

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Springfield City Hall – Library Meeting Room – 225-5th Street
Springfield, Oregon

December 14, 2006
11:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Bobby Green (Lane County), Chair; Bill Dwyer (Lane County), Anne Ballew, Sid Leiken (City of Springfield), Kitty Piercy, David Kelly (City of Eugene), Susan Ban (Lane Transit District), Judy Volta (City of Coburg), Jane Lee (Oregon Department of Transportation), Metropolitan Policy Committee members; Dennis Taylor (City of Eugene), Mark Pangborn (Lane Transit District), Gino Grimaldi (City of Springfield), Bill Van Vactor (Lane County) Metropolitan Policy Committee *ex officio* members.

Kathi Wiederhold, Tom Schwetz, Ann Mortenson, Byron Vanderpool, Susan Payne (Lane Council of Governments); Ed Moore (Oregon Department of Transportation), Tom Boyatt (City of Springfield), Mark Schoening, Chris Henry (City of Eugene), Tom Stinchfield (Lane County).

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Green convened the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) and welcomed everyone. Those present introduced themselves.

Mr. Green wished everyone a happy holiday. He noted his term as Chair was over at the end of 2006.

Mr. Dwyer announced that this was his last meeting as he would no longer be serving as a Lane Board of County Commissioners representative to the MPC. He said he would be back “when [the committee] figured out how to resolve conflicts.”

Mr. Leiken thanked Mr. Kelly for his service on the MPC. He expressed his appreciation for Mr. Kelly’s diligence.

Mr. Kelly said it had been a privilege to serve on the MPC.

Mr. Dwyer commented that he also wished to thank Mr. Kelly for his service on the Beltline Highway committee. He thought it was a great example of collaboration.

Mr. Green noted that Mr. Schwetz, transportation engineer for the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG), had moved to work for the Lane Transit District (LTD). He thanked Mr. Schwetz for his service. Mr. Kelly echoed Mr. Green.

Mr. Schwetz said he was now serving as the planning and development director for LTD.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mark Rabinowitz, P.O. Box 51222, was glad that the West Eugene Parkway (WEP) was removed from the list of projects. He suggested that the money that had been designated for the WEP be spent on fixing the Beltline Highway intersection with West 11th Avenue. He noted that the City of Eugene had endorsed the idea of adding another left-turn lane from Highway 99 to Roosevelt Boulevard. He felt this was a good project. He thought it would be reasonable for the Oregon Department of Transportation to contribute money toward fixing the intersections on West 11th Avenue that were within the City-owned section. He noted that it was roughly equivalent to the money that had been spent on the final environmental assessment for the WEP. He asked why it would cost more money to complete the environmental assessment for the WEP when it was not going to be built. He also wished to know how much had been spent on the project since June, 2001.

Mr. Rabinowitz urged the MPC to consider “peak oil” when conducting its charge to engage in transportation planning.

CALL TO ORDER/APPROVE November 9, 2006, MINUTES

Ms. Volta, seconded by Mr. Kelly, moved approval of the minutes from the meeting held on November 9, 2006. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

Report from the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee

Mr. Green said he had attended his last Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting and asked the committee to consider who should serve as the next liaison from the MPC to the CAC. He reiterated that the CAC was interested in having a liaison attend the MPC meetings as a non-voting member.

Ms. Wiederhold reported that the CAC had met on December 6 and had a quorum present. There were two main items on the agenda: the revised public participation plan and designing a public outreach strategy. She related that the committee decided to add a couple of agenda items that had been brought up via email from two of the CAC members. Ultimately, the CAC spent most of its meeting on those two items, one of which was a request from committee-member Jan Spencer to send the MPC a letter concerning “peak oil.” She said the committee voted to table the item. She reported that the other item had been brought to the table by committee-member Jeanne-Marie Moore. She explained that Ms. Moore was hindered from fully understanding the materials because of blindness. Using the reader on her PC to review agenda materials is cumbersome. In addition, she is unable to read materials presented at the meeting. Staff offered to work with Ms. Moore to obtain better Braille translations of materials. She said the committee supported Ms. Moore and recommended that staff presentations be made in “plain English” and that staff should work with her to provide a better Braille interpretation of materials.

