

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Thursday, June 15, 2006 – 1:30 p.m.  
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-102**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:35 p.m.

**CALL OF ROLL**

On a Call of Roll, the following members were present: Wayde Swenson, NDDOT-Grand Forks; Wayne Lembke, Grand Forks Civil Engineer; Ryan Brooks (Proxy for Brad Gengler), Grand Forks City Planner; Kent Ehrenstrom, MNDOT-Bemidji; Julie Romig, East Grand Forks City Planner; Dean Wieland, East Grand Forks City Engineer; Nancy Ellis, Polk County Planner; Roger Foster, Transportation Superintendent; Mark Johnson, FHWA-Bismarck; and Paul Benning, NDDOT-Bismarck.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, MPO Executive Director and Peggy McNelis, MPO Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Dave Leftwich, NDDOT-Bismarck.

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF THE MAY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2006, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

***MOVED BY ROMIG, SECONDED BY FOSTER, TO APPROVE THE MAY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2006, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.***

***MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.***

**MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE 2006 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Haugen referred to the packet, and pointed out that it includes information received back in April 2006, and which this body approved. He stated that the 45-day comment period for the Draft Public Participation Plan has been completed, and all comments received during, and after that time period are also included in the packets for your review. He

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said that most, if not all, were positive and suggested that people were glad to see that we are doing this update to the Public Participation Plan, and that we are including the public. He added that, while they didn't include the entire document in the packets, they did provide the web-site address at which it could be viewed, and/or downloaded.

Haugen stated that discussion was held briefly at mid-years, which were held earlier today, regarding the fact that they have promulgated the new proposed regulations implementing SAFETEA-LU. He added that Marissa Champion, MPO Intern, has already gone through them to compare/contrast our Public Participation Plan with these proposed rules, and found that we are in compliance.

Haugen referred to the staff report, included in the packet, and pointed out that there is one change being requested based on comments received from the State Engineer of the Water Commission, and that is that more of the state and local agencies involved with the management of natural resources be included as resources.

Champion reiterated that they did receive preliminary approval of the Public Participation Plan in April. She explained that she received comments from four different agencies, including the Northeast Human Service Center and the ARC, who were originally solicited prior to the solicitation of comments from the public, and that most of those comments pertained more to transit issues than the Public Participation Plan, but that she did invite representatives from each of the four agencies to work on the coordinated plan.

Champion stated that she did speak with Lynne Bly, MNDOT, and they went over the new rules, in terms of how they pertain to our Public Participation Plan. She said that there were some key changes, which are illustrated in the plan, and available on the MPO's website.

Haugen commented that staff has presented the final draft of the Public Participation Plan, subject to the one change as noted at the bottom of the staff report, and would recommend the Technical Advisory Committee consider a motion requesting the MPO Executive Policy Board approve and adopt the plan subject to that change.

***MOVED BY FOSTER, SECONDED BY WIELAND, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY GRANT FINAL APPROVAL OF THE MPO 2006 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN SUBJECT TO CHANGING THE STANDARD ON PAGE 20 TO READ AS FOLLOWS: "CONSULT WITH FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR LAND USE MANAGEMENT, WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DURING DEVELOPMENT OF LRTP AND AS NEEDED."***

***MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.***

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**MATTER OF SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

Haugen referred to the packets, and commented that the staff report highlights that MNDOT is now soliciting projects for this program. He pointed out that a few of the key pages from the Minnesota program were included in the packets as well. He explained that the most important thing to note is that the timeline for submittal is July 6<sup>th</sup>, however the Technical Advisory Committee will not be meeting again until after that date, so we probably will be on the back-side of any awards in our MPO area, but we will work with East Grand Forks to get applications completed.

Haugen referred to the information contained in the packets, and stated that it indicates that there are two types of projects that would be eligible: infrastructure, which would include trails, crossings, beacons, etc. with a range of \$5,000 to \$175,000; and non-infrastructure, which would entail more of the education end of this, with a range of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Haugen reported that as part of the infrastructure projects, MNDOT is requiring that up to \$5,000 be part of any infrastructure project that links to the education enforcement type of activities. He explained that this would mean that if we got an award of \$175,000, we cannot spend all of it on construction, up to \$5,000 needs to be spent on education enforcement and promotion programs.

Haugen commented that another item of note is that Minnesota requires any impacted schools to sign-off on the application, or to submit the application themselves.

