

## **GREATER MORGANTOWN MPO**

**October 21, 2010      Minutes      City Council Chambers**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bill Byrne, David Bruffy, Perry Keller, Joe Fisher, Don Spencer, Joe Statler, Asel Kennedy, Mike Kelly, Jim Gaston, Bob Bell, Charles Byrer

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Patty Lewis, Janice Goodwin

**MPO DIRECTOR:** Bill Austin

**1. CALL to ORDER:** Mike Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. He welcomed Jim Gaston, representative from Star City.

### **2. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Steve Solomon** – Noted that information given about the Mileground has always been the same; no one has ever said how much property would be taken and whose property would be taken from.

Mr. Austin wanted to clarify the process and stated the public was presented what the project would look like. The MPO Board then gives their recommendations to the DOH; there would be another chance for the public to review detailed plans for the project prior to implementation of the project.

Mr. Solomon stated after the recommendation is given to the DOH, it's a done deal. He believes the problem is that no one can say what is actually going to be done.

Mr. Keller noted the recommendation has to be something the DOH can support, (either the four or five lane). The project will be tweaked in its final design.

Mr. Byrne stated, that as a point of order, anyone wishing to address the body may do so. The proposal is before the Board and public input is welcomed.

Mr. Solomon stated that if the proposal didn't change, public comments would be the same as those already stated.

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Byrne moved for approval of the August minutes; seconded by Mr. Bell. The motion unanimously carried.

#### **4. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Mr. Kennedy stated the report shows deposits and checks written since August 16; balance is \$17,280.77. Mr. Bruffy moved for approval of the financial report; seconded by Mr. Bell. The motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Kennedy stated that two companies were proposed to perform the MPO's audit. Mr. Kennedy stated that the Committee reviewing the audit proposals recommended Teed and Associates for this service. They were the lowest cost responsive bidder. Mr. Byrne moved to approve authorizing the MPO to contract with Teed and Associates to perform the MPO's Audit; Mr. Fisher seconded it. The motion unanimously carried.

#### **5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Austin reported:

- A.** Working to complete the TDM Project; Met with WVU and various businesses in the vicinity of WV 705 for the creation of a van pooling project; WVU and Monongalia General and WVU Hospitals agreed to begin a project, NETL is very interested in the project and they are presenting the proposal to their management;
- B.** Staff has been working with WVU on the Grumbein Island project the scope of work is being finalized;
- C.** Staff has asked DOH to begin data collection for the MPO's ongoing traffic count program;
- D.** MPO is hosting the Statewide MPO Conference. Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Byrne will speak at the conference on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>;
- E.** Continuing work with the States initiative on corridor protection with the National Governor's Association will out of town most of the week of November 16<sup>th</sup> for this project;
- F.** Attended the Transportation Research Board's Tools and Trade Conference for Small and Medium Size MPO's in Williamsburg the third week in September.
- G.** Personnel Policy, Director's Contract and UPWP have been updated. Will be presented for review at the December meeting;
- H.** Staff is working with the MPO's committees to determine the scope of work for the long range transportation plan update. Staff hopes to be able to coordinate the LRTP with the City's Comprehensive Plan Update which it is understood may be coordinated with Star City's plan and possibly an update of the County's Comprehensive Plan. He state that coordination with these efforts may slow down

the LRTP Update process. He will work with the appropriate City and County personnel on this issue.;

**I.** It is anticipated that there will be at least two minor TIP amendments will be presented at the December meeting.

## **6. NOMINATING COMMITTEE:**

Bob Bell, Bill Byrne and Jim Gaston, as nominating committee, will present a slate of officers at the January meeting. Anyone wishing to be considered should contact them by email.

## **7. MILEGROUND TIP: Morgantown WV US119/WV 705 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment**

Mr. Bruffy asked noted that the TIP Amendment included \$750,000 in Engineering for the project. He asked Mr. Keller to explain what that item included. Mr. Keller explained the work included in the item. He noted that it would cost a great deal more to provide detailed plans for more than one alternative, but it would probably not be as much as an additional \$750,000.

Mr. Keller explained that the DOH had presented an outline of the potential right of way impacts of the project at the first meeting on this project and that once an alternative is selected DOH will preserve as much of the business and buildings in the corridor as possible. He also noted property owners will be contacted during the right of way stage of the Project. This project is unprecedented within the State in that the decision is being given to the local residents through the MPO. He would prefer to excuse himself from the vote since this is a local decision not a DOH driven project though he will support any decision taken by the Board. He noted that none of the alternatives is a magic bullet that will solve all of the problems and the recommendation of the Board should reflect the areas values. Mr. Statler questioned how the DOH arrived at the right of way costs? Mr. Keller stated they were estimates prepared by the State's right of way agents based on general estimates of the square footage needed for the alternatives and there visit to the area to review the land uses there. Once the actual design is specified more definitive estimates of the right of way cost can be prepared. Mr. Keller explained that the Engineering item included the actual preparation of the design for the project. Mr. Byrne moved to amend the TIP to include the Mileground Widening Project to the TIP; seconded by Mr. Bruffy. The motion unanimously carried. Mr. Austin noted the figures given are just estimates and may change.

