



## POLICY BOARD MEETING

August 19, 2021

City of Morgantown Council Chambers  
389 Spruce Street. August 19, 2021, 6PM

### **Members Present:**

Chair-Commissioner Tom Bloom, Vice-Chair Ron Justice-WVU, Treasurer-Mayor Patricia Lewis, Commissioner Jeffery Arnett-Monongalia County, Recorder Steven Blinco-Star City Mr. Brian Carr – WV DOH, Councilperson Dave Harshbarger-City of Morgantown, Councilperson Bill Kawecki-City of Morgantown, Mr. Mike Kelly-Board of Education, Mayor Jennifer Selin – City of Morgantown, Commissioner Sean Sikora-Monongalia County

**MPO Director:** Bill Austin, AICP

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### **1. Call to Order**

With a quorum present, Chairman Bloom called the meeting of the Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMMPO) Policy Board meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Bloom noted that the minutes for the last meeting are included in the agenda packet. Mr. Kelly moved to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Mayor Lewis. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

### **3. Public Comments**

No public comments.

### **4. Committee Report**

#### *a. Citizens Advisory Committee*

Mr. Austin noted that Christiaan Abildso, the Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), was not able to attend the meeting due to a schedule conflict. Mr. Austin noted that the CAC recommended approval of the TIP amendments and the TIP policy amendment.

*b. Finance Report*

Mayor Lewis briefed the Board on the financial report as the following:

At the beginning of May, the balance was \$38,687.24. The May expenditures were \$23,590.35 with three deposits totaling \$23,866.26, leaving a balance of \$38,963.15 at the end of May.

At the beginning of June, the balance was \$38,963.15. The expenditures were \$21,830.32, with one deposit totaling \$19,189.70, leaving a balance of \$36,322.53 at the end of June.

At the beginning of July, the balance was \$36,322.53. The expenditures were \$59,423.48, with three deposits totaling \$43,237.15, leaving a balance of \$20,136.20 at the end of July.

Mayor Lewis moved to approve the finance report as presented; seconded by Recorder Blinco. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

*c. Executive Director Report*

Mr. Austin noted that he has been assisting the County Commission with a broadband study. The study is to provide an analysis of needs and methods for increasing internet accessibility in Monongalia County.

Mr. Austin noted that the West Virginia MPO Association is planning a conference in May 2022.

Mr. Austin noted that the transportation bills that are currently considered in the Congress will have substantial impact to the operation of the MPO. Mr. Austin noted that he works with the Policy Committee of the national MPO association to keep track of the federal legislation on transportation planning policies and infrastructure investment.

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO is in the process of updating its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The consultant team has met a members of Mountain Line Transit's CAC and emergency response staff for their input on the plan update.

Mr. Austin expressed his appreciation to WAJR and Dominion Post for promoting the MTP update to the public.

Mr. Austin noted that currently the MPO is using a credit card that requires the MPO to pay administrative fees. The MPO will change to another credit card with no fees.

Mr. Austin noted that he will attend the National Conference of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the week of October 4<sup>th</sup>.

**4. TIP Amendments**

Mr. Austin noted that the West Virginia Division of Highway (WVDOH) has requested amendments to the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The amendments include adding the Scott Run Rd-Fort Martin Rd project to FY2021, increasing funding for the Westover Bridge project, deleting the Mylan Park Bridge Approach project, deleting the I/S WV

100 and Dents Run Improvement project, deleting the Boyers Ave/US 19 Improvements project, and adding Pleasant St Streetscape project to FY2023.

Mayor Lewis noted that she has a concern over the proposed amendment to delete the Dent's Run intersection. Mayor Lewis suggested dividing the proposed amendments by fiscal year and voting for them separately. Chairman Bloom agreed.

Mr. Kelly moved to approve the amendments for FFY 2022; seconded by Mayor Selin. Without discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Selin moved to approve the amendments for FFY 2023; seconded by Councilperson Harshbarger. Councilman Kawecki asked about the scope of the Streetscape project on Pleasant St. Mr. Austin noted that it is from Spruce Street to University Ave. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Councilman Kawecki moved to approve the amendment for the Beechurst Ave project; seconded by Mayor Lewis. Mayor Selin asked about the reason of cutting funds for the Beechurst Ave and asked if the project will be negatively impacted. Mr. Justice noted that the University has been working with the DOH to develop an alternative site plan that avoided right-of-way purchase by the DOH. The portion of funding that has been deleted was for right-of-way purchase, which is no longer needed. The funding decrease will have no impact on the project construction. With no further discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

Mayor Selin made a motion to vote on each amendment item in the FY2021 individually; seconded by Mr. Kelly. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

Chairman Bloom noted that the first proposed amendment for FY2021 is adding Scott Run Rd-For Martin Rd project. There was no discussion on this project. The Board approved this amendment unanimously.

