

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 19, 2008**

The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board met in the Bismarck Transit Building, 3750 East Rosser Avenue. Chair Erhardt presided.

Members present were Glenn Christmann, Sarah BaeHurst for Ken LaMont, John Warford and Matt Erhardt.

Others present were Paul Benning, Mark Berg, Ben Ehreth, Steve Saunders, Bill Troe, Gordon Weixel, Robin Werre and Diana Nadeau.

Member absent was Doug Schonert and Ken LaMont.

MINUTES

Chair Erhardt called for consideration of the minutes of the January 15, 2007, meeting.

MOTION. Mr. Christmann made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2007, meeting. Mr. Warford seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved with Sarah BaeHurst, Glenn Christmann, John Warford and Matt Erhardt voting in favor of the motion.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT (TE) UPDATE

Mr. Benning stated the DOT met with the Director's Task Force a week ago Tuesday and went through all the urban projects and county projects that were sent in for the applications. They have made a determination on which projects will be picked along with the dollar value for each one. The next step now is going to the DOT Director for his approval and after that the letters will be sent out after that notifying the folks that got the projects.

Mr. Erhardt asked about the Mandan Bike Trail. Mr. Benning stated he did not know because he was not on the Director's Task Force.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL UPDATE

Mr. Benning stated that this is similar to the TE process. The Director's Task Force will meet in early March to review the projects and how they were scored and assign a dollar value to it. The Director will sign off on them and letters will be sent out.

URBAN PROJECTS LIST UPDATE

Mr. Benning stated that the applications are being reviewed for funding and to determine which projects will be selected. The DOT is waiting to get the 2008 obligation limit for how much money will be available from FHWA.

Mr. Erhardt asked if the amounts will be available shortly for budget purposes. Mr. Benning stated there are several programs that funding has been identified, but there are a couple of them out there that have not been identified yet.

Mr. Erhardt asked if there is a possibility there will be funds available that won't be expended. Mr. Benning stated there are always more needs than dollars.

REGIONAL NORTH/SOUTH BELTWAY CORRIDOR STUDY UPDATE

Mr. Saunders stated that Ulteig called this morning and apologized, they were unable to attend this morning's TAC meeting and this afternoon's policy board meeting. Mr. Saunders stated that the Steering Committee for the beltway is scheduled for Friday the 22nd here in this room at 8:30 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. to discuss the alternatives for the beltway for Bismarck and Mandan. They also asked Mr. Saunders to let this board know that Steve Windish will attend and a good possibility that Steve Grabill will also attend, Mr. Troe's public meeting on Wednesday night for 71st Avenue, just in case there is some infiltration of beltway questions, which is very probable. Mr. Saunders stated he would take back any questions or comments to Ulteig. There were none at this time.

Mr. Erhardt asked if the members should be at the meeting. Mr. Saunders stated that it is a technical meeting, but anybody can come if they would like too. Mostly it is the steering committee that has been working on this project. Ms. BaeHurst added that Commissioner Gangl from Mandan plans to attend also. Mr. Erhardt said he would also be at the meeting.

71ST AVENUE/CENTENNIAL ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY UPDATE

Mr. Troe stated tomorrow there is a meeting at 10:00 a.m. with the Department of Transportation Management, to walk through the issues and the preliminary recommendations and discuss with the DOT the project. Tomorrow evening is the second public meeting and it is at Century High School. Being presented will be the preliminary recommendations for public comment. There will be an open house starting at 6:00 p.m. and a presentation about 6:30 p.m. walking through what the recommendations are and how they got there, focusing on two areas that are going against the typical right-of-way, those would be along 71st Avenue, where there is development. The right-of-way requirements will be shrunk Also along Centennial between Trenton and Jericho, they were assuming that 150' in there, there will be something narrower there assuming an urban section rather than a rural section. The last thing that a conclusion needs to come to, which won't occur until after Friday, is 71st Avenue going to be part of the beltway or not because there are a couple of elements that go into the preliminary recommendations on 71st Avenue right now, that would be modified if it was not part of the beltway. The right-of-way would have to be modified from 200' to 150'. All of the issues that have come about because of 150' of right-of-way would be substantially reduced. Also, regarding the interchange, if the beltway is not on 71st and is located in another corridor that is where the interchange ought to be, it should not be on 71st if it is not in the beltway. An assumption would then be made that the vast majority of truck traffic that is through, even if through takes you into town, then likely migrates off of 71st and then onto the beltway and still remains in the Centennial corridor, but it probably would come off of 71st and then a little bit of adjusting would have to be done to the language. Mr. Troe thinks that the big thing is, is he accurate in the assumption on an interchange long-term. Mr. Troe stated that Mr. Saunders had made the comment that the footprints of the interchange should be shown in the graphics. It should migrate to the beltway and if the beltway isn't on 71st then it is fine where it is at but other text would have to be changed that refers to it as the beltway.

