

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**Friday, May 11th, 2007 – 12:00 Noon
East Grand Forks City Hall Council Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Gary Malm, in Chairman Steve Gander's absence, called the May 11th, 2007, meeting of the MPO Executive Policy Board to order at 12:12 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Secretary Gary Malm, Steve Adams, Warren Strandell, Sheila Bruhn (proxy for Punky Beauchamp), and Wayne Gregoire (proxy for Dick Grassel).

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Nancy Ellis, GF/EGF MPO Senior Planner; David Hampsten, GF/EGF MPO Senior Planner; Nichole Tiggs, GF/EGF MPO Intern; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Bill Troe, URS.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Secretary Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 20TH, 2007, MINUTES

MOVED BY ADAMS, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE THE APRIL 20TH, 2007, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Adams, Bruhn, Strandell, Gregoire, and Malm.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF 2007 T.I.P. AMENDMENT

Haugen reported that, as discussed at the last meeting, the East Grand Forks Extension of 13th Street Project, which connects South Point Elementary School directly to Bygland Road, was funded with two different funding sources. He explained that when the project was first conceived, we realized that such a large ticket item would probably require us to apply for several funding sources, which we did, and one of those was safety funds and the other was transportation enhancement funds. He added, however, that through the course of time we lost the enhancement dollars, but did maintain the safety funds awarded us. He stated that we then

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went to Congressman Peterson to enlist his assistance in filling the gap created by the loss of enhancement funds, and eventually we were awarded some high priority dollars, or earmarked dollars, to help extend 13th Street from 17th, across Hartsville Coulee, to Bygland Road, and to connect it to Greenway Boulevard.

Haugen referred to copies of a e-mail request the MPO received from the MnDOT District Office, and explained that because the cost estimate that came out of the Engineer's office did not show a need to spend all of the monies received from both funding sources, and because one of those sources involves HPP monies, which could be spent anytime during the 2006 to 2009 timeframe, and because they wanted to zero out the safety dollars that could only be spent in 2007, they asked the Area Transportation Partnership (ATP), who consists of various Northwestern Minnesota agencies that meet and determine who should and who shouldn't receive federal funds to release those funds not being used on this project so they could be used on other projects. He stated that he received this e-mail just prior to the last MPO Executive Policy Board meeting, and asked you how you wanted staff to approach this request, and your response was to try to make sure that the MPO process is followed, and to try to determine why the cost estimate was reduced so much that \$300,000 was left on the table.

Haugen reported that after that meeting, an exchange of e-mails with both the district office and St. Paul Central office, he was getting the message that the MPO process had to be followed, but the district was maintaining that they couldn't follow that process due to a deadline that they had to meet in order to ensure that the excess federal funds would remain in the northwest part of Minnesota. He added that if we are never able to show a need for those safety dollars, then they would be routed to St. Paul, and never returned to us, so the district office took them and put them towards another project in the northwest part of the state.

Haugen commented that as they were going through this process he was always told we had to follow the MPO process, which meant that today would be the first time we could actually say yes or no to whether the project needed those funds, but at the same time, even though the district office was getting that same message, they went ahead on the first of May and removed those dollars from our project, so from both the ATP's and the District's point of view those dollars are out of this project and if we have an issue it needs to be discussed in St. Paul. He stated that because of this, there is no need for a T.I.P. amendment at this time as we are better off keeping the project as is in our T.I.P., and continuing discussion with St. Paul regarding whether or not those funds are truly not available to us any longer.

Haugen reported that he did send an e-mail to the full board after looking at the project plans. He explained that some of the reasons why the costs are lower than what was programmed in the past is because the five-foot sidewalk should have been a ten-foot bikepath in order to be consistent with our plans; and then the areas that are shown with "zebra-stripping", in our Safe Routes to School program would have school crossing lights; so if these things were actually done as previously programmed, the cost of the project would increase about \$160,000 to \$170,000, which would have substantially reduced the \$255,000 taken away.