Wieland asked if there were any projects being proposed in East Grand Forks yet. Haugen responded that they are working on something near the South Point School area.

Leftwich reported that North Dakota is in the process of getting a committee together to review the criteria they will be setting, as well as to set the deadline for solicitation. He added that they are also looking for a new coordinator, so they are a little bit behind Minnesota on this issue.

Haugen commented that one other thing to note is that this will be a statewide competition in both North Dakota and Minnesota for the funds, so whatever is submitted by either state will be competing with other statewide projects for funding. He added that there is an evaluation requirement with these funds which states that information should be available prior to funding, and a year or so after the project is completed information should be available as to how the project impacted the community. Haugen stated that this needs not only City approval, but School District approval as well. He said that a complete application is available on the website.

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**MATTER OF UPDATE ON DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY**

Brooks reported that they had intended to have the consultant available via conference call, but the conference phone is unavailable, therefore he will just give a brief update himself.

Brooks stated that the steering committee met on Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.. He said that the committee consists of representatives from the school district, as Central High School students and faculty have a large impact on the downtown parking; the county, which has a large building in the downtown, and therefore also impacts the parking; and staff, including Wayne Lembke and himself. He explained that the purpose of this study is to determine whether or not there is a parking problem within the downtown area, and if so, what can we do to solve the problem.

Brooks reported that basically the consultant has done the parking and utilization portion of the study, with the findings available for review if anyone is interested. He explained that they had personnel walk through the downtown area during the early afternoon, from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. to determine whether or not there were any parking spaces available in our surface lots, and on the streets. He added that they also did both a late afternoon, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and an evening, from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. search as well.

Brooks stated that in addition to the parking and utilization study, they have also done condition assessments on the parking ramps, and some of the surface lots as well, to see where any problems might be located, and there are some problems out there for which they will be offering some ideas on how to fix them.

Brooks commented that the consultant has made a lot of stakeholder contacts, as a lot of the business owners are concerned with parking issues, particularly with the new construction that is, and will be going on in the downtown area. He added that they are in the process of surveying other cities to see what they have done in similar situations, and would like to talk to both MnDOT and NDDOT about on-street parking options, specifically the issue of allowing diagonal parking as an option. Leftwich responded that they have talked about the idea of diagonal parking, and basically, as you are aware, after the flood they redid the whole downtown area with an overlay, using federal funds, and signed an agreement that there would be no diagonal parking allowed, which is their policy. He added that, from a safety standpoint it is best not to allow diagonal parking anywhere, but they also have parking concerns here, and may take it into consideration. He stated, however, that should they determine they will allow diagonal parking in the downtown, they would need to change their policy to reflect that decision, and a new agreement would need to be composed.

Brooks commented that the language in NDOT's agreement isn't dissimilar to what a lot of states have, but they are now seeing a lot of those states saying they need to do away with those kinds of blanket clauses, and look at situations such as this on a case-by-case

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basis, which is what Minnesota is doing. He added that Minnesota has allowed East Grand Forks to have diagonal parking in their downtown, on both sides of the road, however, Grand Forks is only looking at doing it on one side of the road in order to keep good adequate widths. He stated that this is really something they would like to have considered, and would be willing to just do a stretch of road to see how it works first. Leftwich said that the pilot project has some merit, as they would like to see how it would work before agreeing to allow it elsewhere in the downtown area. Brooks stated that he would make sure the consultant gets in touch with NDDOT regarding this.

Romig asked what the rationale was behind putting in angle parking versus perpendicular parking. Leftwich asked if she meant parallel parking. Romig responded that parallel parking would be ideal, but she would like to know why they haven't at least considered perpendicular parking. Brooks asked if she was referring to having 90-degree parking. Romig responded that that is what she was referring to. Brooks explained that by using angle parking, as people back out of their space they won't try to cross the lane of traffic coming at them, but if we have 90-degree parking, people may want to go in the other direction, and cross a cross-lane of traffic to go the other way. Romig asked, then, if they are worried about driver behavior. Brooks responded that that would certainly be one concern. Romig stated that, as you know, angle parking is very bicycle unfriendly. Brooks said that there are some reverse angle options available as well. Romig asked, then, if you feel that a driver wouldn't know better than to cross a cross-lane if you have 90-degree parking, what would make you think they would be able to figure out reverse angle parking either. Leftwich commented that another issue with 90-degree parking would be the fact that you would need a wider street to accommodate it. Romig stated that she understands this, but, again, angle parking is not very safe for bicyclists, who are supposed to be on the road, especially downtown. She added that if you do reverse angle parking, she wouldn't think that drivers around here will be able to figure that out, so she would just like you to be aware of the safety issue with angle parking. Benning commented that diagonal parking is not something that the NDDOT is recommending, but it is included in their ASHTO guidelines, and is a nationally recognized form of parking by Federal Highways.

