

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-101**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the November 12th, 2009, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:30 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Jane Williams, Grand Forks Traffic Engineer; Dean Rau, Grand Forks Assistant Engineer; Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks Planning; Stacey Hanson, NDDOT-Bismarck (Via Conference Call); Brad Gengler, Grand Forks Planning; Les Noehre, NDDOT-Grand Forks District; Dustin Lang, NDDOT-Grand Forks District; Greg Boppre, East Grand Forks Consulting Engineer; and Dale Bergman, Cities Area Transit.

Guests present were: Peggy Harter, Consultant with SRF; Carma Hanson, Safe Kids; Patty Olsen, Safe Kids; Al Grasser, City Engineer; Randy Gust, EGF Fire Chief; Pam Wanger, NDDOT-Safe Routes To School Coordinator (Via Conference Call); Andy Mielke, Consultant with SRF (Via Conference Call); Tammy Wagner, FRA (Via Conference Call); Jim Styron, NDDOT-Bismarck (Via Conference Call); and Lynn Leibfried, BNSF (Via Conference Call).

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

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Haugen reported that a quorum was present.

INTRODUCTIONS

Haugen asked that everyone please give a brief introduction of themselves as there are several new people present.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 14TH, 2009, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Haugen reported that one correction needs to be made to the October 14th, 2009, minutes. He referred to Page 5, and pointed out that the word “expendable” in the last sentence should actually be “defendable”.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY ELLIS, TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 14TH, 2009, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS AMENDED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF T.I.P. AMENDMENT FOR ARRA PROJECTS

Haugen referred to the public meeting notice included in the packets, and pointed out that it does indicate that we needed to act on some Cities Area Transit projects, however it has since been determined that we do not need to do so at this time. He added, however, that we will be acting on an amendment to add a project at 13th Avenue South.

Haugen stated that essentially the City had identified projects that have, or will soon have contracts; and with some of the bids received, as well as some changes to their scopes-of-work, and some additional funds being available, we found that we were able to add an additional project. He explained that this proposed project is a mixture of concrete panel replacement and a mill and overlay between Cherry Street and Columbia Road on 13th Avenue South, with an estimated cost of \$450,000, and because we are using ARRA funds no local match is necessary.

Haugen reported that, although we originally intended to hold a public hearing at this meeting, due to some deadline issues we will not be doing so, but will, instead, hold the public hearing at the MPO Executive Policy Board meeting next Wednesday, however this body still needs to take action and forward their recommendation on to the MPO Executive Policy Board.

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY WILLIAMS, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE FY 2010-2013 T.I.P. AMENDMENT AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF NORTH DAKOTA TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT AND SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Haugen reported we have some applications due on the North Dakota side for both the Technical Advisory Committee and the MPO Executive Policy Board to review.

Haugen referred to information included in the packet, and explained that the City of Grand Forks is only applying for one project, which is a multi-purpose path along South Washington between 47th Avenue South and 55th Avenue South. He stated that the estimated cost of the project is \$238,244, however the unofficial T.E. funding request is \$165,736. He asked if that was still the amount being requested. Rau responded that he believes the actual request is higher, somewhere around \$260,000, and he will get the exact number and get it to him. Haugen commented that he needs both the estimated cost total plus that portion that will be just T.E. funds.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

Haugen stated that this is still going through the City Council process, however it was discussed at the Service Safety Committee last week, and the Council of the Whole this past Monday. He added that there is a similar project that is included in the Safe Routes To School applications, with a slight difference in that the Safe Routes To School project does not go quite as far south, it stops at the Drainway Trail System, and it is only a five-foot sidewalk instead of a ten-foot path.

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY ELLIS, TO FORWARD A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE NORTH DAKOTA TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT APPLICATION SUBJECT TO INCLUSION OF THE UPDATED PROJECT COST ESTIMATE.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Haugen reported that we only included the front pages, and maps, for each of the Safe Routes To School applications in the packets, however the full applications are available for viewing on the MPOs Website at: www.theforksmpo.org.

Ellis stated that they are submitting seven infrastructure applications and one non-infrastructure application, which is a continuance of the Bike and Ped Program for the Grand Forks School District. She added that they have been successful in obtaining that grant for two years in a row now, so it is hoped that that will be the case a third time as well.

Ellis referred to the information in the packets and went over each application briefly. She stated that the infrastructure applications are based on meetings with the School District, Safe Kids, Grand Forks Engineering, and herself. She said that six of the projects (projects two through seven) have been applied for the last two years, but as we still feel they are necessary, we are applying for them again this year as well.

Ellis commented that project two consists of the installation of remote-controlled flashers. She explained that the current pedestrian lights are set manually at the site, but we would like to see them all remote-controlled in order to be able to set them more easily for things such as early dismissal, etc., rather than having to have the City Engineers go out and set them manually.

