

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 11th, 2008 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-102**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the June 11th, 2008, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:34 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Jane Williams, Grand Forks Traffic Engineer; Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks Planner; Brad Gengler, Grand Forks Planner; Stacey Hanson, NDDOT-Bismarck; Greg Boppre, East Grand Forks Consulting Engineer; Les Noehre, NDDOT-Grand Forks; and Dale Bergman, Cities Area Transit Superintendent.

Staff present were: Nancy Ellis, MPO Planner, Senior; Teri Nelson, MPO Planner; Ali Rood, MPO Intern; and Peggy McNelis, MPO Executive Assistant.

Guests present were: Paul Benning, NDDOT-Bismarck; Troy Schroeder, NWRDC; and Bob Kost, SEH Engineers.

INTRODUCTIONS

Haugen requested that, because there are new people here today, he would like for everyone to introduce themselves.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Haugen declared a quorum was present.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE MAY 7TH, 2008 MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY BERGMAN, TO APPROVE THE MAY 7TH, 2008, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF UPDATE ON DOWNTOWN PLAN

Haugen introduced Bob Kost, SEH Engineers, and stated that he was present today to give a brief overview on the status of the Downtown Plan Study, specifically regarding traffic issues.

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Kost reported that they started this study about a month ago, when Dan Jochum and himself met with City staff from both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. He stated that they spent time taking photos and getting to know the lay of the land, as well as gathering data from previous plans and from the City's GIS.

Kost commented that Mr. Jochum and himself, as well as several other members of their team, are here today and tomorrow to both gather additional data, and to share information already collected.

Kost explained that Maxfield Research will be meeting with business and property owners on both sides of the river in order to get the additional data needed. He added that that firm is also looking at socio-economic data for both communities including growth patterns, lease rates, real estate market conditions, etc., so that they data can help with the planning process they will be doing. He stated that their Traffic Engineer has received the traffic count and turning movement data from both cities, and they just recently added that information to their base map. He referred to that map and went over the information briefly.

Kost stated that with the data already collected, including turning movement counts at five locations in East Grand Forks, and several locations in Grand Forks, they can now begin generating scenarios for redevelopment. He said that as he understands it, as they start generating the scenarios they will look at what the impact, whether it is residential or some other use, as well as the quantity of new uses, will be to the downtown traffic flow. He added that once they have this information they will forward it on to A.T.A.C., as well as to plug it into a Synchro model in order to get an understanding of what impact, if any, new development or redevelopment will have on both downtowns.

Haugen commented that they do have a project programmed to upgrade the signals on DeMers Avenue in Grand Forks, so part of the analysis will be to look at the 2002 Downtown Study to make sure it is still relevant, and if not what recommendations may need to be made to make it relevant to the signal coordination project. He added that there are a few other things that will be looked as well: 1) the option of having a transit circulator in the downtowns; 2) one-way pairs out of Grand Forks' downtown - 3rd Street and 4th Street; and all of these will be premised on the full intersection at 5th Avenue N.W. being constructed in 2010.

Kost stated that the transit circulator option is an interesting one. He explained that last time they were in town the idea of a transit circulator was discussed as a method for people to get from one place to another within the downtowns without having to use their vehicles. He added that they would be able to park once, but still get to and from their desired destinations. Williams commented that she really likes the idea of a transit circulator, not only for visitors, but for those that work downtown. She explained that it isn't a matter of distance, but rather a matter of time that is the problem.

Ellis reported that one thing she did not get a chance to mention earlier is the fact that the housing in the downtown area is primarily for students and lower income individuals, and it

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would be nice to see some more upscale housing for young professionals, particularly in East Grand Forks. Kost agreed that there is a need for higher quality rental units in the downtowns.

Kost asked if the transit circulator would be operated by the transit operators. Haugen responded that that would be one option, but another would be to have it operated privately. He added that there are actually two kinds of circulators, there is the daytime circulator that Ms. Williams discussed, and the other would be the nightlife circulator. Kost commented that one of the things they will be exploring is the organizational structure, and specifically the idea of a more focused organization. He stated that they have found, especially in communities that have a tourist component to them, is that the merchants, city, and other organizations pool funds to run the circulator free of charge. He said that this actually saves you money because you don't need a parking space for every single trip, therefore less parking is required in the long run. Williams asked, if it is decided that we should have a transit circulator in the downtowns, will the issue of a two hour parking limit be looked at to see if it should be increased for those that park and use the circulator. Kost responded that that is something that would certainly need to be looked at at that time.

