

DIXIE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2015 - 1:00 p.m.
Five County Association of Governments
1070 West 1600 South, Building B
St. George, UT

PRESENT

Arthur LeBaron, Hurricane City Engineer, Vice-Chair
Jay Sandberg, St. George City Engineer
Monty Thurber, St. George City, Engineer Associate/Traffic Coordinator
Chuck Gillette, Ivins City, Public Works Director
Mike Shaw, Washington City, Public Works Director
Angela Rohr, Leeds Town
Darren Cottam, Toquerville City
Todd Edwards for Ron Whitehead, Washington County Public Works Director
Dana Meier, UDOT, Region Four
Kirk Thornock, UDOT, Region Four
Branden Anderson, UDOT, Region Four
Myron Lee, MPO Planning Manager, Five County AOG
Diane Lamoreaux, Program Specialist, Five County AOG
Fred Davies, St. George City Transit Manager
Ken Hosen, KFH Group, Inc.
Bronson Bundy, Washington City
Dustyn Shaffer, Sunrise Engineering
Kye Nordfelt, Southwest Utah Public Health Department
Craig Shanklin, Southern Utah Bicycle Alliance
Susan Crook, Citizens for Dixie's Future (CDF)
Lisa Rutherford, Citizen

ABSENT

Cameron Cutler, St. George City, Public Works Director, Chair
Derek Imlay, LaVerkin City
Jack Taylor, Santa Clara City, Public Works Director
Steve Call, FHWA, Planning Engineer (Excused)
Kelly Lund, FHWA, Planning Engineer (Excused)
Elden Bingham, UDOT Planning

Arthur LeBaron, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. It was noted that a quorum was present for conduct of business.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE

- A. Minutes from November 4, 2015 Meeting:** Arthur LeBaron, Vice-Chair, presented minutes from the November 4, 2015 Dixie Transportation Advisory Committee (DTAC) meeting for discussion and consideration.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DANA MEIER, SECONDED BY MIKE SHAW, TO APPROVE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 4, 2015 MEETING AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

Mr. Ken Hosen, KFH Group, Inc. reported that his company is beginning the process of developing a St. George to Springdale Public Transit Feasibility Study. Mr. Hosen provided background information and noted that he has over 30 years of experience working with rural and small urban transit across the country. In addition, he has managed and drove buses and taxis. Other staff at KFH is very experienced with the many aspects of transit as well. Mr. Hosen reported that he has been visiting the area for the past 2.5 days and has attended various meetings to begin the data collection and input phases of this project. He reviewed the overarching goal for transit to provide more service, higher ridership and greater mobility for all residents and visitors in a safe, efficient and effective manner. Study goals include: **1) Identification of Needs in the Entire Corridor--** Commuter, local and visitors and to provide for extensive outreach; **2) Development of Alternatives--** Realistic based on current and near term future needs, cost benefit analysis, and selection; and **3) Implementation and Financial Plan--** This will also address parking and congestion issues in Springdale which are associated with visitation at Zion National Park. Service area attributes include: 1) Two directional commuter needs; 2) Local residents and other needs; 3) Visitors and tourism related businesses; and Dixie State commuting students may generate some ridership. It was noted that there is excellent public transit at both the St. George and Springdale end points. This ensures appropriate connections and technology compatibility. These attributes may attract the ridership necessary to sustain service. There is some seasonality, but this may lessen as time passes. The focus of the feasibility study will be residents, but tourists will also be a consideration. Elements of the work plan include extensive outreach with two rounds of public meetings, stakeholder interviews, surveys and observations. A market analysis will review existing service and determine unmet service needs of the corridor, commuter, other local and visitors. A cost-benefit analysis will also provide alternatives. Implementation and financial plans will be built into the study as well. This feasibility study will not include Mag-Lev or High Speed Rail options. In addition, possible scenarios can include variations of bus service between St. George and Springdale. Mr. Hosen indicated that the KFH Group will develop a realistic plan that meets the needs of the communities and one that can be implemented. The community will be afforded the opportunity to provide input and staff will also be engaging in public/private initiatives. The plan will be simple and straightforward. Representatives will be in attendance at the Transportation Expo in February for an extensive outreach effort.

Ms. Angela Rhor, Leeds, asked if consideration for a spur to Harrisburg would be a consideration. Myron Lee responded that most constituents and elected officials desire transit, but it is difficult to determine how funding will be put in place for these services. Other connections to various areas will be kept in mind, but this study will focus on the area between St. George and Springdale. Previous studies have indicated that transit from the St. George airport to St. George would be a viable option as well. The same is true for a transit route between St. George and Hurricane. Parking issues that currently exist in Springdale may be lessened with the expansion of transit from the St. George area. Washington County is currently not a non-containment area in terms of air quality, and this may help to alleviate future problems. Committee members are encouraged to visit with Mr. Hosen in February at the Transportation Expo.