Draft Public Participation Plan

Ms. Wiederhold said the committee did give a “quick treatment” to the work plan. She conveyed the committee’s recommendation to the MPC to adopt its work plan. She noted that she had compiled the public comments into a memorandum entitled *Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization Draft*

Public Participation Plan Comments and Response Summary dated *December 7, 2006*. She added that Rob Zako had submitted his comment after the public comment period had closed.

Mr. Kelly felt the revised plan to be “solid.” He supported adoption of Mr. Zako’s proposed language change for page 5 of the draft. He asked if there was any reason staff would object to it.

Mr. Vanderpool commented that he felt leery of it because staff had not had sufficient time to review it. He said from a cursory read he disagreed with Mr. Zako’s assertions. He stated it was clear that the State rules were not binding on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), but the MPO actions did have a ripple effect on the local transportation process. He explained that as part of the upcoming RTP discussion staff was trying to frame the issues more clearly and to get the State to work out the areas that were still not clear. He said staff wanted to bring this back to the MPC as part of the discussion.

Mr. Kelly said he would hate to see a public participation plan that had as a statement of fact something that there was so much vociferous disagreement about. He recommended including a placeholder paragraph that indicated there was debate about the active state requirements. He thought staff should provide a point by point explanation of why staff did not agree with Mr. Zako’s assertions.

Ms. Wiederhold pointed out that the last sentence of the paragraph in question concluded that the public participation plan should be consistent with state process.

Mr. Kelly responded that this was a different issue. His question had to do with whether the actions of the MPO had to be consistent with the state requirements.

Mr. Green summarized the discussion and requested that staff provide an explanation of why they disagree with Mr. Zako.

Mr. Dwyer, seconded by Mr. Kelly, moved to invite the Citizen Advisory Committee to appoint a liaison to the Metropolitan Planning Committee. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Mr. Dwyer, seconded by Mr. Leiken, moved to appoint Ms. Piercy to replace Mr. Green as liaison from the Metropolitan Planning Committee to the Citizen Advisory Committee. The motion passed unanimously, 9:0.

Follow-up and MPO Calendar

1) Follow-up

i) ODOT Update

(a) Region 2 Redeployment of West Eugene Parkway Funds

Ms. Lee pointed to the memorandum from the Department of Transportation Region 2 Headquarters dated *November 29, 2006* regarding the redeployment of WEP funds. She stated that the WEP funds, approximately \$11.7 million, would be redeployed. She relayed the ODOT recommendation that the money be allocated to modernization projects that were currently under construction and that were in need of additional funds to complete or to projects that were already in the program and would be under construction by 2011. She cited the work on Highway 20 between Pioneer Mountain and Eddyville as an example of a project that needed additional funds to complete and she cited the Interstate 5/Coburg interchange as an example of a project that was already in the program. She said initially it appeared that

\$3.5 million would remain for projects in the area. She stressed that the area was not being “punished,” but rather was receiving its fair share of this money. She felt the news was good.

Ms. Ballew asked if there was anything the MPO could do to assist Ms. Lee in retaining the funding for the area. Ms. Lee replied that the “battle was kind of won.” She said she had been strongly advocating for this since May. She recommended supporting the straw proposal when it came out.

Mr. Kelly thanked Ms. Lee for her advocacy on behalf of the region. He thought the Beltline Highway/Interstate 5 was a key project, as was the Interstate 5/Coburg project. However, he felt that philosophically, given that one of the goals of the WEP was to improve the traffic flow to north and west Eugene, some of the money should be “couched” in doing similar things. He wished there was some way to “make a gesture” toward the Beltline Highway between Interstate 5 and River Road.

Ms. Lee acknowledged Mr. Kelly’s input and indicated she would pass it along.

Ms. Volta asked if escalating fuel costs were the primary impetus for rising costs. Ms. Lee replied that it was not all fuel. She said the Ballot Measure 39 had made right of way more difficult to afford. She cited as an example that the work ODOT wanted to do on the Interstate 5/Coburg interchange necessitated the purchase of a certain amount of right-of-way, but the right-of-way will now cost \$18 million. She said ODOT could not buy the land and build the project, too. The department was looking to push for purchasing land early before it was needed in order to avert this cost escalation.

