

**BISMARCK-MANDAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
POLICY BOARD MEETING  
June 17, 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 Doug Schonert, Ken LaMont, John Warford, Glenn Christmann, and Matt Erhardt.

Others present were Paul Benning, Sarah BaeHurst, Ben Ehreth, Steve Saunders, Jonathan Rivoli, Kim Riepl, Robin Werre, Mel Bullinger, Stacey Hanson, Bill Troe (URS), Steve Grabill and Steve Windish (Ulteig).

## **MINUTES**

Chair Erhardt called for consideration of the minutes of the May 20, 2008, meeting.

**MOTION.** Mr. Warford made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2008 meeting. Mr. Christmann seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved with Ken LaMont, Doug Schonert, John Warford, Glenn Christmann and Matt Erhardt voting in favor of the motion.

## **INTRODUCTION OF KIM RIEPL**

Mr. Saunders introduced and welcomed Kim Riepl as the new MPO staff person.

## **2009 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP) UPDATE**

Mr. Troe with URS directed the group's attention to Exhibit A in their packets, referencing specifically the "synthesis of the issues" portion, which, he explained, was identification and compilation of the major issues from studies performed in the last four to five years. It can then be demonstrated that the LRTP is the umbrella document that pulls these individual studies together.

Mr. Troe then addressed the summary and maps included in the packet. One map shows the issues identified in the 2005 LRTP update. The second map illustrates issues that have been identified and addressed in various previous studies that have been conducted including issues of access, congestion, and safety. In a meeting with Mr. Saunders and Mr. Ehreth, additional issues surfaced that have occurred since the conclusion of the previous studies which will be documented. Mr. Warford asked Mr. Troe to elaborate on the environmental areas indicated on the map. Mr. Troe replied that the environmental issues have more to do with looking at future alternatives in specific areas. These areas are primarily in the Beltway Corridors and deal with slopes, historical properties or cultural resources which would suggest trying to avoid these areas if possible.

Mr. Warford asked for additional information from Mr. Troe concerning the areas of congestion indicated on the Bismarck inset map, wondering if there were more areas of congestion other than the Washington Street, Rosser Avenue and Bowen Avenue areas shown. Mr. Troe

responded that these are the areas that have been identified in the specific study documents. The public involvement process has yet to take place along with the current count and crash data in order to determine congestion fully.

Mr. Troe indicated the list is fairly complete for the Community Committee. This is a focus group that will be comprised of individuals representing a broad range of interests. These interests would range from representing rural portions of the counties, special interest groups such as the schools, emergency responders, Parks & Recreation. The function of this committee would include staying informed of the issues, communicating those to their specific interest groups and providing input.

Mr. Troe stated that the funding memorandum talked about at last month's meeting has met with agreement by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with the exception of the 2% per year growth assumption. The FHWA suggested it be modified to remain flat for the next five years as they expect no funding increase for the region over what is currently in place. This will result in period-wide funding for the 2005 LRTP being about \$350,000-\$400,000 less than previously estimated.

Mr. Warford asked what the engineering industry is saying about the energy changes affecting the country and how the LRTP could address these issues in a manner that could help our citizens with the high energy costs. Mr. Troe replied that ride sharing, car pooling, van pooling and Transit in general needs to be emphasized. Ms. Werre added that Bis-Man Transit will be applying for funding for two new positions, which, when filled, would be able to promote these programs, particularly the van-pooling. Ms. Werre mentioned that the hospitals would be a good fit for implementing van pooling, among others. For many of these businesses, it would be more cost-effective for them to participate in a van pooling program than to build new parking lots.

#### **TRAFFIC SIGNAL OPTIMIZATION UPDATE**

Mr. Troe reported that the field portion of the study is nearly complete. There remains approximately two weeks of office data reduction to be done, which is currently underway. The networks for the US 83 Study and the Expressway Study are complete although there were some gaps. These gaps occurred from Main Avenue/Bismarck Expressway north to I-94 and also State Street south of I-94 down to Divide Avenue. These are very small areas in the scope of the study. Mr. Troe reported being about 12% done and that things are moving along right on schedule.

Mr. Warford asked if the results from the study would result in shared information that the different City departments could utilize to better improve traffic flow. Mr. Troe responded that the information will definitely be able to be implemented in the field.

