

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 10th, 2009 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-101**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the June 10th, 2009, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:35 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Joe McKinnon, MNDOT-Bemidji; Jane Williams, Grand Forks Traffic Engineer; Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks Planner; Stacey Hanson, NDDOT-Bismarck; Dale Bergman, Superintendent for Cities Area Transit; and Greg Boppre, EGF Consulting Engineer, Dean Rau, Assistant Grand Forks City Engineer; Les Noehre, NDDOT-Grand Forks; and Rich Sanders, Polk County Engineer.

Guests present were: Mark Aubol, Grand Forks Street Superintendent; Jason Baker, A.T.A.C.; and Shawn Birst, A.T.A.C.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Teri Kouba, GF/EGF MPO Planner; Kristen Benidt, GF/EGF MPO Intern; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Executive Assistant.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

A quorum was present.

INTRODUCTIONS

Haugen requested that, because we have some new people here today, would everyone please give a brief introduction of themselves.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE MAY 13TH, 2009, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MOVED BY ELLIS, SECONDED BY BOPPRE, TO APPROVE THE MAY 13TH, 2009, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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MATTER OF 2009 T.I.P. AMENDMENT

Haugen reported that the project specifications were included in the staff report in your packets. He explained that the project involves reconstruction/pavement repairs on DeMers Avenue between Washington Street and North 5th Street, excluding the DeMers Avenue Skyway Bridge which is currently being worked on right now. He stated that the project is estimated to cost \$2,000,000, with \$1,600,000 in federal monies. He said that the project itself will not be done until 2010, but because there are some preliminary engineering issues that need to be done in 2009, an amendment to include it in 2009 is required.

Haugen commented that we did advertise that there was an opportunity to submit written comments until noon today, as well as the fact that a public hearing would be held at today's meeting. He stated that no comments were received, and there doesn't appear to be anyone from the public present.

Haugen opened the public hearing. There was no one present for discussion. Haugen closed the public hearing. He stated that staff does recommend the Technical Advisory Committee forward a recommendation to the MPO Executive Policy Board to approve the 2009 T.I.P. amendment, as submitted.

MOVED BY HANSON, SECONDED BY WILLIAMS, TO FORWARD A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE FY 2009-2012 T.I.P. AMENDMENT, AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF DISCUSSION ON BRIDGE CLOSURE PLAN

Haugen reported that a brief discussion was held on this item at last month's meeting, specifically about some issues that arose during our last flood fight, with the closure of "too" many bridges. He commented that this was really our first real opportunity to implement the Traffic Closure Management Plan that A.T.A.C. assisted us in developing, and we would now like to take some time to review some of the good things, as well as the bad things, that occurred during the process, in order to try to make it even better.

Haugen referred to the packet, and pointed out that a copy of an e-mail he received from Les Noehre, which actually prompted having this issue on the agenda, was included, as were some pages from the Bridge Management document, and specifically what happens when the Point, the Louie Murray, and the Sorlie Bridges are all closed, as was the case this year. He stated that Shawn Birst and Jason Baker, who both worked on the document, are here today to assist us with this process.

Birst commented that they worked on this project about a year and a half ago, and this is the first time that a lot of the strategies were used, so it was a good test of the plan. He said that they are

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basically here today to get feedback from everyone to see what was used, what worked, what didn't, and what needs to be updated to make the plan better.

Birst stated that the document, or the study, had three main areas. He said that, in order to get consensus on closures on both sides they first tried to determine what the action levels or trigger elevations would need to be for certain things to start occurring. He stated that once a trigger was realized, they then helped identify detour routes that needed to go into place in order to facilitate smooth movement of traffic throughout both communities, as well as the signage required to inform the public of said detours, so there were several different components to the plan. He pointed out that they did this for both flooding and maintenance events. He added that once the detours were in place, they also helped develop signal-timing plans to accommodate traffic, and help facilitate traffic movement.

Mr. Birst had a power point presentation illustrating various portions of the Traffic Closure Management Plan. He reported that they are here today to try to get input from everyone as to what they feel worked, what didn't work, and what they think could be done to alleviate some of the issues and concerns that resulted during this past flood event.

Birst asked for discussion on action levels first, after which they could then move on to closures or detour routes, and finally timing.

Boppre reported that East Grand Forks did use the document quite a bit during their flood meetings, as did MNDOT. He commented that the action level shown for the Point Bridge is actually East Grand Forks' elevation level, but Grand Forks actually closed their side before East Grand Forks did because their sill level is lower, which they had no problem with at all, but they may want to look at changing that elevation.

