

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD OF THE  
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – 12:00 Noon  
Grand Forks County Commissioners Chambers**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Gary Malm, Chairman, called the November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009, meeting of the MPO Executive Policy Board to order at 12:00 p.m.

**CALL OF ROLL**

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm, Punky Beauchamp, Craig Buckalew (Proxy for Dick Grassel), Steve Adams, Warren Strandell, and Greg Leigh.

Absent were: Art Bakken and Doug Christensen.

Guest(s) present were: Al Grasser, Grand Forks City Engineer; Dean Rau, Assistant Grand Forks City Engineer.

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

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Chairman Malm declared a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2009, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD**

***MOVED BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY ADAMS, TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2009, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD, AS SUBMITTED.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, Strandell, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

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

- A. Public Hearing
- B. Board Action

Haugen reported that there was a public notice published announcing that a public hearing would be held at today's meeting to act on an amendment to the FY2010-2013 T.I.P.. He explained

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that the amendment is necessary to include an additional project the City of Grand Forks is requesting in order to use up some remaining ARRA funds they received. He added that the notice also stated that a modification of programmed projects for Cities Area Transit was necessary, however, since the notice was published those modifications are no longer needed.

Haugen stated, then, that the action required today is to approve the additional of the 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South concrete pavement repair and mill and overlay between Cherry Street and Columbia Road.

***MOVED BY LEIGH, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, Strandell, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

There was no one present for discussion

Malm closed the public hearing.

Haugen reported that both the Technical Advisory Committee and staff are recommending approval of the T.I.P. amendment.

***MOVED BY LEIGH, SECONDED BY ADAMS, TO APPROVE THE FY2010-2013 T.I.P. AMENDMENT TO INCLUDE THE 13<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE SOUTH PROJECT.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, Strandell, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

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

Ellis reported that representatives from the Grand Forks School District, Safe Kids Grand Forks, and the Grand Forks Engineering Department, along with herself, met to determine which projects should be applied for for Safe Routes To School funds. She stated that the eight applications included in the packets are the projects they selected to submit for possible funding. She referred to the staff report, and pointed out that there are seven infrastructure projects, and one non-infrastructure project being submitted.

Ellis went over the seven infrastructure projects briefly:

1. Two permanent radar signs to be placed along 20<sup>th</sup> Street near Ben Franklin – Ellis stated that because there is so much traffic on 20<sup>th</sup>, it was determined that this area could benefit from having permanent radar signs installed to help slow traffic down. She explained that there is currently one of these up on 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South by Lewis and Clark, and it has considerably slowed traffic down since it was installed.

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2. Radio controlled time switches for all 22 school flashing pedestrian lights – Ellis reported that currently if there is a need to change the timing on these lights for an event, city staff has to go out and do it manually, which is time consuming and not very cost effective, so by installing a radio controlled switch on each of the lights staff would no longer need to go out and do it manually, which would allow for easier, and much more accurate timing. Leigh asked if the schools would be able to do this themselves. Ellis responded that the schools would not be able to do it themselves. Leigh asked why the schools wouldn't be able to do so as they are in charge of all the events, so it would seem appropriate that they would be able to change the timing on the lights. Ellis responded that the flashing lights are owned and maintained by the City, therefore city staff is responsible for changing the timing on the lights.
  3. Sidewalk gap fill project – Ben Franklin Elementary
  4. Sidewalk gap fill project – J. Nelson Kelly Elementary
  5. Sidewalk gap fill project – Century Elementary
  6. Sidewalk gap fill project – South Middle School
- Ellis commented that Projects 3 through 6 are all sidewalk gap fill projects. She explained that all of these projects are on the Safe Routes to School, and a lot of them would actually access the school's facilities for baseball, football, soccer, playground equipment, etc., so it wouldn't only be a need for the schools, but for public events as well. Leigh asked if the bikepath to the East Grand Forks Middle School was still scheduled to be installed next spring. Ellis responded it was. Leigh commented that he was driving bus the other day, and was pleased to see that a lot of people are using the bikepath along Bygland Road, particularly since there were so many skeptics when it was decided to put that path in. He asked if, from the school to the bikepath along the river, was a bike lane ever put in. Haugen responded that it has not. Leigh asked if there was still a plan to do so. Ellis responded that nothing has been scheduled to do so at this time. She stated that it would be nice if Mr. Leigh would bring that issue up at a City Council meeting in the future.
7. Hand/Ped Walking Signals – Ellis reported that this project entails the installation of hand/ped walking signals at the signalized intersections. She stated that the eight proposed locations for these signals are all located on our Safe Routes To School.