2. LONG RANGE PLAN

- A. BLM Resource Management Plan Comments:** Myron Lee reported that comments for the Dixie MPO regarding the Bureau of Land Management St. George Field Office Draft Amendment to the Resource Management Plan were refined and the final document was delivered to the BLM. He thanked everyone for their efforts in reviewing and providing edits to the comments. Comments were edited to take out emotions as much as possible when referencing the Northern Corridor.

Comments provided will be reviewed by the BLM and a final document will be released in approximately 6-8 months at which time there will be a consistency review by the Governor. The Washington County lands bill required that the BLM identify a northern transportation route in the RMP and this did not happen. A strong case has been presented for the Northern Corridor. Federal laws are in place which requires the BLM to recognize and respect local plans, of which the Long Range Transportation Plan is one. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a process that must be adhered to when there is an impact to land use. The BLM is required to respond to all substantial comments in this process. Once the final plan is released, another 30 day public comment period will be provided. Local governments feel that there is a need for right-of-way to accommodate utilities and transportation. Elimination of a Northern Corridor will cause traffic bottlenecks on various roadways throughout the area. Projected growth rates depict a 3% increase. Mike Shaw indicated that Washington City is currently experiencing an approximate 6% growth rate in new building permits, but this may be temporary. Arthur LeBaron noted that the growth rate for Hurricane is about 3-4% currently. Jay Sandberg reported that the growth rate for St. George could be somewhat higher than the 3% projection. It is anticipated that the growth rate in the Hurricane area will increase as new developments come online. Myron Lee pointed out that the travel demand model is based on current land use plans and higher growth rates would impact that model. Committee members agreed that forecasted population growth may be low for areas in Washington County.

- B. Freight Planning Process:** Curt Hutchings reported that InterPlan and UDOT have been working on a statewide freight plan. It is interesting to note that 23% of traffic on Utah highways is freight traffic. This process has been extensive and there has been good public outreach with the Utah Trucking Association. The Southern Utah Truckers Association provided input and was surprised to see improvements on I-15 northbound by the Dixie Drive exit. The primary network in this area includes I-15, SR-7, SR-9, SR-17, and SR-59. A list of 17 freight related projects along these routes is included in the plan. Map 21 requires that freight be addressed in planning processes. These projects include passing lanes and widening of roadways. Daniel Kohn, UDOT, provides a very interesting presentation on freight that passes through the state of Utah. An electronic copy of the document will be provided to committee members via email.

3. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

- A. Funding Status Report:** Myron Lee provided an updated spreadsheet depicting MPO project funding. He reported that there will be approximately \$2.4 million dollars available for programming in the year 2020. The committee can elect to program all of the funds today or reserve some funding for programming at a later date.
- B. Selection of TIP Projects for 2017-2021 TIP Program:**

Myron Lee reported that two concept reports were received as follows: **1) St. George City--** River Road Bridge and widening project is estimated at \$5.6 million; and **2) Washington City--** Merrill Road Extension from 20 East to Washington Fields Road estimated at \$2.5 million. Mike Shaw explained that the concept report

for this project was in error when submitted at \$1 million. He reported that the 2020 time frame for the Merrill Road project would be realistic and he needs to have some money available from another source in order to get the City Council to allocate funding. St. George City representatives also indicated that the time frame for the River Road project also fits into this time frame. Both entities acknowledged that it is difficult to justify federalizing a project without a minimum of \$1 million of federal funds into the project.

MOTION WAS MADE BY MIKE SHAW, SECONDED BY ARTHUR LEBARON, TO RECOMMEND PROGRAMMING OF 2020 FUNDS TO THE DIXIE TRANSPORTATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (DTEC) AS FOLLOWS: \$1 MILLION TO THE MERRILL ROAD PROJECT AND THE REMAINING BALANCE OF AVAILABLE FUNDING (APPROXIMATELY \$1.4 MILLION) TO THE RIVER ROAD AND BRIDGE WIDENING PROJECT. Discussion on the motion included the difficulty of federalizing projects that have limited funding from the MPO. It was noted that project funding programmed to other projects can also be shifted from one project to another. Mike Shaw explained the need to expand Merrill Road in order to move traffic from the Washington Fields Road to the Mall Drive Bridge and noted that east/west connections in Washington are bad and in need of improvements. This also ties into the Southern Parkway. Committee members mentioned that there is not that much funding to work with and it would be difficult to take the pain away for St. George, but the option of moving funding from one project to another could help to alleviate this issue. Kirk Thornock mentioned that funds programmed into the Mall Drive Underpass are a holding spot because they do not want this project federalized. Jay Sandberg commented that River Road is very congested at this time and in need of work to alleviate this problem. However, both of these projects would be out to 2020 before it would construction would likely occur. Arthur LeBaron acknowledged no additional discussion and called for a vote on the motion. **MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.**

