

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A102**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the June 8, 2005, meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:35 p.m.

A. **INTRODUCE NEW MEMBERS**

Haugen reported that, as stated in the e-mail that was sent to all of the Technical Advisory Committee members, we have invited two new members to join us: Nancy Ellis, Polk County Planning and Lane Magnuson, Grand Forks County Planning. He welcomed them to the Technical Advisory Committee, and explained that the reason for inviting them to join the Technical Advisory Committee is due to the fact that some major planning facilities are planned for their respective County's jurisdictions, and it was felt that it would be appropriate to invite them to become members on the Committee, as advisors to the MPO.

B. **INTRODUCE NEW MPO STAFF**

Haugen reported that the MPO has hired a new employee to fill the recently vacated Senior Planner position. He introduced Julie Romig, and asked that she give a brief background on herself for the Committee members.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Paul Benning, NDDOT-Bismarck; Kent Ehrenstrom, MNDOT-Bemidji; Les Noehre, NDDOT-Grand Forks; Wayde Swensen, NDDOT-Grand Forks; Dennis Potter, GF Planning; Lane Magnuson, GF County Planning; Nancy Ellis, Polk County Planning; Dean Wieland, EGF Engineering; Cindy Voigt, GF Engineering; Ryan Brooks, EGF Planning; and Mark Johnson, FHWA-Bismarck (via conference call).

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Julie Romig, GF/EGF MPO Senior Planner; Al Grasser, GF City Engineer; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Troy Schroeder, NWRDC.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairman Haugen declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Brooks, seconded by Wieland, to approve the April 13, 2005, minutes of the Technical Advisory Committee. Motion carried unanimously.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

MATTER OF POINT BRIDGE SLIDE

Haugen referred to copies of information included in the packets, and explained . He stated that the Point Bridge painting project is programmed for 2006, that the PCR has been drafted, and that it identifies costs for different types of alternatives. He referred to the staff report, and pointed out that the original estimated costs for solving the slide on the east end of the bridge was \$300,000, however the PCR is now indicating a much higher cost estimate for solving this problem. He commented that, for information purposes, MPO Executive Policy Board members did ask that staff try to identify funding sources that could be used to eliminate the slide problem, so copies of a summary done back in 2002 which lists some possible funding sources was included in the packets. He pointed out that there is an update included which shows a new sufficiency rating, as well as some additional funding sources that might be available on the Minnesota side, with the most notable being the City Share that East Grand Forks gets every fourth year, which used to be \$375,000, and is now up to \$577,500, however the next year it is available is 2010. He said that there has also been, in the past, a partnership pot of monies, which still exists, however the ATP currently does not have any funds programmed in that project, but as projects come up either after the TIP process, or don't fit well in any other TIP programs, they would consider funding it through the partnership. He said that the ATP, as a whole, however, has to agree that it is a regionally significant project, then they will lower the percentages of the other programs to fund the project in this partnership.

Haugen stated that another funding source that was identified was the HES, or safety program, however, he does question whether or not this project would actually be a viable safety project. He said that they have requested crash data from MNDOT for this area, however, we don't actually have to wait for crashes to occur, but can instead be proactive in trying to prevent crashes from occurring. He added that in discussions with officials in St. Paul, he was told that it may be a challenge to justify this project for safety funding, but was encouraged to try.

Haugen reported that in 2002 they were looking at how East Grand Forks could fund their share of the total project, but now we are looking at the slide being a shared project on both sides of the river, so he also included some potential North Dakota funding sources as well. He added that he also attached, in addition to the 2002 Report, the draft PCR which identifies some of the potential solutions to the slide, as well as the soil report to give everyone a better idea of what the actual problem is.

Haugen commented, again, that MPO staff has been asked to bring all potential funding sources that might be available to help repair the slide problem on the east end of the bridge to the MPO Executive Policy Board. He said that we currently have programmed monies that do not cover the estimated costs identified for this problem, so if anyone has any ideas on other potential funding sources, or if anyone knows of any reason those sources listed do not qualify, please let him know.

