

MINUTES

Metropolitan Policy Committee
Lane Council of Governments—4th Floor Conference Room—99 East Broadway
Eugene, Oregon

January 29, 2008
11 a.m.

PRESENT: Bobby Green, Vice Chair; Peter Sorenson (Lane County), Kitty Piercy (City of Eugene); Anne Ballew, Christine Lundberg (City of Springfield), Gerry Gaydos (Lane Transit District), Sonny Chickering (Oregon Department of Transportation), members; Jeff Spartz (Lane County), Gino Grimaldi (City of Springfield), Mark Pangborn (Lane Transit District), Don Schuessler (City of Coburg), *ex officio* members.

George Kloeppe, Petra Schuetz, Paul Thompson, Byron Vanderpool, Ann Mortenson, (Lane Council of Governments); David Helton, Eric Havig (Oregon Department of Transportation); Greg Mott, Len Goodwin, Tom Boyatt (City of Springfield), Rob Inerfeld, Mark Schoening (City of Eugene), Celia Barry (Lane County); Zachary Vishanoff, Eleanor Mulder, Terry Connelly, Rob Zako, guests.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Green called the meeting of the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) to order and welcomed committee members, staff and guests. Those present introduced themselves.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Zachary Vishanoff, Patterson Street, Eugene, distributed copies of a cartoon from the Eugene Weekly illustrating the problem of deferred maintenance. He suggested a rating system for bridges across Oregon as a mechanism for prioritizing maintenance. He said the rating system could also influence drivers' behavior and prompt citizens to call for reforms in how transportation projects were funded.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) ISSUES

ODOT STIP Process and Program Funding Update

Mr. Thompson stated that the purpose of the meeting was to provide direction to staff on the criteria to be used to prioritize Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) modernization projects in Lane County. He reviewed the eligibility criteria that projects were required to meet at the regional and State levels to qualify for funding and the prioritization factors established by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC). He said the purpose of the meeting was to present potential additional local factors that could be used by the MPC to prioritize projects at its February 14, 2008, meeting.

Mr. Thompson noted that in previous STIP prioritization cycles local factors related to Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) policies had also been applied. He said eight additional factors had emerged during discussions by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and Transportation Planning Committee (TPC). He said the CAC recommended adding the following prioritization factors:

- Congestion
- Volumes
- Safety
- Relationship to Regional TDM (transportation demand management) activities

TPC agreed with those factors and added the following:

- Freight mobility
- Leverage other improvements or off-system benefits
- Relationship to regional employment centers
- System hierarchy

Mr. Thompson said a significant amount of technical data was available and could be gathered, but because of the short timeframe the TPC recommended using the statewide criteria, plus the RTP policy criteria, and giving staff direction to embark on developing a more rigorous prioritization process based on some or all of the additional local criteria to be used in future prioritization cycles.

Mr. Sorenson asked if the MPC should limit its feedback to highway projects or include broader transportation issues such as nodal development, transit support of land use patterns and multi-modal improvements. Mr. Thompson replied that the process was responding to a request from ODOT to develop a list of priority highway projects that could make use of potential funding that the legislature might make available in its next session. He said legislative interest appeared to be focused on highway projects and the criteria should address prioritizing those types of projects.

Mr. Sorenson commented that the policies currently in place should be the starting point of criteria.

Mr. Green noted that ODOT and OTC criteria and factors had to be considered. He asked if adding local criteria would help or harm MPC projects competitiveness. Mr. Chickering said the MPC was required to follow the Oregon Highway Plan policies as it would for typical STIP prioritization. He said local factors could be used for prioritizing within the MPO boundaries, but would not be considered at the statewide level prioritization and selection process. Mr. Havig added that local factors would not make projects more or less competitive, but the MPC should assure that local factors were not in conflict with ODOT or OTC factors.

Ms. Piercy said it could be useful to have specific local factors to prioritize at the MPC level.

Ms. Lundberg questioned the need for additional factors. She said the current criteria and factors for selecting and prioritizing projects were thorough and asked what problem the additional factors would solve. Mr. Thompson said that additional local factors could be helpful in drawing projects from the waiting list by providing more weight for specific factors.

In response to a question from Ms. Piercy, Mr. Thompson said that of the eight additional factors, only system hierarchy and regional employment centers were not explicitly addressed in the Oregon Highway Plan. He said the CAC's recommended factors meant that prioritization of projects would consider those

that served areas of highest congestion, highest volumes or most safety problems and addressed those problems.

