

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

April 5, 2023

Certification of Quorum

The following voting members were present: Nancy Berry, Chair, Brazos County; John Nichols, Vice Chair, City of College Station; James Edge, Member, City of Bryan; and Peter Lange, Member, Texas A&M University. MPO staff present were Dan Rudge, Bart Benthul, and Lisa Lyon. 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 9:30 a.m. on April 5, 2023, at the Brazos County Commissioner's Courtroom, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, TX. The meeting opened with an invocation by Dan Rudge and pledges to the U.S. and Texas flags.

Approval of Minutes from the December 7, 2022, Policy Board Meeting

The minutes of the December 7, 2022, Policy Board meeting were reviewed. John Nichols made the motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by James Edge. The minutes were adopted by a unanimous vote.

MPO Staff Report by Dan Rudge

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Discretionary Grant Program – In the summer of 2022, Mr. Rudge spoke with all of the local governments regarding doing a multi-jurisdictional or joint application for a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant. All were in agreement to apply for a \$210,000 grant with each entity providing \$20,000 in match. The Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) Center for Transportation Safety provided a cost estimate of \$270,000 to develop a joint plan. The county and both cities agreed to the \$20,000 match and also adopted a resolution in support of the grant and adopted a goal of zero traffic fatalities by 2035. The MPO is the lead agency, supported by the two cities and the county. The Safe Streets and Roads for All is a new program under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and is intended to support the National Roadway Safety Strategy. There are two different types of Safe Streets and Roads for All grants: developing the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan and Implementation. The DOT was not eligible to apply for these grants; however, MPOs and local governments were. The rationale for doing comprehensive safety action plans is to develop implementation programs from the plans. It was originally thought that only the smaller areas did not have comprehensive safety action plans; however, after looking at who won the grant awards, it is not just small areas.

Larger areas that received a grant to develop a comprehensive safety action plan include Dallas, San Antonio, and Laredo.

Currently, Mr. Rudge is working through the FHWA requirements to receive the grant. The next step would be to designate an oversight committee and champion. The Technical Advisory Committee has already volunteered Mr. Rudge as the champion. So, the next steps will be to collect local match dollars and create an oversight committee. Mr. Rudge will be coming back to the jurisdictions to ask for five names to serve on the oversight committee. The oversight committee should have representatives from the sheriff's office, police department, fire department, emergency responders, bicycle/pedestrian advocates, the disability community, and business leaders. Mr. Rudge has currently identified at least one bicycle/pedestrian advocate to serve on the committee. The Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living has agreed to represent the disability community. Mr. Rudge has also made presentations to the Chamber of Commerce and the Brazos Valley Economic Development Corporation and both agencies provided names of people they would like to see represent their organization as business leaders in the community. Mr. Rudge will work with TAC members to let them know who has been identified and who might be the best fit so that when he visits with each entity they already have an idea from staff who would be a good fit for this particular grant.

The process of creating the comprehensive safety action plan together will begin with goal setting by the oversight committee. Once goals have been set, there will be safety analysis, public engagement, and equity considerations. Finally, the oversight committee will select and prioritize the strategies in the final plan.

Updates to the Public Participation Procedures and Congestion Management Process – The United States Department of Transportation will publish a list of new Transportation Management Areas as a result of the 2020 Census in the Federal Register. As of this morning, it has not been published. When the designation is made, the expectation will be to have the Congestion Management Process document completed within a year. The Congestion Management Process has already been drafted by staff and Mr. Rudge is currently working with TTI to update the document. The document will be presented to the TAC for review before finally being presented to the Policy Board for adoption. The MPO is also updating the Public Participation Procedures. The previous procedures were lacking in virtual meeting options because they were adopted in 2017 before the prevalence of virtual meetings. The procedures are being updated to include those.

