

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Wednesday, May 19th, 2010 – 12:00 Noon
Grand Forks County Commissioners Chambers**

CALL TO ORDER

Gary Malm, Chairman, called the May 19th, 2010, 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, Steve Adams, Warren Strandell, Marc DeMers (Proxy For Dick Grassel), Mike Powers, and Greg Leigh.

Absent were: Art Bakken and Doug Christensen.

Guest(s) present were: Jane Williams, Grand Forks City Traffic Engineer.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Nancy Ellis, GF/EGF MPO Planner, Senior; Teri Kouba, GF/EGF MPO Planner; Matt Leal, GF/EGF MPO Intern; Aaron Nelson, GF/EGF MPO Intern; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF Office Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Chairman Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 21ST, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD

CHAIRMAN MALM ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY CHANGES OR CORRECTIONS TO THE APRIL 21ST, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD. HEARING NONE, CHAIRMAN MALM DECLARED THE MINUTES APPROVED, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Strandell, DeMers, Powers, Malm, Adams, and Leigh.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR NORTH DAKOTA

Kouba reported that back in April staff gave a presentation concerning discrepancies to the functional classification system for both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. She stated that the

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City of Grand Forks proposed to add some more functionally classified roadway this summer that they wanted added into the functional class map, so staff worked with State, County, and City staff to get the inconsistencies worked out and came up with the map that was included in the packets, Page 11.

Kouba stated that this updated map was approved by the Technical Advisory Committee, although some additional changes were required to the labeling in order to include the roadways that are functionally classified.

Kouba distributed copies of a table showing the mileage percentages. She referred to the table, and pointed out that there are some changes to those percentages, adding that they are fairly consistent with the national averages, although our collectors are a little higher as several frontage roads adjacent to our principle arterials were included on the North Dakota side.

MOVED BY ADAMS, SECONDED BY LEIGH TO APPROVE CHANGES TO THE FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR NORTH DAKOTA, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Strandell, DeMers, Powers, Malm, Adams, and Leigh.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF UPDATE TO FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR MINNESOTA

Kouba reported that, again, staff looked at the functional classifications, and worked with State, County, and City staff to come to an agreement on what changes were necessary. She said, however, that staff was not able to get the changes to the Functional Classification System for Minnesota approved by the Technical Advisory Committee, so this is just a review of those changes at this time. She added that they do have a couple of things that they need to double check on with the County before June, as well as to get a more formal okay from the DOT, before the changes can be approved.

Leigh referred to the map and asked where the future arterial at the bottom comes out on the Grand Forks side. Kouba responded that it comes out at 32nd Avenue South on the Grand Forks side. She commented that they include the future classifications mostly for referencing in future plans.

Information only.

MATTER OF DRAFT 2011-2014 T.I.P. – NORTH DAKOTA

Haugen reported that it had been anticipated at the last meeting that a Draft 2011-2014 T.I.P. for the North Dakota side would be available for your consideration today, however, as the staff report notes, we have not received what projects the NDDOT are programming in their Draft S.T.I.P., therefore we cannot really produce a Draft T.I.P..

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Haugen stated that they did receive, either late last month or early this month, a copy of the draft listing that the NDDOT submitted to the City of Grand Forks concerning what Urban projects they plan to include in their S.T.I.P.. He said that they gave Grand Forks a couple of weeks to provide comments back to them on this list of projects.

Haugen commented, again, that although we had hoped to have a Draft North Dakota T.I.P. available for your consideration, we were unable to do so. He added that one of the reasons for this was the fact that Congress was so late in finalizing Federal Fiscal-Year 2010 Appropriations. He stated that the T.I.P. document we are trying to draft and get to you for approval are for Fiscal Years 2011 through 2014, and now that Congress has acted, from what we can tell from their correspondence to the City, the State is now in the process of finalizing their documents, so we hope to have a draft document available at our June meeting.

Haugen reported that one thing we are following up on on both sides of the river, with Congress acting on the finalization of Fiscal-Year 2010, on the Minnesota side we found out that there were indeed additional monies available that were not previously programmed. He explained that in SAFETEA-LU there are earmarks that are in that Authorization Bill, and this lasts throughout the life of the bill, and that ended in 2009, so in Fiscal-Year 2010 they carried on the earmarking program but there were not projects attached to those earmarks, so each State had a program that did not have any projects attached to it, and Minnesota split their monies with 50% staying in the Metro area, and 50% going out to Greater Minnesota. He stated that this was further refined, and we are trying to determine whether or not the 23rd Street Project was in the mix for possible funding, as that project is ready to go in 2010.