Grasser asked if there were any cost savings from the Sorlie Bridge Lighting Project compared to the original estimate. Haugen responded that East Grand Forks is still trying to get all their costs identified for that project, but he would anticipate that there may have been some savings,

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

however, the original estimate was for \$270,000, and they have currently identified \$183,000, and are still coming up with some additional costs at this time.

Haugen stated that one thing to note is MNDOT's efficiency rating of the Point Bridge, specifically that in 2001 they had it rated at 80, which is right on the cusp of making it eligible for bridge program funds, but that the most current rating drops it down to 69, which is more in line with what North Dakota has had it rated at for some time. He added that one of the differences was that Minnesota had a different bridge management system, but have recently adopted a system that is much closer to what North Dakota uses.

Noehre asked if they were looking for additional funding sources, for informational purposes, to add to the PCR in the decision process. Haugen responded that if there is still, as part of the decision process, a desire to fix the slide problem, are there funding sources to do that, that is what they are attempting to do, to identify those funding sources. He said that they could include language stating which sources would be more viable, and which would be less viable, but he didn't want to make that judgement call, so he just included those sources that the slide program seemed eligible for. He added that the cost estimate, as they currently are, are significant, to the point that he would doubt we could fund it with the existing funding sources that were identified for the project. Noehre commented that this wouldn't affect the preservation project, correct. Haugen responded that was correct, that there is funding for that, but, again, if there is still the desire to fix the slide problem at this time, then there is not enough funding to fix it. Noehre stated, however, that in the event the slide problem cannot be fixed, they would still be able to do the preservation project, correct. Haugen responded that that is correct, that that is a decision that this is not attempting to make. Noehre stated that that was his concern, whether you were attempting to guide toward a decision, or simply to gather additional information to place in the PCR. Haugen responded that he doesn't believe staff was asked to "guide" the Policy Board's decision, but if that is what this Committee wants to do, they can certainly do so, however he isn't sure we are in the position to do so yet, that we were only asked to identify funding sources, which is what we are attempting to do. Noehre stated that we can do that in the PCR, but he doesn't think it would be appropriate to kill something at this stage, for the PCR. Haugen agreed, stating that that isn't what they are trying to do, that they are only trying to offer additional information for the decision process.

Grasser stated that part of the question, when he looks at this, is whether or not they are trying to adjust the scope of the project, and the funding to make the new scope, or are you trying to adjust the scope of work to fit the budget given the difficulties we have had, as the budget seems to be driving it, as there was a pretty exhaustive search made the first time between the two communities. He added that he is also a little uncertain, in the discussion, and maybe Cindy can help, but he is a little uncertain when we talk about repairing the slide, exactly what that means. He commented that some of their staff discussions have indicated they were looking at doing some overlay work, but are we now looking at doing an actual physical structural extension, and if so then there may be some different background information on the two sides. He added that he isn't sure he would be able to find specific documents on the Grand Forks side that rate that slide repair out, as a full structural repair, not that it shouldn't be done, but the problem is that structural bridge extensions would be a little bit different project than painting, so this would be a totally different function, and he would like to know if they have to be done together, or can

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

they be separated. He added that the question would be whether or not there is money to do it. Voigt commented that her recollection of what happened is that when they had the estimate, most of it was for a paving project, and then they went through the PCR process, and they got a bridge expert involved, so they thought they might as well address the obvious slide issue, and then they found that the costs are much higher than what we have budgeted, so it now becomes a decision for both cities to make as to whether or not this is something we want to do in addition to the painting project. She added that the concern is that the project keep on track for the 2006 bid letting, because, with the sources identified here, she isn't sure they would be available within that timeframe. Grasser stated that another issue, from the Grand Forks side, would be not having approval from the City Council to look at adjusting the dollars, or the scope of work, so he would be very careful about a discussion that talks about possible funding sources, which might be misconstrued that Grand Forks has some kind of commitment to take monies out of one of these potentially identified sources, which is something that staff can't decide without approval from their City Council.