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MATTER OF PRESENTATION ON STREET AND HIGHWAY PLAN UPDATE

Haugen reported that they are at the point where we have done a forecast of what our 2035 traffic volumes will be based on our future land uses. He stated that Bill Troe, with URS, is here today to give a brief presentation. He added that a series of meetings did take place this week, beginning on Tuesday, and culminating with today's meeting, and a lot of information was given and gained through these meetings, and Mr. Troe is going to highlight some of that information for you today.

Troe explained that would like to spend a little time walking through some of the information they presented at the various meetings this week; as well as to talk a little bit about the alternatives analysis they started in order to give everyone an idea of where it all fits in the process.

Presentation ensued.

Troe stated that he would first like to reiterate what the purpose of the study is; that it is essentially being done to come up with a list of roadway, or highway projects for the metropolitan region through the year 2035. He added that while we do want to consider some of the other modes as well, we are primarily addressing, through this update, the Street and Highway Plan.

Troe said we need to focus on improvements that address needs, therefore we will need to have symmetric for needs rather than wants within the region. He added that we will be dividing it into a number of periods, which has come into play a little bit relative to the last round of the plan, whereby now if we project that a project is needed in the region in 2015 we have to make sure that we inflate the costs to that year, which is a change from the last round of the transportation plan. He stated that this is so that essentially the buying power of the transportation plan project list is going to ultimately go down relative to what we have had in the region before, which isn't something we want to hear, but it is a requirement now of the Federal Highway Administration.

Troe referred to his power point, and explained that the four boxes shown primarily discuss the four key steps they have in the transportation plan. He stated that they have completed all of the information on the existing conditions, gathered information on the issues, looked at where they have crashes, looked at where there is congestion today, and have forecasted traffic out to the year 2035.

Troe reported that in forecasting the traffic out to 2035, some of the issues they looked at included anticipated growth in the region, both from a residential and retail/industrial standpoint; the committed roadway improvements that are planned for the region; and anticipated congestion.

Troe stated that most of what they talked about throughout this week was the alternatives analysis, which is essentially a process of identifying what improvements might address or

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alleviate an issue they have identified. He commented that issues were identified through the public involvement process, which entailed public meetings, surveys, input from the Technical Advisory Committee, staff, and through technical analogies done by their firm. He said that now that they have identified all these issues, problems, or concerns, we need to determine what we can do to resolve them.

Troe reported that in going through the analysis, they are not focusing purely on whether or not they are improving the transportation services, carrying more traffic, reducing crashes, providing connectivity, but are also looking at how the proposed changes might impact adjacent residential areas, industrial areas, the environment, etc., and ultimately what the cost of the improvement will be as well.

Troe stated that what they need to do right now is to try to identify as many alternative as they possibly can for each of the issues identified so that they can get to the point where they can get the final document approved without having to answer a lot of questions as to whether or not they looked at a specific alternative or not, as they would much rather say that they did look at that alternative, but dismissed it for some reason rather than having to say that they didn't look at it and risk not have the plan approved, so during this first round they want to look at as many alternatives as they can, and weed out those that don't make sense, and focus their efforts on those that do make sense, so that they can ultimately develop a plan that is both functional and fundable.

Troe referred to a map that indicates the locations within the region where they are identifying congestion problems; primarily on the DeMers corridor, the intersection of Columbia and 17th, Washington and 32nd, 32nd and Columbia, and Washington and Gateway. He then referred to maps illustrating job and housing growth in the region, and went over them briefly, explaining that both show growth occurring in the same locations as the previous plan, but more of it as they are going out an additional five years with the new plan.

Troe commented that the range of improvements they are looking at focusing on are: 1) management improvements, which include such things such as turn lanes, signal improvements, etc.; 2) travel demand management, which includes car pooling, van pooling, and other things that we can do to try to reduce the overall level of traffic on the street; and 3) expansion projects, which includes extending corridors, adding new corridors, adding interchanges, upgrading intersections to interchanges, etc..

