

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

**Friday, June 22nd, 2007 – 12:00 Noon
East Grand Forks City Hall Council Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER

Steve Gander, Chairman, called the June 22nd, 2007, meeting of the MPO Executive Policy Board to order at 12:11 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm, Warren Strandell, Punky Beauchamp, Dick Grassel, and Art Bakken.

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

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairman Gander declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 11TH, 2007, MINUTES

MOVED BY MALM, SECONDED BY GRASSEL, TO APPROVE THE MAY 11TH, 2007, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Strandell, Grassel, Beauchamp, Malm, and Gander.

Voting Nay: None.

**MATTER OF DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO NDDOT
TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT (T.E.) PROGRAM**

Haugen reported that the North Dakota Department of Transportation has asked us for MPO's opinion on proposed changes to the North Dakota Transportation Enhancement Program. He explained that North Dakota gets \$4,000,000.00 a year, which is divided into four different programs, and of those four programs the two that we are most involved with are the Urban Program, which is given \$1,000,000 to work with, and the Rural Program, which is given \$500,000 to work with.

Haugen referred to information included in the packet, and pointed out that it includes a brief history on how the Rural Program has been funded. He stated that some of the rural interests have expressed concern that the Rural Program is run through the County, and some of the Counties that are near the Urban Centers have sponsored projects that are contiguous, or very

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near the Urban Center, so some of the Rural Interests have suggested that the program be modified so that if a T.E. project comes from an area adjacent to Cities such as Bismarck, Grand Forks, Minot, Williston, Dickinson, or another of the 13 Urban Cities, they would actually go against the Urban Cities Program, or those projects that are located within those urban cities.

Haugen reported that a response from himself, and the Technical Advisory Committee, is included in the packet as well. He explained that they questioned whether this is really an issue, or just a perceived issue. He stated that if they find that it isn't really an issue they would recommend Alternative "A" which leaves the boundary as is, but if a change is required, that they consider an additional alternative, Alternative "E" which would use the Adjusted Federal Aid Urban Boundary for the 13 Urban Cities. Beauchamp asked if this would lead to more urban sprawl, or is it being suggested because of urban sprawl. Haugen responded that it has been suggested because of urban sprawl.

Gander asked if there ever a project that we would initiate, where we would obligate these townships adjacent to Grand Forks, or, on other words are we giving them unfounded mandates that say that we have this transportation thing, and you all have to find a way to pay for it. Haugen responded that that hasn't, and shouldn't happen in our area.

Haugen explained that what would really happen if they changed the geography boundaries would be an increase in projects competing for the Urban Cities Program, and there are already about twice as many projects competing than are awarded funding. Gander commented that his thought is that if a city or town grows to the point where it would be considered Urban, fine, but up to that point if you define urban boundaries a different way, if you extend just beyond your corporate limits, and it is a little more restrictive than their four scenarios, he would approve it.

Haugen reported that the U.S. Census Bureau defines Urban Places as having a population of 5,000 or more, therefore North Dakota has 13 Urban Cities.

Gander asked if Mr. Haugen would like a prepared answer that includes one of their four scenarios in the event they reject our fifth. Haugen responded that we do have an answer that supports their Alternative A, and then we offer that if they are intent on adjusting the boundary, that they consider our Alternative E.

MOVED BY MALM, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE THAT A LETTER BE SENT RECOMMENDING THAT AN ADDITIONAL ALTERNATIVE, ALTERNATIVE E, WHICH SUGGESTS THAT NDDOT USE THE ADJUSTED FEDERAL AID URBAN BOUNDARY FOR THE 13 URBAN CITIES INSTEAD OF ANY OF THE ALTERNATIVES PRESENTED, BUT IF THAT RECOMMENDATION IS NOT CONSIDERED, THAT THEY CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE , A, WHICH LEAVES THE SYSTEM AS IS.

Voting Aye: Strandell, Grassel, Beauchamp, Malm, and Gander.

Voting Nay: None.

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MATTER OF PRESENTATION ON STREET AND HIGHWAY PLAN UPDATE

Haugen reported that in the packet was formation on alternatives, identifying names for alternatives at different locations, and the ranking system used for those alternatives to help us determine which to include in the plan. He pointed out that he also included a list of those projects that have already been eliminated from the plan.

