

Bryan/College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization MPO Policy Board Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2022

Certification of Quorum

The following voting members were present: Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; Karl Mooney, Vice Chair, City of College Station; Andrew Nelson, Member, City of Bryan; Bill Stockton, Member, Texas A&M Transportation Institute; and Chad Bohne, Member, TxDOT-Bryan District. MPO staff present were Dan Rudge, Bart Benthul, and Lisa Lyon who took the minutes. The sign-in sheet for the meeting is attached listing other attendees.

Welcome and Open Meeting

Nancy Berry, Board Chair, called to order the Policy Board meeting at 9:12 a.m. on February 2, 2022, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with pledges to the U.S. and Texas flags and was followed with an invocation by Dan Rudge.

Approval of Minutes from the December 1, 2021 Policy Board Meeting

Minutes from the December 1, 2021, Policy Board Meeting were considered for adoption. **A motion to approve the minutes was made by Karl Mooney. The motion was seconded by Andrew Nelson. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.**

MPO Staff Report by Dan Rudge

Regional Access Management and Traffic Impact Analysis Standards – At the last meeting of the Policy Board, draft Regional Access Management and Traffic Impact Analysis Standards were distributed. The intent of this document is to create a set of standards that are consistent across all of the communities in Brazos County to assist the local development community. Mr. Rudge has conducted a few meetings with the development community to garner feedback which has been positive. The development community seems excited that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is working towards creating consistent standards across Brazos County, the City of Bryan, the City of College Station, and even in some regard with TxDOT. There were a few minor issues raised regarding the Traffic Impact Analysis section dealing with how the engineers are supposed to do the crash analysis and what level was needed. These items need to be more specific on what is being requested. There will be another round of meetings in the coming weeks and that feedback will be brought back to the TAC to make revisions as necessary.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation – The 1,056 page bipartisan infrastructure legislation was signed in November and covers transportation as well as other things such as broadband. The difference between this bill and the previous one is there are certain grant programs that were traditionally only available to the states and then the states could create grant programs that would filter down to local governments. With the new bill, there are now grant programs that are available to localities, MPOs, and public authorities (like a regional mobility authority) directly from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

for transportation funding. FHWA has not yet determined how this legislation will be administered. As soon as guidance from the FHWA on how to apply for funding is given, those entities eligible to apply can begin the process of submitting grant requests. In the new legislation, a few programs' names were changed. The National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) is the same as the old National Highway System (NHS) funding category and the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) is the same as the Surface Transportation Program (STP) grants. Both of these programs are allocated by apportionment and then directed to each state. Texas then comingles the state funds and put the dollars into twelve different funding categories specified by TxDOT. The final bill contains language to add a loop around Bryan/College Station called I-214. This bill represents about a 72% increase over Fast Act funding.

Grouped Projects Agreement

In February of 2021, the Federal Highway Administration and the Texas Department of Transportation reached an agreement on what types of transportation projects can be included in the grouped projects list in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These projects fall into some general categories like engineering, right-of-way, safety, resurfacing, bicycle/pedestrian, etc. FHWA is now requesting that all MPOs adopt the agreement to ensure that local Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and STIPs match. The TAC has recommended the FHWA/TxDOT grouped project agreement be adopted by the Policy Board. Traditionally, the MPO has taken any grant received for a bicycle and pedestrian project through the Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program and listed it under highway projects in order to highlight the project(s) for citizens to see. With the new agreement, all of those projects would be grouped projects which will not allow the MPO to highlight them. The positive outcome is since these will be grouped projects, administrative amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) can be made without the necessity of coming to the Policy Board each time a locality gets a bicycle/pedestrian project. And our local work around will be once a project is added to the TIP and STIP administratively, the MPO will send a letter to the local jurisdiction stating such and giving the date and CSJ number to meet the requirement of the grant which requires the project be added to the STIP and TIP. **A motion was made by Karl Mooney to adopt the FHWA-TxDOT Grouped Project Agreement. The motion was seconded by Bill Stockton. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.**

Annual Listing of Projects for FY 2021 (ALOP)

An annual listing of project (ALOP) is required by TxDOT and FHWA. It requires the MPO to specify what projects were let using federal funds during the Fiscal Year. It also requires that any federal funds used on transit projects also be shown. This year, the TxDOT Transportation Planning & Programming office compiled the ALOP so that the formatting in relationship to the UTP was consistent.