Haugen reported that another thing that is being addressed by this study is the issue of signage. Brooks said that this is true, as the two new parking ramps are not very well signed that there is parking available to the general public, so that is something that needs to be addressed. He added that another thing, when he talks about surveying other cities, they will also be looking at is the management we have here, and how to structure the parking authority, as well as the enforcement of parking rules and regulations as the police currently enforce parking on the streets, and Urban Development, under whom the parking authority has fallen under, takes care of the three parking ramps. He said that they actually have Urban Development agreeing that it makes sense for them to do both the surface ramp parking and the on-street parking in order to make enforcement more efficient.

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Brooks reported that one huge issue is the fact that a lot of business owners are concerned with assessments that are coming due on some of these big ramps, so we will also be looking at what options might be available concerning the fee rates for these ramps.

Wieland asked if the inventory included the parking located on the wet side of the dike as well. Brooks responded that they are looking at that lot. He added that he knows that CPS has some employees that park in that lot. Wieland stated that they have been trying to get their employees to park there, but, out-of-site – out-of-mind, and people tend not to use it. Brooks commented that one of the agreements being looked at would be for Central students to use this lot as well. He explained that Central students currently use the parking lot by the Civic Auditorium, but if that building is sold, that would not be possible any longer so they are looking at moving the students to the surface lot on the wet side of the dike, however, Central staff do have some concerns with the fact that there is only one opening out of the lot, right on to DeMers, and we all know about the traffic issues are on DeMers.

Leftwich said that, getting back to the issue of Bismarck doing some diagonal parking, they were looking at doing a one-block section in their downtown, on a street that is on the state's system, so they were told that if they did they would be on their own. He stated that the planning commission did vote this down.

Brooks commented that they know that this is something that NDDOT will be dealing with in the future, so anything we come up with will have to be a model that might work in other areas as well, so that is why we want to work closely with NDDOT on this. Leftwich responded that they will be happy to look at this, not saying yes, but saying that they will take it into consideration.

Benning stated that, basically, NDDOT has a policy in place, and everything that is in their agreement is based on that policy, so, although they won't say that policy can't be changed, that is how it is now. Brooks responded that they understand this, and that is why they are willing to work with NDDOT on this.

Haugen commented that he doesn't think anyone is contemplating having angled parking on DeMers Avenue or U.S. Business 2/5<sup>th</sup> Street, so any business route or U.S. Highway would probably not be impacted by the angled parking concept. Leftwich stated that that is something they wouldn't approve in any event. He said that what they would look at would be to possibly allow angled parking on urban streets, off the state system.

Benning said that something the City might want to look at as well is possible problems with people making u-turns to get into an angled parking spot. Brooks responded that, depending on the angle, they can make that nearly an impossibility. Haugen reported that the information that was shared at the public open house is downloadable off the MPO's website: [www.theforksmpto.org](http://www.theforksmpto.org). Brooks added that there are thirteen or fourteen slides in PDF form for review. Haugen asked if the survey form

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was also available on the website. Brooks responded it wasn't, but that he would get it on there for people to take a look at it.

Haugen commented that one other area of concern is the safety, or the perceived safety issue of the parking ramps, which will also need to be addressed as well. He explained that they have been bombarded with people saying that the ramps are unsafe to be parking in. Romig asked if the safety concerns involved issues with vehicles, or people. Haugen responded that the concerns included both vehicle safety as well as personal safety. Haugen stated that one of the charges of the consultant is to track down police records on the ramps to show what the recorded data indicates in terms of safety and/or vandalism problems.

Information only.

**MATTER OF UPDATE ON COORDINATED HUMAN SERVICES  
TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Champion reported that she did include quite a bit of information in the packets, and referred to a copy of the solicitation letter sent to the stakeholders asking them to fill out a form indicating who their point of contact would be concerning transit issues. She explained that this was done in order to include everyone that works with human services, specifically those that work with the transit end of their business, and that a list of those contacted is available. She referred to the packet and pointed out that copies of the invitation letters to both meetings, and copies of the power point presentations given at both meetings, were included as well.