Myron Lee provided a brief update regarding the local option sales tax that was included on the ballot in 17 counties. The initiative passed in 10 of the counties and failed in the other seven counties. It did not pass in Salt Lake and Utah counties. The option is still available to other counties in the future. Information has been provided to the Dixie Transportation Executive Council (DTEC) in terms of how cities could expend these funds if they were available. County officials must determine when or if this will be on the ballot and voters will ultimately decide the matter. Elected officials have indicated that general fund monies will be made available for funding transportation projects. Myron Lee explained that the Long Range Transportation Plan is updated every four years and the project list is revisited during this update to determine immediate and future needs. However, the state of Utah did enact a \$.05 per gallon gas tax increase that will be distributed through the B & C road formula. These funds will begin to flow into city and counties in March 2016. A survey that was conducted indicates that the local option sales tax initiative would have failed in Washington County. This is still an option for consideration in the future. Todd Edwards reported that a number of other tax increases have been approved in Washington County over the past few years. County officials hesitate to include another tax initiative on the ballot without it being a general election year and until additional education can be provided to voters in advance. Curt Hutchings reported that there is some discussion for changes at the legislative level for counties of the 3rd class in terms of the distribution of funds.

4. LOCAL PROJECT STATUS UPDATE

- A. **Hurricane:** Arthur LeBaron reported that the Purgatory Road Environmental Assessment is ongoing for the connection between SR-9 and Washington Dam Road.
- B. **Ivins:** Chuck Gillette reported that Ivins is in the process of wrapping up their Transportation Master Plan with formal presentation to the City Council tomorrow. A pre-bid meeting was held for the Old Highway 91 project and the bid opening will occur on December 15th. Construction is anticipated to begin in February 2016.
- C. **LaVerkin:** None.
- D. **Leeds:** None.
- E. **St George:** Fred Davies reported that a consultant has been selected for the transit system redesign and the contract is currently in legal review. This effort will provide more efficient transit routes, better coverage with the same dollars that are available, and options for expansion of services. The bid has not been awarded by the City Council at this point.

Jay Sandberg reported that the slurry project has been completed and bidding is in the process for crack seal projects. Work is progressing with the bridge widening on River Road with acquisition of right-of-way. Work continues on Canyon View Drive with some inconvenience to local residents. The Mall Drive bridge widening and signal project is moving along with anticipated completion in March 2016. Design for the Mall Drive underpass drainage is approximately 30% complete. This is a joint project between St. George City and UDOT that will be completed prior to widening of I-15. The City will complete the realignment of Red Hills Parkway and drainage in this area and UDOT will construct the underpass.

Monty Thurber reported that St. George City has awarded a contract to Alta Planning for development of a St. George City Active Transportation Plan. A lot of the information collected for the MPO Active Transportation Plan will be utilized in this planning effort. The kickoff meeting was held last week and it is anticipated that the plan will be completed by April 2016.

- F. **Santa Clara:** None.
- G. **Toquerville:** Darren Cottam reported that Toquerville City has completed an update for their Capital Facilities Plan. A two block reconstruction project on Hillside Drive. UDOT funding will be utilized for a curb and gutter project from Center Street to West Field Road. Arthur LeBaron complimented Mayor Darrin LeFevre for the excellent presentation on the Toquerville bypass road that was presented at the Transportation Commission meeting.
- H. **Washington City:** Mike Shaw reported that the 3650 South storm drainage and reconstruction project is nearing completion. It is anticipated that the Washington Fields Road project will be out to bid sometime in January 2016.

- I. **Washington County:** None.
- J. **UDOT:** Dana Meier reported that UDOT administration is optimistic that a five year transportation funding bill is likely to be signed by President Obama in the next few days. This legislation has passed in the House and Senate and is awaiting signature.

Kirk Thornock reported that \$240,000 in TAP funds have been approved for the Old Highway 91 project from Swiss Village to 200 East in Ivins. He thanked committee members for working together well as a group and for making it easy for UDOT to move forward with this allocation. He also noted that updated cash flow figures have been provided to Myron Lee for use in updating the MPO TIP. These numbers reflect state funds that have been shifted between projects in Washington County. The Transportation Commission approved funding for the following projects: **1) Milepost 4-5 on I-15, \$28 million in 2017--** An additional lane will be added in each direction and the structure will be widened to accommodate a four lane section for the future. **2) Mall Drive and SR-18--** These two projects will be undertaken as well; **3) SR-34, St. George Boulevard, 9th to 10th East, \$2.5 million--** This project will be part of UDOTs initiative with 3D design and advertising. Efficiency funds will be utilized to allow this project to be designed for construction in 2017. This will help with storage, traffic backup, as well as improve turn movements. There will be some right-of-way acquisition on the right side of the road.

6. **STATE AND FEDERAL UPDATE**

- A. **Program Development - UDOT:** None.
- B. **Federal Oversight:** None.

7. **ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

The next DTAC meeting will be held Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at the Five County Association of Governments office. The next DTEC meeting is scheduled for December 16th. Myron Lee reminded committee members that the Transportation Expo is scheduled for February 9, 2016. The MPO will conduct a survey of participants similar to the one utilized last year. Committee members can contact MPO staff to provide questions they would like to have included in the survey.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION WAS MADE BY TODD EDWARDS, SECONDED BY ARTHUR LEBARON, TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.