As a point of clarification, there are four projects in the grouped projects section listed in the ALOP that are not in Brazos County but are listed in the ALOP which has caused some controversy. In the agreement previously discussed between FHWA and TxDOT, in the ALOP only the first project that has a CSJ number attaching it to the group is the one that is listed. An example is US 84 which is not in Brazos County; however, there is a SH 21 resurfacing project contained within that group so instead of showing SH 21, the ALOP shows US 84.

Once a cover sheet is put on the ALOP and it is returned to TxDOT, but before it is added to the MPO's website, a note will be added to provide more transparency and less confusion to our local citizens. The note will state that "TxDOT can group projects under a single federal project number. These grouped projects are listed with the first TxDOT control section or CSJ number for the grouping. As a result, some

of the project descriptions shown in this document are not within the actual area, but at least one project in the group is within the BCSMPO boundary.” Along with the note, there will be a listing of projects that are actually in the MPO boundary. Although this creates additional work locally, it provides the type of transparency Bryan/College Station is accustomed to, and it actually streamlines the process for the MPO as now TxDOT is creating the ALOP and the MPO is only adding a cover sheet. In the past the MPO was solely responsible for creating the ALOP which took several man hours. Grouped projects is a tool that simplifies things to get through the funding process. Grouped projects can be compared to consent agenda items on a large docket at a meeting where you’re potentially debating or discussing a multitude of things that are not of debate level so you then put them together as a single item and it is understood these are all standard items to approve. When projects are grouped, the entire group has one name which may or may not be associated with this MPO, but is referred to by the name of the “grouped” project. When projects are grouped, they generally have the same work description such as resurfacing. By grouping projects, TxDOT can more efficiently and quickly deliver needed projects.

A motion was made by Andrew Nelson to adopt the Annual Listing of Projects for FY 2021 with the addition of the note and list of projects to be published locally. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Setting FY 2022 Roadway Safety Performance Targets

Under FAST Act requirements, and now the new Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, state Departments of Transportation must set safety targets on an annual basis. The Texas Transportation Commission took action to set safety targets for 2022. MPOs have until February 27, 2022, to either adopt the state targets or set their own targets.

The TxDOT safety targets are a five-year running average for different types of performance measures for fatalities and injuries. The state safety targets are based on their Vision Zero goal so targets set in 2021 and 2022 are rather aggressive. If The MPO were to set their own targets, the state’s targets would have to be parsed down into a size that is appropriate for Brazos County. Even though that would result in smaller numbers, the MPO would still have to follow the Vision Zero requirement. There have been unsubstantiated rumors in the past that at some point in time FHWA is going to impose a penalty on MPOs that set their own targets but did not meet them. During discussion there was a concern voiced that the fatality number went down but the serious injury number greatly increased and the desire would be for both numbers to go down. After examining the safety targets, the TAC recommended the Policy Board adopt/support the TxDOT safety targets. **A motion was made by Karl Mooney to adopt TxDOT’s Roadway Safety Performance Targets. The motion was seconded by Nancy Berry. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.**

Freeport to Forth Worth Freight Corridor Study

The Freeport to Fort Worth Freight Corridor Study examines the viability of developing a roadway corridor from Port Freeport to the Alliance Rail Yard just north of Fort Worth. The corridor would include a new roadway, called 36A, from Rosenberg to Hempstead, connect to State Highway 6 passing through Bryan/College Station all the way to the Waco area, and then connecting to an extension of the Chisolm Trail Parkway. To determine the viability and reliability of the corridor, travel times on the corridor were estimated and compared to travel times on the existing corridor that relies on Interstate 45. The study shows that in many cases delays on the I-45 corridor due to congestion and accidents, makes the proposed corridor faster and more reliable. MPO staff prepared the Freeport to Fort Worth Corridor Study last fiscal

year and asked other affected MPOs to provide comments. The comment period has been completed, TAC has reviewed the study, and has recommended that the Policy Board accept the study as work complete and to direct the Executive Director to forward the document to TxDOT Transportation Planning and Programming Division for incorporation in future statewide freight plans.