Haugen distributed copies of the preliminary cost estimates for all of these alternatives, and commented that he would now give a power point presentation that will discuss each of these alternatives, and give you a concept level of what they are talking about when they discuss at-lane, turn-lane, dual-lane, etc., and give you a visual of what those things are, which is what is illustrated on the 11x 17 sheets distributed.

Haugen commented that he also identified on the MPO's website where you can download a more complete packet of all of the alternatives, but what he is going to do today is to go over what they consider to be the more critical alternatives they are addressing.

Presentation ensued (a copy of which is included in the file, and available upon request).

Haugen stated that in terms of forecasted revenue, we need to project twenty year out. He said that Grand Forks' forecasted revenue is \$110,000,000 available for projects, and East Grand Forks' is \$25,000,000. He commented, however, that from those figures we need to remove those programs that are already in our T.I.P. document, so we need to remove \$8,000,000 from the \$110,000,000 for North Dakota, and \$3,000,000 from the \$25,000,000 for Minnesota. He reported that all of these revenue estimates are based on our historical expenditures we received, and have all been adjusted, so they do reflect 2007 dollars, so essentially we have \$155,000,000 in North Dakota, but of the \$155,000,00 we are going to keep roughly \$40,000,000 for rehab and maintenance projects.

Haugen commented that that the next slide, while not part of the packet, needs to be discussed. He stated that none of our past plans have included revenue from either of the county sources, and this just lists what we identified when we did the Thompson Bridge funding option study in April 2006, what revenues the county was receiving. He said that we will need to have this conversation again with the county to see whether or not we can anticipate their assistance would be available to help us meet some of our transportation issues in the MPO area.

Grassel said that he knows that the two counties have met concerning the Thompson Bridge, and have agreed to work on finding the necessary funding for that bridge. He asked when they think they might start on that project. Strandell responded that they plan on doing that project in 2009. Grassel asked if the Thompson Bridge was going to be reconstructed to the 100-Year Flood Plain. Malm responded that that was the plan, but he doesn't know if it will actually come to fruition or not. Grassel asked, by doing the Thompson Bridge, where does that put us with the Merrifield Bridge, will there ever be one. Haugen responded that the sources shown, on the North Dakota side they are using the Bridge Replacement Program so they aren't dipping into any of the County's appropriations, but on the Minnesota side they haven't truly identified a funding source yet. Strandell stated that, again, there are bridge replacement funds available, and

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they can get those, but monies for a new bridge site is unclear. Haugen referred to a slide, and explained how the funding works.

Haugen stated, again, that none of the county revenues are reflected in these revenue forecasts. He added that they have said all along that they are not trying to reopen discussion on all of the projects, but are basically confirming some of their major projects, which, referring to a slide of the 2035 Base “Confirm” Package, are as follows: 1) Merrifield Road Interchange/River Crossing; 2) 32nd Avenue River Crossing; 3) Central Spine/2nd Avenue NE Grade Separation; 4) 17th Avenue/I-29 Overpass; and 5) 42nd Street widening, 17th Avenue to 32nd Avenue.

Haugen reported that of the \$100,000,000 on the North Dakota side, the base projects that we are carrying forward will have a price tag of about 60% of it. He added that the next few slides indicate the costs involved with the various alternatives. He went over each briefly.

Alt 1A – Columbia Road – DeMers Avenue to 13th Avenue South – Added Southbound Lane/Acceleration Lane

Haugen reported that this alternative costs \$300,000, and involves the addition of a southbound lane on Columbia Road from DeMers Avenue to 13th Avenue South.

Haugen explained that there is a congestion problem on Columbia Road, and our current plan calls for seven lanes, or the addition of a through lane in both directions along Columbia Road. He stated that this is something, because it is already in our current plan, we are looking at, but we would prefer to do something with the intersections instead of a complete widening of the corridor.

Haugen pointed out that both this alternative, and the next alternative have right-of-way impacts, and one isn't easier than the other from a right-of-way perspective.

Grassel asked, when you widen these to seven lanes, how many driving lanes will there be. Haugen responded that there would be three driving lanes, and then the seventh lane would be a continuous left-turn lane. Grassel asked if this would entail that area from DeMers Avenue south. Haugen responded that that would be correct. He explained that going northbound the third lane would act as your right turn-off ramp lane, and would truncate there. He added that going southbound on the overpass, the DeMers on-ramp right-turn lane, or third lane would just come in on that ramp. He stated that currently if you are southbound coming off of DeMers there is a bit of a merge issue, with two lanes coming off the overpass, so the third lane would actually give you more space, to merge. He said, then, that the overpass is a good termini for those third lanes because of the ramps. Grassel asked if there would be enough right-of-way there to do this. Haugen responded that that is what this slide is saying, that there are going to be right-of-way impacts in any event, so any solution we can come up with to eliminate congestion on Columbia Road will not be able to be accomplished in the current right-of-way. Grassel commented that there is also the issue of power lines along that corridor as well. Haugen responded that that was correct, and is included in the right-of-way cost estimate.