Boppre stated that as far as the Sorlie Bridge is concerned, a lot of what determines when it is reopened after an event is dictated more by politics than by elevation. He said that both sides of the river get a lot of pressure to get it opened as soon as possible because it does impact a lot of businesses on both sides. He added that they did work with Roger Hjelle, whom he would think was in touch with Mr. Noehre during the process as well. Noehre commented that the reopening of the Sorlie is somewhat dictated by politics, but no matter how much political pressure one has you still have to make sure it is safe. Boppre responded that that is what they told their political entities, and they, in-fact, did not open it until they had concurrence from MNDOT Engineers, so for the most part he feels the plan worked well.

Birst asked if it was felt that the action level for the Point Bridge should be lowered slightly. Aubol responded that he would think it could remain as it is, but added that we all need to be aware that every flood event is unique, and will need to be handled as such. He explained that with the flood prediction this past spring, and knowing that it takes about twelve hours to put the Point Bridge closure logs in place, it just made sense to get that closure in as soon as possible to allow for his staff to be able to concentrate on other areas of concern, so, again, we need to be

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flexible when dealing with bridge closures as we are at the mercy of the water, and it all takes time to get it done.

Noehre commented that the ultimate goal is to work to try to get the flood and the closure plans to coincide as much as possible, so now that we have been through an event we maybe do need to go back and look at it and see what might need to be adjusted to ensure the plans are as accurate as possible. Boppre agreed, adding, however, that it is a plan, and we will need to adjust it when necessary.

Haugen stated that his concern is that we went through the process of identifying all those different elevations because they are different on each side of the river, so we came up with the numbers we agreed we would use as a guideline for both sides when determining whether or not to close a structure, but when the media talked numbers during this past flood fight, none of these numbers were even used. Boppre commented that he doesn't know where they got their information, but he knows that when Roger Hjelle was here he used the numbers in our plan. Haugen said, then, that because most of those present here today were included in the flood meetings, where these numbers should have been used, he would request that they let him know if any adjustments need to be made. Boppre stated that some of the inaccurate numbers used by the media may have been gotten off the National Weather Service website.

Noehre asked if the action level shown for the Kennedy is correct, as he thought they had adjusted it to 54-feet because of the dikes that were constructed on the East Grand Forks side. Rau responded that the number shown for the Kennedy was the number agreed on, but it was increased slightly after dikes were placed on the East Grand Forks side. Birst asked when that change occurred, if it was done after this document was completed. Boppre responded that it was, that because we needed to keep the Kennedy open at all costs, East Grand Forks decided to place small berms on their side, which allowed for the river level to be raised from the number shown in the plan. Noehre stated that he would think that the placement of berms on the East Grand Forks side will most likely be something that would be done again if warranted. Haugen asked if this means the numbers for the Kennedy should be adjusted then. Noehre responded that he would think they should be.

Boppre explained that in 2006 the City of East Grand Forks put temporary berms up at the Louie Murray Bridge, however they then they removed them and didn't put them back up for this past flood event. He stated that they will most likely put them up in the future in order to keep that bridge open as long as possible as well. Ellis asked if there should be a different action levels for this bridge with berms, and one without. Boppre stated that it sounded like the berms would be placed permanently, so the action level should be adjusted to accommodate that change.

Noehre commented that issue he raised in his e-mail actually pertained to the re-opening of the Sorlie. He stated that in 2006 he found out the Sorlie was going to be opened via the media, and then again this past year the City of Grand Forks, and Roger Hjelle, both found out it was re-opening via the media. Boppre said that he isn't sure what happened, but he does know that both

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Al Grasser and Mark Walker were aware that they were planning on opening that bridge on Thursday afternoon instead of Friday morning.

Boppre stated that Roger Hjelle came and looked at the bridge Thursday afternoon and gave verbal approval to open it at that time. He said that he also asked Mr. Hjelle for an e-mail stating that it was okay to open the bridge as well, and he does have a copy of that at the office. Noehre agreed that he talked to Mr. Hjelle as well, and was aware that it passed inspection, but he was not notified that it was going to be opened earlier than Friday morning, as was originally agreed upon, and that is his point. He added that he also talked to Mr. Hjelle right after he found out it had opened, and his response was "what", and it's not that he was upset, but he wasn't aware of the time change either. Boppre responded that when he talked to Mr. Grasser and Mr. Walker their response was that it was his call, so whatever the communication error was, it is just something that needs to get fixed. Noehre agreed, adding that as the owner of the bridge it would be nice to be informed of changes before they occur. Boppre stated, however, that it isn't his call, he is in Minnesota not North Dakota, so if the Grand Forks Engineering Department doesn't get in touch with NDDOT, that isn't his issue. Noehre responded that we should all be working together on this. Boppre agreed, but added that his contacts were Mr. Grasser and Mr. Walker, and if they don't contact others, he has no control over that.