Ellis reported that the eighth project is actually the only non-infrastructure project, and should actually be listed as priority number one instead of number eight, as is shown in the staff report. She explained that the project involves the continuation of funding for a bike and pedestrian safety program in the Grand Forks Elementary Schools for the 2010-2011 school year, as well as to establish a stronger program in the Middle Schools. Leigh asked if the \$43,000 is part of the grant. Ellis responded it was. Leigh asked if this was something that had been done before, is it a continuation. Ellis responded that they have been funded through Safe Routes To School, through the North Dakota program for the last three years. Leigh asked what it is they do. Ellis responded that they give presentations to the schools, they have implemented that walking school bus program, they do bike safety workshops, they purchase equipment for crossing guards, etc.. She commented that she also wanted to mention that in the East Grand Forks middle school sidewalk project they received \$5,000 to do non-infrastructure projects, so Safe Kids is putting

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together a program for East Grand Forks elementary and middle school children with those funds as well.

***MOVED BY ADAMS, SECONDED BY LEIGH, TO APPROVE THE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL APPLICATIONS, AND TO SET PRIORITIZATION AS SUBMITTED.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, Strandell, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

Haugen said that the last issue on Safe Routes is that North Dakota is soliciting projects that are playing catch-up with funds that are authorized under SAFETEA-LU, while Minnesota has already awarded all their Safe Routes funds already.

Haugen stated that the next thing we need to discuss is the North Dakota Transportation Enhancement applications. He said that the City of Grand Forks is submitting only one T.E. application for a multi-purpose path running from 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue down to 55<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He explained that while a similar application for Safe Routes to School funding has been submitted, the differences are that the facility would not extend south past the connection with the multi-purpose path along the Southend Drainway and would be a sidewalk instead of a multi-purpose path, so should both projects be awarded, we would have to make a decision as to which one we wanted to put in, the five-foot sidewalk or the ten-foot multi-purpose path.

Haugen reported that both the Technical Advisory Committee, and staff, agree that the project is consistent with the Long Range Transportation Plan, and should receive a number one priority ranking.

***MOVED BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY BUCKALEW, TO APPROVE THE FY2011 NDDOT TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT APPLICATION AS BEING CONSISTENT WITH THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND TO GIVE IT A NUMBER ONE PRIORITY RANKING.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, Strandell, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

**MATTER OF RAILROAD CROSSING STUDY UPDATE**

Haugen reported that a copy of the full presentation given by our consultant, SRF, was included in the packets, however, he would like to give a short power point summarization of that presentation today.

Presentation ensued.

Haugen commented that ultimately the study will allow both communities the necessary information required to be able to make decisions as to what level of safety they would like to see at each of the crossings studied.

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Haugen then went over the Quiet Zone Crossing Review information, pointing out that they looked at four crossings in East Grand Forks; 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Central Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. He reported that there was one change made since the packets were mailed out, and it involves the 4<sup>th</sup> Street (U.S. #2) crossing.

Haugen explained that the first option shows that the access for the west scale road goes right in-between the flashing lights and gates. Leigh asked if this project would have any effect on the proposed road on the north side of the factory. Haugen responded that they have been in contact with personnel from American Crystal regarding this to determine how much traffic might actually shift to the north, specifically to determine whether or not it might be possible that they wouldn't need to use the west scale road, but it is needed from approximately September to April. He said, then, that in order for this crossing to be quieted, it would mean that the access would need to be adjusted slightly in order to get it outside the gates as you cannot have an access located between gates. He added, however, that the second option would take it out of the quiet zone, and nothing would need to be done with the access.

Haugen went on to explain what is needed at each of the other three crossings in order for them to be eligible to be quieted are:

2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue – All that is needed at this crossing is that a constant warning time be installed.

Central Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – These crossings do not have the minimum safety devices installed at this time, but in 2011 an upgrade program is currently scheduled at Central Avenue, however, as part of the diagnostics meeting with BNSF and MNDOT it was suggested that it be up to the City of East Grand Forks to determine whether or not they want to spend the programmed monies at either Central Avenue or 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. He added that a second part to that decision is that BNSF has offered to pay a portion of the costs should it be determined that one of the crossings be closed. Leigh asked, if they didn't close a crossing, what would the financial ramifications be to the City of East Grand Forks. Haugen responded that you would still get the necessary equipment installed at Central Avenue, if that is the one you choose to use the 2011 funds on, and then under Option 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street N.W. would need gates and the constant warning signal installed at a cost of \$236,800. Leigh asked if the City would need to pay those costs. Haugen responded they would. He added that in addition to this, and the Central Avenue improvements in 2011, you would also need to install the constant warning signal at both 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street, in order to qualify for quieting, at a cost of about \$296,800.