Staff from Texas A&M Transportation Institute as well as a group of industrial engineering students doing a Capstone course looked at the corridor. Both groups came to the same conclusion that because of congestion and accidents on I-45, this corridor could be a way to more quickly move freight between Port Freeport and the Alliance Rail Yard in Fort Worth as well as other locations up and down the corridor. The study identifies the fact that the Brazos Yard in Robertson County could potentially become an intermodal facility. It also recognizes the City of Bryan's effort to create the Texas Triangle Park as an inland port. Overall, those that have reviewed the study feel like a solid case has been made that this would be a prime freight corridor for the State of Texas. The most logical way to get from any of the major ports or other cities in the state is to use either I-45 or I-35 which have considerable congestion and suffer delays from accidents. The study shows there is a 25% chance that anytime you travel the I-45 corridor, you will be slowed up by an incident versus the State Highway 6 and 36A corridor which is around 6%.

The report was originally intended to be cowritten by Mr. Rudge and the Directors from the Waco MPO, Houston MPO, Dallas/Fort Worth MPO, but for various reasons they were unable to participate. The Houston MPO staff did provide some review comments.

A motion was made by Andrew Nelson to accept the Freeport to Fort Worth Freight Corridor Study as work completed. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Presentation on the Interstate 14 Corridor Study

Juan Quiroz, Ph.D., P.E., is the TxDOT Bryan District Planning Engineer and the Project Manager for the US 190 Central Texas Corridor Study which is also referred to as the IH 14 Corridor Study. Mr. Quiroz presented information on the study and potential development of the IH 14 corridor.

Mr. Quiroz outlined the steps taken in developing any long-term project of this magnitude and explained that project development went from a high level to a granular detailed design and is on-going for several years:

- Feasibility Study (high level) to look at feasible corridors
- Routing Study to determine a viable route
- Schematic and Environmental which looks at the actual alignment and geometrics establishing the footprint
- Detailed construction plan development
- Construction

Background:

- 2012: high level corridor study encompassing all of I-10 and US 190 that looked at the needs of the US 190 corridor.
- 2018: US 190 Feasibility Study which included a route study from Killeen to Rogers (some segments are already under construction). This study was used to develop the scope of the current study.

- 2021: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act outlined the latest updates to the I-14 corridor designations and added an interstate loop around Bryan/College Station and referred to as I-214.

Study Area and Goals:

There is the existing segment of IH-14 which is 25 miles long from Killeen to Belton. The 2018 study looked from Belton to Rogers which sets the stage and is looking at the US 190 Central Texas Corridor and its designation to IH-14. US 190 starting from Huntsville, goes up to Madisonville, down to North Bryan, up to Hearne, down to Milano, up to Cameron, and ends up in Rogers in Belton County. The limits are from Roberts (Bell County) to Huntsville (Walker County) which is approximately 125 miles. The *goals* of the current corridor study are to conduct a feasibility study and route study for a freeway facility meeting interstate standards. Once it is determined the corridor meets interstate standards, then it can be fully designated as IH 14. The legislative language says generally follows US 190 in an eastward manner from Killeen and passes in the vicinity of Bryan/College Station and Huntsville. Those are the only two cities mentioned in the legislation and it says "in the vicinity of." There is also I 214 that would be in this area and the legislation says a loop around the Bryan/College Station area.

Study Overview:

The intent is to conduct the study in three phases: feasibility study and route study with a transition period in between.

Phase I - Feasibility Study (zoomed out) – Define a study area and begin data collection and looking at constraints mapping to identify conceptual corridors. Once conceptual corridors are identified (could be several miles wide traversing in an easterly manner from one end of the Bryan District to Huntsville), they move into fatal flaw analysis so they can ultimately end up with a feasible corridor(s). They anticipate this phase to take approximately three years and there is a consultant team in place to assist with the effort. During this phase there are several planned public involvement meetings over a two to four week period scattered logically within the study area at different stages: existing conditions and beginning of project, development and conceptual corridors, and looking at the feasible corridor where they will educate the public on the first study.

