

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, December 14, 2005 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-102**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introduction of New MNDOT Representative

Haugen welcomed J.T. Anderson, who is replacing Mike Kamnikar, and asked that he give a brief introduction of himself.

Anderson stated that he is actually the Resident Engineer for MNDOT, out of Thief River Falls. He added that he does live in East Grand Forks, and is taking over for Mike Kamnikar, who transferred to the Traffic Division of MNDOT in Bemidji. He said that he will most likely be in this position until April, when their Draft ATIP is due, at which time he will then most likely return to this Resident Engineer duties.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll, the following members were present: Ryan Brooks, EGF Planning; Kent Ehrenstrom, MNDOT-Bemidji; Richard Onstad, GF County Engineer; Wayne Lembke, GF Engineer; Paul Benning, NDDOT-Bismarck – via conference call) Wayde Swensen, NDDOT-Grand Forks; Mark Johnson, FHWA-North Dakota – via conference call); Nancy Ellis, Polk County Planner; Roger Foster, Cities Area Transit Superintendent; J.T. Anderson, MNDOT; and Lane Magnuson, GF County Planner.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Julie Romig, GF/EGF MPO Planner, Senior; Marissa Champion, GF/EGF MPO Intern; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Mike Martinez and John Sayer, HDR Engineering; Brad Bail, Floan-Sanders; and Larry Zitzow, UND.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Brooks, seconded by Benning, to approve the November 9th, 2005, minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee, as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.

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MATTER OF FY 2007-2010 T.I.P. APPLICATIONS AND REVISED T.I.P. SCHEDULE

a. North Dakota Revised T.I.P. Schedule

Haugen reported that normally at the end of December they receive all of the proposed T.I.P. projects for North Dakota, however, he included in the packets copies of a letter from NDDOT granting the MPO an extension to January 20th to submit to them our North Dakota T.I.P. projects. He said that he also included copies of the revised T.I.P. schedule, which was published and distributed to the public in August, to inform them of the new submittal date for North Dakota projects.

Haugen commented that there are also some things going on in Minnesota as well, and that he did include some information in the packets on the new Statewide Corridor funding program that explains the background, what type of projects are eligible, etc.. He added that he also included copies of the draft application for this program as well, however, there currently isn't a formal solicitation process at this time for these projects, but one will be coming soon. He stated that Minnesota agencies need to start thinking about how they might have projects that could be eligible for this program, and pointed out that the first year of funding is 2009, so, on the Minnesota side, the last year of our T.I.P. will have to show any projects that need to be considered and forwarded on to the A.T.P..

Haugen stated that the second item involves the A.T.P. schedule, specifically that there is solicitation for the Highway Safety Improvement Program, for which more information will be forthcoming as to what the application process will entail. He commented that he did include some information he downloaded off the internet from MNDOT that identifies some key things for the Highway Safety Improvement Program, such as the funding amounts available, etc.. He added that this actually replaces the old Hazard Elimination Safety set-asides, which involved setting aside 10% of the STP funds for safety, and of that monies for the railroad, and other areas were set aside as well. He said that change doubled the funding nationwide, but also requires that projects come out of a safety plan. He asked Mr. Benning if information on this program would be coming soon from North Dakota. Benning responded that there would be information distributed soon.

Haugen reported that one other change on the Minnesota side involves the Transportation Enhancement Project submittal date, which originally required a December submittal date, but now can be submitted in January instead. He added that this modification was based on the A.T.P. schedule.

Haugen stated that the action he is seeking is for this body to forward a recommendation to the MPO Executive Policy Board to extend the timeline for submittals to January 4th, 2006. He said that the Technical Advisory Committee would then consider those projects, determine if they conform to the Long Range Transportation Plan, prioritize them, and forward a recommendation to the MPO Executive Policy Board.

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Moved by Foster, seconded by Brooks, to forward a recommendation to the MPO Executive Policy Board to approve the revised schedule for T.I.P. Project submittals. Motion carried unanimously.