Mr. Leiken asked what kind of state-wide policy existed to address this type of right-of-way. He thought it made a lot of sense to “jump in” when land was affordable. Ms. Lee responded that the right-of-way laws were convoluted. She noted that ODOT had purchased land for the right-of-way for the WEP but the State stipulated that if the land was not built upon within 20 years it had to be sold. She called this the conundrum; how the land could be anticipated to be needed and how project funding could be put into place within the stipulated time.

Mr. Leiken related that when the dilemma had been discussed with Representative Peter DeFazio he had seemed to think that federal funds could not be used for the purchase of right-of-way. He suggested that when the region was asking for federal dollars the need for a little more flexibility in how it could be spent should be emphasized.

Ms. Lee said her experience with federal earmarks was that each one came with its own set of guidelines and rules. She recommended asking for money in a generic way to minimize the rules the money might come with.

Mr. Dwyer remarked that the different jurisdictions worried about everything within the urban growth boundaries (UGBs). He opined that unless the body started studying in order to find a solution that went beyond UGBs, no matter how many parkways were built there would still be cars queueing up at Greenhill Road. He wanted the MPC to find a solution that went beyond the UGB of Eugene or the UGB of Springfield and that sought to embrace a regional transportation approach.

Mr. Green surmised that this was a discussion the MPC would want to engage in. He suspected that, at a federal level, there would not be funding for a study of this issue. He said the federal government preferred shovel-ready projects. He expressed a willingness to engage in the discussion if it would become a United Front Lobbying issue.

Mr. Kelly felt that the local MPO could not be the only one that took issue with some federal restrictions. He wondered if joining forces with other MPOs might benefit the local MPO.

Ms. Piercy thought Rep. DeFazio was operating in a different world, brought on by Ballot Measures 37 and 39. She felt it made more sense to give the local MPOs more flexibility in the face of the measures.

ii) MPO Dispute Resolution Process

Mr. Vanderpool reported that he would be talking to the LCOG Board and Executive Committee in regard to a potential joint meeting. He suggested, in looking at the calendar, that a meeting for circa February 1 be proposed.

iii) MTIP Administrative Amendment

Ms. Payne explained that the administrative amendment was for LTD and would add a small amount of funds on top of the programming funds that would be used for debt service. She stressed that it was a minor change.

Mr. Pangborn reported that the EmX would have full service beginning on January 14. He said there would be a dedication on that day. He said during the preceding week both the EmX and the existing route would run.

Mr. Dwyer asked what the ridership was on the route that the EmX would run. Mr. Pangborn replied that it was the busiest corridor. He noted that the corridor would run for free for the time being as the majority of the riders on the system had bus passes.

In response to a question from Mr. Kelly, Mr. Pangborn clarified that it would cost a rider to transfer to a different bus from the EmX if the rider did not have a pass.

Mr. Kelly urged everyone to “keep to the faith” and build more corridors before analyzing the results.

Mr. Pangborn believed the new system would work. He pointed to several aspects of the EmX buses that were cutting edge, such as doors that opened on both sides. He felt it would be a good first step.

Ms. Piercy hoped that LTD’s public relations campaign would infuse the riders with excitement about the new buses without making expectations too high. She said in terms of looking at the future and getting people out of their cars, it was important to stress the idea that people were now riding the bus because it was a good idea and not just because they could not access other modes of transportation.

Ms. Ballew added, as an informational item, that she had attended the recent Oregon Freight Advisory Committee meeting. She said the committee planned to be more aggressive in pursuing Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) funds. She suggested that a little more staff time be applied to consideration for freight movement.

2) MPO Calendar

Mr. Vanderpool announced that there would be no Transportation Planning Committee meeting on December 21. He also noted that it was unlikely that there would be any discussion of the State Transportation Program-Urban funds at the January meeting of the MPC.

Ms. Ballew said there seemed to be a lot of talk about having another Connect Oregon project. She thought it worthy of discussion.

Ms. Volta asked if another joint meeting was planned for the MPC and the CAC. Mr. Green was uncertain of the answer. Ms. Wiederhold said staff had talked about possibly scheduling a joint meeting in March.

The next meeting of the MPC will be held in the Springfield City Hall Library Meeting Room on January 11, 2007.

Mr. Green adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)