

MINUTES

Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizen Advisory Committee
Singer Room—Eugene Public Library—100 West 10th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon

September 17, 2008
5:30 p.m.

- PRESENT:** Webb Sussman, Chair; David Jacobson, Vice Chair; John Anderson, Eleanor Mulder, Bill Morganti, Sarah Strand, Edward Winter, members; Kathi Wiederhold, Byron Vanderpool, Lane Council of Governments; Savannah Crawford, Sonny Chickering, Oregon Department of Transportation; Marcia Maffei, Lane Transit District; Lloyd Gordon, guest.
- ABSENT:** Diana Alldredge, Wendy Butler-Boyesen, Philip Farrington, Chess Patricolo, members; Kitty Piercy, MPC liaison.

I. Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Review

Mr. Jacobson called the meeting of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizen Advisory Committee (MPO-CAC) to order. Members introduced themselves.

Mr. Sussman thanked the CAC and staff for its cards of sympathy he had received during his recent bereavement. He also thanked staff for arranging for members to attend the recent OPI conference. He thought all who participated found the experience valuable.

II. Comments from the Audience

There was no one present who wished to speak.

III. Approve August 6 and August 20, 2008, Minutes

Mr. Jacobson delayed consideration of the minutes until after the break to give all members time to review them.

IV. Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Process

Ms. Crawford of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The presentation provided information on the STIP development process and associated public input process. Members asked questions clarifying the information presented.

Ms. Crawford called attention to STIP Web site, where members could seek additional information about the STIP: <http://www.oregon.gov/odot.hwy/stip/index.html>

Ms. Crawford also provided members with contact information for herself and McGregor Lynde of ODOT.

Ms. Wiederhold noted that the next open house for the STIP was scheduled to occur directly before the next CAC meeting in the same meeting room.

Mr. Vanderpool observed that the STIP contained little the CAC had not previously seen yet given the local planning process. He noted the many local public input opportunities and hearings processes related to the projects in the STIP, but added that did not mean that more changes could not occur.

Responding to a question from Mr. Morganti, Mr. Vanderpool said that suggestions for sidewalks projects should be forwarded to the local jurisdiction.

Mr. Jacobson commended the flow chart developed by Susan Payne that shows the interrelationships between key MPO document and asked if more copies could be made available. Ms. Wiederhold noted the request.

V. Commuter Solutions Activity

Ms. Maffei, Employer Program Coordinator for the Lane Transit District (LTD), provided a PowerPoint presentation on the district's Commuter Solutions Program (CPS). She overviewed the various programs offered under the umbrella of the CPS, all of which were intended to reduce congestion. The programs included the Emergency Ride Home Program, Group Pass Program, Valley Van Pool, Smart Ways to School Program, Congestion Mitigation Program, and the district's carpool, bicycling, and walking programs. Members asked questions clarifying the information presented.

Mr. Sussman suggested that the sign-up process for the Emergency Ride Home Program could be a barrier to its use. Ms. Maffei indicated the process was needed to track use, but that the program was sufficiently flexible to allow for last-minute use.

Mr. Chickering noted his difficulty in using the Group Pass Program because of the requirement that all employees must be eligible and the various labor contracts he had to work with. Ms. Maffei said that Lane Community College had the same problem but was trying to be creative in overcoming it. Mr. Vanderpool invited Mr. Chickering to contact him for information on how LCOG handled the program. Mr. Chickering asked if the program was taxable. Ms. Maffei noted that Oregon Department of Energy tax credits were available for users of the Group Pass Program, including to public agencies through a pass-through partner.

Ms. Maffei shared usage figures for the Group Pass Program to demonstrate the growth in its use and its wide access to community residents. Ms. Mulder asked how many of those eligible for such passes actually used them. Ms. Maffei said LTD did not have precise information but she planned to conduct an exhaustive survey of those eligible for the program in October that would include that question. She said the survey would also ask those eligible to use the system about their non-work related trips.

Mr. Vanderpool noted that LTD was seeking public input on possible route reductions, and it was possible the district would go to the legislature to seek funding changes. He urged the CAC to be involved in both the local and legislative processes.

Mr. Sussman asked about LTD's fare box recovery ratio. Ms. Maffei said that it was about 18 percent, and that compared favorably to other similarly sized districts, such as Albuquerque. LTD was one of the lowest priced providers in the nation. Mr. Sussman asked if an increase in the group pass price above what was already planned had been contemplated. Ms. Maffei said no, noting the proposed increase in 2009 was 8.8 percent.