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Haugen stated that in order to somewhat alleviate the fear involved with those impacts, he would cite the issues Fargo had on it's 13th Avenue Corridor when they widened it. He said that they worked it through, and in the end, the utilities were very pleased with what happened as it allowed them to do some things they wouldn't have been able to do before. He added that they have had discussions with Xcel Energy about this potential need for widening, and they also described that 13th Avenue experience where they were fearful of going in, but now they aren't too worried about this project should it need to occur.

Haugen referred to a slide that relates all of the improvements that could help with the congestion on Columbia Road, and went over it briefly. He said that he wasn't going to focus much on the improvements outside of the corridor itself, primarily the 32nd Avenue and Merrifield Bridges, which are already being forwarded to the new plan.

Haugen referred to the scoring matrix, and stated that they are trying to use it to help identify the better projects. He added, however, that just because a project scores well here doesn't mean it is automatically going to be included in the plan, and vice-versa, as it is just another tool to try to help us make that determination.

Haugen referred to a graphic that shows how the three lanes would work, and gave an explanation of how it would work. He stated that this project ranked very well, and has been identified in the past, including in a corridor study we did a few years ago, because it not only relieves congestion, but also addresses safety issues as well.

Haugen stated that one of the things we will need to address is the issue of how much of a setback we want from either a sidewalk, or the bikepath from the base of the corridor. He said that we currently have a nice green area with at least six-feet of separation, but many of these alternatives would end up making it look more like Washington Street, with the sidewalk and curb adjacent with each other, so you will have to make the choice as to how much of an impact you want to make on the right-of-way.

Alt 1B – Columbia Road/13th Avenue – Southbound Dual Left Turns

Haugen commented that with this concept, what we need to do to accommodate the turning movements that are currently occurring, and those that are projected to occur here, is to add dual left-turn lanes to Columbia Road. He added that when you do that, you also need to have accommodation lanes on 13th Avenue as well. Gander commented that that is kind of screwy, if you can't handle them on 13th he doesn't know what the big gain will be, and it isn't like there is this great turning pattern north, although a lot do turn south there, so maybe that is what you would do, have the one that comes in on the southernly half of 13th turn right. Haugen responded that that would be correct, that you would be extending two lanes past the current Hugo's entrance, then drop it off, but what happens is that you need to have the ability to have two cars turning at the same time in order to capture more green time. Gander stated, however, that if there is a bottleneck further down, that could be a problem. Haugen responded that that bottleneck does dissipate with that space to the east.

Further discussion on access issues ensued.

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Haugen reported that Altru has approached the City of Grand Forks to discuss the possibility of closing off the connecting frontage road between the hospital and the clinic, which, if done would result in all that traffic being dumped onto Columbia Road between 11th and 13th. He stated that they have hired a consultant to work on this, and they have met with the us a couple of times so far. Beauchamp asked if they were doing this to get more parking. Haugen responded that what they are doing is to rearrange their hospital, expanding it's footprint across that roadway out towards Columbia Road.

After some discussion it was determined that it would not make for a very smooth flow of traffic on the Altru Campus should they decide to vacate that frontage road. Haugen responded that they are aware of that, and that is why they hired a consultant to try to find a solution to this issue. He added that the base city response was that internal circulation should be kept internally, so what they should be doing is trying to find a solution that will keep traffic internal rather than putting it out onto one of our growing congested roadways.

Gander asked if everything west of Columbia Road considered private roadways. Haugen responded that 30th Street, behind Altru, is a public roadway. He added that 14th Avenue is also a public roadway as well, but everything else is internal.

Alt 1C – Columbia Road/17th Avenue – Dual Left Turns All Approaches, Southbound Right Turn Lane

Haugen reported that this is our Achilles Heal, so to speak. He stated that they are looking at constructing dual left turn lanes virtually all around the intersection of Columbia Road and 17th Avenue. He referred to a slide illustrating the proposed alternative, and pointed out that there are two businesses at this intersection that will potentially be impacted, and although we may be able to avoid the park, by doing so would mean impacting those properties to north considerably.

