

**CORPUS CHRISTI METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)  
TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE (TPC) MINUTES**

**July 6, 2017**

**1. Call to Order and Quorum determination**

The Honorable Judge Terry Simpson called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. at the City of Corpus Christi Council Chambers.

Present: Terry Simpson, San Patricio County Judge, Chairperson; Joe McComb, City of Corpus Christi, Mayor; David Krebs, City of Portland, Mayor; Chris Caron, P.E., TxDOT-Corpus Christi District, District Engineer; Curtis Rock, Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority, Board of Directors, Chair; Loyd Neal, Nueces County Judge; Charles Zahn, Port of Corpus Christi Authority.

Staff Present: Jeff Pollack, Brigida Gonzalez, Victor Mendieta, Daniel Carrizales and Elena Buentello.

**2. Introduction of visiting agency officials**

Judge Simpson welcomed all in attendance.

**3. Approval of the June 1, 2017 TPC Meeting Minutes**

Judge Simpson called for approval of the minutes of the regular TPC meeting of June 1, 2017. Mayor Krebs made a motion; Mr. Caron seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**4. Discussion**

**A. 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session Update**

Mr. Pollack referenced a summary of transportation-related initiatives in the 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature that was included in TPC members' agenda packet. He stated that, overall, transportation advocates had assumed a defensive position. While there was no boost in transportation funding, funding for Propositions 1 and 7 was upheld. He commented on the appropriation of \$26.6B for TxDOT, which Mr. Caron confirmed, and noted that the passage of Senate Bill 312 defers sunset review for TxDOT until 2029.

Mr. Pollack referenced SB 1001, which exempts trailers of a certain weight class from required safety inspections; Mr. Zahn added that this bill had been sponsored by the Texas Port Association.

Mr. Pollack also pointed out the passage of multiple bills related to autonomous and connected vehicle technology, including House Bill 1791, which allows connected braking systems between platooning trucks, and Senate Bill 2205, which address research and testing of autonomous vehicle technology on state highways. Mr. Pollack also commented on Senate Bill 977, the passage of which prohibits the use of state money for high-speed passenger rail.

Judge Simpson asked how, if at all, Senate Bill 28—pertaining to financing of ports in the state—helped the Port of Corpus Christi. Mr. Zahn stated that the bill provides funding for ship channel improvements and calls for distributing those funds to the 11 ports up and down the coast on a pro-rata basis.

**5. Discussion and Possible Action**

**A. 2015-2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and FY 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendments**

Mr. Pollack reminded the TPC that, at the June meeting, he had mentioned the forthcoming proposed 2015-2040 MTP amendment package, which staff intends to submit as part of the August quarterly amendment cycle.

Mr. Pollack stated that the proposed amendment package is the most comprehensive amendment ever undertaken by the MPO and will result in the most complete, transparent, and user-friendly version of the MTP that the MPO has had to date. The content of the proposed amendment reflects detailed feedback from Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) received

during the MPO's Federal Certification Review (FCR) in April relating to the specificity of project descriptions and cost information and demonstration of fiscal reasonableness. Staff has been working very closely with TxDOT (Corpus Christi District) staff and the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) since April in creating this amendment package. Mr. Pollack expressed particular gratitude to the TxDOT-CRP District staff for their time and effort in complying with FHWA's requests.

Mr. Pollack referenced the summary of the proposed amendments that is included in TPC members' packets. He stated that, per a recommendation by the TAC, staff is seeking TPC approval to submit the proposed 2015-2040 MTP amendment package to TxDOT as part of the August amendment cycle.

Mr. Zahn asked if MPO staff was working on any other requests made by FHWA during the FCR. Mr. Pollack responded that the changes in the MTP represent the most substantial communication between the MPO and the FHWA staff during the FCR. He also stated that while the MPO had not yet received the draft report from the review, staff had already begun proactively addressing other feedback received during the review. Per FHWA feedback, staff has begun revisiting the Congestion Management Process narrative, which will be before the TAC and TPC in future meetings.

Mr. Pollack added that a final report from the FCR will be presented to the TPC.

