

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

**Wednesday, July 22nd, 2009 – 12:00 Noon
Grand Forks County Commissioners Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER

Gary Malm, Chairman, called the July 22nd, 2009, meeting of the MPO Executive Policy Board to order at 12:06 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm, Art Bakken, Steve Adams, Warren Strandell, and Greg Leigh.

Absent were: Dick Grassel, Punky Beauchamp, and Doug Christensen.

Guest(s) present were: Charles Durrenberger, GF City Planner, Senior and Dean Rau, Assistant GF City Engineer.

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

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairman Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 17TH, 2009, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD

CHAIRMAN MALM ASKED FOR CHANGES OR CORRECTIONS TO THE JUNE 17TH, 2009 MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLCY BOARD, HEARING NONE HE PROCLAIMED THE MINUTES APPROVED AS SUBMITTED.

MATTER OF 2009 T.I.P. AMENDMENTS

Haugen reported that the City of East Grand Forks' City Council has requested that their 23rd Street N.W. project, which is currently programmed to occur in 2009, be split into two phases, with the first phase occurring in 2009, and the second in 2010. He explained that in order to do this we will need to move the 5th Street N.W. Intersection project, which is currently programmed in 2010, to 2014.

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Haugen added that the cost of the 23rd Street N.W. project would increase to \$4,630,000, however some additional funding sources will be used to cover some of those additional costs. He reported that the first phase is estimated to cost \$2,470,000, and the second phase \$2,160,000. He explained that all of the first phase costs will be funded with TRLF funds with the exception of \$275,000, which will be funded with monies from Water and Light; and all of the second phase costs will be funded with TRLF funds with the exception of \$737,000, which will be covered with federal funds from the 5th Avenue N.W. Project.

Haugen reported that the first phase of construction will entail removal of the existing road, construction of the infrastructure, completion of the subgrade, and installation of a temporary crushed concrete road surface; and the second phase will entail installation of the new concrete street, curb and gutter, and a multi-use trail.

Haugen stated that a public hearing was held at the July 8th Technical Advisory Committee meeting, and two members of the public did attend, and did ask questions pertaining to the construction activities, which were answered satisfactorily. He commented that the questions asked, and the answers given do not affect the action you will take today, and the Technical Advisory Committee did recommend approval of the amendment.

MOVED BY BAKKEN, SECONDED BY ADAMS, TO APPROVE AMENDING THE FY 2009-2012 T.I.P. TO INCLUDE PHASE 1 OF EAST GRAND FORKS 23RD STREET N.W. PROJECT IN 2009, AT A COST OF \$2,470,000; TO CONTINUE PHASE 2 IN 2010 AT A COST OF \$2,160,000; AND TO MOVE THE CURRENT 2009 T.I.P. 5TH STREET N.W. INTERSECTION PROJECT TO 2014.

Voting Aye: Bakken, Leigh, Strandell, Malm, and Adams.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF SCHOOL SAFETY STUDY FINAL REPORT

Ellis stated that A.T.A.C. has completed a School Safety Study for Lewis and Clark and West Elementary Schools in Grand Forks and New Heights Elementary School in East Grand Forks, and this is the final report for that study.

Ellis explained that we do these safety studies annually, and look at all modes of transportation used to get kids to and from school; including biking, walking, busing, and being dropped off and picked up by parents.

Ellis referred to the report, Page 41, and pointed out that it lists the recommendations made for improvements to Lewis and Clark Elementary School. She added that there are basically two types of recommendations, the first, shown on Page 43, shows what signs need to be included, pavement markings for those that are walking and biking, and parking in and along bus areas. She said this is just to make sure that all the signage meets the MUTCD requirements, and that there is safe access provided for all the kids.

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Ellis reported that all the maps showing signage being removed, and added, do correlate with the Ulteig study that was done last year. She explained that they uniformly created school traffic devices in order to have a consistent type of pattern for all the school districts in the area. She added that there are also some engineering infrastructure improvements shown as well.

Ellis referred to Page 45 of the report, and explained that there were some parking concerns, so A.T.A.C. has recommended changes be made to parking at Lewis and Clark to include a drive-through lane, and construction of a sidewalk so parents can come in, drop off their children, and drive off.

Leigh asked if any of these recommendations have been done. Ellis responded they have not, that they are all just recommendations at this point. Leigh commented that the question he has is whether or not there is any funded attached to these recommendations. Ellis responded that although there is no money attached, Grand Forks School District was anxious to get the study done because of the stimulus monies that are currently available for schools, for infrastructure improvements and such. She added that in any event it is nice to have a plan in place should funding become available for either city.