Haugen commented that originally the MPO Executive Policy Board had a tentative meeting date of January 20th, however, that may be changed to January 13th instead. He added, just for clarification, that, officially on the North Dakota side, they are trying to create a 2007-2010 T.I.P. document, and on the Minnesota side, the official document will be 2007-2009 T.I.P., however they are still seeking 2010 projects at this time.

Haugen explained that the reason for the different T.I.P. timeframes for Minnesota and North Dakota is that with the passing of SAFETEA-LU there are a lot of requirements that have to be in place in order to have a four-year T.I.P. in place, and MNDOT doesn't feel that they will have all those things in place in time to have an official four-year T.I.P. program at this time, but they have until July 2007 to accomplish this, and in the interim, have decided to start asking for projects for the fourth year in order to get everyone used to the four-years, but will only approve a three-year T.I.P. as is currently allowed.

MATTER OF DRAFT FINAL 42ND STREET EVENT TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Haugen reported that copies of the alternatives that are being developed and reviewed by the Study Team were included in the packets. He referred to a copy of the draft plan, and, along with a power point presentation, gave a brief overview of the findings to date (a copy of the document is included in the file and available upon request).

Haugen referred to page 2 of the Technical Memorandum, and explained that there were some alternatives suggested that the Study Team decided not to pursue. He reported that one was to construct more parking on-site, or adjacent to the site, with cost being the main reason not to pursue; another was, in our Long Range Transportation Plan we do show construction of an overpass at 17th Avenue and I-29, which is still in that plan, but not to help Alerus traffic concerns, and in looking at the traffic patterns and flow during the study, there is little traffic coming on and off the interstate, or using the west side of the interstate, so, again, because of cost and benefit, this alternative was determined not worthy to pursue; and last was to have a direct on-off ramp into the Alerus parking lots, which, after looking at Federal Highway's Interstate Access Policy, it was determined that this alternative does not conform to those policies. Johnson concurred that it would not conform.

Haugen referred to the power point presentation, and went over the alternatives the Study Team determined should be pursued.

Presentation ensued.

Haugen stated SRF recommends that we go with Alternative 2, which was to construct South 43rd Street and 17th Avenue Extension. He pointed out that there is a copy of the estimated costs to do this alternative.

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Haugen said that the purpose of today's presentation was to inform everyone on what has occurred, and to get feedback on the alternatives, specifically the recommendation that we go with Alternative 2.

Swenson asked if there was any cost difference between Alternative 2 and Alternative 3. Haugen responded that Alternative 3 would require more variable signage due to more people wanting to go south being forced to go north, so there would be a need for more staff time and signage, but that would only cause a minor increase in cost.

Lembke pointed out that with Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, at 17th and 42nd, it was never addressed in the report as to how background traffic would be handled. Haugen responded that they would be forced to go the direction that is already shown. He added that under all of the alternatives there is a heavy informational campaign to try to entice traffic not to use 42nd during event departures, and traffic that wants to use it will be at the mercy of the event departure traffic. He commented that this would involve traffic that is trying to get into the site to pick up children and adults. He pointed out that the information given would be to use 11th Avenue to get into the site, and to exit on 11th Avenue as well, so 42nd will become, primarily during that timeframe, for departure.

Foster asked if fire, and/or emergency lanes identified. Haugen responded that they are not identified in the plan, but there will be police officers at the intersections to control traffic going in and coming out. Foster asked if the barrier still goes down during events, and is it addressed in the plan. Haugen asked if he was referring to the barrier at 17th. Foster stated that he was referring to the one at 11th. Haugen responded that it does not. He added that the current railroad crossarm that comes down at 11th Avenue hasn't been used for a number of years, and it hasn't been suggested it be used in the plan, and in-fact, the big change is that, unofficially, 11th Avenue has been used for departures, and officially it is now designated as a departure route, so will be better utilized.