Haugen stated that, as that PCR plays out, and decisions are needed, both sides will have to determine where they want to go with this. He said, again, that staff was asked to identify funding sources that could be used to make a decision on the slide issue, and there are some possible sources should be identified as soon as possible in order that the monies can be programmed in a timely manner.

Potter asked if there was a rush to get this information to the MPO Policy Board. Haugen responded that the people requesting the information would like it as soon as possible.

Grasser commented, again, that one of the issues is timing, whether or not any of these possible funding sources would be available in 2006, which is the schedule our current project is on, or would they only be available at a later time, which then raises the question as to whether or not the two should be dealt with as separate projects. He said that we may, or may not be in a better position on the Grand Forks side to handle the slide issue in 2007 or 2008, although 42nd Street is certainly going to put a crimp on our funding, but if there is a program out there on the Minnesota side, it would certainly be an important consideration. Haugen responded that there are, on the Minnesota side, a couple of options, one being the safety funds, which may or may not be a fundable pot of monies. He added that in identifying these, we do know that reauthorization is on the horizon at larger levels than what we are currently programming, which provides us an opportunity, if we can identify them, and we decide to pursue them, we can get our names on the list sooner than later.

Voigt commented that she finds it curious that Federal Highway would fund a painting project with safety funds. She asked if, when you are talking about those funds are you talking about funding a new bridge, or to alleviate the curve, or what. Haugen responded that they are only trying to identify possible funding to cure the slide problem, not to find funds to do the painting or other repairs to the bridge.

Grasser asked, when you are talking about bridge repair, is there a possibility that this type of structural extension, to correct the slide problem, would qualify for those types of funds, or would the sufficiency rating still be too high to be considered. Benning responded that the

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

sufficiency ratings are currently too high for it to be considered for these types of funds. He added that you would have to show a sufficiency rating of 50 or lower to qualify. Brooks asked if the sufficiency rating factors in the slide problem, or, if the slide isn't affecting the bridge structure, would it be included in the sufficiency rating. Benning responded that he would have to look at the sufficiency report to determine this.

Wieland stated that when you look at the numbers needed to solve the slide problem, you aren't that far off from the costs of a low level bridge replacement. He added that the existing bridge was substandard when they did an overlay a few years ago, and they had trouble getting federal funding to do that even then, and it isn't getting any better, so to spend the kind of monies we are talking about to paint and repair it, we might want to consider replacing it instead.

Discussion on bridge replacement versus repainting and repair ensued.

Noehre commented that if you don't have the funding available to do a \$2,000,000 repair, how will you fund a new bridge. Wieland responded that he understands this, however, it doesn't make sense to spend money on a substandard bridge that will need to be replaced in the somewhat near future. He added that it also wouldn't make sense to put in anything other than a low water project because all the roads are on the wet side of the dike, so it wouldn't make sense to build a bridge to the 100-year flood level, and he doesn't think this has been looked at in any kind of detail. Grasser said that he can't imagine that even a low level crossing would cost less than \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000, and we just don't have that kind of funding available, so he would like to see it painted at least. Wieland stated that from Minnesota's standpoint, they would have an easier time funding a new bridge than doing some kind of extension on the existing bridge, most likely through their bridge bonding program. Brooks commented that he isn't sure he totally agrees with Mr. Wieland's comment, as he is still a little worried about coming up with the local match on a new bridge, as they would have just as much of a problem doing that as we are funding the painting and repair of the existing bridge. He added that if they were to look at alternative one, and go with the \$2,000,000 painting project, then try to find monies to fix the slide, we would get a bridge that would serve us longer than by doing nothing, that would make sense as we are still talking about other bridges that we want to pay for, so he can't imagine adding another bridge to the mix now, although he doesn't know where the policy makers will go with this, but he is looking at something a lot more doable than if we were looking at a new bridge, although he doesn't know what kind of competitiveness there is for bridge bonding monies. Wieland responded that he agrees, to the extent that we need to do what we need to do now, as cheaply as possible, that we need to address the slide problem by maybe filling it with asphalt, and then look at what we need to do in the future, but he also feels that it doesn't make sense to look at putting in a \$7,000,000 extension on the existing bridge, along with the painting, because, to him it is like taking an old Chevrolet, putting some new bumpers and things on it, and calling it a new car. Grasser said that he followed up on this very closely, and he feels that the PCR, the initial draft, is going to reflect that kind of an option, however, he also thinks it will take some time to put together what we need to determine what we are going to do with the bridge in the future. He added that because of the 42nd Street project, funding is pretty well taken care of until at least 2010, and if we don't do anything with that bridge before then, the decision will most likely be made for us, and that would be that we will need to replace it.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

