travel as a mode of transportation based on network deficiency, trip generation, and community needs. The next step of this study is to prioritize projects identified in the study.

Mr. Kelly asked if the plan can be modified by the Policy Board in the future. Mr. Austin noted that the plan can be amended to reflect the preference of the board. The board has the power to refuse to approve federal funding for a project in the TIP, if the board find that project is not appropriate.

Mr. Carr noted that it is important for local entities to coordinate when applying for grant for TAP projects. Community support is a key criteria in evaluating a project for TAP funding. It is best for an applicant to have the MPO's endorsement before applying for TAP grant.

Mayor Kawecki noted that many projects in the past were done without planning in advance. This plan will provide clear guidance on how to build a transportation network for bicyclist and pedestrians in the region. The plan is a well-founded and it can be modified due to changing circumstance in the future.

Mr. Blinco noted that pedestrian safety is the top priority for the Star City. It is what the residents are asking for and it should be reflected in the project prioritization in the plan.

Mr. Justice noted that to make more informed decisions, the board members should be briefed on the priority considered by each entity before prioritizing the recommended projects. He noted that mutual support among communities in this region is key to success in accomplishing a project.

Chairperson Selin noted that most the projects proposed in the plan are for retrofitting developed areas and addressing network deficiencies. It helps the community to build consensus on what should be done to improve multimodal transportation travel in the area, which will make the community more attractive to people at all ages.

Mayor Kawecki moved to adopt the bicycle and pedestrian study, seconded by Councilperson Harshbarger. The motion passed with Commissioner Bloom and Commission Hawkins voting against the motion and Councilperson Goodwin abstaining.

Mr. Austin noted that he will contact board members to set up a meeting in December or early January for the project prioritization of this study.

7. HSIP 2020 Goals

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO is required to update the Highway Safety Improvement Program Goals each year. The FHWA has adopted a vision of zero deaths and serious injuries on the national transportation network as part of FHWA's Strategic Plan. MPO staff is recommending that the MPO adopt the State of West Virginia's HSIP 2019 goals with the understanding that these goals are to work toward the vision of zero fatalities and serious injuries on the State's and the nation's transportation network. The State of West Virginia's goals for 2019 are included in the agenda package.

Mr. Justice moved to adopt the HSIP 2020 Goals as presented, seconded by Commission Hawkins. With no discussion, the motion was approved.

8. 2020 MPO Calendar

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO's draft 2020 meeting calendar is included in the agenda package. The schedule avoids meeting dates on holidays such as Election Day and West Virginia Day. Mr. Kelly moved to adopt the 2020 MPO Calendar as presented, seconded by Mr. Justice. With no discussion, the motion was approved.

9. Update on Mountain Line Transit Study

Mr. Austin noted that the steering committee of the study held the first meeting yesterday. During the meeting, the consultant introduced the study process and the scope of work. The study will identify potential improvements for transit facilities and routes in the area. Mr. Justice noted that the transit system is operating very well and the community is fortunate to have it.

10. Requests for 2020-2021 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Austin noted that MPO staff is preparing a draft work program to present to the MPO Policy Board in January. Mr. Austin asked board members for any work on transportation planning projects that the members' agency would like the MPO to perform in the upcoming year. Mr. Austin noted that MPO staff will be preparing for the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update in 2020. The update will integrate the outcomes from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Study and the Medium-range Transit Study for the Mountain Line Transit. The update will focus on bringing the MPO's travel demand model up-to-date in order to identify or reconfirm highway improvement projects. It will emphasize extensive public involvement.

This is an informational item and requires no action from the board.

11. Appointment of Officer Nominating Committee

Chairperson Selin noted that the board will elect new officers at the January meeting. Mr. Justice, Councilperson Goodwin, and Mr. Kelly volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee to select officers.

12. Other Business

Mr. Rice asked if the MPO's advisory committees are expected to participate in the project prioritization process for the bicycle and pedestrian study. Mr. Austin noted that he will solicit input from committee members and invite them to participate in the process. The Committee members will also review the recommendations prior to adoption.

Councilperson Selin noted that the board will hold an executive session in the next meeting to evaluate the performance of MPO's Executive Director. Evaluation forms will be distributed to board members after this meeting.

13. Meeting adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.