Haugen stated that one thing we need to clarify is that even though we looked at the alternative of putting in additional parking, and have said that it probably isn't needed, they aren't saying that additional parking shouldn't be added. He added that there are some adjacent sites that could be used for additional parking, which, if done could help ease some of the shuttling required for large events.

Foster asked if the North 43rd entryway shown in Alternative 2 would be heavily used during non-event periods, and if so, will there be a right turn out. Haugen responded that the extension of 17th and 43rd would be public streets, and, unless the City should decide to close them, should help spur the development to the south.

MATTER OF DRAFT FINAL E.G.F. GATEWAY DRIVE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Brooks reported that John Sayer and Mike Martinez, from HDR, are here this afternoon, as is Brad Bail, from Floan-Sanders. He stated that they do have a final draft document for approval,

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so he hopes everyone downloaded it for review, but if not, he did bring a few copies along (a copy of the report is included in the file, and available upon request).

Brooks explained that they have been pushed back about a month, so they will be coming before this body in January, and will have another public meeting at that time as well. He said that Mr. Sayer will now give a brief presentation on the final draft document.

Sayer stated that he is asking for input from the Technical Advisory Committee on the draft document, and would like to receive comments by the end of the business day on December 20th. He explained that the reason for that timeline is due to the fact that they need to address any comments received, fold them into the final report, and get it into the January 11th Technical Advisory Committee meeting packet for your review and action.

Sayer referred to Figure 8.1 in the draft report, and explained that the purpose of this project is to redesignate the category of Trunk Highway 2, Gateway Drive, as a Category 7 as opposed to its present access category, which is Category 2. He stated that Category 7 is an access category that has to be defined by a specific document, and the document before you today is that supporting document.

Sayer commented that the first, roughly 20 to 25 pages of the document, discuss existing conditions along the corridor, including existing access points. He said that it also talks about traffic volumes along the corridor, and the levels of service they analyzed along the corridor, and also about the crash analysis they performed using the five years of accident data provided. He stated that they noted, during the last conversation he had with the Technical Advisory Committee, that there were three segments, or intersections along the corridor that suffered crash rates that were in excess, so they took this information into account.

Sayer stated that a public meeting was held in August 2005, at which they were able to meet with several people from the public, and a City Councilperson from East Grand Forks. He said that some of the comments made are listed on Page 43, and that he would go over them briefly. He pointed out that, in response to comments made at the August Technical Advisory Committee, and Public Meeting, they drafted some alternatives, which can be found on Pages 35-38 of the report. He referred to those alternatives, and, using a computer generated simulation of the alternatives, went over them each briefly.

Sayer referred to the table on Page 40 of the document, and pointed out that there was an error made, which will be addressed before the final document is completed. He stated that they actually doubled the impact of an alternative at 2nd Avenue N.E., so the total cost shown doubles everything, and that isn't appropriate, and will be adjusted.

Simulation presentation ensued.

Haugen asked for an explanation of the frequency of the flood event. Sayer referred to Page 29, and stated that data provided from Floan-Sanders for 1997 through 2005 indicate the number of closures, and the number of days of closure during flood events. He added that when he refers to

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the number of closures, that indicates that there was some level of closure within East Grand Forks during flooding events, and that could mean River Road only, or the River Road and 4th Street intersection, or River Road and 12th, or it could go all the way up to the bridge to the south, or it could also include Highway 2, but most of them are simply the closure of River Road, 4th Street and the Interchange at Highway 2. He said that this data shows that every year since 1997, except for 2002, there has been at least one event that has closed at least River Road. Haugen asked if we know how the permanent flood protection project has impacted these numbers. Bail responded that everything in the document is based on what has occurred after the flood protection was in place, adding that River Road does close at 33-feet, so it is closed a lot during flood events.

Presentation continued.

Anderson asked, when it floods, it floods at the overpass first, so is it caused by backup from the storm sewer system, because he thought that was to have been taken care of with the flood protection. Bail responded that it is basically caused by backup from the storm sewer system, because being on the wet side, it is not part of the pump system. He added that it used to be pretty well protected by a small dike, but since that was removed, we now have to close that area more often. Anderson asked if there was anything the City could do, such as a pump system on that side of the dike to help alleviate some of the closures. Bail responded that water comes over the banks at about 38-feet, but a pump system might be something they can look at doing.