Aubol reported that he met with Mr. Hjelle on the bridge that day, and he assumed that someone would be contacting the NDDOT office, but in the future, since his department is responsible for removing the closures, he will directly call the NDDOT office before they begin. He requested that all titles and numbers be included in the plan in order for communication to occur with the correct people during future events.

Birst said that it is his understanding that each city has its own flood plan, and asked if these triggers could be added to those plans. Aubol commented that this is a great plan, but to be able to follow the plan as it is written he would need about \$30,000 for signage, which he simply doesn't have right now, and although he hopes to be able to do it over time, it will probably take ten to twelve years. Rau reported that the action levels are included in the City of Grand Forks' plan. Aubol agreed, adding that they have, for each action level, the elevations at which the road closures are put up, but they could also include a reference to pertaining pages in the Traffic Management Plan as well. Birst stated that they understood that when an event such as this past flood occurred, there would be a lot of signage going up, but they also understand that when an event such as that does occur people aren't necessarily going to be worrying about travel information because they are fighting a flood, but it was felt that when there was the time and resources available, the signage would be implemented at that time.

Aubol commented that they did work with the DOT, who helped a lot with the initial closing of the Sorlie, and who did put up a message sign stating that the Sorlie was closed and that an alternative route should be taken, but there were a lot of other traffic issues that occurred once the Louie Murray Bridge closed, specifically along Gateway Drive. He explained what some of those issues were, and suggested that maybe the plan should briefly address some of them as well.

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Boppre stated that, again, these bridge closures are road closures that are included in their action plan, but it might be good to include a little sub-message requiring that the DOTs be contacted both for the closing and re-opening of these bridges. He added that East Grand Forks has the same issue as Grand Forks in terms of signage, they simply can't afford to implement all the signage needed for events such as this. He said, however, that the DOT did help them a lot as well, by putting up a lot of the closures, and the signage required. He added that they actually had Highway Patrolman directing traffic out on Highway 2, as that area had quite the traffic problem once the Louie Murray closed. He stated that basically this is all a work in progress, and things will need to be adjusted as we go as there is not perfect plan for every event, and we need to be flexible.

Williams said that one thing that would help, and she knows that it isn't affordable, but if there were some way we could set up a camera so people could see the water levels on-line so they wouldn't feel the need to drive over the bridge, that would be great. She explained that she watched one day and saw that a huge amount of the traffic was caused by people wanting to see the water, and they would go over the bridge, turn around and come back, which, of course, made the traffic problem that already existed, worse.

Noehre commented that in terms of signal timing, the only thing he witnessed, and this occurred during peak hours, was that initially people were frustrated, and there were cars backed up all the way through the intersection, but as time went on it seemed as though people got used to it and it appeared that things were working pretty well under the circumstances. Williams stated that by that time we probably got rid of some of the people that were just driving back and forth, but those first few days it was a problem. Boppre commented that the first day they built the berms on Highway 2 was pretty bad. Ellis stated that she knows that East Grand Forks had to have additional enforcement at the corner of Highway 2 and 220 because of people not wanting to wait, and then once the light changed it left them blocking the intersection, which, of course caused traffic to build up in the other directions. She suggested that they may want to put a note in about maybe wanting to add some additional enforcement at that intersection should it be warranted in the future.

Ellis asked if the plan addresses signal timing on Business 2, at 4th and 2nd, because once the Point Bridge closes the traffic there increases, and then when 4th closes then it increases even more. Birst responded it does not. Ellis suggested that they may want to do that. Williams added that when it gets to the point when only the Kennedy Bridge is open, we need to run a much longer signal time on Highway 2, so that should be adjusted in the plan.

Birst stated, then, that it appears that they need to make several adjustments to the plan to address both signal timing and detour issues/changes.

Discussion on various detour issues/concerns, possible solutions, and the changes required to the plan ensued.

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Sanders asked if the bridge elevations on County Road 72, the Mallory Bridge, should be added to the plan in the event we ever have an event such as that in 1997. Boppre responded that it could be added, but the City of East Grand Forks did include it on their website. He stated that they were getting constant calls from a local radio station that wanted that information as they have a tower in the area, so the City actually put the information on their website, as well as the detour information, to try to alleviate some of the calls. He added that in terms of traffic control, the locals that know the shortcuts, you can put up all the signage you want but they will go around them, so we can try to plan for every feasible possibility, but it just isn't going to happen.