Wieland reported that when they did the overlay in 1980's, they had a very hard time getting a variance from Federal Highway because they felt it was substandard, which doesn't really jive with the sufficiency ratings it has now, because either it is substandard or it isn't. He added that things aren't going to get any better, they will only get worse, but he doesn't know how this fits in with what is being looked for. Haugen responded that he thinks it fits in in that it shows that if they want to continue pursuing fixing the slide problem, there is a funding issue with it, and to answer to the question, what funding programs are available, we also see that it is going to be very difficult to find funding to fix the problem as well, and, in-fact, if he heard Mr. Benning correctly, BRR funds are probably not eligible for this, so it can be struck as a possible funding source. Benning responded that that would be correct, and that instead of listing what funds are available, you may want to list what funds are eligible. Haugen said that he thought that is what he did. Benning said that he is referring to all funding sources, not just BRR funds.

Potter asked if they were getting the cart before the horse, in that they have a PCR in the process that does not address the slide issue, and then we are going to send this up, and he is assuming that the Policy Board is going to take this shopping list and money, and try to figure out how to find money to deal with the slide, is that a rational assumption. Haugen responded that there are some on the Policy Board that are trying to find money to fix the slide. He added that the slide issue is addressed in the PCR, it is an alternative identified as part of the decision making process, and some members want to know if there are funding sources out there to fix it, and they do realize that fixing the slide will cost more than what is programmed, so they requested staff find out if there are additional funding sources to cover those costs. Grasser asked if these questions are being asked by people who have seen the Project Concept Report, or by those that have not yet seen the report. Haugen responded that he doesn't know, that he doesn't know what has been shared, however they did seem pretty knowledgeable with what the PCR said. Wieland asked if there were extra copies of the PCR available. Voigt responded that the PCR is not in it's final format yet.

Potter asked if Mr. Haugen had shared the Draft PCR with any of the MPO Policy Board members from Grand Forks. Haugen responded that he has not shared the PCR with any policy makers. Grasser referred to the Draft PCR, and asked for clarification on a comment. He pointed out that on the MPO Staff Report, the very last bullet talks about Grand Forks staff paying 100% of the costs, and he isn't sure what that refers to. Haugen responded that this same comment was included in the 2002 report as well. Voigt said that she thinks that Mr. Grasser is asking which costs are being paid. Haugen responded that back in 2002, Grand Forks had stated that if East Grand Forks cannot afford to do anything with the bridge, they might do it all, but the update is now saying that the 100% costs Ms. Voigt is referring to, East Grand Forks has programmed it's federal funds, with an additional \$369,000 that could be federally funded that they were short for, which Grand Forks was paying for to cover the shortfall of funds. Grasser said that he just wants to be very clear on this so that some politician won't read it and think that staff even hinted that the City would pay 100% of the bridge project. Haugen said that it was paying 100% of the East Grand Forks shortfall. Potter asked what the 100% shortfall was from, from the painting, the slide extension, or what. Haugen responded that is from the \$2,000,000 programmed project, which involved \$1,800,000 for the repainting, and whatever slide repair was being done, as, at that time it was anticipated there would be an 80-foot extension on the east approach.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

Grasser commented that if the purpose of this is to look at possible funding sources, he doesn't know what particular relevance that specific statement has in this PCR, and, because it may cause confusion, he would like it taken out of there.