Sayer reported that, based on their evaluation and their review of the simulation, as well as the discussions held with this Committee and the public, they have moved forward with their recommended plan, which is what you see before you today. He referred to Page 47 of the document, and explained that it discusses the plan that they recommend as the future access alternative for the Category 7. He stated that, in summary, it recommends the extension of the north leg of 5th Avenue N.W. to Trunk Highway 2, and the signalization of that intersection; and it recommends the inclusion of a ¾ access at 2nd Avenue N.E.; and it recommends improvements to the substation access.

Sayer reminded everyone that this is the final draft, and they really do need everyone to review and comment on it by the end of business on December 20th.

Anderson stated that MNDOT has several comments concerning the document. He distributed copies of those comments (a copy of which is included in the file, and available upon request), and reported that Mike Kamnikar was, and still will be the main contact person for this study, but, unfortunately he wasn't able to be here today. He added that there may still be more comments as well, and that, as written, MNDOT, District 2 would not approve these access recommendations based on how the report is written. Sayer asked if the comments from MNDOT illustrate exactly what they need to do to garner MNDOT's approval. Anderson responded that he wouldn't be able to respond to that, that that is something they would need to talk to Mr. Kamnikar about.

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Anderson asked if Mr. Brooks could talk about the level of acceptance of the Barton-Aschman Plan. Brooks reported that, ten years ago, they did get buy-in from MNDOT in 1994, so they did have a full access at 2nd, and other accesses as well. He stated that the two that were carried over were those at 5th and 2nd. He said that in 1997 they had planned construction, but the flood pushed that back a year or two, and then they changed it to allow a right-in/right-out from the south leg of 5th, so the full-access was dropped; and they also reduced the level of access at 2nd as well. He commented that they did try to work with Mr. Kamnikar throughout this entire study, so he hopes something can be worked out, and he was hoping to hear what it was they wanted to see from us to get approval. He added that they tried to work with MNDOT as this study progressed, but Mr. Kamnikar was in the process of changing positions, and there were other things going on, however he thought that they had come to an agreement of sorts, but evidently not. Ehrenstrom stated that he has a note stating that OIM, Mr. Kamnikar, and others from the District Office are willing to meet to work out these details. Brooks said that he will be talking to Mr. Kamnikar before the January meeting, and hopefully come to some kind of agreement.

Sayer asked if Mr. Anderson had any feeling as to whether or not MNDOT will have additional comments, and if they would be available by the end of business on December 20th. Anderson responded that he would say yes to both questions.

Haugen said that the only other point he would have, backing up what Mr. Brooks said about the 1994 plan, would be that just two years ago the MPO updated and approved their Long Range Transportation Plan, Street and Highway Element, and in that plan they do have full accesses at 5th and 2nd Avenues, and cooperatively developed that plan with MNDOT, so just two years ago we examined these alternatives through a larger planning level, and concluded they should remain in the plan. Brooks added that this plan actually backs off on the full access at 2nd Avenue as well, going to a ¾ access at both legs. Haugen stated that they took it from the larger regional planning level down to a more corridor/intersection specific level, and are concluding that there would be no harm to the system, and in-fact shows that there is a benefit to the system.

Sayer commented that there is benefit to highway functionality and access during normal business operations, and that there is also significant benefit to Trunk Highway 2, between Central and the bridge during a flood event.

Haugen asked if the action recommended in the staff report was still what Mr. Brooks wanted. Brooks responded that he was hoping to get this firmed up, but since we did add some additional things to it, we are not at the point of adding alternatives, so he would think that waiting for additional comments, and addressing the comments received today and getting them into the report, then act on it at the January meeting would be sufficient. Haugen asked if his intent, however, was to still schedule the public meeting in early January. Brooks responded that he would try to do so the Tuesday before the January Technical Advisory Committee meeting so everyone can hear those final public comments before the meeting. He added that we have, to date, received support from the community for these recommendations, so he hopes that will continue.