Troe stated that their initial goal with the alternative analysis is to try to confirm that the regional significant recommendations included in the last plan are still valid, and if they are, whether or not they would be implemented within the same timeframe. He referred to a power point slide, and explained that it shows some of the big ticket items that were included in the last plan, which they have confirmed are still valid, and went over each briefly.

Troe referred to copies of figures, included in the packets, that show the universe of alternatives they have been looking at, which he went over at the Technical Advisory Committee at their meeting on Wednesday. He explained that these figures show the range of improvements they

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are trying to look at for each of the corridors, and recommended that everyone take time to look them over.

Troe then explained that their next steps will involve going through, and doing more work on the alternative analysis, development of cost estimates, determining funding levels, and conducting the alternative analysis and coming up with some preliminary recommendations for next month's meeting.

Haugen stated that the main message here is purchasing power. He explained that as the Executive Policy Board is aware, Federal Highway and Federal Transit promulgated new rules March 16th, and prior to that date we could use constant dollars for both our revenue forecasts and future expenditure forecast, but we now have to use the cost of the year of expenditure. He said that this means that as projects get out toward the end of the 20 to 25-year horizon, we have many years of multiple inflation factors getting involved with that cost, but our revenue will most likely not see the same increase, so our purchasing power from all our previous plans is probably going to be less this time around, thus prioritizing will become more important.

Information only.

SUSPEND AGENDA

Haugen asked that the agenda be suspended in order to discuss the Bridge Closure Management Study agenda item before the Transit Study item.

MATTER OF BRIDGE CLOSURE MANAGEMENT STUDY

Haugen referred to copies of information included in the packets, and explained that it is a portion of the Draft Bridge Closure Management Study document. He stated that, as you would expect with flood protection, we have certain actions that the City's need to take during flooding and maintenance events, therefore the MPO performed a study in order to produce a document that allows for a more managed way to approach traffic changes caused by bridge closures. He referred to drawings that illustrate the proposed bridge closure alternatives, and explained that signage and detour routes are shown for each bridge location. He reported that they also changed the timing plans for traffic signals so that as they close structures, they adjust the traffic patterns by adjusting the traffic signals.

Haugen commented that they have been able to capture quite a bit of travel reduction with the timing plans. He added that A.T.A.C., who assisted us with the study, has put a cost component to the plan, but it is only for a three hour period per day, and in reality a flood event can take several days, therefore we are able to show a real cost benefit to the traveling public at that time. He stated that at some key locations they are suggesting that some of the current signage be changed to help the detour route flow better. He explained that when the Point Bridge is closed, they will try to move people up Belmont, over to Division, and up to 3rd, so they would switch the stop position to allow for that movement. He added that in East Grand Forks, in the Point,

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they would change the stop condition because most of the flow is traveling east and west rather than north and south.

Haugen reported that out on the Point there is a significant amount of traffic turning both ways, and because of that staff is recommending that U.S. 2 traffic be stopped by essentially putting in a stop sign, which did cause concern for the DOT, but when they saw the volumes, they agreed.

Haugen stated that the full draft report is available on-line. He commented that the report does include the signage necessary for the detour routes. He added that one thing they did discover is that in our past flood fights, essentially we have been ignoring the Manual Of Traffic Uniform Control Device for signage of detours, and as part of the package for getting signal timing improvement, we have to actually install a lot more signs than we have in the past, and that has raised a real issue among the agencies as the signs cost a considerable amount.

Haugen commented that the last bit of business we have, and it was included in the packet, involves a Concept of Operations Agreement. He explained that, just like with flood protection, it lays out who is responsible for what, who agrees to provide what, and when. He stated that we currently have a little friction between the two cities in regard to the fact that additional signage is being suggested, and because a lot of the roadways are on the state highway system, shouldn't they help with the cost of that signage. He said, however, that the States are saying that it is a local traffic issue, therefore they don't feel they should help with those costs, so further discussion will occur and it is hoped that a solution can be determined by the end of June.