2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Development – Staff has already begun development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. It is due in December of 2024 and is a lengthy document. Staff is currently working through the socio-economic information and introduction and then will review what the existing transportation network. As work continues, there will be a number of workshop meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee to discuss and review before the document comes to the Policy Board in December. In January or February of 2024, there will be a call for projects. The purpose of the call for projects is to give local governments, the public,

and TxDOT the opportunity to make requests that are considered for inclusion in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Limited English Proficiency Plan

MPOs are required to adopt and maintain a Limited English Proficiency Plan. B/CS MPO's plan was last updated in 2011 and it was time for a review and refresh. The Technical Advisory Committee has already reviewed the draft plan being presented today. One of the biggest changes is to make available a card(s) with different languages allowing a person that doesn't primarily speak English to point to their language. It is our responsibility as a federal agency to then get documents translated into a language so that person can be included in the public participation. In reviewing past requests for limited English proficiency accommodations, there have been zero, so this will probably not be something that happens frequently. Once the plan is approved by the Board, it will be uploaded to the website and staff will get everything ready for the next public engagement process. **Nancy Berry made the motion to adopt the Limited English Proficiency Plan. The motion was seconded by Peter Lange. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote.**

TMA Transition White Paper

Mr. Rudge presented the board with a white paper that he put together with the help of Brazos Transit District staff. Mr. Rudge wanted to get it to the Policy Board first in anticipation of their colleagues beginning to ask questions about what it means and the impact of becoming a Transportation Management area (TMA).

MPOs are required in metropolitan areas larger than 50,000; however, the boundaries for most of these are what are called the urbanized area population boundaries. These boundaries are different than the MPO or the metropolitan statistical area. If you look at the metropolitan statistical area for Brazos County, it includes Robertson and Burleson Counties. Those three counties make up our metropolitan area; however, our urbanized area only covers Bryan/College Station, so the MPO only has to cover Bryan/College Station.

TMA's are still MPOs but have additional requirements to fulfill. For the local governments, the biggest impact will be public transportation. To give you an idea of what the difference is kind of between county population and urbanized area population, in 2010 it was 194,000 for Brazos County, but the urbanized area population was 171,000. It took until December 30, 2022, for the Census Bureau to finally publish the numbers for the 2020 Census which is about a year behind the normal timeline. For the 2020 Census, the Brazos County population was 233,000, and the urbanized area population was 206,000. Because the population is over 200,000, Brazos County MPO will now be redesignated as a Transportation Management Area once the Federal Register notice is published.

What does this mean? The MPO currently has control over Category 2 (metropolitan and urban area corridor projects) funds. The amount received on an annual basis is about \$11 million. If

not for Propositions 1 and 7, it was around \$1-\$2 million a year. The MPO works with TxDOT to look at bridges, structures, maintenance, and safety, and then can apply for Category 9 (transportation alternative projects) funds which are enhancement projects and bicycle/pedestrian projects. Category 4 (statewide connectivity corridor projects) funds, which TxDOT designates as Category 4 Urban, have been really important in helping to fund some of our MPO selected projects. In addition to that, the Category 12 (commission strategic priority) funds have played a major role in helping to fund projects like State Highway 6 and the Bush/Wellborn interchange.

When the MPO becomes a TMA, we will have access to Category 7 (metropolitan mobility and rehabilitation) funds. In the last Metropolitan Transportation Plan it was estimated to be approximately \$4.5 million per year which can be used on projects locally. The MPO will receive their own appropriation of Category 9 funds which is unfortunately only about \$270,000 a year; however, last year there weren't enough projects around the state to use up the entire Category 9 transportation alternatives set-aside (TASA) project money that was budgeted, so it was opened up to all MPOs and TMAs. The MPO will be required to have a Congestion Management Process which has already been prepared and is in draft form. The MPO will undergo a formal review from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration which will be November 15-16, 2023. During this audit, they will meet with all of the Policy Board members and make sure that the MPO is doing a good job of representing their community. Another requirement is to add Brazos Transit District to the MPO Policy Board.