Chairman Bloom noted that the next proposed amendment for FY2021 is increasing funding for the Westover Bridge project. Councilman Kawecki noted that the City of Morgantown is planning to paint mural on the Westover Bridge. Mr. Austin noted that the City could coordinate with the DOH on this issue. Mr. Carr noted he will reach out to DOH District Office and identify a point of contact for this matter. There was no further discussion on this project. Mayor Selin moved to approve the amendment; seconded by Mr. Kelly. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Bloom noted that the next proposed amendment for FY2021 is deleting Mylan Park Bridge project. Commissioner Sikora asked about the location of the project. Mr. Austin noted that it is a small bridge northwest of the I-79 Exit 155. There was no further discussion on this project. Councilman Kawecki moved to approve the amendment; seconded by Mr. Kelly. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Bloom noted that the next proposed amendment for FY2021 is deleting the WV 100 and Dents Run Intersection Improvement project. Mr. Justice moved to reject the amendment; seconded by Mayor Lewis; Mayor Lewis noted that the intersection is dangerous for both vehicle drivers and pedestrians. She noted that the intersection has been used heavily by trailer trucks

and there is a very limited sight distance and turning radius. The intersection has been of a concern for the community for years. Mayor Lewis noted that it is understandable that the project is difficult, considering the potential cost of right-of-way purchase. Mr. Kelly agreed and noted that the turning movement at the intersection is extremely dangerous for all types of vehicles. The intersection causes travel hazards on daily basis. Mr. Kelly asked about the reason of deleting this project. Mr. Carr noted that the deletion is a miscommunication between the District Office and the Charleston Office. He noted that the intent of the District Office is to postpone the project. With no further discussion, the motion was passed. Mr. Carr abstained.

Chairman Bloom noted that the next proposed amendment for FY2021 is deleting Boyers Ave and US 19 Intersection improvements. Mr. Justice moved to approve the amendment; seconded by Mr. Kelly. Mr. Blinco asked if the intersection will be impacted by the I-79 Exit 155 Improvement project and if there is any plan to improve the intersection in the future. Mr. Carr noted that the reason of deleting the project is because the DOH is done installing the turn lane on Boyers Ave. The DOH need to evaluate the impact of I-79 Exit 155 project to this intersection. Mr. Austin noted that the MPO's MTP identified this intersection as a part of I-79 Exit155 Interchange improvement. With no further discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO will make several TIP administrative adjustments. The adjustments require no action from the Board.

Mayor Selin expressed her appreciation to the DOH for the programmed project on Burroughs Street. She noted that local residents have various concerns along Burroughs Street. Mr. Carr noted that the DOH is considering intersection at the intersection of Burrough Street and Collins Ferry Rd, as well as ADA ramps at appropriate locations.

Councilperson Kawecky asked about the status of Greenbag Rd. Chairman Bloom noted that the DOH is waiting for the final approval from FHWA. Mr. Austin noted that DOH has developed several mitigation strategies associated with the project. The project is currently under environmental impact review by FHWA. Mr. Austin noted that he will share with the board a link for the environment impact document for the project. Mr. Carr noted that DOH will start the engineering process as soon as the FHWA officially approves its preliminary design.

## **5. TIP Process Amendment**

Mr. Austin noted that WVDOH has been using a process called "groupable projects" to administratively combine small projects into groups in order to streamline WVDOH's ability to accomplish small projects and to program TIP in a timely manner. The MPO's Policy Board has been generally supportive of these efforts, but did not authorize the use of "groupable projects" in the MPO's TIP policy, because the WVDOH had not defined the criteria or project types that would be subject to "groupable projects".

Since this process was last discussed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) update process, WVDOH drafted a guideline identifying the programs and types of projects that would be eligible for "groupable project". The guideline provides that to be eligible to be grouped, the projects must be less than \$10 million and they can be accomplished with the

issuance of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) environmental document. The guideline also identified the criteria for projects that are not to be “grouped”.

