

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

November 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; and Peter Lange, Member, Texas A&M University. 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 9:32 a.m. on November 2, 2022, 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 September 7, 2022, Policy Board Meeting

Minutes from the September 7, 2022, 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

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Discretionary Grant Progress Report – At the September Policy Board meeting, the Board approved a resolution to submit as the lead organization for the Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary grant program. The application was submitted on September 8th which was before the September 14th deadline. A tracking number from USDOT for the grant was received. USDOT will make their decision sometime in November/December or at the latest in Spring 2023.

Request for Assistance in Autonomous Vehicle Deployment – Dr. Bill Stockton, former Policy Board member and Mr. Rudge have been preliminarily working with a private vendor regarding autonomous vehicles in terms of creating a special center at the RELLIS Campus as well as looking at a deployment that would move students from the Northgate area onto campus. Any activities at Northgate would be sometime in FY 2024. The current proposal for the shuttle is to move students from Northgate to where all of the buses go into campus and meet at the Simpson Field for a three-year pilot program. They are looking to the Texas Department of Transportation for funding; however, Texas A&M has placed a higher priority on the RELLIS Campus piece of it. Right now, we are awaiting direction from the Texas A&M University

System and the Texas Department of Transportation on how to proceed on both proposals. Typically, in larger cities in Texas there is staff person for transportation innovation projects. Mr. Rudge was contacted because there is no such person in Bryan/College Station. Since the Policy Board has given Mr. Rudge great latitude in trying to bring projects to Bryan/College Station, he happily agreed to work with them.

Safety Funding Contingent on Texas Transportation Commission Approval – The Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations has been working with the Texas Transportation Commission to try and establish an annual allocation from the Commission to do safety work as part of the MPO process. The funding would be \$50,000 annually from TxDOT. The MPO would be obligated to complete a one-page report at the end of the year basically explaining what was done to try and improve roadway safety in the Bryan/College Station area. If the MPO does not get the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant this year and we reapply next year, the safety funding will make up the local match because it is all state money.

Staff Presentation on Changes to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Rudge provided an overview of transportation projects approved by the Policy Board. The FM 2818 project is a collaboration between the City of College Station and the Texas Department of Transportation. After looking at many alternatives to improve the intersection, they decided on what is called an R-CUT intersection. Mr. Rudge showed a photograph at Holleman Drive with the cross-section overlaid on top of it. Drivers will not be able to make a left from Holleman onto 2818 north. Instead, they will make a right turn, make a U-turn in the center, and come back on the north side. The objective is to end up with two signal timings for each intersection and this scenario was the only one that reduced delay enough for the next twenty years. If in the future it is decided to do a freeway out there, the existing lanes will become frontage roads with a freeway down the center. TxDOT already owns 400 feet of right-of-way out there and are only using a small portion of it in the center so all of the construction work is within the existing right-of-way.

At the Policy Board meeting in September, an amendment to the Unified Planning Work Program was approved that included complete streets. Complete streets focus on better accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. With all roadway work and certainly with the way FM 2818 will be developed, bicyclists and pedestrians are being accommodated in the development process.

There will be an underpass for Jones Butler Road underneath FM 2818 that will connect all the way down to where Holleman and Dowling meet. The city is proposing a large round-about at Holleman, Dowling, and Jones Butler. Again, opening up this corridor provides students that live in the quadrant another way to get to Texas A&M University without using Wellborn and 2818.

The FM 158 project in Bryan is a collaboration between the City of Bryan and the Texas Department of Transportation. They are including raised medians on the FM 158 portion, but the focus of the presentation is the plan around the park zone. New to the Bryan/College Station area are the addition of HAWKs (high intensity activated crosswalks). HAWKs will be added on FM 158 around Sue Haswell Park. If there are no pedestrians in the crosswalk, the lights on the HAWK will be dark. If a pedestrian activates the signal, the lights will flash yellow to warn drivers to slow down. Just as at a regular traffic signal, the lights will turn solid yellow and then red. The pedestrian will cross the street and then the red lights will begin flashing to let drivers know that it is safe to move once you they have stopped. The lights will turn off once the pedestrian has cleared the intersection.

The Texas Avenue/Business Route 6 project from a little bit north of State Highway 21 and Old Hearne Road all the way to University Drive or FM 60 is in the Transportation Improvement Program. The total price tag for this project is \$33 million and when it is finished, the Bryan/College Station area can proudly say it has completed a Complete Streets project. The project is a collaboration between the City of Bryan and Texas Department of Transportation as well as the Active Transportation Advisory Panel and Brazos Transit District. All of the bus stop locations on Texas Avenue work well for transit users, transit drivers, and motorists. In the existing roadway configuration, there are limited sidewalks in some areas along Texas Avenue. When the project is finished, there will be a sidewalk on the west side (Aggie west) as well as a shared use path on the Aggie south side all along Texas Avenue from Highway 21 to University Drive with raised medians in a portion of it. Mr. Rudge showed an example of what the raised medians would look like. Ms. Albert and Mr. Kaspar gave a presentation in February regarding the importance of safety and efficiency when we consider U-turns and medians. The George Bush project, like this Texas Avenue project, included a loon which is new to Bryan/College Station. It is called a loon due to its shape resembling the head and neck of a loon. Other raised median projects include the FM 2154 project that is complete; FM 1179 and Villa Maria; and State Highway 30 from Texas to State Highway 6.