Mr. Jacobson called for a brief meeting break. After the break, he returned the CAC to item III.

III. Approve August 6 and August 20, 2008, Minutes

Mr. Morganti, seconded by Mr. Anderson, moved to accept the minutes of August 6 and August 20, 2008, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Central Clearinghouse for Public Involvement

Mr. Jacobson recalled the homework assignment given the CAC regarding what should be included on a Web-based central clearinghouse.

Mr. Morganti advocated for a Web site that all agencies with responsibility for transportation planning would be able to provide input into. Mr. Jacobson asked Mr. Morganti if those agencies would work through a Web site administrator for a central agency. Mr. Morganti was unsure.

Mr. Sussman noted the availability of content management systems, including some in the public domain. Their advantage was that one could establish a distinct site look and feel, but the central administrator did not have to worry about the provision of content. The agencies could provide their own content, pictures, and text, which would be automatically placed in the site's format. Mr. Morganti endorsed the concept. Mr. Sussman said with that approach, project managers would be responsible for providing some of the content with assistance from LCOG, but LCOG would not be responsible for all content.

Members briefly discussed the attributes of such a central clearinghouse. Suggestions included a format that allowed a person to enter their address and view the projects being considered near them, an e-mail notification system of new projects that citizens could subscribe to, an interactive map showing all projects in metro area on which one could click to go to the details of the project, and a meetings calendar with links to information about scheduled events.

Mr. Sussman noted some technical obstacles that might hamper the operations of an address-based site. He suggested a web-based approach would be simpler.

Mr. Gordon mentioned the Onward Oregon web site, sponsored by the Oregon Bus Project, and suggested to the CAC that it consider taking advantage of the site's dialogue section, which was available for \$1.

Mr. Sussman observed that a former member of the CAC would likely point to the fact a web site was not easy for the sight-impaired to use and many people still preferred to use the telephone. He suggested that the CAC consider establishing a memorable telephone number staffed by a knowledgeable individual whom people could call with questions about projects in their neighborhoods. Mr. Winters endorsed the suggestion.

Mr. Jacobson said it appeared there was interest in both a web site and telephone access. He suggested that a web site could be both map- and address-driven.

Mr. Sussman suggested that the clearinghouse could also provide information to public agencies about projects that other public agencies were doing for the purpose of information sharing.

Mr. Anderson observed that people were increasingly using cell phones and had access to the web.

The CAC members generally agreed that the success of the site depended on its simplicity to update and access.

Mr. Jacobson recalled that the CAC had discussed using existing web sites and asked if either of the two previously discussed, Keep us Moving and MPO-CAC sites, could be used. Mr. Sussman thought the clearinghouse needed both a unique URL and 1-800 number although he thought both sites mentioned should be linked to the clearinghouse.

Ms. Mulder expressed concern about the cost of a new staff person to answer the telephone.

Mr. Jacobson solicited input from ODOT. Mr. Chickering said ODOT maintained its own rather extensive Web site and the clearinghouse would be an additional web site for ODOT to maintain and populate with information. He feared that the site would duplicate ODOT's site. Mr. Chickering had anticipated the proposed clearinghouse would allow the user to use either a map or address to find out who had responsibility for a project and would provide a link to that agency for information about the project.

Mr. Sussman believed there would be a benefit from having staff resources dedicated to monitor the currency, accuracy, and timeliness of links to other agencies' web sites. Members briefly discussed the challenge of ensuring that agencies' sites were up-to-date, particularly Lane County's, which was likely to be updated monthly rather than weekly due to budget reductions.

Ms. Crawford noted the automated trip system phone system run by ODOT and suggested a similar approach could be used for events such as open houses.

VII. Updates from Staff

Mr. Vanderpool reported that the local joint elected officials met on Monday to discuss and authorize a work plan to coordinate MPO, Local Transportation System Plan, and Regional Transportation System Plan activities into one overall coordinated work plan. The Land Conservation and Development Commission was expected to consider and, he hoped, approve the work plan in October. He expected the CAC would hear more at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Mulder reminded the CAC of the September meeting in Eugene on the Big Look Task Force's recommendations.

Mr. Sussman noted the upcoming public comment opportunities for the proposed reductions in LTD services.

Responding to a question from Ms. Mulder, Mr. Vanderpool recommended that staff and the officers discuss the CAC's role in the legislative lobbying process. Mr. Sussman invited members to the upcoming officers' meeting, tentatively scheduled for the following week.

VIII. Wrap-up

Mr. Jacobson solicited members' remarks. There were none.

Mr. Jacobson adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)