

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 10, 2006 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-102**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the May 10th, 2006, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:30 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll, the following members were present: Wayne Lembke, Grand Forks Civil Engineer; Brad Gengler, Grand Forks City Planner; J.T. Anderson, MNDOT-Thief River Falls; Ryan Brooks, East Grand Forks City Planner; Dean Wieland, East Grand Forks City Engineer; Nancy Ellis, Polk County Planner; Richard Sanders, Polk County Engineer; and Paul Benning (via conference call), NDDOT-Bismarck.

Staff present were: Julie Romig, MPO Senior Planner, and Peggy McNelis, MPO Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Richard Tebinka, ND-LEA, Inc., and Tim Mitchell, FHWA-Minnesota Division.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

A quorum was present.

SUSPEND AGENDA

Haugen reported that he would like to suspend the agenda in order to hold discussion on Agenda Item VII, the Grand Forks Downtown Parking Study. He explained that originally the firm chosen to do this study, ND-LEA, Inc., was going to do a utilization study, however because of the weather, the consultant, Richard Tebinka, graciously agreed to attend today's meeting to give us a brief overview on their scope-of-work. He added that Mr. Tebinka does have another commitment at 2:00, which is why we would like to act on this item first.

Haugen referred to the packet, pointing out that copies of the staff report, and the scope-of-work were included for review.

Brooks reported that the selection committee met last week to interview the top two firms, and did select ND-LEA, Inc., to perform the Grand Forks Downtown Parking

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Study. He added that ND-LEA's sub-consultant on this project is EAPC, a local firm. He then introduced Richard Tebinka, ND-LEA, Inc., and asked him to proceed with his presentation.

Tebinka commented that, as Mr. Haugen said, they had planned to do parking utilization surveys today, but were concerned that the rain might have an impact on the amount of casual parking downtown, so they decided to wait until Thursday. He added that another thing they plan on doing in the next couple of days is to visit all of the publicly owned parking lots in the downtown to do a condition assessment, during which they will be looking at the condition of the lot surface to see if it is cracked, in poor condition, etc.. He stated that they will also be doing a walk-through on the ramps to see what kind of shape they are in as well. He commented that EAPC is under contract with the City to do some rehabilitation with the central ramp, so they are already quite familiar with that. He added that they will also be looking at items such as security features, lighting, signage, etc., which may make it difficult for someone to use the parking spaces, especially for casual users that may not be familiar with the parking regulations.

Tebinka reported that another thing they will be doing is to perform stakeholder contacts, beginning tomorrow, both in person and by phone to get input on issues and concerns they may have with the parking system in the downtown.

Tebinka stated that they will be doing surveys of other cities in the region to determine how they handle the management of publicly owned parking in their downtowns. He said that they are already somewhat familiar with what Fargo does, but will also be looking at Bismarck, Minot, St. Cloud, and Duluth as well.

Tebinka said that once they have some of the background information put together they will hold their first open house, which will take place at the Grand Forks Herald, in one of their conference rooms. He explained that this will allow us to let people know that the study is underway, what the work plan is doing, and what the end result is intended to be; as well as to allow us to get input from the attendees on parking issues and concerns they may have.

Tebinka stated that once they have input from the open house, they will then be able to develop a parking plan. He explained that they will look at identifying existing, or forecasting deficiencies based on anticipated additional development in the downtown, including the three residential projects that are in various states of development; will get input from City Planning on other projects that may happen in the next five to ten years, including development on the temporary parks and in underutilized buildings throughout the downtown. He stated that they will also be looking at ways to address parking shortfalls, and other parking supply issues, and ways to reduce parking demands in the downtown.

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Tebinka reported that once various options have been developed, they will hold another open house to present those findings, as well as the proposals on how to address those findings to the public. He said that they will then use the input from this meeting to create a recommended plan, which will then be put into a final report for the steering committee and city council.