Mr. Austin noted that given that WVDOH has much more clearly defined the projects that are eligible to be grouped, the MPO staff recommended amending the TIP Policy to incorporate groupable projects in the MPO’s TIP.

Mr. Carr noted that the DOH is open to discuss with all MPOs to decide if a project should be groupable or not groupable. The purpose of the policy change is to expedite certain projects to avoid unnecessary administrative delay. Those projects are mainly maintenance projects such as bridge inspection, resurfacing, and slide repair. Projects that have significant local impact will always ungroupable, even it is less than \$10 million dollar. Mr. Carr noted that the \$10 million dollar is used as a threshold to catch all maintenance projects that may fall into groupable project category.

Commission Bloom suggested that the Board consider adopting the policy change by a resolution. Mr. Austin noted that he will prepare the resolution for the Board to review at the next meeting.

## **6. Status of Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update**

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO will hold a virtual public forum on August 26. There will be two sessions. One starts at the noon; and the other at 5:30 PM. Mr. Austin noted that the event will officially kick off the public involvement process for the MTP update. Mr. Austin noted that the consultant has been reviewing existing plans and updating the travel demand model.

## **7. Request for Traffic Study-University Town Center**

Mayor Lewis noted that the Town of Granville would like to request a traffic study at the Sesame Dr and University Town Centre Dr intersection. There has been a lot of traffic using Sesame Dr since the opening of Wendy’s and Chick-fill-A. Mayor Lewis noted that the intersection might be impacted by the modification of roundabout on the I-79 Exit 153.

Commissioner Sikora noted that there has been a lot of traffic coming in and out of Granville Square. It is worthwhile to assess the traffic condition at that intersection. Mr. Austin noted the MPO is capable of doing a warrant analysis on the intersection to verify if a traffic signal should be considered. The MPO staff can collect the data and run the warrant simulation in next few weeks.

Mayor Lewis asked if the software could do a corridor study, including the intersection at Walmart/WVU Medical Center driveway on University Town Centre Rd. Mr. Austin noted that the software can do multiple intersection analysis. The MPO can do analysis at both intersections.

Commissioner Sikora noted that there has been some traffic on University Town Centre Dr associated with the construction of a new store on the west side of the I-79. The store will have a soft opening in September and a grand opening in October. Mr. Austin noted that it is more desirable to do the data collection after the soft opening in September.

## **8. Other Business**

Commissioner Bloom noted that the County Commission had a meeting with WVDOH regarding ongoing projects in the area, including Greenbag Rd and Mileground Rd. He noted that he will share the presentation material with the Board once it is available.

Mr. Carr noted that for the Mileground Road project, the right-of-way phase has been completed. The DOH has acquired all necessary parcels for the project. The construction has started, including drainage installation and utility relocation. Mr. Carr noted there will be some construction impact on Mileground Rd in the next few weeks.

Chairman Bloom noted that the I-79 Exit 155 Interchange Improvement project has been moving forward. Commissioner Sikora noted that currently the major challenge for the project is to coordinate utility upgrade and roadway upgrade. There has been a lot of progress on this project.

Mr. Carr noted the DOH's District Office for the MMMPO area has developed a list of various active projects in the area. Those projects are mainly low cost resurface and repair projects. He will share this information with the MMMPO.

Chairman Bloom noted that District Office will have a presentation to the County Commission on September 2, from 8 – 10 am. He would like to invite the Policy Board members to attend that meeting.

Mayor Selin noted that it is difficult for a pedestrian to cross the Greenbag Rd and WV7 intersection. She asked if DOH could do a pedestrian safety project at that intersection. Mr. Austin noted that since the MPO is updating its Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the community could raise this issue in the public involvement process. Mr. Austin encouraged community participation in the update. He noted that the residents can pass along their concerns through an online survey and an online interactive map.

Mr. Blinco noted that Chipps Hollow Rd near the Mon Blvd in Start City has been closed because of flooding. Mr. Blinco asked if there is any plan to address that issue. Mr. Austin noted that it needs to be identified whether the road is a state route. Mayor Selin noted that the damage on Chipps Hollow Rd is severe and asked if any disaster recovery funds from Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) could be used to repair that road. Commissioner Bloom agreed and noted that to qualify for emergency or recovery funds, the City needs to fill out certain forms on the FEMA website to assess if the condition meets the criteria set by FEMA.

## **9. Meeting Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.