Alt 1D – Columbia Road/24th Avenue – Southbound Dual Left Turns

Haugen commented that there is actually an improvement taking place at this intersection right now. He said that the only change to that improvement would be the addition of dual left turn lanes southbound and eastbound.

Gander asked what the specific improvement is that is currently underway. Haugen responded that everything you see on the slide before you is going in now with the exception of the dual left turn lanes southbound and eastbound.

Gander commented that whoever controls traffic at this intersection, and maybe it is the contractor, but the couple of times he has been through there traffic was backed up considerably, with extremely long waiting times, and he would have to say it was unacceptable. Bakken stated that he lives in that area, and he always makes sure he uses an alternative route, and stays away from that intersection. Gander agreed that he now does that same thing, but if we are trying to minimize the economic impact to the adjacent businesses during construction, then kicking traffic everywhere but there is not the best scenario, and to do a better job of traffic control through a construction zone minimizes the economic impact to those businesses. Haugen

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suggested that a call to CPS or the City Traffic Engineer, as they are the project managers, might be warranted.

Malm stated that while he doesn't know what it might cost us, but on 17th Avenue there is a very simple answer to at least one of the problems, and that would be to purchase the business on the northeast corner of the intersection. Haugen agreed, but added that we could also be looking at the need to purchase Hardees as well.

Haugen reported that when you look at the cost estimates for each of these alternatives, there is a right-of-way cost associated with each, and it is the most minimal estimate we can get by with, but they did use the assessed value of the property and factor it up by 1.7. Gander asked if that would buy out those two properties. Haugen responded that if you had a property with an assessed value of \$100,000.00, and took that times 1.7, we would show a cost of \$170,000.00. Gander stated that his question was whether or not the analysis of this improvement indicated the purchase of these properties, or just the purchase of some right-of-way. Haugen responded that it only includes the purchase of right-of-way.

Alt 1E – Columbia Road/20th Avenue – Extend 20th Avenue South to Connect with Columbia Road

Haugen reported that this alternative would actually help minimize some of the turning movements on 17th. He explained that right-of-way exists for the continuation of 20th Street from Columbia Road to just beyond the ball diamonds, which would then make it a straight two-lane roadway, and would divert approximately 1,000 to 2,000 vehicles per day from 17th. He stated that the one concern, besides the possibility of some neighborhood opposition, is what to do at the intersection at Columbia Road. He said that when referring back to the corridor study was accomplished several years ago, the concept was to allow a signal at this location, however another alternative would be to do a ¾ access like the one at 26th and Columbia now.

Discussion ensued.

Malm pointed out that there are only two land owners involved with this project, so if one of them tried to protest it you would have 50% protesting. Gander asked if the cost of this project would be assessed to the local property owners. Haugen responded that the default policy of the city would have some special assessments to it, but that isn't the only avenue available to the city. He explained that they could utilize federal funds for 80% of the cost, and then the remaining 20% could be covered through assessments or sales tax. Malm commented, however, that previously when this project was suggested they wanted to assess the two property owners, who, of course were not agreeable at all. Gander added that their City Attorney, Ron Galstad, told them that if you do not add sufficient value to a property owners property, and they were to take you to court, you would lose.

Beauchamp asked if it wouldn't be wise to purchase the right-of-way needed now, as the costs will just continue to get higher. Haugen responded that that is what he is alluding to. He explained that when you visualize the Columbia Corridor, you are adding in right turn lanes at 11th and 13th, and then you go to 17th and add a right turn lane, then to 20th or 24th and add a right

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turn lane, there isn't much of a difference than just adding the continuous right turn lane down the whole corridor. Bakken stated that it may be cheaper to just add the whole thing right away. Malm added that it would also handle the traffic for the next twenty years. Haugen said that the decision you will need to make is how much setback you want for a sidewalk.

Alt 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D – DeMers Avenue/Washington Street – Add Third Through Lane

Haugen stated that even though we do have bridges shown at 32nd Avenue and Merrifield, we still have to do something with the intersection of DeMers Avenue and Washington Street to get us to an acceptable level-of-service, and these alternatives basically add a right turn lane to the south side of the roadway and carry it over to the 4th Avenue off-ramp. He said that when this alternative was developed they were able to show that by doing it alone it would get us to a level-of-service "C", but now that several years have passed, and traffic has continued to increase, and even with the addition of bridges at 32nd Avenue and Merrifield we are finding that this alternative no longer will get us to an acceptable level-of-service.