In the TIP program that you are considering for approval today, the State Highway 6 project was changed from two projects into one major project and funding was increased. There is currently \$284 million in funding for the project thanks to TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Commission. Originally, the MPO put \$11 million on the project in the hopes of leveraging additional funding which was successful. The project does more than just widen from four to six lanes. In certain locations along the corridor, there will be collector-distributor lanes which allow a motorist to get on State Highway 6, travel a short distance, and get off State Highway 6 without getting on the main lanes. This will improve the safety and efficiency of State Highway 6 and well as improve congestion. Although there is \$284 million allocated to this project, efforts will continue to increase funding.

A diverging diamond interchange is being considered for the University Drive intersection; however, because of numerous negative comments that were posted on KBTX after an interview given by Mr. Rudge, a formal decision has not been made. The big change that will be made is that in the new design, the exit for Harvey Road will be in the same location as the exit

for University Drive and the exit for Harvey Road will disappear. Originally, the intersection was intended to be below grade; however, due to drainage issues there will now be a bridge over University Drive.

Another important part of the State Highway 6 project is the left exit on SH 6 to Business Route 6 which is currently one of the most dangerous intersections in Bryan/College Station. In the new configuration, this exit will be moved to the right side.

Several years ago, the Federal Highway Administration began talking to localities and State Departments of Transportation about context sensitive design to make bridges and overpasses less stark and fit better into the landscape. TxDOT heard good comments from the public about the Rock Prairie Road overpass that has the stonework on bridge supports. Bridges and overpasses will be retrofitted with this aesthetic concept on the remainder of the Highway 6 interchange.

The Texas Transportation Commission added the Wellborn and George Bush project to the Unified Transportation Program. The total project cost for that is estimated at \$103 million. There is \$103 million in funding available provided Proposition A passes. There is \$15 million in Proposition A that would go to the George Bush Wellborn interchange. If Proposition A does not pass, \$25 million of the Texas Transportation Commission monies would be lost because the local match in Proposition A was not created. This project is a collaboration between Texas A&M University and the Texas Department of Transportation and is a unique design. Looking southwest from Kyle Field, the Wellborn through lanes stay at their existing height (same as the railroad) and the lanes on George Bush would be pass underneath. Going back to the Completes Streets and the safety aspect of it, the pedestrian and bicycle only facilities within the intersection are on a separate level throughout the intersection/interchange. Completion of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Wellborn Road will give students a safe way to get through the intersection and then get to the A&M Campus from points south.

Also in the TIP is the State Highway 21 project from Texas Avenue to State Highway 6; the FM 1179 project from Boonville Road to Easterling Drive; Wellborn Road from Fitch to Greens Prairie; and the State Highway 30 widening from State Highway 6 to FM 158.

FY 2023 – FY 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment One

Following adoption of the Unified Transportation (UTP) by the Texas Transportation Commission in August of 2022, The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Bryan District requested multiple changes to the TIP. These include: a) consolidation of all State Highway 6 projects into one project with combined and revised funding totals; b) changes to Business Route 6 project to allow for Phase 2A and 2B which have different TxDOT-Identification numbers but the same MPO Project numbers; c) inclusion of the Bush/Wellborn interchange project; and d) revised project descriptions for State Highway 21, FM 1179 and FM 2154. In addition, multiple changes were made to construction estimates, MPO funding allocations, and

construction funding provided by others. All of these changes were a result of the adoption of the UTP or revised cost estimates on projects that previously were included in the list but have now been reviewed to provide a more realistic cost estimate. The Technical Advisory Committee has unanimously recommended approval of the TIP amendment and staff has completed a 15-day public comment period.

A motion was made by Andrew Nelson to adopt the FY 2023 – FY 2026 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment One. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Integration of Resiliency into the MPO Planning Process

One of the big pushes in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and previously in the FAST Act, was doing a better job of incorporating resiliency into project selection. Originally, the MPO staff plan was to prepare a standalone resiliency plan. In working with other MPOs in the State of Texas, the consensus was to look at how resiliency can be better incorporated in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan process. The document contains recommendations about how to do things differently for the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. The documents give guidance on topics such as looking at new ways to rate projects to see if they help address resiliency, different ways to look at mitigation strategies, and looking at where roads are traditionally vulnerable here in Bryan/College Station and Brazos County during extreme weather events. The document was not something that a lot of the MPOs in the State were willing to do; however, B/CS MPO agreed to prepare the document. Mr. Rudge thanked Mr. Benthul who was the main author of the document.

A motion was made by Andrew Nelson to accept the Resiliency Plan as work completed pursuant to the FY 2020 – FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program activities. The motion was seconded by Karl Mooney. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

Presentation by MPO Policy Board Chair

Commissioner Berry presented plaques to several members that are leaving the Policy Board and TAC and thanked them for their service and commitment. Plaques were awarded to Dr. Bill Stockton, Policy Board Member, Mayor Andrew Nelson, Policy Board Member, Mayor Karl Mooney, Policy Board Vice-Chair, and Dr. Tim Lomax, Technical Advisory Committee Vice-Chair.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Tracy Harvey

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

12-7-22

Date

ATTEST:

Dan Rudge

Dan Rudge - BCSMPO