Haugen asked if they would be looking at both off- and on-street parking issues. Tebinka responded that would be looking at both. He added that this afternoon someone would be confirming all of the supply numbers, parking restrictions, where the reserved spaces are, where loading zones are located, where handicapped spaces are located, etc., in order to give us a good idea of the existing supply of parking available. Haugen asked if they would include time restrictions as well. Tebinka responded he hoped that would be included, otherwise they would do it later.

Brooks reported that ND-LEA, Inc., has done work in the downtown previously, through the River Forks Plan, and has also done considerable parking studies in Fargo and Winnipeg, which is one of the reasons they were selected to do our study. He added that EAPC also has some experience with the downtown area as well.

Haugen asked about the timeline of the project. Tebinka responded that the contract states completion by October 1st, but their target is to have a draft final report to the steering committee by mid-August. Brooks added that he did leave some wiggle room in the contract so no extensions would be needed.

Haugen asked who would be on the steering committee. Brooks responded that it would consist of four downtown property owners, two city council representatives, Wayne Lembke, Brad Gengler, himself, and a Downtown Leadership Group representative. Haugen asked if there should also be someone from the NDDOT on the committee as well. Benning responded that someone from the Grand Forks District office should also be included on the committee. He suggested that Les Noehre be contacted to see who he would like to sit on the committee.

INTRODUCTIONS

Haugen introduced Tim Mitchell, FHWA-St. Paul, and asked that everyone introduce themselves as well.

Mitchell gave a brief introduction of himself, explaining that he is relatively new to Federal Highways, and, in-fact, has only been with them for about six weeks. He stated that he spent the bulk of his professional career working for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), most of which was trail related, so this is a whole new world for him. He reported that, as far as his responsibilities with Federal Highways, he splits his time three ways; 1/3 dealing with planning and mpo relationships, 1/3 is environment based, and 1/3 is bike and pedestrian related.

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Haugen asked how often Mr. Mitchell thought he would be attending these meetings. Mitchell responded that he would try to make it as often as he could, hopefully every other meeting or so.

RESUME AGENDA

**APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 12TH, 2006, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

***MOVED BY BROOKS, SECONDED BY WIELAND, TO APPROVE THE APRIL
12TH, 2006, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS
SUBMITTED.***

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF MAY 18TH TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT COURSE

Haugen reported that because of flood issues this spring, this course, which was originally scheduled to take place April 6th, was postponed to Thursday, May 18th. He said that the course will take place from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Grand Forks City Hall Council Chambers.

Haugen referred to the packets and pointed out that an application form was included. He asked that anyone interested in attending please fill out a form and return it as soon as possible to Peggy. He also reported that he does have copies of the course material available, if anyone would like to pick up a copy for review prior to the course.

Haugen explained that the purpose for holding this course is because we have included, in the MPO's Annual Work Program, an activity to do a Traffic Incident Management Plan for Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, and because this is such a new subject for most of us we thought it might be beneficial to have some training in this area, to get an idea of what a Traffic Incident Management Plan can be, and allow us to develop one for the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area.

Haugen stated that there are 35 manuals available, and therefore up to 35 individuals can attend the course. He added that the instructor said that he would teach the course the same way for one person or 100 people, so please send us a list of all interested parties from your firm.

Haugen commented that while we are not actively soliciting a fee, we would gratefully accept any donations toward the cost of the course, which is \$4,500.00. He stated that we have only received forms from five or six individual, so there is still plenty of room available. He asked if anyone was planning on attending from Bismarck. Benning responded that he wasn't aware of anyone at this time.

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MATTER OF DISCUSSION ON BRIDGE CLOSURE STUDY BY A.T.A.C.

Haugen referred to the packet, pointing out that copies of the staff report were included. He explained that last month we did experience a flood event, during which two of our three bridges were closed, and traffic was quite congested on Gateway Drive. He stated that one of the things they discovered during discussions with various staff, was that a lot of what was going on was more of a spontaneous reaction to an event rather than having a clear plan developed ahead of time on how to accommodate the traffic.