Phase II - Transition Phase – Revisit the public involvement plan and the project management plan. Develop any technical memorandums for information missed in the previous study, develop the route study implementation plan, monitor legislative updates. The transition period will be approximately one year.

Phase III - Route Study – Determine the feasible corridor and look for viable routes within that corridor. The viable routes could be in an area up to 1,000 feet wide. In that viable route corridor will be the alignment which is the next phase of project development. The progression is to go from a feasible corridor, to a viable corridor, to a preferred route. Once the route is determined, there is still not an actual alignment but a route to work within to move forward with the next level of project development. There will also be several planned public meetings at different stages.

PEL Approach:

The official name for PEL is Planning and Environmental Linkages. This approach combines the planning activities with environmental studies and accelerates the process by engaging resource agencies earlier in the process. Using the PEL approach is unique for this kind of study but is desired because TxDOT can get their buy in and support early to help facilitate the project development process and the following

steps. One of the major processes is this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance and is a level of environmental clearance necessary in project development before any right-of-way acquisition can begin and is a major milestone. The PEL approach is very well defined and supported by FHWA and gives TxDOT good coordination documentation which will then be used to facilitate environmental clearance in subsequent steps. TxDOT is starting the process and will take full advantage of this tool.

Study Area Breakdown:

The legislation indicates the corridor will pass in the vicinity of the Bryan/College Station and Huntsville. When TxDOT was looking to divide and conquer the study area (approximately 216 miles of roadway) in order to have efficient public involvement and feasibility study, they looked at dividing the project into subareas. There is a dividing line that cuts right through Bryan/College Station, so west of the line is subarea one which is more rural in nature and has less major roadways. The second subarea is east and north of the line and contains the current US 190 alignment. Subarea three is east of the line and south where SH 30 runs through. The entire section of roadway broken down is approximately 216 miles.

Next Steps – Long Term:

- Identify & Prioritize Segments for Further Development
- Schematic Design & Environmental Clearance – looking at establishing a footprint of an alignment and the make-up of interchanges while at the same time doing environmental studies to get environmental clearance. This phase will take approximately three to five years pending adequate funding.
- Construction Plan Development – can be taken in series depending on how they choose to work through the development of the corridor. This phase will take approximately three to five years pending adequate funding.
- Construction

Discussion:

The main discussion point was if the steps can be accelerated or if a specific subarea could be accelerated to better facilitate plans for projects that may already be on the horizon. Right-of-way acquisition cannot happen until the environmental clearance is granted. It would be a challenge to accelerate a portion of the project because there are so many factors involved at each anchor point. TxDOT will be creating a traffic demand model through the corridor which may shed more light on some focal points. TxDOT desires to let the process confirm what they think is going to happen in terms of where the route will end up. TxDOT officials also reported they had scoped the IH 14 study before I-214 legislation passed. Since the I-214 legislation passed, they can now incorporate more specific I-214 analysis within the study. There may actually be a subarea four of the study which would focus on I-214. Since IH 14 and I-214 are separate, they can move independently of each other even though they will come together.

Adjourn

It is possible there will not be a Policy Board meeting in March due to lack of agenda items. Mr. Rudge thanked Dennis Christiansen who coauthored an article in the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce Connections Magazine regarding the Regional Mobility Authority.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

Meeting: Policy Board Meeting

Date: 2/2/2022

Name	Agency
Bill Stockton	TTI
Dennis Christensen	RMA
John Nichols	BCS Chamber
Doug Marino	TxDot
Juan Durcoz	TxDot
Taslima Khandaker	BTD
Tim Lomax	TTI
CHAD BONNE	TxDOT
Troy Pothar	CoCS
Paul Krzypur	COB
JASON SCHUBERT	CoCS
B. ERRAIT	Bates G. GC
Debbie Albert	TTI
Gabriel Garcia	District Clerk
STEVE ALDRIDGE	Brazos County
Russ Ford	Commissioner

ATTEST:

Nancy Ferris

MPO Policy Board Chair/Vice-Chair
Bryan-College Station
Metropolitan Planning Organization

Dan Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO

6/01/2022

Date