Haugen commented that they asked the same questions on the North Dakota side, but have not yet received a response.

DeMers asked if there would be any issue with the 23rd Street Project already being let, if that would affect the funding sources for that project. Haugen responded that he knows that at one time, when they were actually dealing with possible Stimulus II funding, that letting was a critical component to receiving those funds, but he isn't sure that is the case now as these are not Stimulus dollars, just regular appropriation dollars, but that is what we are following up on. He added that they are being told that all of the projects have been programmed, and the 23rd Street Project was not one of those selected, so they are trying to find out what criteria they used in the selection process.

Information only.

MATTER OF STUDY UPDATES

1. Quiet Zone

Haugen reported that concerning the work on the Quiet Zone itself, the meeting with Federal Railroad Staff and BNSF Technical Staff at the Amtrak crossings was to take place this week to

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help determine what improvements are actually required for that area to become a quiet zone. He explained, however, that we were politely informed that we were not invited to this meeting to assist them in their site review of those crossings, although we did try to get ourselves invited to the meeting, therefore we are not sure at this time whether or not that meeting already has, or will occur this week.

Haugen commented that work has been done, and will continue to be done, to all three of the downtown crossings to upgrade them to meet the eligibility for quiet zone status.

2. State Mill Spur

Haugen reported that a copy of the Draft State Mill Spur Report was included in the packets. He said that a public meeting will be held June 1st to present this draft report to the public, and will be held in the Grand Forks City Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.. He added that a Neighborhood Stakeholder Committee meeting will be held in Grand Forks Conference Room A101 prior to the public meeting at 5:30 p.m..

Haugen commented that when reviewing the report you will notice that because none of the crossings have more than the bare minimum traffic control requirements, there is a huge cost to bring them up to eligibility standards for quiet zone status. He added that there are some other items listed that are fundable in the near term, and three closures are recommended with the funds to do so coming from BNSF and the State of North Dakota, therefore very little local dollars will be necessary to do the closures.

3. Bacon Road Closure

Haugen stated that one thing they did find out was that a Unit Train is not feasible. He said, however, that even though the Unit Train is off the table, in terms of their analysis, we still have an issue that the State Mill needs to address concerning how to receive more grain at their facility using a different mode of transportation than trucks.

Haugen reported that now that they have determined that a Unit Train is not feasible, they are beginning to develop a Plan B, and we have offered our assistance in developing that plan. He said that one thing we know is that the State Mill has been increasing their capacity and output, and they plan on increasing it more, so the current train operations they have hauling their flour out is about the size of half a Unit Train, or about 50 to 52 cars, and is done on a daily basis, and will need to be increased somehow, so both BNSF and the State Mill have continued to ask us to consider the closure of Bacon Road as it still impedes their train operation for getting the flour out.

Haugen stated that they have tentatively scheduled a meeting with the property owners located adjacent to the Bacon Road area on June 1st to inform them that, setting aside the Unit Train issue, there is still a current operational issue that BNSF and the State Mill are asking the City to

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consider assisting them with by considering doing something that would make Bacon Road unavailable to the public. He added that the primary issue here is that there is a site distance clearance required by Federal Railroad that a public crossing has to have a 250-foot clear-zone from the crossing to where cars are stacked, and because there are three or four sets of tracks in that area, by adding 250-feet on either side of Bacon Road, it makes for a lot of cars not being able to be serviced.

4. Traffic Signal Coordination Plan

Haugen reported that they had hoped to have South Washington and Gateway Drive corridors done, but we now have a delay in the purchasing of the signal equipment necessary to install the timing plans for these corridors. He added that the consultant has the timing plans prepared for those two corridors, so it is just a matter of getting the necessary equipment installed to get those timing plans in place.

Haugen stated that we will have this project completed this fall with the installation of equipment and timing plans on DeMers and 42nd Street.

5. T.I.P. Selection Process

Haugen commented that we have been working on improving our T.I.P. selection process. He stated that this past month they have been focusing on that area between the City's boundary and the MPO's Study Area, which goes out a couple of miles beyond the City's Boundary.