Mr. Troe stated that as he was addressing all the comments, the only item that came up that has to be waited on is if 71st Avenue is part of the beltway system and that after Friday, it should be known if it is or is not. A comment was made by the reviewers a number of times that it might be based on conversations that are taking place during the beltway. Mr. Troe is guessing that after Friday there should be a pretty good idea.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL COORDINATION STUDY UPDATE

Mr. Berg stated six submittals from consultants interested in doing the study had been received. The committee met and created a short list of four that will be interviewed on Thursday, February 21, 2008 at 8:30. At the conclusion of the process, the hope is to have it on the Bismarck City Commission agenda on March 11th with a recommendation, a scope of work and a contract. At the March Policy Board meeting the scope of work and contract will be presented. He added that the selected consultants were: Bill Troe's firm, URS; SRF Consulting out of Minneapolis and Fargo; Interstate Engineering with offices in Bismarck, Mandan and other places; and Ulteig Engineers, from the Fargo office.

Mr. Erhardt asked if there were any problems with the school transportation deal as far as funding. Mr. Berg stated the Safe Routes to School Director's Committee has to choose the projects. He believes there were four projects submitted: the City of Bismarck, the Bismarck Public Schools and Bismarck Parks and Rec submitted as a group this year and prioritized their own projects for the process to let everyone know which projects will be funded. When submittals are made there are always more requests than funding. It is the same for all projects.

Mr. Benning added that the Safe Routes to School decision should be made in April.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Ehreth stated that the proposals for the Long Range Transportation Plan were due last Friday, the 15th. Seven companies requested proposal, but only two proposals were received, one from URS in conjunction with Houston Engineering and one from SRF in conjunction with Kadmas, Lee & Jackson. The selection committee met last week to establish some parameters or guidelines associated with the interview. He is in the process of delivering the proposals that were submitted to the various selection committee members. They will receive a week or two to review those. It is anticipated that interviews will take place around March 12, 2008.

Mr. Erhardt asked what SRF stands for. Mr. Troe stated it stands for Strgar-Roscoe Fausch.

BISMARCK PARKING STUDY UPDATE

Mr. Berg stated the draft for the Parking Study was handed out the week between Christmas and New Years. Comments have been submitted and are in the process of being compiled. An e-mail was received yesterday from Matt Inman, the project manager with Carl Walker, Inc, stating they would like to schedule a presentation before the Board of City Commissioners sometime in March and that should conclude the study with their recommendations being: short term, mid term and long term. The study has brought everything

together. The off-street ramp parking was one entity; the information regarding the needs for the medical facilities and businesses were another and this report brought everything together and compiled it into one summary for the Board of City Commissioners to make a recommendation to either implement the study or implement their own ideas.

Mr. Erhardt asked if there was a lot of feedback from the study. Mr. Berg said it wasn't presented out to the public like a normal study like you normally would do with the MPO. There weren't public meetings. There was a steering committee made up of the Bismarck Parking Authority, the Downtowners, the medical complexes, the library and he represented the Engineering office. The members were people that were impacted the most. The report was also submitted to other people that expressed interest in it.

Mr. Erhardt thinks Mandan is going to run into the same problem because they are talking about a community center. Ms. BaeHurst said she believed it was still just talk. Mr. Erhardt feels this study could be used. There are going to be parking issues. This study should be looked into.

TRANSIT UPDATE

Mr. Erhardt would like to complement Ms. Werre on the good job that is being done with the bus service. The price is stable and right. People are willing to use it. Also, the Mayor, Steve and the Board are doing a fine job with the transit update.

Ms. Robin Werre stated that Mr. Saunders made the graphs in the packets, she provided the numbers and he made the graphs for Transit. She stated that from the transit studies that had been done, one of the goals was to move the people from the para transit door to door system over to the fixed route system. If you look at the graphs, from 2004 to the present, they do show the increase in total rides. The rides are going up each year on the fixed route. The para transit numbers are also going down. It is happening, when looking at what has happened already in 2008, during the month of January the rides were up for the fixed route and then again in February. Transit was excited when the rides got to 400 riders a day on the fixed route, now the 500 numbers are being hit, of the 18 days in February, three of those days were Saturday and Saturdays are not big days, but of the other days, six of those days were over 500. Actually on the 12th of February, there were 566 rides that day. Now everything is pretty consistent in the high four hundreds and now starting into the five hundreds. They are now seeing that the change is taking place, it is slow but it is happening. Transit is looking down the road, one of the plans is: some of the New Freedom money and Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) money is going to be released shortly. There has been a meeting of the community people and they put together a list of some of the needs. One of the things they want to apply for JARC funding on is hiring a marketing person and using the money from JARC to fund that. They are still looking at a part-time position that would help train. They know that a lot of the developmentally disabled (DD) individuals can ride the fixed route, but they don't know how and they are afraid. The DD providers do not have the staff to go out with them, ride with them, show them how, and get them familiar and comfortable with it. That is not only the DD people, but the elderly as well. They have never ridden a bus and the concerns are there. Transit would like to do some group training with them. Some meetings have been done, last week at Library Square in Mandan there was a group and they had a lot of questions. The bus goes right by there and it would be so easy for them to walk out their door and get on it, but the fear is there because they have never