Backalew asked if traffic counts are available at each of these crossings. Haugen responded that they do have 2005 counts; and off the top of his head he would say that 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue has around 6,500 to 7,000 cars a day, Central Avenue has around 500 cars a day, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street has around 2,000 cars a day.

Haugen reported that he also e-mailed both the City Council and Planning Commission members in Grand Forks to update them on the history of our desire to have an underpass in this general

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area, however with a price tag of about \$11.8 million dollars it remains an illustrative project at this time.

Discussion on the various options, costs, and funding sources ensued.

Leigh asked if it would be possible to temporarily close a crossing to see if it is the right thing to do or not before permanently closing it. Ellis responded that it has been done. She explained that there was a community where everyone was totally against closing a crossing, but city officials said they wanted to try it so they put up barriers for thirty days, and found that it really wasn't that big of an issue, but then other communities have done the same thing and found that it was a big deal. She stated that if that is the option they choose, it should be closed for a minimum of thirty days in order to allow for people to become accustomed to it. Beauchamp added that they will also really need to publicize the closure as well, because we are so used to construction around here that people don't typically complain even when they should because they just expect that it will reopen in the near future.

Discussion on traffic and safety issues should the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street crossing be closed ensued.

Haugen stated that ultimately the message is that no crossings have to be closed, but in order to create a quiet zone some additional safety measures would need to be taken, at an additional cost to the City.

Haugen reported that most of the crossings in Grand Forks have already received some updates, therefore there isn't much needed in order to quiet them. He stated that there are four crossings out on the west end of Grand Forks; the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Crossing, and three near the Amtrak Station that need constant warning timings installed. He added that it is also being suggested that a median be placed down one of the three crossings by Amtrak as well.

Haugen commented that they packaged the downtown area with the school crossings out on the west end of town, and they only have to install constant warning timings at those school crossings out west, they don't need a median, so the cost to create a quiet zone would be minimal. He added that the minimum required for the set of tracks that run parallel to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in Grand Forks would be to rebuild the median.

Haugen reported, then, that if you just want to do the minimum required for a quiet zone, you could include seven crossings in one zone instead of having two separate zones, so you could have ten crossings done for around \$120,000.

Haugen stated that there is a separate program of funds that the North Dakota Legislature established for which each City is eligible, so each City is eligible for \$225,000, with 90% of the funds being provided by the State and 10% locally.

Beauchamp asked if one City could be eligible for a quiet zone when the other isn't. Haugen responded they could, as each City is a separate entity, and is treated as such, with it's own funding sources.

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Haugen reported that they are looking at each and every one of the crosses included on the State Mill Spur, which is the second part of this study. He stated that it is felt that there are some crossings that could be considered for closure, and once it is established which crossings should be closed they can then begin prioritizing what minimum improvements are needed at the remaining crossings to make it a quiet zone as well.

Haugen stated that they should have the study finalized for the December meeting. He added that an open house is scheduled tomorrow at 7:00 p.m. in the Grand Forks City Hall Council Chambers. He added that a Neighborhood Meeting will be held on the State Mill Spur at 5:30 p.m. in Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A101.

Information only.

**MATTER OF MERRIFIELD ROAD UPDATE**

Haugen reported that a copy of a letter sent to the Grand Forks County Commission to formally request that Grand Forks County be the lead agency on this project was included in the packet.

Leigh asked if the possibility of additional bridges is a dead issue. Haugen responded that a bridge at Merrifield Road is still the number one desired bridge in the Long Range Transportation Plan. He commented that both Grand Forks and Polk Counties have gone on record that once the Thompson Bridge project is completed, they will begin moving forward on getting a bridge constructed at Merrifield.

Information only.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

***MOVED BY LEIGH, SECONDED BY BEAUCHAMP, TO ADJOURN THE NOVEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2009, MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 1:06 P.M.***

***Voting Aye: Adams, Beauchamp, Buckalew, Malm, and Leigh.***

***Voting Nay: None.***

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis  
Executive Assistant