Haugen commented that this is a unique intersection as it involves two state highways, and therefore requires DOT approval as to what can or cannot be done, and NDDOT won't approve anything that doesn't get it up to at least a level-of-service "C", so this intersection has been failing for some time, and continues to get worse.

Haugen reported that Alternatives 2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D keep everything at grade, but ultimately only shift the problems to the north, and really don't get the job done to the extent we would like. He added that all of these alternatives do infringe on the apron, and while they can still technically be there as they are now, it would be better to go west and south because we have more lanes to accommodate the traffic volume, however that doesn't eliminate the issue we currently have. He stated that, as shown in the example, instead of adding an additional lane on the south or the north sides, we are suggesting that to truly get this intersection to an acceptable level-of-service, all directions should have an additional lane added, which would then mean right-of-way impacts and or business acquisition.

Grassel asked how long it has been since the current improvements to the intersection of Washington and DeMers were done. Haugen responded that improvements to get it to its current state were done in 1992 and 1993. He stated that back when those improvements were made the City and the DOT made an agreement, and if you will recall that when a construction project is done projections are made out several years ahead before you even begin to physically pour any concrete, so back then a grade separated interchange concept was discussed as a possible solution to the problems at this intersection, however the City Council at that time just couldn't quite come to grips with the idea of purchasing all the property necessary to make that happen, so an agreement was reached to build what we currently have, with the stipulation that the City of Grand Forks come up with a plan to improve adjacent corridors to help shift some of the traffic off this corridor. He said, then, that the City and the MPO worked on developing a plan that could accomplish this, and that plan included additional river crossings as well as improvements to Belmont, Cherry, 20th Street, etc., but it was determined that even with those improvements, an interchange at this intersection would still be the best solution.

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Gander asked if there would be any purpose whatsoever in reconsidering these adjacent corridors as a way to help alleviate some of the pressure from this corridor. Haugen responded that the only corridors for consideration are Cherry, 20th, or Belmont, and they all run through residential areas. He added that the only other exception, or the only other project would be a third bridge located between 32nd and 4th. Gander stated that if you want to do town planning correctly between two urban communities separated by a river, having a bridge about every mile would be the right thing, and really, the neighborhood resistance could be dealt with by pointing out that it isn't fair to drive all the neighborhood traffic through one neighborhood, that it makes more sense to divide it up through all the neighborhoods, however, he understands that financially that may not be doable.

Beauchamp commented that when Dr. Gander mentions the issue of resistance, and he understands that, but if there isn't another bridge constructed closer, in future years the movement of traffic through these adjacent corridors will occur anyway because people will start using them to get away from the congestion at this intersection, and, in-fact it is already occurring to some extent on 20th and 24th now. Gander agreed, pointing out that traffic has already increased on Belmont Road as well, particularly between 13th and Minnesota/4th, and that will continue to get worse.

Gander stated that something we have to remember is, if we are pushing traffic from a three mile route to a six mile route, not only are we inconveniencing the motorists, but we are taxing all that infrastructure about twice as much as what it should be, your crossing twice as many intersections, waiting for twice as many stop signs or lights to turn green, so you really are artificially pumping up your traffic volume on your infrastructure in your community when you don't have convenient routes to places. Beauchamp added that you are also taxing your neighborhoods, and all that a bridge is is an extension of a City street across the river.

Haugen commented that another solution to this quandary is to try to make the DOT loosen its level-of-service "C" requirement, and allow the same as Minnesota, which is a level-of-service "D" or "E". He pointed out that by getting this intersection to a level-of-service "D" would still be an improvement to what we currently have, which is a level-of-service "F". He stated that this is something that will have to be discussed further with the DOT.

Malm stated that right now there is a vacant business on the corner of DeMers Avenue and Washington Street, and the City should buy it up. He added that there have been three or four homes sold along 4th, and now they're building a new one along there, which is ridiculous, nobody should be allowed to build along that corridor as we could expand 4th, and start taking those homes that come up for sale now. He said that we need to pay the price now, rent the homes out until we are ready to do the job, and ultimately save in the long run as the cost of those homes will only continue to rise, and if we could widen it, it would solve some of the problems we now have, and maybe eliminate future problems as well.