done it. Transit wants to work with a trainer to get some of these groups comfortable with the fixed route. There are some needs to look at expansion of the routes, whether it is to expand the hours and go beyond 6:30 at night or add on some routes. There has been a request from the University of Mary to go out there as well. That is a route in itself and is probably not the highest priority. They do want to get more involvement with Bismarck State College (BSC) and what they are looking at is a total change in the Mandan route. They would like to keep a bus in Mandan that is just a shuttle that goes around Mandan and makes a connection with a bus that goes between Bismarck and Mandan. Hopefully, to either Gateway Mall where it hasn't been going or to Kirkwood Mall, where it has been going. They have talked to the Bank of North Dakota and they are willing to give space as a transfer point so the bus coming back and forth can go there and meet the Bismarck bus. Probably looking at the college as another transfer point if it is done on the north side. Transit has not worked out all of those details yet but those are some of the thoughts that have been played around with. The other thing, in looking at down the road to maybe some of the JARC and New Freedom money is just what has been talked about with the parking. Transit has been contacted by the School of Nursing about the parking problem and is there anyway, they would like to get their students to use the fixed route more than what they are. Looking at the possibilities in the funding to look at even some shuttles. Transit has looked at the shift work, what has come out of the statewide meetings is that it does not work really well to run fixed route into the industrial areas because of the shift hours. Transit does not meet those hours. Instead of that, more shuttles could be used to do almost like a door to door service, specifically working with the industrial areas, Sykes has been interested, but we are also looking at the hospitals, some nursing homes and downtown. Transit would almost be giving them door to door service. If you look at their lower paid employees we can do some shuttles with them, every shuttle would save twelve to fifteen parking spots.

Mr. Benning asked what the money ratio would be for a new employee. Ms. Werre stated it would be 50% local match and 50% JARC funds. She added that the position has been added into the budget which will be presented to the City Commission on Tuesday along with copies of this information to show the Commissioners.

Mr. Erhardt asked if a lobbyist from the City could request the funding. Ms. Werre stated that Ken and Tom Tupa were representing the senior service providers and the funding from the Dakota Transit Association. It was the first year that there was really someone up there working and they did a lot of good work getting the funding that Transit did get. They are already working with several committees to work with legislatures before the session starts. There are some regional meetings coming up in the next month. There have been no recommendations at this time but would like funding that is permanent and steady. She said they wanted to double the car registration to six dollars. Many people spend more than that a day on a cappuccino. Then they say that farmers have too many trucks. Ms. Werre feels that many of them are unregistered anyway.

Mr. Erhardt stated this board would help in any way they could. He also asked about schools. Ms. Werre stated that in the meeting they had, one of the Associate Deans from BSC was there, and she happens to be on the Mandan School Board. The School Board over there has asked that transit consider transportation to the new junior high which is up on the north side farther than the routes go now. When transit did their routes, they had laid them out to go by the schools in Mandan. Then the schools decided to provide busing for their students, so you can ride a bus over there. She said that is something they would again look at and the possibility of

discontinuing it and providing more support for the public system or the fixed route system. Also, she is interested in getting the BSC college students more involved in riding the fixed route and knowing their numbers, they don't have a large population that live on campus, they live off campus and have to commute. They would likely hold off in building parking lots up there. She said she does see more students on the corner using the system on a gradual basis compared to what she has seen in the past and she's taking the idea back, knowing how the colleges around the state use it and it is part of their activity tickets that could help support the system.

Mr. Erhardt asked if discounts were given or flat rate. Ms. Werre stated that students in K-12 pay \$.50 a ride or \$20.00 for a pass for the month. She added that it is the same for Mandan.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Saunders stated that in the next couple of months, Mr. Ehreth and himself will be trying to get a jump on budgetary things for the upcoming UPWP for 2009-2010 budget for the MPO, specifically studies, so if the entities would give it some thought, with everybody's budget seemingly due in the summer time, the MPO needs to get an early jump to see what works and what does work for the next two years.

Mr. Saunders also asked if March 18, 2008 will work for the next Policy Board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:42 p.m., to meet again on March 18, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. in the Bis-Man Transit Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Nadeau
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:

Matt Erhardt, Chair