Ellis referred to Page 50 of the report, West Elementary, and pointed out that they show some infrastructure improvements. She added that the aerial photography has been updated, and many of those small buildings have been removed, adding that that is the only playground area available to them other than going across to University Park. She commented that they did make some changes for improvements such as employee parking, bus drop-off and pick-up, etc..

Ellis reported that when doing these studies they include the principals, Safe Kids, PTO Presidents, concerned parents, and the traffic engineers in all the meetings.

Ellis referred to Page 52 of the report, New Heights Elementary, and pointed out that it shows the signing and parking that need changing. She referred to Page 55 of the report, and pointed out that it does provide a parking area for teachers, which was a big concern as there currently is no parking available for teachers, therefore they all park along the street which creates a lot of congestion for those dropping off and picking up students.

Leigh asked why there wasn't a four-way stop at the intersection of 5th Avenue and 12th Street, as 12th Street is a very heavily traveled roadway. He explained that a year or so ago he received a call from a parent that lives on one of the corners there requesting a four-way stop be put in. He stated that it would seem to make more sense to have one located at this intersection than it does at the one on 13th, which is much less traveled. Haugen responded that he would check into this further.

Ellis stated that the Technical Advisory Committee recommends approval of the School Safety Study Final Report.

Malm referred to the information concerning West Elementary, and asked if they are proposing a road there that would go over to Columbia Court. Ellis responded that Columbia Court is

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already a partial alley. Malm said that he was talking about that section going from Columbia Court to 25th Street North. Ellis responded that the portion shown on the grass would be new. She added that the school does own that property. Malm commented that he doesn't feel that putting a road in at that location is a good idea, and he doesn't know what it really does for anyone. Ellis responded that there have been a number of complaints that people have been parking in and around that alley, and there is a lot of congestion when traffic picks up there. Malm asked if they were talking about the alley going north and south. Ellis responded they were, and rather than having people head north up the alley, they will have them come straight across to 25th. Malm asked if they were planning on closing the alley off at 6th. Ellis responded that they weren't going to do that. Malm said that he thinks people will still drive straight through to that side of Columbia Court going south, and then once that gets too crowded then they will swing west.

Malm commented that the consultants are supposed to know what they are doing, but he isn't even sure they go out and look at these sites. Ellis responded that they do, that they do it during school hours. Haugen added that this particular proposed roadway is the result of conversations with the principal and the PTO, it did not come directly from A.T.A.C.. He pointed out that there will only be two-way traffic from Columbia Court, through the alley running north and south, but from there it will only be one-way traffic from 25th east.

Ellis reported that the additional parking will also provide an additional access/exit as well. She stated that they need the additional parking in order to allow for play area for the children, as well as to have an actual drop-off area for handicapped buses and the daycare buses to drop-off and pick-up children. Malm said that he understands, but it still doesn't make sense to him.

MOVED BY BAKKEN, SECONDED BY ADAMS, TO APPROVE THE FINAL A.T.A.C. SCHOOL SAFETY STUDY FOR WEST ELEMENTARY AND LEWIS AND CLARK ELEMENTARY IN GRAND FORKS; AND NEW HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY IN EAST GRAND FORKS.

Voting Aye: Bakken, Leigh, Strandell, Malm, and Adams.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF RAILROAD CROSSING STUDY

Haugen reported that at the last MPO Executive Policy Board meeting he asked for direction on how to try to bring the Railroad Crossing Study into the Annual Unified Work Program in order to get the study going. He stated that he did contact NDDOT, and has worked with them on getting this study started.

Haugen commented that the action before us today is to first amend the 2009 Annual Unified Work Program to bring the Railroad Crossing Study in; and the second is to approve the RFP.

Haugen explained that we finally got our 2009 apportionment monies, and they were slightly higher than expected so we will be able to use those additional funds to fund this project.

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Haugen stated that the RFP essentially has the crossing study doing two things; the first would entail looking at quiet-zone implementation at roughly 14 crossings. He referred to a map he distributed, indicating the locations of the crossings being looked at, and pointed out that the crossings being looked at for quiet zone implementation are shown in black. He added that a request was made to add another crossing near the American Crystal site in East Grand Forks.