## **8. Mileground Widening Alternative Recommendation**

Chairman Kelly then introduced the Policy Boards recommendation of a preferred alternative for the Mileground Widening Project. He asked Mr. Austin to discuss the item. Mr. Austin explained the alternative cross sections under consideration for the Project. Mr. Austin explained the cross sections as presented at the September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting and included in the Policy Boards Agenda. He noted that all alternatives include a left turn bay from northbound 119 into the Northpointe development. At the end of the presentation Mr. Austin noted that Mr. Bruffy would be discussing the Technical Advisory Committee recommendation and Mr. Bill Rice would be presenting the recommendation of the Citizens Advisory Committee. Chairman Kelly asked Mr. Bruffy to discuss the TTAC's recommendation for this item to the Policy Board.

Mr. Bruffy stated that the TTAC is made up of professional staff from the MPO's member agencies. Mr. Bruff stated that the TTAC's recommendation to the Policy Board was based on consideration for safety, traffic operations including speed, reducing the amount of right of way needed for the project, the safety aspects of the project and the aesthetics of the project. Mr. Bruffy stated that the TTAC recommended Alternative 4L (b) based on these considerations. This alternative would take less property than the five lane alternative. It should reduce the number of accidents along the corridor as well as the severity of the accidents that do occur. Mr. Bruffy also noted that the TTAC recommended a sidewalk on the NW side of the road the same side as the Armory. Mr. Bruffy also noted that US DOT had surveyed businesses along corridors that had experienced the elimination of left turn movements as proposed along this corridor. USDOT reported that about 50 percent of the businesses that had gone through this type of change had reported that their business had remained the same and about thirty three percent had reported that their business increased after this type of improvement. Mayor Byrne asked if the TTAC had recommended the type of median to go with this project. Mr. Bruffy stated that would have to be an issue addressed by the designers.

Mr. Statler asked if the speed limit for the project was considered. Mr. Bruffy stated that the speeds examined in the project were AM and PM peak period traffic the worst times for traffic flows along the corridor. Mr. Statler asked Mr. Keller about the impact of the proposed school on the speed of traffic on the road. Mr. Keller stated if the new school is abutting to the roadway, the speed limit would be 15 mph. If the school is away from the road the speed limit should remain at the posted speed for the rest of the facility. Mr. Statler also had a concern with the roundabouts and residents getting used to them. Mr. Keller hoped the roundabouts would be promoted through the media – a video would also be on the DOH website.

**Bill Rice – CAC.** Stated the recommended the 4 L (b). They considered the many of the same things as the TTAC. Mr. Rice stated that the CAC did not come to particular conclusions on the exact details of the project. They did discuss that there did not need to be bicycle lanes or sidewalks coming up Easton Hill until you came to Airport Boulevard. The CAC did recommend a "rollover median." The CAC did recommend that there be a sidewalk on the north side of the Mileground and

that there be pedestrian accommodations at the roundabouts and that there be an accommodation for pedestrians in the center of the corridor. Chairman Kelly asked if there were any recommendation on the height of the median. Mr. Rice stated that there was a perception on the CAC that the median should allow emergency vehicle to crossover the median.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**David Biafore** – Stated this process is a joke. He is not here for himself, he is here for the residents of Morgantown. He believes the problem is that people with no knowledge are making decisions. He is passionate about this community. He also believes the decision has already been made.

**Steve Solomon** – Referencing the roundabouts in Fairmont, he stated the elected officials that pushed through that project have been voted out of office. That project was over budget and a waste of taxpayer money. He feels the acquisition costs are underestimated. Asked what the recourse would be if one is unhappy with the right of way process. He asked if the projected 18 million dollars for this project would become \$58 million, would the project still be done. Mr. Keller stated the DOH is committed as long as the funds are available.

**Bob Wisher** – John Howard Motors. Believes the Mileground businesses would be adversely affected and their businesses would be devastated. Access to their business with the four lane would be terrible. (presented letter from Randy Buzzo).

**Argyle Sheets** – Has owned property on the Mileground for 40 years. He doesn't understand why the engineers cannot show where property would be taken. He has requested to see a footprint. He sees the State taking property on both sides of the road. If that is the case, there would be no parking for the businesses. He believes the divider will be a problem for businesses on the Mileground. He cannot relocate his business since there are not many places to locate to.

**Steve Kelly** – Mileground property has been in his family since 1956. The acquisition of the property is a problem and a joke. There is no consideration for frontage values. Appreciation of the property taken is not considered. It is hard for him to believe the Mileground is a priority since there are other roads that are more of a problem, i.e., Beechurst Avenue. Should try regulating the stop lights as is done on football game days.

**Bob Bell** – Will recuse himself from any vote. He has had property on the Mileground for 40 years and he shares the same concerns as the other property owners. He stated that he believes that it will be a problem to provide EMS services with a divided highway. The unknown is a problem. If there was an idea of how much property would be taken a more informed decision could be made.

**Howard Goodsteen – BFS Foods** – A divided highway would be devastating to their business and very well may put them out of business. Feels it is difficult to comment since no one seems to know any facts. How can the MPO recommend something without all pertinent information. Wants to see a plan. The project is DOH driven. The Mileground businesses are producing a lot of taxes for the state; the state is burying their head in the sand.

Public comment was closed.

Mr. Spencer moved to proceed with the recommendation to the DOT for the alternative 4 L (b) with sidewalks on the Armory side of the street with pull outs for transit services; seconded by Mr. Byrne. Mr. Kennedy requested an amendment to the motion to make the center barrier mountable by any vehicle; seconded for discussion by Mr. Byrer. The amendment to the motion, failed with two voting in favor and the remainder voting against. A vote on the motion had Bell and Keller abstaining, Kennedy voting no. With all others voting in the affirmative, the motion carried.

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS:**

None

**10.** The next MPO meeting will be December 2. The meeting adjourned at 8:30PM.