Williams commented that there is also the issue of no facility, no CVS type of store in the downtown area where a person can pick up a loaf of bread, milk, etc., so she would like to request that they look at somehow getting something like that to consider locating in the downtown area.

Haugen stated that one last traffic specific issue is the proposed redevelopment of the Civic Center, and the reallocation of over two hundred parking spaces there that are currently dedicated to the high school students at Central if and when that should occur. He said that one proposal is to move them to the parking lot on the wet side of the dike by the river, and another is to give them the upper floors of the parking ramp across from the school. He stated that the main issue with this is the question of where the students will park, should they be given the parking lot on the wet side of the dike, during high water events, and how it will impact DeMers.

Further discussion on student and staff parking issues and options ensued.

Kost reported that they will be holding a planning workshop at the Grand Forks Herald this evening from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and all are welcome to attend.

Information only.

MATTER OF UPDATE ON CENTRAL AVENUE CORRIDOR STUDY

Ellis reported that at the April East Grand Forks Planning Commission meeting it was decided, with direction from the East Grand Forks City Council, that the Central Avenue Corridor Study should be studied further due to the opposition of the business owners to the recommendation to reduce the width of the frontage roads. She stated that a meeting was then held to develop a process and timetable on what needs to be reviewed and how to do it (a copy of which is

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included in the packets). She explained that after the April Planning Commission Meeting, Barry Wilfahrt from the Chamber of Commerce, agreed to act as a liaison between the business owners along the corridor and herself, so he met with them to get a better idea of their concerns and objections to the study findings and recommendations, and brought that information back for discussion.

Ellis referred to page 13, the process outline, and went over it briefly.

Ellis reported that Ms. Nelson and herself attended a training workshop for bike and pedestrian facilities in Bemidji recently, and the gentleman that was doing the training basically helped AASHTO write their bike and pedestrian guidelines so he did provide her with some helpful hints. She stated that he did say that once you say you are going to remove portions of a roadway, you will really have a battle, so he provided some other options for locating bike and pedestrian facilities along the corridor, and she will be presenting those options to the commission at their meeting on June 23rd.

Benning asked, if you have a 10-foot wide multi-use trail off the roadway, can you still take the roadway and narrow it down to add an additional bikeway along that roadway. Haugen responded that you can. Benning asked if it would be eligible for federal aid. Haugen responded that it would depend on what the multi-use trails are actually used for as statistics indicate that bicyclists are safer on the roadway than on the trail. He stated that if you read the AASHTO bicycle design guidelines the preference is to put them on the street, and the last preference is to put them on a side path. Benning said that he knows that AASHTO makes a design guide for bikes and peds, and you might want to look at that and see how it addresses it if you already have a 10-foot wide multi-use path. Ellis responded that there isn't a multi-use path, that that is part of the reduced frontage road recommendation. She added that most of the City Council members prefer the multi-use in the right-of-way option the best.

Haugen commented that they hope to have more information on this at the July meeting, and to finalize it in August.

Information only.

MATTER OF UPDATE ON 32ND AVENUE SIGNAL COORDINATION STUDY

Haugen reminded the committee that they did approve the scope-of-work for this study at their May meeting. He stated that the request for proposals were sent, four responses were received, and the selection committee met and recommended to the MPO Executive Policy Board that they approve hiring Alliant Engineering, with Ulteig Engineering as their sub-consultant, to do the study.

Haugen referred to the packet, and pointed out that the final scope-of-work was included. He stated that they did negotiate with Alliant to get them to move their schedule up a little. He added that they met with them yesterday for the first time as they were here to observe the

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operations on 32nd Avenue. He reported that they are almost completed with Task #1, and have already begun Task #2. He said that they will be back again at the end of June in order for staff to review and critique their existing conditions report, and they will then begin studying coordination options, and will then come back in July with their final strategies.

Williams commented that an interesting fact that came about after the counts were completed was that our peak hour is on Saturday. Benning asked why they thought this was the case. Williams responded that it appears that it is caused by the fact that our Canadian neighbors are in town at that time.

Benning asked where the Alliant Engineering firm was located. Haugen responded that their principal office is located in the twin-cities. He added that this is the first time the MPO has hired them to do a study, but they have done a lot of work in the Bemidji area. He stated that one of their principal engineers is Bob Green, who has worked quite a bit with URS, so we are somewhat familiar with his work. Noehre commented that just from the short meeting they had with them yesterday they appear very competent, and he is quite impressed with the fact that they were able to catch things that ranged from very small issues to very large issues.