Voigt stated that she feels before this is forwarded on to the Executive Policy Board, some kind of summary, or maybe the percentage of feasibility some of the sources identified have of being programmed in 2006 so they realistically know what choices they have so that the project can be done as programmed in 2006, so that they know that there are sources available, but not if we want to keep the project on track. Haugen reiterated that they talked earlier about trying to assess the likelihood, or non-likelihood of obtaining these additional funds, however he didn't feel that he wanted to get into that because that isn't what was requested, the request was only to identify possible funding sources, but, if that is what this body wants to do, to give guidance, that would be fine, although he doesn't know how they would craft percentages. Voigt said that she would still prefer, that somehow, more information be included regarding the possible funding sources to ensure that everyone understands the unlikelihood of them being awarded us. Brooks suggested that verbage, explaining this, could be added to the background portion of the document.

Noehre commented that his concern is that we will continue to push this project back, as we have done in the past, and he strongly recommends that this not happen again. Benning said that he would have to agree with Mr. Noehre. He added that there are too many questions that aren't being answered right now.

A motion was made by Potter, seconded by Brooks, that the Technical Advisory Committee approves forwarding this finding of possible funding sources for the East Approach Slide of the Point Bridge project, as submitted by MPO Staff.

A motion was made by Brooks, seconded by Potter, to amend the motion to include: 1) the removal of the BRR funding source, 2) the removal of the staff comment which states "Grand Forks staff had presented possibly Grand Forks paying 100% costs; Fund 2169 (Sales Tax Infrastructure Fund) is funding \$369,000 to cover East Grand Forks federal fund shortfall. Actual motion is "..., and designate that any federal funding shortfall be paid by Fund 2169", 3) to include verbage explaining the likelihood, nonlikelihood, and competitiveness of receiving the funding sources identified; and 4) to add in parentheses (for slide repair) by HES.

Benning reported that they currently have the bridge project on the 2005 bid letting schedule, and their contractors are looking at the plans being completed by December 1st, so the DOT would need a letter from the City indicating their desire to move the bid letting back. Grasser stated that he would take care of this.

Amendment, carried unanimously.

Motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

MATTER OF STATUS OF TEA21 REAUTHORIZATION

Haugen reported that information pertaining to the Reauthorization of TEA21 was included in the packets. He explained that the seventh extension of TEA21 will be expiring at the end of June, however both Chambers have passed their versions of the reauthorization. He pointed out that a listing of who is in the Conference Committee was included in the packets, as well as some additional information concerning a briefing that was held the first of April in Deadwood, South Dakota, about where the Chambers were in the process. He added that there are some things that impact the MPOs, which seems to be consistent on both sides of the chamber, so in all likelihood we will need to implement them, with the most notable being a four year T.I.P. instead of a three year T.I.P.. He referred to the fourth slide, and explained that it talks about the highway funding, that on the senate side they have actually increased their dollar amounts to a higher total than is shown on the slide, so, besides trying to figure out the differences between programs, they also need to figure out, and agree on how much money should be spent per year, and there were some wide differences on this issue. He said that there is also an agreement that there will be some kind of safe route to school program as well.

Haugen reported that the hope is that the reauthorization will be final before the end of July, when they convene.

Johnson commented that he hasn't heard anything different on this at this time.

Haugen mentioned that the State of Minnesota is also struggling to meet a June 30th deadline as well. He asked, if a budget is not approved by June 30th, how would it impact State projects, transit projects. Ehrenstrom responded that transit projects would be on-going, but construction projects would come to a halt.

Information only.

MATTER OF ACCESS MANAGEMENT COURSE AUGUST 9TH -11TH, 2005

Haugen reminded everyone of the Access Management Course the MPO is putting on August 9th through the 11th. He said that the MPO is providing opportunity for each Technical Advisory Committee member to attend the course, but we need to have a commitment from you soon as there are several interested parties that would like to attend as well, so he wants to ensure that all members have the opportunity before he starts allowing others to sign up. He said that the course only allows for 30-people to attend, which limits us from allowing everyone that is interested to attend.

Haugen commented that he actually received a list of an additional 13-people from NDDOT that are interested in attending, as well as others.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 8, 2005**

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Brooks, seconded by Potter, to adjourn the June 8th, 2005, meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Executive Assistant