Mr. Zahn made a motion; Mayor Krebs seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## **6. Executive Session**

Judge Simpson made a motion to table this item - designed to accommodate an annual performance review of the MPO Transportation Planning Director - until September 2017. Mayor Krebs seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

## **7. Staff Briefing**

### **A. State-level Involvement in Bicycle Planning**

Mr. Pollack informed the TPC of his pending appointment to the state Bicycle Advisory Committee. He also reported that the MPO staff had, on the basis of its burgeoning bike count program, been asked to serve in a technical advisory capacity for a state pilot research program to explore various bike count hardware and methodologies.

Mayor McComb inquired as to whether the MPO's bike count program was based on the assumption of a high volume of bicycle users.

Mr. Pollack stated that the bicycle count program was an attempt to quantify the baseline level of ridership under existing conditions on corridors that will be getting new bike infrastructure by way of the Bond 12 or 14 programs or as part of an MPO Transportation Alternatives grant project. The MPO will track changes in bike use over time once the new infrastructure has been installed as a means of evaluating the return on these capital investments in order to better direct future investments.

Mr. McComb responded that, despite spending a lot of time in his car, he does not see many bicycles.

Mr. Pollack stated that survey data gathered during the creation of the MPO's Bicycle Mobility Plan indicate that riders go out of their way to travel on slow speed local streets because of safety concerns under existing conditions on collectors and arterials. This finding suggests that there is an unmet demand for more robust infrastructure on the higher volume corridors. He also stated that 74% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to ride a bike more often but don't because of safety concerns, while less than 40% ride regularly, suggesting significant unmet demand for better cycling infrastructure. Mr. Pollack concluded that if the data collected over time do not demonstrate increased ridership where new infrastructure are installed, then certainly the MPO would suggest revisiting decisions about how capital investments in bike infrastructure are made.

## **B. State Metropolitan Transportation Planning Contract**

Mr. Pollack informed the TAC that TxDOT has opted to extend the existing planning contract through September 30, 2018.

## **C. Transportation Policy Committee Meeting – August 3, 2017**

Mr. Pollack stated that due to a lack of action items for the August agenda, staff propose to cancel the August meeting if TPC members are amenable. TPC was in concurrence. The next scheduled meeting of the TPC will be on September 7, 2017.

## **8. TPC Members' Comments and Concerns**

Mr. Caron inquired as to the local impact of the loss of state funding for programs in communities near non-attainment with federal ozone standards.

Mr. Pollack indicated that he had hoped to address this with the TPC, and in fact had invited Gretchen Arnold, Chair of the Corpus Christi Air Quality Group and Pollution Prevention Partnership, to present to the TPC at the next meeting. Mr. Pollack stated that, in essence, the impact on funding translates to a loss of \$200,000 per year for the next two years, pending action in the next legislature. Two programs are at risk:

1. AutoCheck/CleanFleet, which provides free screening of private and fleet vehicles and offers repair vouchers for grossly polluting vehicles to reduce emissions of the precursors of ozone pollution
2. Supplemental air quality monitoring by the College of Engineering at the University of North Texas, which operates three research grade monitoring stations in Nueces County to augment data collected by the two Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) stations in order to be able to better demonstrate the impacts of long-range transport on local ozone levels

Mr. Pollack stated that both of these programs make a meaningful contribution to our ability to preserve our attainment status. Ms. Arnold has begun coordination with industry partners in an attempt to backfill the budget deficit. Local jurisdictions might consider the feasibility of a local coalition to contribute. Administrators from both programs have indicated that they could operate—although sub-optimally—on a reduced annual budget if absolutely necessary. Leaders of local jurisdictions might also consider if and how they wish to broach this issue with the Governor's office and/or Legislature with the hope of, at a minimum, reversing this decision in the next legislative session.

TPC expressed strong interest in establishing a local coalition to mitigate the loss of funding.

Mr. Simpson inquired as to whether another local entity might be able to gather data from the three monitors if they have already been installed and will be left in place.

Mr. Zahn stated that the Port and City of Portland also operate monitors that could potentially be reposition to help provide supplemental data.

Mr. Pollack stated that he and staff would feed this information back to Ms. Arnold in anticipation of her presentation to the TPC in September.

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

Judge Simpson reiterated the importance of having Ms. Arnold of the Air Quality Group provide a presentation at the September meeting of the TPC. The tabled item, related to the Executive Session, would also be added to the September Agenda.

## **10. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were none.

## **11. Adjourn.**

Meeting was adjourned at 2:36.