Ellis stated that the next four projects consist of the filling in of gaps in the sidewalk system, and the last project involves the installation of hand/ped walking signals.

Ellis reported that the first project is a new one this year, and involves the installation of two permanent solar-powered radar signs. She explained that we currently have one in place at Lewis and Clark Elementary School on 13th Avenue South, that Safe Kids installed using a Fed-Ex grant. She stated that she thinks that School District and Safe Kids would both say that this sign has been instrumental in getting the speeds lowered in and around the school, so, based on the fact that they are permanent, and are thus a constant reminder to drivers of how fast they are going, those schools with higher traffic volumes were considered for placement of one of these signs, however Ben Franklin won out for this particular application process.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

Ellis stated that the applications have been submitted for review by the Service Safety Committee, and will be submitted to the City Council for their November 16th meeting, at which she doesn't anticipate any problems or concerns arising. She added that they are still waiting for letters of support, but once they are received the applications will be submitted to Safe Kids for consideration.

Carma Hanson, Safe Kids, reported that this will be the third time that they will be submitting applications for this grant, and she thinks that with the work they have done, even before they submitted these applications through the years, in the area of pedestrian safety, you will see some pretty significant changes around the schools in our area. She explained that each school is very unique in what their needs are, so they try to customize their interventions to fit each of the schools individually. She said that this might include the implementation of a crossing guard program, or additional signage or cones, etc., to supplement what is being done with the signage in the streets, but a lot of it is about education and incentives to encourage children to walk and bike to school, and they are seeing the number of kids walking and biking to school safely increase significantly.

Hanson commented that you will see, in their non-infrastructure application, a continuation of some of the things they have done in the past, as well as some new things. Haugen asked what some of the new things might be. Hanson responded that one of the things they are looking at this year is a program that has been very successful called a "Walking School Bus". She explained that this program is used in an area where parents have concerns with things like speed, traffic volume, etc., and consists of having an approved parent, or other adult, meets children from the neighborhood in a specific meeting place, then walk with the children as a group to and from school each day to ensure their safety. She stated that the area they are looking at possibly implementing this program is the Phoenix School area. She added that they will also be doing some more challenges between the schools, much like the adult health trip program, in which they will be encouraging, or challenging kids to not only learn how to walk safely, but to increase the amount of walking or biking they are doing.

Pam Wenger, Safe Routes To School Director, explained that the Safe Routes To School applications are due Tuesday, November 24th. She stated that once the applications are received, they will be reviewed to ensure that they are compliant with all of the safe route requirements, then they will be given to the Advisory Committee, who will meet in January or February to go over them and determine which ones will be awarded funding, however, announcement of those awards may take another month or so.

Haugen commented that they have numbered the projects one through eight, and that the eighth project, since it is a non-infrastructure project, should be prioritized separately. Ellis agreed, stating that it should have a number one priority rating. Wenger asked if the advised priority rating of the projects being submitted has been determined. Haugen responded that the staff report does indicate the recommended priority rating for each project, although this could be changed if necessary. Wenger asked if Project 7, the permanent solar-powered radar sign, would actually be permanently affixed to a structure. Williams responded that it would. Wenger asked

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

if two signs were being requested. Williams responded they were requesting a sign for each direction. Hanson added that 20th Street has, over the years, because of a high volume of traffic, seen a lot of either near misses, or actual incidences occur. Haugen stated that this project is the number one priority project for Grand Forks. Wenger asked if the application states that this is the number one prioritized project. Haugen responded that it does not, but that the MPO letter announcing the applications will announce the MPO's priority ratings. Wenger stated that she will make sure that the Advisory Committee is aware of that when they receive their books for scoring this, that they are aware of the prioritization request.

Haugen commented that he also wanted to mention that the Minnesota Transportation Enhancement applications are due in January, and that they have already awarded the Safe Routes To School projects, so they are currently on hiatus for soliciting projects for Safe Routes To School funds.

MOVED BY WILLIAMS, SECONDED BY GENGLER, TO FORWARD A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE NORTH DAKOTA SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL APPLICATIONS AND TO SET PRIORITIZATION AS REQUESTED BY STAFF.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF FY 2010 ANNUAL UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Haugen reported that what is included in the packet is what is already currently programmed in the 2010 Annual Unified Work Program list of activities. He stated that, as you can see, all of our funds are already committed to projects that are on-going, and are continuing over into next year, with the exception of about \$75,000. He said that this is why staff is asking for additional work activities for 2010.

Hanson asked if there was any project from last year that did not get prioritized. Haugen responded that he does not recall, however, the one study that was in the work program that did not get done was the one associated with the Wellness Center.