Ms. Ballew remarked that with the exception of system hierarchy and employment centers, the suggested local factors were already tied into current STIP criteria. She said the purpose of local prioritization should be to identify projects that were likely to be funded at the State level. She said the timeframe was very short and she was not certain that adding additional factors that would not be used at the regional and State levels was practical. She suggested that the process move forward with the current criteria and factors. She said that each jurisdiction could base its selection of projects on its specific concerns and factors, but the MPC would base its prioritization on OTC criteria.

Ms. Lundberg agreed with Ms. Ballew. She said jurisdictions could base their project selection process on the OTC criteria and factors if those met local needs. She stressed that any additional factors should fit within OTC guidelines and not jeopardize the competitiveness of MPC projects at the regional and State levels.

Mr. Green asked if all of the additional factors recommended by the CAC were already embedded in current criteria and factors. Mr. Thompson said the CAC was aware that to some extent all four factors were reflected in Oregon Highway Plan policies and required criteria, but still wanted those factors to be considered locally with more specificity.

Mr. Green felt that congestion was a major consideration when looking at problems related to West 11th Avenue and the Delta Highway/Beltline interchange. He asked when the funding for projects would be available. Mr. Thompson replied that ODOT asked for construction projects to be ready to accept funding by 2015.

Mr. Green asked if it was likely there would be changes in project criteria over time. Mr. Havig said that was true as criteria were always subject to revision. He said the OTC reaffirmed criteria and prioritization factors during each STIP update.

Ms. Piercy felt that the CAC's recommendations should be taken into consideration as they were made in response to the MPC's request. She said the short timeframe might prevent adding local factors immediately, but that process should begin in preparation for the next opportunity. She said future planning activities such as updating and aligning TransPlan with the RTP made local factors important and should stress that investment were not in conflict with a community's land use policies and growth management goals.

Ms. Ballew commented that she hoped jurisdictions would engage in a local planning process that resolved those types of conflicts before putting projects forward.

Mr. Green stated there did not appear to be any opposition to the current criteria and asked if members were in favor of enhancing those criteria with local factors.

Mr. Sorenson asked why the timeframe for making decisions was so short. Mr. Thompson said the timeframe had been established by ODOT and the OTC based on the need to provide the legislature with requested information by a certain date. He said there was no flexibility in the deadline.

Mr. Sorenson asked if there would be other opportunities to provide input. Mr. Thompson said there would be other opportunities for commenting on the process, but would probably not influence the position of the MPO's projects as they were blended with other projects at the regional and State levels.

Mr. Sorenson questioned why the current criteria and factors should be changed.

Mr. Havig acknowledged the tight timelines for providing information to the legislature. He said in order for ODOT to meet that request, it needed initial priorities from each MPO that could be meshed with other projects to identify a list for potential funding. He said there would be another opportunity to review the regional list and provide input on a final regional list to be submitted to the OTC.

Mr. Green reiterated his question regarding additional local factors.

Ms. Ballew indicated she was supportive of retaining the existing criteria and factors. She asked what benefit would be derived from adding other local factors.

Mr. Green said that Lane County was concerned about problems such as Highway 126 West congestion in the Veneta area and local factors could be helpful.

Ms. Ballew replied that Highway 126 at Main Street was already failing and asked how local factors could determine which project had higher priority.

Ms. Lundberg remarked that each jurisdiction would want to use criteria that were appropriate for the community and could consider the CAC and TPC suggestions, and then return with more refined criteria to share with other jurisdictions. She said the MPC should adopt a set of criteria that was appropriate for all jurisdictions and each jurisdiction could have the flexibility to have its own specific criteria for making its initial selections. She did not feel that process could or should occur in the short amount of time before the next MPC meeting.

Ms. Piercy interpreted the CAC and TPC recommendations to mean that those factors should be called out as a higher level of concern. She said the larger question was establishing a process for future prioritizations. She favored retaining the current criteria and adding the factors recommended by the CAC.

Mr. Sorenson asked about the relevance of the four Action 1.G.1 priorities identified in Mr. Thompson's January 26, 2008, memorandum. Mr. Thompson replied that Action 1.G.1 was one of two eligibility criteria for modernization projects for the construction STIP with which projects had to be consistent before the prioritization process began. He said that the RTP projects, which were the only ones that could be considered for the current prioritization process, already met those eligibility criteria.

Mr. Green asked staff to summarize what they understood the MPC's direction to be.

Mr. Thompson said staff and TPC were being asked to recommend a set of prioritized projects at the February 14, 2008, meeting based on current criteria and the RTP policies and consideration of the four factors recommended by the CAC.

Mr. Green determined that members agreed with Mr. Thompson's summary of MPC direction.

Mr. Vanderpool added that the MPC had expressed an interest in continuing its discussion of the prioritization process at future meetings.

Ms. Piercy said she was interested in using criteria related to whether a proposed project was in conflict with a community's development plans.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)