

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

**Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – 12:00 Noon  
East Grand Forks City Hall Council Chambers**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Steve Gander, Chairman, called the September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007, meeting of the MPO Executive Policy Board to order at 12:10 p.m.

**CALL OF ROLL**

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Chairman Gander, Gary Malm, Dick Grassel, Punky Beauchamp, Art Bakken, and Doug Christensen.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Nancy Ellis, GF/EGF MPO Senior Planner; Teri Nelson, GF/EGF MPO Planner; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF Executive Assistant.

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Chairman Gander declared a quorum was present.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Haugen introduced Teri Nelson, MPO Planner, who was hired to fill the vacant planner position. He stated that Ms. Nelson is a recent graduate of UND, and has extensive skills in the GIS area. The Board welcomed her to the MPO.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No minutes were distributed for approval.

**MATTER OF DRAFT PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF THE STREET/HIGHWAY  
PLAN UPDATE**

Haugen reiterated that he did explain at the last MPO Executive Policy Board meeting that the Technical Advisory Committee would meet to go over all of the alternatives, improvements, and issues identified, in order to try to come up with a recommended plan for consideration of the MPO Executive Policy Board. He stated that such a meeting did take place on August 22, 2007, and the following is a presentation of the results of that meeting.

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

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Haugen reported that the first step was to either reaffirm or reassess the 2004 plan recommendations/alternatives. He pointed out that the second slide does list those alternatives that were confirmed, as well as those that need to be re-evaluated.

Haugen commented that the third slide is a quote he heard from a federal employee, which basically tells us what we already know, and that is that the intent of SAFETEA-LU is for the MPO to make some very tough decisions regarding their priorities for the urbanized area as there will not be enough revenue to support all the projects, so they will need to identify projects as illustrative, and not include them in the financial analysis, then amend the plan to include them should funding become available. He stated that, in some respects, what they are recommending be adopted is a kind of “interim plan” or an illustrative plan that they hope the Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks will adopt as their comprehensive street and highway plan in order that these projects can continue to move forward until such time funding is available to do them.

Haugen reported that at the last meeting they also discussed the fact that they identified a financial revenue percentage increase they will use, 2% on the North Dakota side and 1% on the Minnesota side. He added that they also identified that they will be using a 4% cost inflation rate as well. He stated that one of the challenges they have is that when they identify a project out, they really can't say with any certainty that it will occur in any given year.

Haugen stated that what they did was to group the projects into time periods, using a 10% cost and 5% revenue increase for short-term (0-5 year) projects; a 51% cost and 21% revenue increase for mid-term (6-15 year) projects; and a 137% cost and 49% revenue increase for long-term (16+ year) projects.

Gander stated that obviously the longer you look at this, in terms of a timeframe, the more you show the pure stupidity of this policy that has been thrust upon us, pure idiocy. He said that the fact that by a factor of almost three-times we are losing pace to inflation, over a span of 16-plus years, and when we've seen a bridge collapse, killing people, and inconveniencing hundreds of thousand of other for the next two to three years to comprise infrastructure like this over the long-haul, someone from this MPO, and all MPOs need to feed back to these federal and state policy makers that this is really moronic. He asked if this was something that the MPO could do, and is there an association that brings this forward, that this is pure stupidity. Haugen responded that he did present this information to the Minnesota MPOs at a conference held in Rochester last week. He added that the basis for this rule is because the last couple of years construction cost escalation was much more than was anticipated so we had these big gaps between what we thought the cost would be and what it ultimately was, so this is one way of resolving that issue. Gander stated that if one good spin-off from this is to somehow let contractors know that we don't have an open check-book, and that we need to use a more reasonable manner of determining construction costs, fine, but if this really plays out this way it is going to be nasty. Haugen agreed.

Haugen reported that right now the planning level concept is pretty generic, not very detailed, so we need to come up with a real concept of cost for each alternative. He cited the DeMers/Washington Intersection project, and pointed out that there is a cost range from \$20-

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million to \$8-million, adding that it will be interesting to see which concept is in the project development.

Haugen referred to a map illustrating all of the different alternatives that are/were being considered, and explained how the Technical Advisory Committee came up with the various packages, as well as what now needs to be done with those packages. He reported that each package achieves a certain objective or represents a theme, and gave a brief overview of how these themes/packages were determined. He stated that they looked at areas where, as the City grows we need to convert from rural to urban; and they looked at not only current congested areas but future congested areas; and lastly they looked at our current plan's recommendations, and how those recommendations price out in comparison with the new fiscal constraint issues we have. He said that with these packages, he feels we now have a recommended plan.