Birst stated that it appears that there could be several modification made to the plan. He asked if the committee wanted to go over all the details at this time, or do they want to just make a list and let them know what they would like to see done later. Haugen commented that the question is if we go through the exercise of updating the plan, would it be referenced, was it referenced during this past flood event, because if it was, and if it will it would make sense to update it, however, if it wasn't, or won't be referenced it wouldn't make sense to go through the expense and resources to update it. Boppre responded that East Grand Forks did reference it during this past event. He stated, however, that he might suggest that everyone make a list of things they feel might be included or changed in the plan, as it is a work in progress. Rau said that the City of Grand Forks used the elevations listed for the action plans, and they used most of what was suggested for the detour routes, although they didn't do all the signage suggested, so he would say they used quite a bit of what was in the plan.

Haugen asked, then, if everyone would come to the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting with a list of modifications they would like to see done to the plan, they will consider doing so.

Boppre asked if this was something the Technical Advisory Committee could do, or do we need to have A.T.A.C. do it. Haugen responded that we can do a lot of it, but if you want to make signal-timing changes we may want them to take care of it. Williams commented that the City of Grand Forks timing changes will be done with they do the City-wide ones, so that isn't an issue that needs to be addressed in this plan. Noehre asked if they would be doing timing plans for all scenarios. Williams responded that they would not. She explained that they found that they only needed one for all of them.

Birst stated that he would e-mail a site where people can download the plan for review.

MATTER OF DRAFT A.T.A.C. SCHOOL SAFETY STUDY

Haugen reported that this study consisted of looking at safety issues for West Elementary, Lewis & Clark Elementary in Grand Forks; and New Heights Elementary in East Grand Forks.

Ellis commented that they just completed a meeting with representatives from the three schools, and A.T.A.C., to review the draft document for recommendations. She referred to the staff report and pointed out that the objective of this study was to look at pedestrian safety, review the working characteristics, traffic control pavement markings around the schools, how the traffic

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actually circulates, and to have A.T.A.C. provide both long and short-term improvements for each school.

Ellis distributed copies of the sign changes, and the geometric recommendations made to help the circulation and drop-off/pick-up of students at each school.

Baker commented that they did get some good feedback from the meeting with school representatives last week. He stated that they discussed both the short-term and long-term recommendations. He explained that the short-term recommendations mostly dealt with signage; while the long-term recommendations included bus loading, pedestrian pickup, staff parking, and access issues. He stated that the discussion did result in the need for some changes/adjustments needing to be made to the document.

Ellis reported that the figures that show the geometric changes will be adjusted to remove some crosswalks that they were unable to get removed in time for this meeting. She added that they typically have Principals, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, the City Traffic Engineers, Parent Teacher Presidents, Safe Kids Personnel, and staff attending these meetings.

Ellis stated that a final document will be presented at the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting for approval.

Haugen commented that these studies have resulted in a lot of good things, with one of the biggest being the implementation of crossing guards at several of the Grand Forks schools. He added that this time, with the Stimulus Package, the schools will be receiving additional funding that can be used to implement a lot of the on-site improvements, so they have a better chance of being done than they would have without the additional funding being made available.

Information only.

MATTER OF PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT CONDITION RATING UPDATE

Haugen reported that this item was presented to the MPO Executive Policy Board at their May meeting asking that they approve a contract with GoodPointe to update the Pavement Management Condition Rating, but we received a lot of “push-back” so staff placed it on the Technical Advisory Committee agenda to get them involved prior to the MPO Executive Policy Board’s June 17th.

Kouba stated that basically the MPO Executive Policy Board tabled this, wondering if it was monetarily necessary, and asked that both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks engineering staff be present to answer their questions about it more thoroughly.

Boppre commented that he talked to Ms. Kouba yesterday, and explained that when the 2003 study was done the City of East Grand Forks had a different Public Works Superintendent in

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place, and he isn't sure that the necessary people were trained on this, so it simply didn't get used as it should have. He added that Brad Bail, and himself talked about this yesterday, and they would be in agreement with doing it as long as they can have a copy of the software, and get the necessary training to utilize it.

Haugen reported that three licenses are purchased for this software, one for the City of East Grand Forks, one for the City of Grand Forks, and one for the MPO. He added that staff is bringing this issue to this meeting to request assistance from the committee in convincing the MPO Executive Policy Board that this is worthwhile activity. Boppre responded that he would contact the East Grand Forks Executive Policy Board members about this. He stated that he feels it would be beneficial, but only if the proper training is offered.

Sanders explained what the project consists of, and what the data can be used for. He stated that he has some information explaining this process, and how it can be used, that he will send to Ms. Kouba for distribution to the Executive Policy Board members.

Noehre commented that, while NDDOT uses a somewhat different program, it is similar to this and it is very useful, so he would recommend doing this.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY NOEHRE, SECONDED BY SANDERS, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 10TH, 2009
MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:50 P.M.***

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis, Executive Assistant