Alt 2E – DeMers Avenue/Washington Street – Single Point Urban Interchange

Haugen referred to a slide illustrating Alternative 2E, which is a single point urban interchange. He explained that this was actually what was in the 1991 plan. He reported that back in 1991 we

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didn't legislation like ISTEA, TEA-21, and now SAFETEA-LU, whereby our planning efforts needed to identify and consider all the possible impacts a project could create, so in 1991 it was easy to say this alternative would work, at this cost, and not have any discussion or concern as to how it would impact adjacent properties. He said that we all know that Fire Station would be impacted, that B&N would be impacted, that Hardees would be impacted, but now we also have to start considering the Park District and the Xcel Energy facility.

Haugen explained that this interchange raises DeMers Avenue up over Washington Street, which was done because Washington Street is already depressed, which would mean less costs. He stated that this alternative would create a right-in/right-out only access for the Xcel Energy facility, which would hamper their operations somewhat. Beauchamp commented, however, that the Xcel Energy facility is used very little, that there are very few employees there anymore. Malm agreed, adding that it is basically used as a storage yard now. Grassel said that there are down to four linemen, two meter readers, and a few gas people. Haugen stated that that may be true, but you would be dealing with a private entity and negotiating right-of-way impacts to their access. Malm commented that that is always used as an excuse. He added that if Cities are looking to properly develop themselves they have to bite that bullet now, because ten years from now it will only cost more, and there will be more rules and regulations imposed as well.

Alt 2F – DeMers Avenue/Washington Street – Split Diamond Interchange

Haugen stated that we also have to consider the 4th Avenue Interchange and the DeMers Overpass have some safety issues, particularly with the ramps coming off DeMers, and this concept tries to kill two birds with one stone. He explained that essentially, instead of having one single point for all turning movements, we would have two.

Gander commented that this alternative would be very costly. Malm agreed, but added that if things aren't done correctly in the first place, the cost will be even higher to fix it correctly later.

Gander pointed out that you would be taking out the Fire Station, B&N Oil, etc.. Malm stated that that is true, but the only major one would be B&N Oil as the next business is the Hertz Rental Office, and the next is a bar, and, while he doesn't have anything against a bar, but you aren't hurting many businesses with this at all. He added that on the other side you have an open space that Burlington Northern Railroad doesn't do any with other than move in some junk once in a while, and the Fire Station, which is also a major business, but again, it will only cost more later.

Alt 3A – 34th Street/32nd Avenue – Add Dual Westbound Left Turn Lanes

Haugen commented that the current plan calls for widening 32nd Avenue South to seven lanes in each direction, but what we are now finding with our traffic projections is that that may have been an over-build, so we are now looking at doing only some intersection improvements. He added, however, that the main difference between this corridor and the Columbia Road corridor is that we have all of the necessary right-of-way already so this could be done with less discussion.

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Alt 3B – Columbia Road/32nd Avenue – Add Dual Northbound and Westbound Left Turn Lanes

Haugen reported that they are recommending adding some dual left turn lanes were there currently aren't any, and these are easily installed as they are opposed by dual left turn lanes as well.

Alt 3C – 32nd Avenue/38th Street – Add Dual Northbound and Southbound Left Turn Lanes

Haugen stated that some right-of-way would need to be purchased for this alternative, and we would have to determine how badly we want to have sidewalks at this location as well.

Alt E – 32nd Avenue South Interchange Reconfiguration

Haugen commented that this alternative was included in the current plan, but they are now looking at rotating it 90-degrees. He explained that it achieves two things, and, again the current plan talks about six-lanes on 32nd Avenue so we had to modify the ramp to accommodate an additional right turn lane, and they are looking at making 42nd Street connect in more directly to the interchange ramps, so, ultimately the original concept was good, but we are just going to flesh it out some more and show you in detail that improvements on 38th won't have to be as extensive as shown on the previous diagram, but can be substantially less.

Malm stated that we need a left turn signal at the intersection at 32nd and 38th. He said that by doing this cheap fix, we would solve a lot of problems.

Alt 3D – Washington Street/32nd Avenue – Add Eastbound and Westbound Through Lanes

Haugen reported that this alternative shows that we currently drop from two lanes to one through lane to get across onto 32nd Avenue, and it is felt that with future traffic volumes we should continue all the way through the intersection with both lanes.