Champion stated that, while most of you are familiar with the requirements of this plan, just to give you a little more information, the plan is being done to earn eligibility for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, job access, reverse commute, and new freedom programs. She reported that the plan itself will be recommended for approval as an amendment to our Transportation Development Plan in the fall, most likely in August.

Champion explained that public involvement included a series of four stakeholder meetings, two of which have already been held, and two more still to come. She stated that the initial meeting allowed for discussion on what the requirements of the plan are, however we are currently a bit hazy as to what they should be. She added that she has basically been working off of the FTA notices and MnDOT's guidance, but MnDOT has changed their guidance a little bit. She stated that the second meeting involved looking at an inventory of services offered within the community, after which a formulation of strategies occurred. She commented that FTA's guidance is a little bit confusing, so we aren't sure if we should be collectively coordinating a plan, or developing a plan to develop coordination, thus these strategies should help us identify where we can coordinate rather than having to look at our problems with the target demographics.

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Champion referred to the second page of the report, and explained that it lists the main strategies:

- 1) Continued Coordination Committee
- 2) Enhancing Public Transportation – She explained that this includes promoting public transit, and options for the low income to access jobs, so, especially on the marking side for our fixed transit, which would be an eligible function.
- 3) Regional Directory - She commented that the MPO does not have an official directory of transportation services in our community as Fargo has had for a number of years, so with the survey done of all of the operators, she tried to make a directory to guide agencies and to help them train their staff, who in turn will help train their clients and customers on the services provided in our community, including Dial-a-Ride, fixed-route, etc.. She added that this will ultimately be a good resource tool for customers.

Champion reported that the third meeting is scheduled to occur in June, and a public meeting is scheduled to occur in July.

Haugen reported that as they have met with these various service agencies, what they are hearing is the difficulty they are having providing transportation to their clients, while on the other hand there is the issue of their inability, or lack of knowledge as to what services public transportation provides, so it seems like there is a real disconnect.

Information only.

**MATTER OF TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

Haugen commented that some of those here today were able to attend the MPO's Traffic Incident Management course on May 18<sup>th</sup>. He explained that in the MPO's Work Program they did include an activity that requires us to prepare a Traffic Incident Management Plan for our metropolitan area. He stated that this request came from NDDOT's District Office in 2004, so we budgeted it for 2006.

Haugen reported that the first line of action was to try to bring in the National Highway Institute to give a course on Traffic Incident Management, which we did on May 18<sup>th</sup>, in order to try to educate us on how to develop such a plan. He stated that there was a lot of participation from the Fire and Police Departments, however there was no participation from either Sheriff Departments. He added that they did have good participation from the district office and local staff on the North Dakota side, but that Minnesota had one person in attendance.

Haugen stated that currently he is in the process of trying to evaluate how to get better outreach to those other agencies in order to ensure they are aware of what it is we are trying to do. He said that one of the things they have done, as a result of the management course, is to institute a map on the MPO's website that will allow travelers to determine

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what might be going on within our area that could impact their travel plans. He commented that what they have been hearing lately is that, while most of us might know what is going on traffic wise, a lot of the emergency responders would like a better method of tracking what is going on around the area in order for them to know which route to take or not to take when responding to calls, so it is hoped that this will help.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. MPO Staffing Update

Haugen reported that Ryan Brooks' last day was May 31<sup>st</sup>, and that he is now working for the City of Grand Forks Planning Department; and that Julie Romig's last day is June 21<sup>st</sup>, and she is moving to Texas where her husband has accepted a position at the university there. He suggested that it might be appropriate to compose letters of appreciation to both Ryan and Julie for their service to the MPO.

***MOVED BY FOSTER, SECONDED BY EHRENSTROM, TO APPROVE LETTERS OF APPRECIATION BE COMPOSED AND PRESENTED TO RYAN BROOKS AND JULIE ROMIG FOR THEIR SERVICE TO THE GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION.***

***MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.***

2. FHWA Survey

Johnson reported that Federal Highway is doing a customer survey, and he was wondering if the MPO received a copy. Haugen responded that they had not. Johnson stated that he would get one out.

**ADJOURNMENT**

***MOVED BY WIELAND, SECONDED BY ROMIG, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2006, MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:35 P.M.***

***MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.***

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis  
Executive Assistant