Haugen stated that there are a couple of viable software programs available, such as travel demand forecasting software, and a micro-simulation type program that could be used for this study. He added that outside of us doing the Long Range Transportation Plan Update, this would be rather intensive, and fairly costly, but, because we do have those two things already being updated with the Long Range Transportation Plan Update, we are able to work with another organization to do a study on how to better manage traffic once bridges start closing.

Haugen stated that most of us are familiar with Advanced Traffic Analysis Center (ATAC), out of NDSU, which is a program that was set up to help small and medium sized communities address traffic issues, so they are well-versed in the software packages we are talking about. He said that he included information in the packets which explains what ATAC can do for us regarding this issue, specifically that they will run various scenarios in order to allow us to get a better idea on how to address this if it occurs again in the future.

Wieland asked if the Louie Murray Bridge was included in this. Haugen responded that it wasn't, essentially because it didn't close during this last flood event. Wieland stated that the Louie Murray Bridge should have been closed during this last event as the intersection was flooding, but it was left open.

Wieland commented that another issue he feels needs to be addressed is the issue of communication concerning bridge closings, such as when a bridge is closing, and when it will be opening again. He explained that there was conflicting communications occurring during this last event, and it is so important that this information be correct, and that it be done in a timely manner, so it should be part of the overall plan. Haugen said that this is certainly something that can be included as they would have all the data necessary, and the network will be in place, so it wouldn't add much too the scope-of-work.

Discussion ensued.

Haugen reported that he did meet with J.T. Anderson earlier, and MNDOT did do some adjustments on the Minnesota side that they will get to them, and Wayne Lembke will do the same for Grand Forks as well.

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Haugen stated that staff will continue pursuing this with ATAC, to clean up the scope-of-work, and to add some of these components to it. He added, however, that while it would be nice to get this started right away, when it is fresh in everyone's mind, but in looking at the MPO's budget, it may need to wait until fall before it can be started.

Haugen commented that it is his understanding that ATAC may be able to help assist us with the financial aspect of this study, which is another reason to hire them as the primary consultant on the study.

Lembke asked, while he understands this last flood event was the 6th highest on record, we did have the Thompson, Drayton, and Oslo bridges close, so he was wondering if there would be any way to incorporate that regional traffic into this study as well. He stated that he understands it doesn't really fit what we are doing here, but there should be some kind of accommodation made for traffic created from the closure of other bridges as well. Wieland asked if Troy Schroeder, ATP, would have any of this information available already. Sanders responded that he would have all of the elevations of all the MNDOT bridges, and is in the process of getting ours as well. Haugen stated that there had been discussion on adding in that traffic to Gateway Drive, but the question is how to do it.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Reminder Of June Meeting Date Change

Haugen reminded the committee that the June Technical Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, June 15th, rather than Wednesday, June 14th, in order to coincide with Mid-Year Reviews.

2. New SAFETEA-LU Requirements

Haugen reported that he just received some additional guidance on the new SAFETEA-LU deadline. He then distributed copies of that information for review. He explained that it all revolves around the July 1st timeline for submittal of T.I.P., S.T.I.P. and Transportation Plan documents adopted and in place. He pointed out that the document does allow for a little room, but still states at the end that every effort to develop full SAFETEA-LU compliance by, or soon after July 1st, should take place. He stated that our work program for this year and next year is set up to try to accomplish that deadline so that we will SAFETEA-LU compliant by July 1st.

3. Mid-Year Review

Benning stated that he will be sending out a reminder in a couple of weeks on the mid-year review. Haugen asked if an agenda would also be sent out. Benning responded he would. He added that he also sent out copies of the completed FY2005 budget, which

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they will be going over at the mid-year review as well. Haugen responded that he did receive that information.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY BROOKS, SECONDED BY GENGLER, TO ADJOURN THE MAY 10TH,
2006, MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:13 P.M.***

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Executive Assistant