Haugen referred to the packet, and pointed out that he included information concerning some questions and clarification concerns that we are trying to get answers to from the NDDOT. He stated that he did meet with Richard Onstad, Grand Forks County Engineer, to discuss some of these issues, but some questions/concerns have not yet been answered.

Haugen commented that the primary thing we are trying to address, shown on Page 28 of the packet, is that South Columbia Road is a Grand Forks County Road, but is not shown as a County Major Collector, therefore it is ineligible for the County Roads Program funds. He stated that it is also outside the Federal Urban Aid boundary, so it is not eligible for federal aid either, but it appears that the one way to make it eligible for federal aid, regardless of the program that Federal Aid comes from, would be to approach the Grand Forks County to see if they would add it to their system as a County Major Collector. He said that Mr. Onstad was favorable to this request, and asked that a request be prepared and presented to the Grand Forks County Commissioners Board. He stated that this will be done in the very near future to try to get this section of Columbia Road eligible for federal aid.

Haugen reported that the remainder of the information discusses our attempt at getting everything in order so that we are prepared for the solicitation of projects in July and August, and that we have an understanding of what projects the MPO will be asked to review and comment

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on, and prioritize when we do our 2012-2015 T.I.P.. He stated that, as presented to the board in past months, these programs will have a similar scoring and ranking sheet that will be utilized to help up accomplish the prioritization of the projects.

Haugen added that a similar process will be done on the Minnesota side as well.

Malm commented that he doesn't feel that the 32nd Avenue Corridor is timed at all anymore, it isn't functioning very well at all. Williams responded that she would check into this.

Information only.

MATTER OF MPO PROCESS REVIEW – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Haugen reported that every three years, roughly, we have our federal partners come in and try to complete a thorough review of our planning processes. He stated that, included in the packet, is a copy of the agenda for this review, and announced that this year Mr. Malm was able to attend a portion of the review.

Haugen pointed out that he identified four items of interest that were discussed at the review, including:

- 1) Sometime in 2011 our current Long Range Transportation Plan officially expires, and we need to present a schedule showing when the next approval of an update to the plan will be completed prior to that expiration date.
- 2) Our current plan focuses only on those projects that add capacity to our system. An example of a project that is not included in our Long Range Transportation Plan because it does not add capacity would be the Minnesota/4th Avenue Corridor project, as that project is primarily a maintenance project, and does not add capacity to the system. Our planning document sets aside funds for these types of maintenance projects each year, but as noted in the report there are primarily two reasons why we don't list all these maintenance type projects and they are: a) our listing of projects would be increased beyond imagine; and b) placing maintenance projects into the financial plan would cause concern as to when we would place the project into the time periods (short, mid or long). Federal Highway is now insisting that our next Long Range Transportation Plan clearly spells out the maintenance projects as well as those projects of major significance, so that will be a considerable change to how we do our updated plan.
- 3) In our current T.I.P. documents we don't list projects that really are not financed with federal funds, mainly because they are very rare as most of our local dollars need to go toward matching our federal projects, but there are instances where we have projects that are 100% locally funded and we do not show them in our T.I.P. document. The new interpretation is that we will need to list all regionally significant projects regardless of funding source.
- 4) In the past we had the blessing to share our color copier/printer with others for a nominal fee, however this is now being questioned. We provided Federal Highway

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and State DOT staff the relevant section of federal regulations that we were relying on concerning our ability to do this, and we have not heard back from them as to whether or not they concur with our analysis, which is basically that under the CFR we are allowed to use the equipment, and to allow others to use it for a nominal fee, but are not able to use it to sort of bid against private industry, and we do not feel that we are doing that in any way.

Haugen stated that a formal report will be forthcoming, but ultimately, we did not have any glaring deficiencies with our planning processes.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Minnesota Safe Routes To School

Ellis reported that she was informed that the State of Minnesota is going to do another Safe Routes To School round this year, and it is running through State Aid, so she was told that the applications will be required by September. She stated that she has not received any formal notification on this, but we do have a project that everyone would like to see done, so she will look into this further and get an application in for that project if it does in-fact come to fruition.

Information only.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY ADAMS, SECONDED BY LEIGH, TO ADJOURN THE MAY 19TH, 2010,
MEETING OF THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD AT 12:30 P.M.***

Voting Aye: Strandell, DeMers, Powers, Malm, Adams, and Leigh.

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Office Manager