

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, September 8th, 2010 – 1:30 p.m.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A-101**

CALL TO ORDER

Earl Haugen, Chairman, called the September 8th, 2010, meeting of the MPO Technical Advisory Committee to order at 1:34 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Nancy Ellis, East Grand Forks Planning; Stacey Hanson, NDDOT-Bismarck (Via Conference Call); Denny Johnson, NDDOT/Transit Division-Bismarck; Ryan Brooks (Proxy for Brad Gengler), Grand Forks City Senior Planner; Dustin Lang, NDDOT-Grand Forks District; Al Grasser (Proxy for Dean Rau), Grand Forks City Engineer; Greg Boppre, EGF Consulting Engineer; and Dale Bergman, Cities Area Transit; and Joe McKinnon, MNDOT- Bemidji.

Guest(s) present were: John Markussen, KLJ Consulting.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director; Teri Kouba, GF/EGF MPO Planner; Matt Leal, GF/EGF MPO Planning Technician; and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Office Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Haugen reported that a quorum was present.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 11TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY BROOKS, TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 11TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

INTRODUCTIONS

Haugen asked that, because we have a visitor present today, everyone please state their name and the organization they are representing.

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MATTER OF RAILROAD CROSSING STUDY

Haugen referred to the staff report included in the packet, Page 1, and pointed out that it gives updates on the three railroad crossing studies:

1) Bacon Road Closure Study:

Haugen reported that the MPO received a request from BNSF and the State Mill to look into the possibility of closing Bacon Road due to a 250-foot sight clearance zone requirement that would not allow the Mill to have 16 railroad cars in que for loading and unloading. He explained that one of the problems encountered while doing this study is that we have been unable to obtain an actual document verifying the 250-foot sight clearance zone requirement. He pointed out that BNSF has indicated that it is an FRA regulation, but FRA can only produce a FHWA guideline, which actually provides varying sight clearance distances based on vehicle speed and train speed. He commented that, although there are some with BNSF that insist it is their policy, or is within their regulations, they have not been able to produce a document that states this, so we have determined that we would note in the study document that, based on the Railroad Highway Grade Crossing Handbook it appears that for the given conditions at Bacon Road the buffer distance could be reduced to approximately 100-feet, but add that BNSF may have a regulation requiring more.

Haugen stated, again, that the premise for doing this study was for us to look at the possibility of closing Bacon Road because of the 250-foot distance requirement, which caused them to lose the ability to stack 16 cars, however we may now be able to have that reduced down to 100-feet. He added that we also note that, as a result of our property owners meetings, the adjacent property owners have expressed strong opposition to the closure of Bacon Road. He said that they are still waiting to see if BNSF is comfortable with how we are terming this, and we are going to hold one more round of meetings with the property owners, the State Mill, and BNSF to inform them on what we have discovered concerning the site distance issue.

Haugen reported that in any event, four alternatives have been identified to address the request to close Bacon Road, with costs varying from \$0 to \$2,000,000, in the event that closure remains the preferred option.

Brooks asked, the 16 rail cars, is the 250-feet the total amount. Haugen responded that the 16 rail cars are based on the 250-foot requirement. Brooks stated, then, that if the requirement is lowered to 100-feet, you would not be able to have 16 rail cars, it would be a lower amount. Haugen responded that that would be correct.

Grasser commented that one of the inputs is vehicle speed, what was used for vehicle speed. Haugen responded that a vehicle speed of 10-miles an hour was used for both the train and vehicle speeds. Grasser asked if they could put in a stop sign there. Haugen

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responded that there are four sets of tracks that cross there, and you basically have a stop, cross, stop again, so he isn't sure that would work or not, but will check on it further.

2) State Mill Spur Study:

Haugen reported that for the past two-months we have basically been working on figures for this study. He stated that two months ago we looked at Figures 6 and 9, and today we will look at Figure 9 again.

Haugen referred to the staff report and pointed out that he states there are two primary things that changed, however he only listed one of them. He said that the first one, which was not listed, involves where the relocated traffic signals would be placed. He reported that on the Mill Road side of this intersection they are recommending removal of the island, which is where the current traffic signals are located, and relocating them to the northwest of the intersection, which is shown on Figure 9.

Haugen stated that there was also an issue with the cross-section detail that is highlighted in the middle of the drawing, and how it relates to the figure as the aerial layout and lanes were not matching up, so that was corrected.

Haugen said that he did send a copy of Figure 9 to both the District Office and Engineering Staff, but have not received any feedback yet.