Information only.

RESUME AGENDA

MATTER OF UPDATE ON TRANSIT STUDY

Hampsten reported that staff is in the process of conducting a transit study, looking at providing new transit service to areas in Grand Forks that are not currently being serviced, especially the Industrial Park and Alerus Center. He referred to a power point presentation (a copy of which is included in the file, and available upon request).

Presentation ensued.

Hampsten commented that they are currently in the stage in which they are receiving a lot of stakeholder input, doing a lot of bus route analyses, and are actually coming up with some findings. He referred to an outline of what is being done through the study, as well as where we are at in the process, and went over it briefly. He pointed out that the second page lists some of the findings that they have come up with, which will be included in the final report that is due to be completed in June.

Hampsten stated again, that, as was discussed in a previous presentation, portions of Grand Forks are expanding, including the Industrial Park area, the Aurora Medical Center area, etc., and

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service is needed, so they are trying to determine the best way to provide that service, at a cost that is within our budget.

Hampsten reported that, as we have already heard, there are additional funding sources available to us as well, both federal and state, many of which have already been granted to us. He explained that the study basically implies that there will be new service to the Industrial Park and 42nd Street, however, because the Grand Forks City Council has insisted, and there has been a lot of additional input from other organizations, our study was expanded to look at adding service to the Aurora Medical Center, as well as other various human service agencies located in that same vicinity.

Hampsten stated that there have been two concerns mentioned, one is that certain areas need to be served, and the other is the hours of service available. He explained that businesses located in the Industrial Park begin their work day earlier than most businesses in the City, and we want to guarantee that we can get people to work on time, without having to change their shifts, so we are trying to take a serious look at our transit system to determine how best to accomplish that.

Hampsten reported that the most frequently asked questions are how long can we sustain any new services we might provide, and is it something we can do from year to year, because if we put in new services we want to be able to sustain it well beyond the grant monies received now, so that is something we looked very seriously at. He stated that what they found was that they can actually sustain all of the services, that they actually have these savings that are continuing to add up, and then there is actually more state monies being awarded, with Grand Forks receiving around \$50,000.00 in addition to the steady state monies we receive through vehicle licensing fees. He said they also receive a pretty stable conduit of federal funding, and there is the local match as well, which can only be used for transit related projects, so we usually have enough local monies for these additional federal grants, so, because the earlier proposed Saturday service will cost \$58,000.00, and as far as we can tell from our analysis we can sustain new services, although only to a certain extent, it appears certain that we will start the earlier Saturday service sometime this summer as we did receive the grant monies, and we do have enough local match to do it.

Hampsten stated that extensive discussion has been held with the Industrial Park Employers, and they have indicated that there are about 2,200 employees, and will most likely increase that to about 3,000 within the next five years, of which to fifteen percent either choose to not drive, or are unable to drive for some reason, and service is important to their being able to get to and from work, so there is a demand for service to that area. He added that the last issue is the fact that there are a lot of tax incentives for employers to provide transit passes or tickets to their employees, up to \$125,000 a month, so we have been presenting this to the employers.

Hampsten reported that a full, new bus route is estimated to cost \$570,000, and that by having all of the routes begin a little earlier, which is something the Industrial Park employers would like to see, is estimated to cost about \$86,500. He then referred to the transit alternative analysis maps, and went over them briefly, pointing out the costs involved with each scenario.

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Hampsten commented that they held a public open house at the Metro Transfer Center on May 3rd. He referred to the slide listing the issues discussed, and went over each briefly.

Malm stated that the only issue he has with this is once you start it, you will never be able to stop it. Hampsten agreed that that is true. Malm asked how these people get to work out there now. He said that the Industrial Park boggles his mind because if someone works out there, they need to figure out how to get there. Hampsten responded that right now there are several employers out there, and LM Glasfiber is one of them, who have a shortage of workers, and it is getting pretty severe, and they also have a parking shortage as well, so they are trying to get perspective employees out there any way they can, in a more reliable fashion.