The biggest issue with the redesignation will be with transit. When you are under 200,000, the governor designates who is the designated recipient for transit funds which is currently Brazos Transit District. Once we go over 200,000 in population, the MPO in partnership with Brazos Transit District, determine who they would like to be the local designated recipient. The selection is submitted to the governor through certified resolutions, and then the governor notifies the MPO that they have agreed that this is the correct organization to be the designated recipient. The final step is to make sure whoever is the designated recipient has the financial capabilities to be able to handle the FTA funds. Because Texas A&M is not considered a general public transportation service, they are not eligible at this time to be the designated local recipient. For BTM, what that means is a change to the operating assistance formula that determines the funding they receive. When you are under 200,000 it is based solely on population and population density. When you go over 200,000 in population, they add bus revenue vehicle miles and bus passenger miles to the equation to figure out how much money you will receive from Federal Transit Administration.

Typically, when you go over 200,000, the transit provider would lose the ability to use any of their Section 5307 funds for operating assistance; however, there are a couple of special rules. The one that we would take advantage of here in Brazos County is the smaller transit system which is under 75 vehicles. This allows us to continue to use 75% of Section 5307 funds to subsidize operations. The remaining 25% would need to be a local match. Mr. Rudge prepared an example in the white paper that projects the local match would be approximately \$800,000.

These changes bring up quite a few questions such as:

- Is a separate BTM board needed for Brazos County. If so, what is the composition?
- Do you like the current system? Would you like to see changes to the system? If so, what changes would you like and how does that impact that local match requirements?
- How do we determine the portion of local match each entity is responsible for? This is done in so many different ways that there's not really one standard that can be recognized when determining local match. This would be a local decision.
- At the Policy Board level, adding a BTM representative will give the board an even number. Is the board comfortable with having six members or do you want to have an odd number in case there is ever a tie?

These are the things that the board will need to consider when moving forward. Once the TMA designation has been published, Mr. Rudge will visit each of the jurisdictions to give this presentation. Mr. Rudge in cooperation with Brazos Transit District, will take the regional discussion process and questions back to the Technical Advisory Committee for recommendations on how this could best be handled and how the questions could be answered.

Presentation on City of Bryan Flood Early Warning System (B-FEWS)

Paul Kaspar, Bryan City Engineer, and Jacob Torres, Torres & Associates, gave a presentation about the City of Bryan's Flood Early Warning System (B-FEWS). Mr. Kaspar provided some background information on the project. The concept of the project dates back four years ago when Mr. Kaspar expressed his interest in bringing low water crossing signs that flash messages (like Austin) to the Bryan area. Even though the City of Bryan puts out barricades when water crosses the road, there is a timing element that makes it difficult to know when the barricades should go out. The idea behind an flood early warning system would be to alert the public that there is water over the road before a barricade goes out. The project was born of that concept, but the city decided to take a different approach than to just buy an off the shelf product. They approached the Texas Water Development Board and received a grant for the project. The scope was 20 locations throughout the community for installing the flashing beacons similar to a school zone flashing beacon. The city took the project a step further and put weather stations at those locations to gauge rainfall amount, stream flow, etc. This information and more is currently available to city staff to know how to appropriately respond to flooding in Bryan. Currently there are 19 of the 20 gauging station poles installed. At each location, there will also be sign poles on each sign of the road with flashers and a flood warning sign. The Texas Water Development Board has given feedback that they are very happy with the project. Dr. Torres refers to the project as a "poster child" for these types of projects. Mr. Kaspar introduced Jacob Torres with Torres and Associates who has been instrumental to the project.

They are currently at the tail end of this multi-year study. The first year and a half was all about the paperwork. 2022 was the year for doing construction, installation, catching rain, reviewing data, and calibrating the hardware. Once all the equipment is installed, there will be maintenance and inspections. There is an entire process that is integrated as an asset management platform into the flood warning system for organization.

The B-FEWS is effectively additional eyes and ears for the City of Bryan as well as their emergency response crew and traffic operators by way of sensors out in the field to let them see those blind spots before, during, and after a flood event. This will allow the city to be proactive as opposed to reactive to roadway closures. Safety is the number one goal. This is not a forecasting system, but rather a real time situational system.