#### **REGIONAL NORTH/SOUTH BELTWAY CORRIDOR STUDY UPDATE**

Mr. Grabill, Ulteig Engineers, state that significant progress has been made on two fronts of the project over the last months, specifically on the decision-making process and also on the alternative development analysis. He then detailed the need to conduct face-to-face meetings

with those officials involved in making major decisions in regards to the project. The most important issue at hand is that of keeping them informed of the alternatives and analysis so that they would be prepared to answer questions from the public. Mr. Grabill proposed a two-fold method of accomplishing this.

The first part of this method involves distribution of a newsletter outlining particular items of interest in order to keep everyone updated along with educating them to the process involved with each item.

The second part involves meetings with the officials, again with the purpose being to update and aid in the education process. The question that Mr. Grabill presented at this point pertained to the timing of the meetings. Mr. Grabill referenced a memo from Mr. Saunders dated June 4, 2008, which suggested July 15<sup>th</sup> and July 17<sup>th</sup> for a second set of public meetings requesting feedback regarding the Beltway proposals. He stated the first set of meetings was well attended and excellent feedback was received. Mr. Grabill proposed that the content of the next public meeting would include not only the proposed alternatives but also details of a steering committee that has been formed in order to more closely examine the alternatives for each corridor and the impacts of each. Mr. Grabill suggested conducting meeting with officials prior to the public meetings so as to inform and educate them as much as possible prior to receiving feedback from the public as a result of the public meetings. The other alternative is to meet with the various commissions after the public meetings.

Mr. Schonert indicated that he would like to see the meetings with the officials conducted prior to the public meetings, and Mr. Erhardt and Mr. Warford concurred that prior knowledge would be beneficial.

Mr. Windish continued the update on the North/South Beltway Corridor Beltway Study by detailing a drive taken through the alternatives proposed. He cited several items examined throughout the alternatives including terrain and other physical features such as rivers, highways and bluffs, as well as power lines, houses, driveways and these types of things that have changed since the aerial photos were taken. These items were all noted on the proposed alignments and the alignments were then presented to the steering committee to more closely review. It was determined that the alignments currently presented are the better options. Initially, a 65 mph design speed was identified for the overall design speed of the alignments, but it is now apparent that the speed design will have to be adjusted, particularly the speeds on the curves. A 55 mph speed works well for a vast majority of the corridor, with posted speeds varying between 35 mph and 55 mph. Mr. Windish directed the group's attention to the rural typical sections portrayed in Exhibit C. He stated that other options including medians had been explored but discarded in favor of the rural typical sections.

Placement of interchanges has also been examined. The current thinking is to try to combine crossings at the Burlington Northern Rail, Heart River and Old Highway 10 in Morton County into one crossing. The terrain is fairly rugged, presenting some challenges to that. On the Burleigh County side, an interchange located at 66<sup>th</sup> Street is the option of choice at this point. Access management will be a critical item in this alternative, in particular at the intersection of 71<sup>st</sup> Avenue & 66<sup>th</sup> Street as there is much residential development at that corner. Mr. Schonert indicated that he and Mr. Mill would like to meet regarding that particular area as there is much

activity taking place. Mr. Windish replied that Mr. Mill had reviewed the alternative and was very comfortable with what was presented.

Mr. Warford asked if the designation of 66<sup>th</sup> Street would influence the timing of an interchange. Mr. Windish stated that it is easier when working with the FHWA if certain criteria can first be met. These criteria include the ability to demonstrate the impact of traffic on the existing system and also being able to demonstrate the inability to improve the existing system. He continued that it becomes difficult to prove these things unless there is some development and increased traffic activity in the designated interchange area.

Mr. Warford and Mr. Christmann discussed the importance to Lincoln of locating the interchange at 66<sup>th</sup> Street versus 80<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Benning added that things are being accomplished in their proper order. He provided the necessary steps in obtaining approval for an interchange. These are:

- Establish a north/south corridor
- Once the corridor is in place, branch out and establish local roadways
- After local roadway establishment, congestion will likely increase and then the need for an interchange can be established

#### **CENTURY AVENUE UPDATE**

Mr. Bullinger stated that the intent of the construction of Century Avenue easterly from Hamilton Street to Centennial Road, the intersection of Century and Centennial Road, and from Trenton Drive to Jericho Road on Centennial Road is to urbanize the rural road section. Anticipated bid date is to be fall of 2010 with a 2011 construction. Currently, they are in the early stages of being under contract with Kadrmas Lee & Jackson (KLJ) for preliminary engineering and environmental clearances. KLJ is in the process of contacting adjacent property owners regarding preliminary surveying. A preliminary field meeting with KLJ is scheduled for Thursday (June 19<sup>th</sup>) morning after which more information will be forthcoming.