Boppre asked if the money could be used to purchase software. Haugen responded that it would depend on the use of that software. Grasser asked if the monies could be used for the development of proper intersections just south of 32nd Avenue, both on 34th and 38th Streets, where those shopping centers are seeing an increase in traffic volumes. Haugen responded it could, but he isn't sure what they would be looking at as the basic intersections are already in place. Grasser said that they might be looking at additional lanes, medians, etc..

Hanson stated that NDDOT doesn't have any concerns with this, but added that once you have more information on a specific project, they would need to review it and make sure that it would be an eligible work program item.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

MATTER OF RAILROAD CROSSING STUDY UPDATE

Andy Mielke, SRF, was present via conference call for a short presentation on the Railroad Crossing Study Update. In addition to Mr. Mielke; Lynn Liebfried, BNSF; Tammy Wagner, FRA; and Jim Styron, NDDOT-Bismarck were also present via conference call.

Presentation ensued.

Williams asked, in regard to the four quadrant gates, if they are installed, is it correct that the City would assume full liability at that crossing. Leibfried responded that BNSF would assume some responsibility, however, they would also have an agreement with the City to install the four-quadrant gate system, and the City would also be responsible for installing and maintaining a vehicle detection system so no vehicles are able to get stuck between the entrance and the exit gates, which would be 100% City responsibility, so, yes, there would be some liability attached to the City for the detection system, and they you would also have a maintenance responsibility to reimburse BNSF for the extra exit gates.

Presentation continued. Mielke reminded everyone that the cost estimates shown in the corner of each figure are very preliminary, so changes most likely will occur.

Peggy Harter, SRF, said that she couldn't remember if it was stated in the earlier part of the presentation or not, but since some people did not attend the diagnostic meetings, she thought it would be good to let everyone know that in order to have a part of a quiet zone, if a crossing is not closed at minimum it does need to have lights, gates, constant warning signs, and power out indicators, so some of the options being shown are already scheduled to be improved to include these requirements, and some are not.

Boppre referred to Figure 14A, 2nd Avenue, and suggested that they may want to look at railroad right-of-way, as he thinks they may be encroaching on it. Mielke responded they would do so.

Mielke referred to Figures 15A and 15B, and reported that Mr. Haugen and himself have been having conversations over the last couple of days concerning the fact that under the current situation, the driveway shown on both figures is gated most of the time, only being opened between September and April, and is a private drive that serves the beet plant, therefore he was wondering if it could remain as it is. Tammy Wagner, FRA, responded that it is not allowed, and would need to be relocated. Haugen referred to Figure 15B, and asked if, since it would not be outside of a quiet zone would the roadway still need to be relocated. Mielke responded that this crossing is more than a mile away from the other three crossings, so it could be left out. Harter stated that the question actually was without the quiet zone could that private drive remain. Haugen added that if they placed wayside horns here, to not quiet it but to minimize the use of the actual train horns, would they still have to relocate the private drive. Tammy responded that if this crossing remains out of the quiet zone, then the roadway can remain as is.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

Mielke referred to the East grand Forks Quiet Zone Improvement Scenarios and went over the information briefly. He added that 4th Street NE and US Business Highway 2 would also need to include the roadway improvements, which have an estimated cost of \$72,000, so we really need to add that amount to the \$30,000 for the constant warning time. He pointed out that, as shown for Option 1, the national risk level is 18,775, and the risk level with horns at these crossings is 6,443, which puts them under the 10,000 threshold required to qualify for a quiet zone, but the downside is that the cost to make them quiet zones is around \$300,000. He then continued going over each of the remaining four options, and the costs involved for each.

Leibfried commented that MNDOT has Central Avenue on their list to fund signals in 2011, so in early 2010, January or February at the latest, they would be requesting a new signal system at Central Avenue. She added, however that Rick Van Wagner did indicate that if Central Avenue were to be closed, he could swap those signal monies into a different project, or if they were to keep Central Avenue open and close the far west crossing, then MNDOT could pay 100% of the costs of signal installation. Haugen asked if they would also participate in the closure costs. Leibfried responded that this should really be answered by Mr. Van Wagner, but it is her understanding that they cannot do both.

Presentation continued with discussion on Risk Index Sensitivity.

Grasser asked if the trains stay the same, but traffic increases by 50% would we be able to stand with those numbers shown. Mielke responded that he believes you could, but he would have to run those numbers to make sure.

Williams asked what increase the risk factor more, the ADT or the trains. Mielke responded that his experience is that trains increase the risk factor more. Leibfried added that they both impact it, but it really depends on volume. Mielke stated that it is difficult to run all the different scenarios, as each crossing could have different numbers. Harter commented that there are a lot of different scenarios that could be considered, but the whole idea behind putting this slide in the presentation was just to show everyone that it is a low cost option, but in three years when it is reviewed again there is a chance that you could lose your quiet zone, or make additional improvements to keep it, and that is just something that they wanted to make sure everyone was aware of.