Haugen said that the second thing the study would do would be to look at the State Mill Spur, which is shown in red on the map. He explained that there is a very high density of crossings within the spur area, approximately every half-block, but none of them have even the minimum safety devices necessary for quiet-zone eligibility, therefore it is highly unlikely that we would ever be able to achieve implementation even the minimum requirements at all of these crossings, so the study will look at whether or not there are any crossings that we can close.

Haugen referred to the map, and pointed out that at the very northern end of the spur there is the Bacon Road Crossing. He explained that the State Mill and Burlington Northern have submitted a request to the City of Grand Forks to consider closing that crossing. He said that the purpose of that would be to allow the State Mill to store and stack railroad cars across that crossing. He stated that the City said they would consider the request if it could be included as part of this study, so the RFP includes it, but does identify that it as a stand-alone cost estimate which the State Mill and Burlington Northern will fund if the cost is within their budget.

Leigh asked if Bacon Road were to be closed, is that the last link other than going all the way out on Mill Road to Highway 2. Haugen responded it is, and that is a concern.

Haugen stated, again, that the two requested actions today are to amend the 2009 Annual Unified Work Program to include the study, and to approve the RFP. He commented, however, that Federal Highway has not yet given us their final word as to whether or not all of the study activities would be eligible for planning dollars, if not we will need to go to the two cities for additional funding.

Haugen reported that all of the crossings except the one closest to the river in East Grand Forks, 3rd Street or Hill, have the minimum traffic control devices in place for quiet-zone eligibility. Strandell asked what the plan is for that crossing. Haugen responded that that is what the study will help determine. He explained that if we were able to put in lights and gates at that location, it would then meet the minimum requirements for quiet-zone eligibility. He stated that as part of the A.T.P. process, and the stimulus package, Minnesota acknowledged that they did not put enough stimulus monies into railroad crossings, so they have asked the A.T.P. to look to see if they can back fill the A.T.I.P. with railroad projects that can take the place of projects funded with ARRA.

Malm commented that he finds it interesting that the people with the least influence, politically, living along the railroad will get nothing, while others are being considered. He stated that going north along the State Mill, the train horn is being blown continuously. Haugen responded that the purpose of the study is to get that spur as close to a quiet-zone as possible, so it will be a “quieter” zone for a while, and then hopefully at some point all of the crossings can be upgraded to a quiet-zone.

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Haugen reported that the timetable for the study is to complete the quiet-zone portion by November of 2009, and the State Mill Spur portion by April 2010.

MOVED BY LEIGH, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE AMENDING THE 2009-2010 ANNUAL UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM TO INCLUDE THE RAILROAD CROSSING STUDY IN 2009; AND TO APPROVE THE RFP.

Voting Aye: Bakken, Leigh, Strandell, Malm, and Adams.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF SOLICITATION OF JARC AND NEW FREEDOM PROJECTS

Kouba reported that both NDDOT and MNDOT are soliciting for JARC (Job Access/Reverse Commute) and New Freedom projects. She stated that the North Dakota applications are due August 5 by noon and will be available soon, and the Minnesota application is currently available at: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/grantapplications/grantapindex.html>, and is due to the District 2 Transit Project Manager, Kent Ehrenstrom, by August 5th for review and approval, and by August 28th for final approval.

Information only.

MATTER OF QUARTERLY RERPORT ON MERRIFIELD PROJECTS

Haugen referred to the staff report and reminded the board that they did approve a motion in April that he give a quarterly report on the status of the Merrifield projects, which he will now do.

Haugen reported that he included the concept drawing that was done as part of the 2002 Merrifield Interchange Justification Report, and the proposed timeframe for construction from the Long Range Transportation Plan, which includes a range of costs for the project depending on when the project is constructed. He explained that is a range of three different cost estimates for the project based off of the estimated total project cost of \$7,100,000, with a 4% increase added each year.

Haugen commented that, as noted in the staff report, he has met with the property owners, and will continue to do so. He stated that one thing that has come to light is, back in 2006 the City Right-of-Way Officer did provide an estimate of acreage required for the project, however since that time it has been discovered that that estimate was in error, and additional acreage will be required.

Malm stated that he thinks, because we are seeing some development in the southwest quadrant of that area, we need to make sure that everyone understands that this project is in the plan. Haugen responded that there is language pertaining to this included on the plat.

Information only.

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OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY LEIGH, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO ADJOURN THE JULY 22ND, 2009,
MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 12:36 P.M.***

Voting Aye: Bakken, Leigh, Strandell, Malm, and Adams.

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,
Executive Assistant