Information only.

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**MATTER OF REQUEST TO AMEND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODE
PLAN – BIKE SECTION**

Haugen referred to the staff report, included in the packets, and pointed out that this issue is being generated through discussion that has taken place on the project concept report for 47th Avenue South, between Washington and Belmont. He stated that in the Long Range Transportation Plan we show a multi-purpose path, however, through the PCR process there was some resistance from the neighborhood concerning that path, so it was decided that this body should be alerted to that fact. He explained that in order to keep the bid timeline on track, City staff was trying to do the preliminary stages to amend the plan to switch that path to a bike lane facility, with the difference between the two being that the bikepath is typically 10-foot wide pathway that is separate from the roadway, while the bike lane would add, essentially 5-feet of pavement to the driving surface, and is stripped as a bike lane.

Haugen stated that Mr. Lembke may have some updated information concerning this issue, as there was a public meeting held last evening, which was alluded to in the staff report. Lembke agreed that there was a public meeting held last evening, and explained that about 20 residents attended. He reported that the consensus of that group was to move forward with an 8-foot bikepath rather than a bike lane, so this issue will probably actually be dropped, as they will now proceed with a multi-use path for the project. He added that they will, however, be looking for design exceptions for an 8-foot from a 10-foot path.

Haugen commented that the intent of this staff report was to inform this body that, perhaps in January, we might be seeking your technical recommendation on this issue, but it sounds like, based on the discussion last evening, action will be required Monday evening by the City Council. Lembke responded that they actually need to make changes to the PCR, so they won't be asking for approval until January 19th. Haugen asked if it would be possible that the City Council would not approve this request. Lembke responded that he wouldn't think so.

Discussion ensued.

Haugen stated that the good news is it seems like everyone is on the same page now, that they want to continue with the plan that has a pathway going in here rather than putting in a bike lane, but we will keep you informed should we need to take action on this in January.

Information only.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Planning Provision Information/Guidance

Haugen distributed copies of information on how the planning provisions will be implemented. He explained that they talk about the July 1st, 2007 implementation deadline for our plans and T.I.P.s, and also give an update on SAFETEA-LU requirements as well.

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Johnson stated that FHWA will be sending additional guidance on this as well. He added that what is important is that all the MPOs in North Dakota really horn in and determine and look at their processes early rather than waiting until the last minute, so it would be wise for each one of the technical and policy committees to begin looking at what they need to do, and to start implementing some of it now versus waiting until a year from now.

2. Funding

Haugen asked Mr. Benning if he could give an update on the MPO's funding situation. He explained that last he heard we were at 8/12's of the 2005 funds, and he wondered if that was still correct. Benning responded that it was, that they did put in the grant for the other 4/12's for the three MPOs, and yesterday had a meeting with FTA, and there is a DBE issue that is being resolved with FTA, but at this time they are not going to be releasing that other 4/12's until that issue is resolved.

Haugen asked if the DBE issue was only a NDDOT issue, or does the GF/EGF MPO need to deal with it as well. Benning responded that the NDDOT has the issue, not the MPO's. He gave a brief overview on what the issue involves, explaining that it is a regulation problem that they have asked FTA to define as they don't understand it, but FTA doesn't seem to be able to give a definition, so they are working with a couple of other states to see if they can get this issue resolved. He added that because of this, there is not only the issue of funding for the MPO, but there are also transit funds being held hostage as well, so they are working on it.

Haugen asked if Mr. Benning had identified the 2006 funding availability yet. Benning responded that he hasn't yet. Johnson added that not only have they not been told what their budget will be, but were also told that it may be at least a couple more weeks before they are.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Brooks, seconded by Foster, to adjourn the December 14th, 2005, meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee at 3:02 p.m.. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Executive Assistant