Haugen reported that the neighborhood committee met and reviewed the final report, and all other issues have been resolved other than the one we discussed and shown on Figure 9.

3) Quiet Zone Study:

Haugen reported that this study involved looking at the availability of installing quiet zones elsewhere in the metro area besides the State Mill Spur line, and the three crossings by the Amtrak Station have been the three crossings that we have been asking FRA to assist us and BNSF with. He referred to the packet, and pointed out that a copy of FRA's response to our request was included.

Haugen stated that the good news is that for two of the three crossings they have ruled that we do not have to install Constant Warning Time. He explained that the problem we were having with these crossings was that we knew we didn't have Constant Warning Time, and when we asked BNSF when they could install it they said that we would have to upgrade a lot of the other equipment at each of the crossings, which drove the costs up considerably, so we asked FRA to assist us in determining whether or not this was really the case, and they concluded that two of the three crossings do not need Constant Warning Time installed, therefore two of the crossings are already eligible for quiet zone status. He added, however, that the third crossing, at 55th Street, does require that Contact Warning Time be installed, but it does have all the other

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required equipment already installed, therefore we asked BNSF for a cost estimate to install the Constant Warning Time, and we are still waiting for their response.

Haugen pointed out that the City of Grand Forks' Staff Report shows that they have already received City Council blessing to do the notice of intent to establish the two quiet zones on the DeMers crossings. He added that last month the City Council did the notice of intent for the other crossings as well. He stated that, with the exception of 55th Street, nine of the ten crossings would be able to be quieted as they currently are serviced with safety features.

Haugen reported that the last thing the study states is that for key crossings medians could be installed to reduce the risk factor even further, and to provide a buffer zone to the quiet zone itself in order for it to remain eligible for quiet zone status even if train or vehicle traffic increased.

Haugen stated that both the State Mill Spur Study and the Quiet Zone Study are available on the MPO's website. He added that they hope to finalize both the State Mill Spur and Quiet Zone studies this next month, and have the final Bacon Road Study meeting so that we can do the same with it within the November/December timeframe.

Grasser commented that they are anticipating that once they get the necessary information on the 55th Street crossing, they have some state monies available that could be used to help with the installation of some of the upgrades necessary to make it quiet zone eligible as well. He added that they want to pursue some of the redundancy issues in the quiet zones because, although we currently qualify, it is just by the skin of our teeth, so we are looking at being able to upgrade as part of our implementation process.

Information only.

MATTER OF TRIENNIAL REVIEW REPORT

Haugen referred to Page 15, the staff report, and reported that back in May Federal Highways from both Minnesota and North Dakota, met with NDDOT and MNDOT representatives and with MPO Staff and the MPO Executive Board Chair to go through the Triennial Review, done every three years, to get a top-to-bottom review of the MPO processes and practices.

Haugen stated that on August 16th we received the final report. He referred to Page 17, the cover letter that accompanied the report, and pointed out that they requested a response to the comments or concerns listed in the report by August 31st, so included in the packet, beginning on Page 35, are the MPO's responses. He referred to Page 38 and explained that some of the actions needed a response from NDDOT as well, those responses are also included.

Haugen referred to Page 35 and pointed out that there were nine observations/recommendations listed. He went over each briefly.

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Haugen stated that NDDOT's response indicates that are working on the contract language. He said that they did meet on August 23rd, and they have provided a funding chart, and will continue to do so, and the rest of their observations they indicated that they will support the MPOs in their process of doing these things.

Grasser asked if the funding chart is different than what we have traditionally seen. Haugen asked if what he was referring to as "traditionally seen" is the federal corps programs and how they flow to the urban projects. Grasser responded that, typically with the urban list there is usually expenditures and income for that year of the plan. Haugen responded that it is a different chart than that. Grasser asked if the dollars would change or will they remain as they currently are, around \$2,000,000 for Grand Forks. Haugen responded that there will be some changes to the annual estimate coming into the urbanized area. Grasser asked if that was due to some changes to the federal formula. Haugen responded that it was, that, based on this funding chart, before the DOT has always kept a constant dollar amount throughout the T.I.P. process, but now it will be done by year of expenditure/year of revenue, so it will be adjusted. He explained that North Dakota suggested at the meeting on August 23rd, that we could use a 3% inflator for the revenue side. He stated that we haven't sent our solicitation letter yet for the Urban Program, but when you see it you will see a 3% inflator included for the annual dollar amount. Grasser asked if they are supposed to be adjusting their projects, then, for year of expenditure as well. Haugen responded that you should, that in the T.I.P. process manual you will see that this is something that will need to be done. Grasser asked if the City would be doing that, or will the NDDOT be doing it. Haugen responded that when we talk about the next agenda item, you will be directed to use 4% per year in your submittals to the MPO, so if you are submitting a project for 2015, you would use current year estimates and adjust them by 4% annually out to 2015, so it will be the City making the adjustments. He added that Minnesota will basically have to do this as well.

Information only.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF THE T.I.P. PROCESS MANUAL

Haugen reported that we did have considerable discussion on this item at our August meeting. He pointed out that he only included those sections of the manual that were substantially changed based on that previous discussion, as well as via some e-mail discussions with FTA.

Haugen referred to Page 45, and pointed out that this is where they worked out the regionally significant projects definition; and on Page 47, per FTAs request, we have included a more thorough write-up on our prioritization process.

Haugen referred to Page 52, and explained that this is the T.I.P. schedule that was determined during the meeting on August 23rd, with a due date of December 15th on the North Dakota side; and a due date of January 19th on the Minnesota side.

Haugen referred to Appendix V, and explained that it includes our annual T.I.P. checklists. He stated that each state has their own separate sheets.

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Haugen reported that one thing they identified, working with Stephanie Hickman and Stacey Hanson, was a separation of the regionally significant projects into two different types: Type 1 are projects that still require federal action, so we treat them as if they are regular T.I.P. projects; and Type 2 projects are those that do not require federal highway or transit action, and may be federally funded by some other source. He added that they essentially narrowed the focus of these down to only those on collectors and above, and only if they have capacity or other operational improvement.

Haugen commented that the Type 1 projects are all T.I.P. projects going through the full T.I.P. process; and Type 2 projects are informational projects, but we still need to account for them in the financial portion of the T.I.P. document.

Grasser said that he is a little confused on Type 1 projects, where it states that “ all projects requiring an action by FHWA or FTA regardless of funding source on existing roadways that are functionally classified as urban collector or rural major collectors and above that add capacity or provide other operational improvements (i.e., traffic signals, round-a-bouts, ITS, etc.)...” and Type 2, “all projects on existing roadways that are functionally classified as urban collector or rural major collector and above that add capacity or provide other operational improvements (i.e., traffic signals, round-a-bouts, ITS, etc.)...” as to what the difference is. Haugen responded that Type 1 projects require federal action, and Type 2 don’t; so for Type 1 projects, regardless of funding source you need action from either Federal Highway or FTA. Grasser asked, then, if they were going to put up a traffic signal using city funds, would they have to have federal action. Haugen responded that they would not because they weren’t using federal funds.

Haugen commented that the next item deals with T.I.P. prioritization and selection. He stated that they have been meeting with staff and going through the T.I.P. scoring sheets and how the process is worked. He referred to Page 47, and pointed out that they have attempted to describe that process, explaining that they essentially used the eight factors in SAFETEA-LU, augmented them by the Livability Principles that Federal Highway and FTA are focused on, and created a scoring system based off of those including a ninth factor of regional. He added that, within different programs, they have weighted them so that something like an enhancement project is weighted more towards non-motorized traffic than motorized traffic, and vice-versa for something that is on a street facility.

Haugen reported that they hope, as discussed, that a project could score 60 or above, showing that it is implementing a lot of the eight factors and livability principles.

Grasser commented, that just to be clear, they have had some previous discussions about the rating process, who does the rating, and he still sees some of that as potentially still being unresolved, as he thinks that different people will rate these different projects and interpret the criteria differently. He said that he understands why we need to do that, to try to figure out where it fits in the overall federal highway funding process, but for the local process, where we are actually selecting projects, we are still considering a lot of criteria that is not reflected in that

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document, such as road conditions, capacity issues, etc., as we get into more of the operation/replacement side of things. He stated that in recognizing this, and getting some of it in the minutes so that our council members can read it, they understand it is a work in process, and they know that this isn't the only criteria that will be used in the selection of projects for the city.

MOVED BY BOPPRE, SECONDED BY BERGMAN, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE T.I.P. SELECTION PROCESS MANUAL, AS SUBMITTED.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF DRAFT RFP FOR SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET CORRIDOR STUDY

Haugen reported that this is one of the four additional studies the MPO will be conducting. He said that this first project, for which an RFP is being done, is for the South Washington Street Corridor Study, and Nancy Ellis is going to be the MPO Project Manager on this study.

Ellis referred to Pages 80 and 81 of the report, and explained that this RFP is based on the proposal that the Wellness Center be built between 40th and 47th Avenues South, and to the East of South Washington. She added that, based on this, as well as some other potential commercial or wellness type buildings that would be located in this area, they will look at how it will affect traffic conditions and operations and trip generations in and around the area, going from a residential use to more of a commercial use.

Ellis stated that they will be looking at existing and future traffic and land conditions, as well as, if it is built in periodic stages, and if the road is built out. She pointed out that what you are looking at right now is that the road, 11th Street, actually runs north/south from 47th up to 44th, and the possibility of that road connecting up to 40th has not yet been discussed, but it would then lead up to the Wellness Center itself. She added that just having two entrance points, one from 47th and one from 44th, to the Wellness Center may cause some current traffic conditions and future traffic conditions, whether it be intersection control, transit, multi-modal, etc., that will need to be looked at as well.

Ellis reported that the RFP will look at existing traffic conditions, operations, modeling; and then try to model for future conditions, operations, and modeling for when the Wellness Center is constructed, then for when additional facilities are constructed as well.

Ellis stated that there will be a Steering Committee, comprised of property owners, both residential and commercial, City Council, Planning Commission, Park Board, the Aurora Medical Park; and staff from the Park District, Engineering, Public Works – Street, Planning, and the MPO.

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Ellis said that they hope to have the RFP approved by the MPO Executive Policy Board next Wednesday, published on Monday, September 20th, and then submitted to us by November 1st.

Grasser commented that he likes the idea that we are going to have the consultants do traffic operations to determine short-, intermediate-, and long-range potential improvements to help us with our planning process as to what happens when.

Haugen reported that they are also asking the consultant to assist us on figuring out how and if we can service the area with City Transit. Bergman asked, in regard to South 11th Street, are they looking at going all the way from 47th to 40th. Haugen responded that they will be looking at doing that sometime in the future. He added that it is his understanding that it won't be any time soon, however, so the current Route 12/13, which services the Aurora Medical Park, may need to be adjusted. Brooks commented that they are also talking about some potential locations for stops as well, some pull-outs or something like that. He added that they understand that transit probably won't want to drive the half loop in front of the facility, but it is their hope to get you to 11th, but they know that they will need to work with Transit on this. Bergman stated that even on 11th people aren't going to walk out much past the front door when the weather is 40-below, they will have to make some kind of trip through that loop. Brooks said that they will work on this with Transit. Ellis pointed out that that is one of the recommendations in the scope-of-work, as well as multi-modal. She said that they want to make sure that the connections are also looked at in terms of traffic control and safety, as well as how they will lead up to the site or buildings themselves. Grasser added that that will be a very important consideration, because he thinks there are a couple of different opinions on whether or not 11th is sufficient for the bus stop because it is a couple hundred feet to the front door. Haugen commented that the biggest problem is crossing South Washington to service both the medical complex and the wellness center, to be able to get back and forth between those two facilities and still maintain 12/13's schedule.

Ellis stated that she did not receive any comments from either Dean (Rau) or Jane (Williams) regarding the scope-of-work, so staff is seeking approval of the RFP.

MOVED BY BROOKS, SECONDED BY BOPPRE, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPROVE THE DRAFT RFP FOR SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET CORRIDOR STUDY.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MATTER OF SOLICITATION OF PROJECTS FOR 2011-2012 UPWP

Haugen stated that it is once again time for you to begin consideration of what projects you would like to see included in the MPO's 2011-2012 UPWP. He reported that, as noted, we are going to be updating the Long Range Transportation Plan during the next two years, therefore there will be less monies available than other years to do these special studies, but now is the time to begin compiling your list of projects. He added that staff does request that these projects

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have the backing of your respective City Councils before you submit them to the MPO for consideration. He stated that we would like to have this done by November so that we can have our State and Federal partners review it in time for us to start January 1st with a new program in place.

Information only.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. President Obama's Labor Day Speech

Haugen commented that some may have heard about President Obama's Labor Day Speech, and proposal. He stated that the key issue is that the \$50,000,000,000 he talks about is part of a reauthorization bill, and that the \$50,000,000,000 being programmed will be programmed on the front end of the bill, which means that the back side of the bill will be light, although we don't know how congress will act on it, so there could be many changes before any bill is passed.

Information only.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY BROOKS, SECONDED BY JOHNSON, TO ADJOURN THE SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2010, MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 2:25 P.M.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis
Office Manager