Haugen pointed out that the next two slides show the current 2030 plan, with the recommended improvements that have been identified, and the cost estimates for those packages/alternatives. He went over that over that information briefly, stating that, as you can see it shows that the total cost estimate in 2007 is \$131,600,000. He explained that in all of our past plans we were able to use a constant dollar for cost and a constant dollar for revenue, but that is no longer the case. He said that the first thing they did was to look at a couple of areas where they could make some changes, and they were: 1) six-lane widening of 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue; 2) six-lane widening of Columbia Road; 3) and what improvements are doing at DeMers/Washington. He stated that rather than doing those six-lane expansions along the corridor, they are recommending that we do what they are calling TSM projects, or spot specific improvements instead. He commented, however, that even with that, by mid-term we won't have enough financial resources to complete all the projects, and long-term we are way out of line.

Haugen reported that as they worked with these different packages at the Technical Advisory Committee level, they recognized that we have some major regional projects with joint funding on both sides, and we need to make sure that if we adjusted them to mid-term, both sides have the necessary financial resources available. He added that they also selected the TSM concepts where they could, and were able to solve most of the issues on the North Dakota side, but not the Minnesota side.

Haugen stated that these are the recommended preliminary projects, adding that there are some illustrative projects shown as well; including the Central Spine Concept in East Grand Forks, and 220 North widening.

Haugen said that at the Technical Advisory Committee level they feel that they have put together a good balance of short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects. He added that they also looked at some regional improvements that would help immediately versus some of the long-range projects that need to grow to occur in order to make them more necessary, and included that information as well.

Christensen asked what the population growth percentage for Grand Forks is, is it 1.5% a year compounded. Haugen responded that they used a 1.2% growth rate. Christensen asked if that

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information was given to Mayor Brown and Mr. Schmisek when they did their projections. Haugen responded that it is his belief that they do have that information, but that they used a 1.6% growth rate. Christensen stated that he doesn't understand why, because you are all in the same building, you are using a 1.2% growth rate and they are using a 1.6% growth rate, adding that he would think it would be better to use the same rate all around. He asked what Mr. Haugen's source is for using 1.2%. Haugen responded that their use of a 1.2% growth rate is based on historic census data, and what they averaged out historically. He stated that each year they do annual estimate of how we are keeping pace. Christensen asked if the number came from a source, or did the MPO come up with it on their own. Haugen responded that it is determined by the MPO, but the source data is the census data from the federal offices.

Discussion on population figures ensued.

Beauchamp asked if the Kennedy Bridge had been inspected yet. Haugen responded that it is inspected annually, however he isn't sure if it has been done since the Minneapolis Bridge collapse. Beauchamp stated that he asks this because a few years ago, after an inspection, they were told that it wasn't in that great of condition, and that it would need to be replaced in 2025, and then that was moved back and they said it wasn't in as bad of condition as they thought, but it would really be terrible if we were to lose that bridge like the one in Minneapolis. Haugen commented that prior to the collapse of the Minneapolis Bridge, as part of the information they were trying to gather for this plan, they met with both DOTs and asked what their views were on the Sorlie and Kennedy Bridges. He said that North Dakota felt they only need to resurface and rehab the existing bridges, but Minnesota felt that it would be better to replace them than rehab them, but nothing more has been discussed since the collapse.

Haugen reported that ultimately this is a new management tool, and when we have projects programmed in our T.I.P. we have to make sure that they are still consistent with our financial plan, and this is a higher level tool than anything we have had in the past.

Haugen stated that, assuming this body takes action on this today, they will hold some public meetings to inform the public of the plan, after which final approval will be sought in November.

***MOVED BY MALM, SECONDED BY CHRISTENSEN, TO GRANT APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT PRELIMINARY STREET/HIGHWAY PLAN UPDATE AS SUBMITTED.***

***Voting Aye: Beauchamp, Malm, Grassel, Christensen, Bakken, and Gander.  
Voting Nay: None.***

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Next MPO Executive Policy Board Meeting

Haugen reported that although we do have an MPO Executive Policy Board meeting scheduled for Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, at noon, the only action item involves the selection of a consultant for the Grand Forks Collector/Collector Traffic Control Strategy Plan, and, as has been done in the

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past, this body has deferred authority to the MPO Finance Committee to approve such items, so he is asking if that is something the board would like to consider.

***MOVED BY BEAUCHAMP, SECONDED BY CHRISTENSEN, TO APPROVE DEFERRING AUTHORITY TO THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE TO SELECT A CONSULTANT FOR THE COLLECTOR/COLLECTOR TRAFFIC CONTROL STRATEGY PLAN.***

***Voting Aye: Beauchamp, Malm, Grassel, Christensen, Bakken, and Gander.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

**ADJOURNMENT**

***MOVED BY MALM, SECONDED BY CHRISTENSEN, TO ADJOURN THE SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>, 2007, MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 12:50 P.M.***

***Voting Aye: Beauchamp, Malm, Grassel, Christensen, Bakken, and Gander.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,  
Executive Assistant