Grasser asked what happens should the scenario just discussed develop, say the Cities of East Grand Forks and Grand Forks both end up with a quiet zone in the next couple of years, and then Grand Forks falls off the list because of increased traffic, does that jeopardize East Grand Forks. Mielke responded that because they are separate communities, they would file separately, so even if they were only separated by one block, because they are separate communities they would be treated individually, therefore even if one side has a quiet zone, that community would still hear the horns from the other if it does not have a quiet zone, but it would not impact the other City's ability to have a quiet zone.

Presentation continued.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

Mielke referred to Figure 10A, and reported that, per Jane William's request, they did look into doing some curb work at Kittson, to bring the curbs to the north, but they were not successful in trying to get a truck to be able to turn down there when putting any kind of median in, not even a 10-foot median, so the scenario they are showing is to put a median on the south side, curb off and seal off the driveway, and then putting in median in. He added that they are also showing the installation of a chain-link fence along the rail line. He stated that he just wanted to explain that so you know that they didn't overlook the request, and to let you know it just isn't possible.

Williams asked, with the fencing going along the track line, does that mean they can put parking in on the east side of Kittson. Mielke responded that as long as it stays out of the railroad right-of-way he doesn't see any reason why they couldn't put parking there. Liebfried stated that she would have to look into this, but she doesn't think there should be a problem. Grasser asked who would own and maintain the fence once it is put in. Liebfried responded that it would not be BNSF. Mielke added that an agreement could potentially be struck with BNSF, but if not it would be the City's responsibility. Williams asked if the estimated costs shown include the fencing. Mielke responded it did.

Mielke stated, in summary, for the downtown Grand Forks area, the first option is to really to do nothing as both 3rd and 4th Streets will be getting railroad improvements in 2010, and 5th Street has already been upgraded. He added that he doesn't want to mislead anyone by letting you think there is no cost involved at all because there would be with signage, striping, etc., but, comparatively speaking he would call it zero dollars to do this option. He said that the second option would be to leave 4th and 5th Street essentially as is, and leave them with the two quadrant gates, and make the median improvement at 3rd Street; that the third option would be to put medians in at 3rd Street, short medians at 4th and 5th Street, which would increase the cost somewhat, but would really bring the risk level down; the fourth option includes four-quadrant gates, which, again would lower the risk level but you would also be spending a considerable amount of money doing so.

Grasser asked, if they put the fence in can it be within the railroad right-of-way or will they need to potentially obtain additional property to be able to put that fence up. Mielke responded that essentially you would want to define BNSF right-of-way, but ultimately you would probably want to obtain an easement from BNSF. Liebfried agreed that the fence could go on BNSF property with an easement, and agreement that the City maintains it.

Williams asked, at 5th Street, for the quad gates, would they have to remove the gates put in this past summer and replace them. Mielke responded that you wouldn't have to do anything to them if you didn't want to modify that crossing any more than it is. Harter stated that they are asking about putting in the four-quadrant gate option. Liebfried said that they would most likely be able to leave the gates that are there and just add to them, but she would have to check with the signal department to make sure, but since it is brand new equipment it should be compatible with what would be required to make them a four-quadrant gate system.

Presentation continued.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 12th, 2009**

Grasser commented that some of the ped mazes are located on bikepaths the City installed, and he was wondering how this complies with ADA and Bikeway Design Standards, particularly if federal monies are used. Mielke responded that the pedestrian mazes can be designed to accommodate wheelchairs, various other handicapped vehicles, kid carriers, etc.. He said that one discussion they have had in regard to ped mazes is the concern that by adding pedestrian mazes at all of the crossings, you are creating a slight inconvenience for people, as well as possible safety issues as well. He stated that this is probably an issue for further discussion. Williams commented that she has looked as a couple of these, and some of the ones she has seen are actually more slalom like, which makes people look, it gets their attention but still allows them to stay on their bikes. She said that these are the type of mazes she feels would work.

Grasser commented that he had a question concerning the annual cost to the City, which he thinks is \$5,000, paid to BNSF, and whether or not it would be possible to have an asterisk placed by the ones that will have an annual cost. Mielke responded that they could do that, but essentially any option or improvement area that would have a four-quadrant gate would have an annual fee.

Haugen suggested that for the 32nd Avenue crossing it should be noted that there is no treatment on 17th Avenue, so you have a crossing closer to people that won't get treated. Mielke responded that that is a good point to add, that you will still hear the horn sound before that crossing. Wagner asked if there should be a reference to the spur track on the last slide of the quiet zone presentation. Mielke responded that that is a good point, that any trains coming down the spur line would still sound their horn, that under this scenario the horns would still be sounded.

Presentation continued.

Mielke gave a brief overview on the State Mill Spur portion of the update.

Information only.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

HAUGEN DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 3:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis, Executive Assistant