Information only.

MATTER OF UPDATE ON MINNESOTA/4TH AVENUE CORRIDOR STUDY

Ellis reported that they have kicked off the study by holding their first steering committee meeting, and an open house on May 14th. She said that they had good attendance at the steering committee meeting, and they discussed what the purpose of the study was, what they are looking for, and came up with some good ideas. She referred to the packet, and pointed out that beginning on Page 30 she did include the minutes from that meeting.

Ellis commented that there was a lot of discussion on how we can preserve the granitoid, particularly how it can be done without keeping it in its present location because it is in such terrible shape in many areas of the roadway.

Ellis stated that she did send out approximately a 140 neighbor notices, and they had about eight people attend the public meeting. She added that when the steering committee, staff, and the consultants walked the corridor earlier that day, they did have the opportunity to talk to some of the neighbors, and it appeared that many of them really don't care what they did, and several would like to see it removed totally while some others would like to see it preserved.

Ellis said that the consultants took all the comments received from all entities including the neighborhood, the engineers, the historical preservation society, etc., and will present those findings at a meeting on June 25th at Phoenix School at 5:30 p.m.. She added that the consultants also prepared a newsletter that was mailed out earlier, and will be mailed out again next week.

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Benning asked if they received comments from SHPO. Ellis responded that a SHPO employee actually sat on the steering committee, as did a member of the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission.

Haugen stated that the key issue here is the relationship between our local preservationists and the state. He explained that they haven't been in agreement on this issue in the past, with the local entity agreeing that all the granitoid need not be placed on the register, only certain segments, but the state placed it all on the register based on an ad hoc citizen group's insistence. He added that even now the staff person for the local preservation committee is trying to get the city to focus on only a couple of streets, and then allow that the rest of it be updated with newer pavement as needed, however, they are still dealing with people that want to keep all of it at all cost.

Benning commented that NDDOT recently had a project in Valley City that required dealing with trolley track, and SHPO made them take a chunk of it out and place it elsewhere for preservation purposes. Williams said that that is another thing, that there were trolley tracks through this area, as well, that were taken out during World War II, and the steel was used for the war effort, and the granitoid was replaced with concrete, so there are actually areas where the granitoid has already been displaced.

Benning said that he would think it would make sense to remove a piece of the granitoid and use it somewhere else, say in a park or something, in order to preserve it for prosperity. Williams responded that they have already done that. Haugen explained that the flood protection project disturbed some of the granitoid, as did the new water facility that went out past the interstate, and several four by four or two by four sections of the granitoid was removed, documented, video-taped, and placed elsewhere within the city. He added that they also used colored and stamped concrete in some of the areas in which the granitoid was removed, so a lot of mitigation along this corridor has already occurred.

Haugen commented that some people in the neighborhood feel that by retaining the granitoid it will help slow down traffic through the area. Noehre responded that he was just going to bring that issue up. He explained that they often hear that same thought, but in reality rough roadways, railroad tracks, etc., are very poor traffic calming solutions. Williams added that rough roadways also make it hard for bicyclists to use it; and for people walking in the crosswalks, especially handicapped people; and it is noisy.

Ellis reported that the steering committee walked the corridor from one end to the other, and back, looking at all of the pavement and visiting with people in the neighborhood. She stated that it seems that those that want to keep it seem more apt to attend the meetings, while those that don't want to keep it don't attend, and somehow we need to get everyone to voice their opinions.

Discussion on various mitigation options ensued.

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OTHER BUSINESS

1. Solicitation For JARC/New Freedom Projects

Haugen reported that there is actually solicitation occurring right now for JARC and New Freedom funds, both in North Dakota and Minnesota. He stated that the North Dakota applications are due to be submitted to the MPO on June 13th, and the MPO Executive Policy Board will be meeting on June 19th and will be asked to act on any applications submitted. He said that applications for the Minnesota funds are only for the JARC program, and are not due for another month.

Noehre asked what JARC and New Freedom are. Haugen responded that they are programs for transit funding. He explained that JARC stands for Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom is for new services for primarily the elderly and handicapped sectors. He stated that Grand Forks is submitting something. Bergman explained that they are submitting applications for funds to continue running Route 12/13; to change the Saturday transit hours to 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., which will allow for an additional two hours of transit service; and to purchase a Dial-A-Ride vehicle.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY WILLIAMS, SECONDED BY NOEHRE, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 11TH,
2008, MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:32 P.M.***

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,
Executive Assistant