Alt 5A – 24th Avenue South and 34th Street Roundabout

Haugen stated that there is a desire from the community, and others, to consider roundabout locations. He explained that while North Dakota doesn't have the same philosophy, Minnesota is asking us to justify why we aren't putting roundabouts in instead of traffic signals.

Haugen reported that the best location appears to be at the intersection of 24th Avenue South and 34th Street South. He referred to a drawing, and explained how the concept of a roundabout works, pointing out that it involves continuous movement, no stopping, just yielding, and that it could be accomplished with minimal impact to the right-of-way, and doesn't cost any more than a traffic signal.

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Alt 5B-5D – 24th Avenue South and 29th Street Safety

Haugen commented that this is another tough choice. He explained that the City of Grand Forks is currently in the process of implementing an improvement at the intersection of 24th Avenue South and Columbia Road, but there is a very high crash rate at the intersection of 24th Avenue South and 29th Street South. He stated that they have come up with three alternatives to address the safety concerns at this location: Alt 5C is the best of the three alternatives and involves removal of the south leg; Alt 5B is the next best alternative and involves channelizing northbound traffic to provide ¾ access; and Alt 5D involves signalizing the intersection, however warrants would need to be met in order to accomplish this alternative.

Alt 6A-6C – Bygland Road Access/Congestion

Haugen reported that the best solution would be Alt 6B, to restripe it as a three-lane highway, with a continuous left turn lane down the center.

Haugen stated that if desired, they could try to consolidate some of the access, and close minor accesses, which is what Alt 6C suggests.

Central Spine/BNSF Grade Separation

Haugen referred to a slide illustrating the Central Spine Grade Separation, and explained that it begins at the Louis Murray Bridge, travels north to the railroad, goes underneath the railroad, and comes back up.

Beauchamp asked what this will do to the existing businesses. Haugen responded that they would have to have their driveways modified, and we will need to look into whether or not it will impact the pumps.

Gander stated that this is a good alternative, but how do you get from the intersection of the State Highway to corner where North Valley Family Medicine is located. He said that maybe you can push traffic through several streets, but it sure would be nice to have a visible corridor identified. Haugen responded that this is just a grade separation, so it really doesn't change any traffic patterns. He added that there were some other solutions looked at, that did swing things over to Central Avenue, and, while they are still something we can consider, it would require the purchase of some additional properties.

Alt 17A-17C – Beet/Potato Plant Truck Traffic

Haugen reported that this slide shows an area that they are still wrestling with, 5th Avenue N.E. and the Business 2 Intersection. He stated that they did meet with representatives from American Crystal to discuss different options, but no decisions have been made at this time. He said that he hopes to come back with more information soon.

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GF/EGF MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD
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NEXT STEPS

Haugen stated that this slide indicates what is left for them to do, and, again, at some point there will need to be choices made from among the alternatives discussed, after which the final plan will need to be approved by the City Councils. Bakken asked what the time frame for all of this is. Haugen responded that they hope to have it completed and approved by October.

Haugen commented that this is an informational meeting, but that we now have drawings that give us a better idea of what the concepts and cost components are for each alternative. He pointed out that there are updated costs shown for the Merrifield Interchange, the Merrifield Bridge, the 32nd Avenue Bridge, the 17th Avenue Overpass, etc..

Haugen stated that they are now in the process of trying to work out things with the DOT and Federal Highway, and if you recall we discussed the issue of the year of expenditure cost adjustment we have to do, whereby Minnesota is recommending we do something different than what the Federal Highway is, so last month he reported that because of the year of expenditure requirement we now have to do, purchasing power is probably less in this plan than previous plans, but since then more information has come up that we need to adjust our revenue expenditures as well, so the question now is what inflation rate we should use for each. He said that this is still being discussed.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Overlay of County Road 17 – Highway 2 to Business 2

Strandell reported that Polk County is currently advertising for bids for shoulder widening and a mill and overlay on County Road 17 from Highway 2 to Business 2. He stated that the plan is to get this before beet season starts.

2. Senator Coleman's Staff Visit

Grassel reported that Senator Coleman's staff will be here next Wednesday to address the border crossing, passport issue. He added that Grand Forks people are invited to attend as well.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY BEAUCHAMP, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 22ND, 2007, MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 1:40 P.M.

Voting Aye: Strandell, Grassel, Beauchamp, Malm, and Gander.

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Executive Assistant