For gauging, there are 15-foot aluminum poles with an aluminum cabinet and bucket on top for rain collection. Currently there are 19 of 20 poles out in the field. They will be backfilling with the traffic flasher beacon poles so when the roadway overtops, the beacon will begin to flash. To give a sense of how it works, there is a sensor placed at the gauge location that measures the water rising near that road. A premeasured survey was conducted to see what elevation will cause the road to overtop with water. The sensor is recording this water as it rises and the moment the elevation gets triggered, the automated flasher beacons will begin flashing to warn people of flooding. Simultaneously, text messages will be sent out to Mr. Kaspar, Dr. Barfknecht, Dr. Torres, and others, informing them the beacon has been triggered. Also, the actual webmap dot will change from a green to red indicating a real time roadway condition. Currently, the web map is only available to city staff, but they are working to get that map published to the bryantx.gov website so it can be accessed by the public. These gauges are also collecting rainfall, temperature, atmospheric pressure, and all of the components that help understand weather a bit more.

Approaching the project from the ground up, it was realized that economically it could be built and scaled more easily than some of the commercially available sensors that are out there and it is something that works for the city. The other key point here is they are not trying to gauge rivers, but instead, unstudied tributary ditch systems that run through the neighborhood areas that are known to be outside of the regulatory map flood plain. Many times areas that get flooded are not in the flood plain. This is geared towards inner places that large duty stations from USGS might not be able to reach. This is not a substitute to traditional gauging, but rather a compliment by expanding coverage in a more economical sense to these hard to reach places.

Mr. Torres showed examples of the web application map which shows the 20 gauge locations. If the locations are green, it means everything looks good and there is no flooding. There were also pictures of the process of installation as well as what the gauging poles look like. There is an aluminum cabinet that houses the brain or data logger. The bucket on top collects rainfall. It is all solar powered. There was a picture of an actual flasher beacon at Old Reliance Road near the high school. When water overtops, the beacons on both sides of the road automatically trigger flash. Mr. Torres also explained the transducer that measures the water level and how it works.

The software provided for the city to operate the B-FEWS efficiently shows the login status of people so everyone is aware of who is monitoring during a storm. The software also contains a closed-circuit chat so there is quick communication without the need to text or make phone calls. There are also switches in the software to override poles. The system operates on a cellular based telemetry to operate the system more efficiently. This allows the system to shoot blank cellular pings to all gauge and flasher poles to determine that they poles are functioning properly.

The software is a one stop shop location or mission control for the entire system to see what is going on. There is a rainfall accumulation chart that makes the dots bigger at each location as rainfall accumulates. Another chart shows radar rainfall as a storm goes through. There is a pie chart that looks at more than just a binary is the road overtopped or not. The chart shows levels of criticality for different road crossings: is it low criticality, medium, high risk, is it overtopped? The chart tracks this information in real time. Yellow implies low criticality all the way to red which is an overtop. Another chart shows water levels currently ranked from highest to lowest at any given location. Another chart shows rate of rise for each location. The software has many other helpful tools.

Next steps, they have a training workshop scheduled with city staff on how to interpret results, do installs, what to look for, etc. They also need to get all of the flasher beacons installed. They are also pushing the information out to the public at First Fridays, etc.

Adjourn

Mayor Nichols announced that the City of College Station has a new seal which was adopted with the ribbon cutting on the new city hall. The updated seal is now displayed in the Commissioner's Courtroom.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.



BRYAN / COLLEGE STATION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Bryan-College Station Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Meeting: Policy Board Meeting

Date: 4/5/2023

Name	Agency
John Nicholl	City of College Station
Deanne Christensen	RMA
Paul Kasprk	COB
Terry Taholek	HNTB
Jacob Torres	TORRES ASSOCIATES
Carol Cotter	City of College Station
Phil Shackelford	Shackelford Consulting
Doug Marino	TxIDOT
JASON SCHUBERT	CITY OF COLLEGE STATION
JO MARLOW	BRAZOS TRANSIT DISTRICT
Duane Peters	BRAZOS COUNTY
Prarthana Banceji	BRAZOS COUNTY
JANAL CONQUEST	HALFF ASSOCIATES
STAVIN ALPICKA	BRAZOS COUNTY

Francois Harvey

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

6.28.23

Date

ATTEST:

Dan Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO