

MORGANTOWN MONONGALIA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
JUNE 18, 2020 MINUTES

Members Present:

Chairman Joe Statler, Vice-chair Commissioner Tom Bloom, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line, Brian Carr-WVDOH, Commissioner Edward Hawkins-Monongalia County, Ron Justice-West Virginia University, Councilperson Dave Harshbarger-City of Morgantown, Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover, Bill Kawecki-Mayor of Morgantown, Councilperson Jennifer Selin, Commissioner Sean Sikora-Monongalia County

MPO Director: Bill Austin

Member Absent:

Councilperson Steve Blinco-Star City, Mayor Patricia Lewis- City of Granville, Mike Kelly-Board of Education,

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Chairperson Statler called the Policy Board meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Reports

a. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Abildso, the Chairman of CAC, noted that the CAC met last week with a quorum of five members. The committee unanimously commended approval of the proposed TIP amendments. Mr. Abildso noted that the committee expressed their appreciation to former Chairman Rice for his leadership.

b. Finance Committee

Mr. Austin noted that Treasurer Mayor Lewis is not able to attend this meeting. Mr. Austin presented the financial report prepared by Mayor Lewis.

-- Beginning balance in May \$65,714.87.46 with expenditures of \$28,027.03 and one deposit of \$17,835.10, leaving a balance of \$55,522.94 at the beginning of June.

Commissioner Bloom asked if the MMMPO anticipates any financial difficulty at the end of the fiscal year due to the financial impact of the pandemic to the State. Commissioner noted that the county will reimburse the MMMPO for the salary of the shared position. The county cannot pay for service in advance.

Mr. Austin noted that he is aware of the county's financial policy. He noted the MMMPO has paid off the Alta consultant and line of credit loans and is currently paying a partial cost of the ongoing transit study. The MMMPO financial status is in good shape.

Mr. Bruffy moved to accept the Finance Report as presented; seconded by Councilperson Selin. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

c. Executive Director

Mr. Austin noted that currently there is no special federal transportation legislation aimed to relieve the impact of the pandemic. He is in contact with the National Association of MPOs to monitor any transportation legislation that could be passed in the near future.

Mr. Austin noted that the MMMPO is working with the WVU and the City on the Beechurst Ave project, including potential relocation of 1st St.

Mr. Austin noted that he will take a vacation leave for the week of July 4th.

4. TIP Amendment

Mr. Austin noted that WVDOH has requested TIP amendments. They include Mr. Austin noted that the WVDOH has requested the TIP amendments. The amendments include Mason-Dixon Hwy Slide repair projects, Little India Creek Rd slide repair project, Bertha hill Rd Slide repair projects, King wood pike slide repair project, River Rd slide repair project, Westover bridge repair project, I-79 Exit 146 SB exit ramp project, I-79 Exit 152 Ramps resurface project, I-68 Exit 7 ramp repair project, I-68 Resurface project (Cheat Lake – Coopers Rock), and I-79 Welcome Center improvement project. Mr. Bruffy moved to recommend approval of the TIP amendment to the MMMPO's Policy Board; seconded by Selin. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. Chairman Statler expressed his appreciation to the WVDOH for the timely repair of the slide on Mon Blvd.

5. Presentation on proposed Public Involvement Policy amendments-Jessica Shuey

Ms. Shuey made a presentation on the proposed Public Involvement Policy Amendment. Ms. Shuey noted that the proposed policy has been restructured with a clearer format and enhanced graphics. It added virtual public involvement elements to keep up with the best public involvement practice in transportation planning. The proposal does not have any material changes on the content in the policy.

Chairman Statler asked how MMMPO staff will handle inquiries sent from the website's chatting box. Mr. Austin noted that Ms. Shuey will directly interact with the community through the chat function.

Mayor Kawecki asked how the document will be distributed. Mr. Austin noted that hard copies will be available in the MMMPO's office and public libraries. The digital copy will be available on the MMMPO's website.

Mr. Carr noted that Mrs. Inglis-Smith from FHWA mentioned in the TTAC that the document is required to be ADA 501 compliant. Mr. Austin noted that the MMMPO staff have followed the ADA design standard to develop the document. The fonts and color patterns are 501 compliant.

6. Presentation on Transportation Improvement Program online database-Jing Zhang

Mr. Zhang made a presentation on the development of web project search applications for the MMMPO's TIP. The application will allow the public to search the MMMPO's TIP project database via various search criteria such as fiscal year, phases, jurisdiction, funding source, and scope of improvement.

7. Mountain Line Transit Report

Mr. Austin noted that the public outreach process was slowed down by the pandemics. He communicated with the consultant yesterday. The study team expects to develop a digital campaign for this study in August. Mr. Bruffy expressed his appreciation to Mr. Justice for coordinating the public involvement process between the Mountain and WVU. He noted that it is essential to hear from the community about the issues and opportunities to improve transit service for both short-term and long term solutions.

8. Discussion of Temporary Signal on WV 7

Mr. Austin noted that the WVDOH has installed a temporary traffic light at the intersection of WV 7 and Decker Creek Rd for the detour on the Greenbag Rd intersection improvement on WV 7. The MMMPO received positive feedback from the community about the temporary improvement. Councilman Harshbarger and Mayor Kawecki asked to discuss the possibility of the MMMPO requesting that WVDOH study permanently reinstalling the signal.

Mayor Kawecki noted the adjacent neighborhood has been commended on the temporary traffic signal for its improvement on traffic flow and pedestrian safety. He would like to ask the WVDOH to consider permanently installing the traffic signal on that location.

Councilperson Selin noted that a new ALDI will open soon. It could further increase the demand for better pedestrian facilities in that area. Pedestrian safety in the area is a key interest to the nearby neighborhood.

Commissioner Bloom noted that the ALDI store is accessible from the trail. He noted that a comprehensive approach should be adopted to improve the traffic condition for all users.

Mr. Carr agreed and noted that the WVDOH has to ensure the traffic volume warrants traffic signals at the intersection. The nearby intersection on Hartman Run could impose other traffic concerns. Mr. Carr noted that the WVDOH will continue monitoring the performance of the corridor after the opening of the ALDI store. He noted that some pedestrian safety projects identified in the recently adopted bike-ped plan could be good candidates for the Transportation Alternative Program grants.

Mayor Kawecki expressed his appreciation to the board for raising concerns on the pedestrian safety issue at the location.

Mr. Austin noted that it is important to collect the data, documenting the need for pedestrian facilities in the corridor. He noted that the traffic pattern will take a few months to establish. The MMMPO will initiate a preliminary pedestrian study along the corridor in the 2021 spring as a part of the Unified Planning Work Program for FFY 2020-2021.

9. Other Business

Commissioner Bloom noted that Mon County has got a relatively small number of projects compared with other counties in the states. He is concerned that the county is not getting a fair share of the transportation funding.

Chairman Statler noted that he received a lot of comments complaining about the slow progress of implementing transportation projects in the county. The community is frustrated by the lack of major improvement on the roads since the approval of the Transportation General Obligation Bond.

Commission Sikora agreed and noted that the Mon County needs to get more attention to the WVDOH to move projects forward.

Mr. Austin noted that three projects in the area are going out to bid shortly and some other major projects take a long time to go through the environmental process.

Mr. Carr agreed and noted that the WVDOH has conducted several studies for projects of significant impact in the MMMPO area and those projects require a prolonged process before actual construction. He noted that the MMMPO did get another smaller project completed earlier this year.

Councilperson Selin suggested that DOH prepare a report to show the project status. So the community can see the progress made in time.

Mr. Austin agreed and noted that MMMPO staff will work with WVDOH to compile a list of accomplished and ongoing TIP projects in this area.

Mr. Austin noted that MMMPO will distribute the adopted bike-ped plan to municipalities, county, and WVU. The MMMPO is happy to make presentations to the community about the plan.

Mr. Carr noted that the Governor has approved \$100,000 Transportation Alternative Grants to the Mon Trail Conservancy for the rail trail undercut project.

Mayor Kawecki asked about the public meeting for the Greenbag Rd project. Mr. Carr noted that the WVDOH is requesting approval from the FHWA to conduct virtual public meetings for the project. The WVDOH will take every opportunity to head from the community. Mr. Carr noted that he expects the meeting will happen soon but he does not have a specific date yet.

11. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.