#### **TRANSIT FARE INCREASE UPDATE**

Ms. Werre reported that the Transit Board requested a fare increase which was approved by the City Commission and the new fares will become effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The demand response fare on the par-transit system will increase from \$2.00 to \$2.50 per ride and the fixed-route Capital Area Transit (CAT) system will increase from \$1.00 to \$1.25 for the full fare and the half fares for the elderly, disabled, and students will increase to \$.75. The monthly passes will remain unchanged. She stated that there were notices published in the newspaper and a public hearing was held and no negative responses were received.

Mr. Schonert questioned whether a larger margin between the CAT fares and the para-transit fare could increase ridership on the CAT. Robin responded that there are limitations placed on the amount the fares are allowed to increase. Federal law state that para-transit fares can only be as much as twice the amount of fixed-route fares.

## **REVIEW OF JOB ACCESS/REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC) & NEW FREEDOM GRANTS**

Mr. Saunders provided an introduction to the grants in question, saying that they are FTA-sponsored grants that, ultimately passed through to the ND DOT, are first approved and possibly prioritized by the MPO. These are advertised grants, and Mr. Saunders stated that the only application received was for Transit by Ms. Werre. He then asked Ms. Werre to provide detail as to what the applications consisted of.

Ms. Werre stated that one of the positions being applied for is the Transit Ride Trainer. This is classified as "Mobility Manager" and is a position that falls under the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding. This person will serve as a trainer who will work with elderly and/or disabled individuals in educating them in how to ride the Capital Area Transit (CAT). This trainer will most likely work on an individual basis with clients who are developmentally disabled and in groups with the elderly. Being able to provide this service will most likely increase ridership on the CAT as opposed to the Demand Service, and, as shown in the Transit marketing plan, a shift from Demand Service to the CAT would result in an overall cost savings for Transit which in turn, can then be used to expand routes and service to the CAT system. The Mobility Manager will also eventually work with the Marketing Director implementing the van pooling and ride share programs. This position will entail full-time hours during the summer and part-time hours during the winter. The customer service portion of this position would be comprised of weekend hours and is not covered under JARC funding and will be funded separately. Wages for the Mobility Manager will be approximately \$10.00 per hour. Mr. Erhardt questioned who provides the training for the Mobility Manager and whether there were curriculums developed for this type of position. Ms. Werre responded that there were curriculums being made available.

Mr. LaMont asked what reverse-commute means. Ms. Werre said it is transportation that allows low income people to get to their jobs with help through this program.

Ms. Werre commented that the Marketing Director would be a full-time position with a salary range of approximately \$25,000 annually. This person would develop and implement the marketing, public relations, and advertising functions of the organization with an emphasis on the van pooling and ride sharing programs discussed earlier.

Mr. Saunders brought forward the thought that this is a case where necessity has met opportunity with the grants being offered at just the right time. He noted that TAC recommended approval of moving the process forward in applying for the grants.

**MOTION:** Mr. Schonert made a motion to recommend approval by the Policy Board to move forward in applying for the position grants. Mr. Christmann seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved with Matt Erhardt, John Warford, Ken LaMont, Glenn Christmann, and Doug Schonert voting in favor of the motion.


## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Saunders noted that this would be Mr. LaMont's last Policy Board meeting representing the City of Mandan. Mr. Saunders was joined by the remaining Policy Board members in sharing comments of appreciation.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

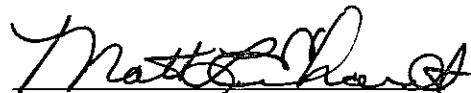
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m., to meet again on July 15, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. in the Bis-Man Transit Building.

Respectfully submitted,



Kim Riepl  
Recording Secretary

APPROVED:



Matt Erhardt, Chair