Malm asked if anyone ever asked those employer if they would be willing to subsidize the bus going out there. Hampsten responded that that issue has been raised, and some of them are actually very responsive. He added that LM Glasfiber is a Dutch company, and is used to subsidizing alternative transportation. Malm suggested that this be explored more thoroughly.

Information only.

MATTER OF CENTRAL AVENUE STUDY RFP

Ellis reported that an updated memorandum was sent out on May 8th regarding the consultant selection process for the Central Avenue Improvements Study. She explained that an amended RFP was submitted for proposals from consultants following the April Executive Policy Board meeting, during which the budget for the study was increased, and four proposals were received and are listed in the staff report included in the packet.

Ellis stated that copies of the four proposals were distributed to the Selection Committee, who are now in the process of reviewing them, and it is hoped that this body, due to time constraints, will grant approval for the Finance Committee to approve the Selections Committee's selection, and allow them to enter into a contact with that firm.

Malm asked who comprised the Finance Committee. Haugen responded that it is comprised of the immediate past chair, the current chair, and the current secretary. He stated that those positions are held by Doug Christensen, past chair; Steve Gander, current chair; and Gary Malm, current secretary.

MOVED BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY ADAMS, TO APPROVE AUTHORIZING THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE TO SELECT THE CONSULTANT FOR THE CENTRAL AVENUE IMPROVEMENT STUDY AND TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT NOT TO EXCEED DOLLAR AMOUNT.

Voting Aye: Adams, Bruhn, Strandell, Gregoire, and Malm.

Voting Nay: None.

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MATTER OF APPROVAL OF COPIER/PRINTER PURCHASE

Haugen reported that the MPO's Annual Unified Work Program identifies that the MPO is considering the purchase of a color printer/copier. He explained that staff followed the standard procedure of requesting proposals from local firms, and that we initially received proposals from five of those firms, however only four agreed to allow us to evaluate their machines for a week-long trial period.

Haugen stated that during the trial period staff was requested to evaluate each machine on things such as ease of use, training, reliability, etc.. He said that once all machines had been evaluated, and the information processed, the top three firms were asked to submit a bid on both the cost of the machine and a maintenance agreement.

Haugen referred to the supplemental information that was distributed earlier, and explained that it indicates that staff is recommending the purchase of a machine that is not the cheapest, but rather falls in the middle of the cost range, for the primary reason that while it does cost \$995.00 more, over the long run it has a cheaper maintenance cost, and it is a faster machine as well which would mean less staff time.

Strandell asked if there was enough funding available for this purchase. Haugen responded there was, that it is already programmed in the work program.

MOVED BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY GREGOIRE, TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF THE SAVIN COPIER/PRINTER FROM ADVANCED BUSINESS METHODS AS RECOMMENDED BY MPO STAFF.

Voting Aye: Adams, Bruhn, Strandell, Gregoire, and Malm.

Voting Nay: None.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **MPO Mid-Year Review**

Haugen reported that MPO staff, along with both North Dakota and Minnesota Departments of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration representatives, held a mid-year review on Wednesday morning. He explained that these mid-year reviews are held to go over issues with our current work program, and upcoming things as well. He stated that one thing he would like you to be aware of is that NDDOT is trying to scrape every dime and dollar they can to put towards construction, so they have approached the MPO Directors to see if we would be willing to accept less planning dollars in order that the extra monies can be converted to construction dollars. He said that his response was that the other two MPOs have quite a large surplus from previous years sitting there, and we are not in that same situation, so if they want to go after planning dollars they should look to them first, however it may still impact us down the road.

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ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY GREGOIRE, TO ADJOURN THE MAY 11TH,
MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 1:28 P.M.***

Voting Aye: Adams, Bruhn, Strandell, Gregoire, and Malm.

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Executive Assistant