

**DIXIE TRANSPORTATION EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (DTEC)
MINUTES
August 15, 2012**

PRESENT

Jim Eardley, Washington County Commission
Gail Bunker, St. George City
Jeff Turek, Washington City
Jimmie Hughes, St. George City
Ken Sizemore, Five County
Mike Shaw, Washington City
Myron Lee, Dixie MPO
Dave Demas, Dixie MPO
Marreen Casper, Sen. Hatch
Jerry Lewis, UDOT Commissioner
Matt Ence, Santa Clara City
Larry Bulloch, St. George
Mike Empey, Rep. Matheson
Curt Hutchings, Dixie MPO
Dana Meier, UDOT
Ron Whitehead, Washington County Public Works

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Eardley called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm. A quorum was confirmed.

MINUTES

Approval of Minutes of May 16, 2012 and June 20, 2012

Motion: Motion by Councilman Jeff Turek to Approve the Minutes of May 16, 2012, and June 20, 2012. Motion seconded by Councilman Matt Ence and carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

- a. Self-Certification of MPO programming

Mr. Lee distributed a handout entitled, "Resolution: Urban Transportation Planning Process Certification." Every year, the MPO must certify that it is following proper rules and regulations governing MPOs in general. This agreement is between DTEC and UDOT and was approved by the DTAC earlier this month. ~~DTAC asked where the~~

~~\$700,000 local match from St. George City was going, and the MPO committed to look into that before the TIP is finally approved.~~

~~Dana Meier said that the \$700,000 has been “floating around,” for a long time, having originated from the Valley View Drive Bridge project. Most recently, the City has supplied a commitment letter to the Department of Transportation to secure additional funding on other projects. The DOT’s position is that it fulfills the \$700,000 obligation. With Commissioner Lewis’s concurrence, we will be deleting that from the TIP and utilizing the commitment letter as replacement for what these funds would have covered.~~

Motion: Motion by Councilwoman Bunker to Approve the Self-Certification of MPO Programming, as presented. Motion seconded by Councilman Turek and carried by unanimous vote.

b. TIP Public Comment Response

As the TIP went out for public comment DTAC committee member Larry Bulloch of St. George City asked where the \$700,000 local match was coming from listed under PIN #7843. The MPO committed to look into that before the TIP is finally approved.

Dana Meier explained that the \$700,000 has been “floating around,” for a long time, having originated from the Valley View Drive Bridge project. Most recently, the City has supplied a commitment letter to the Department of Transportation to secure additional funding on other projects. The DOT’s position is that this effort fulfills the City’s \$700,000 obligation. With Commissioner Lewis’s concurrence, UDOT deleted the obligation from the TIP utilizing a commitment letter from the City as replacement for what these funds would have covered.

The Transportation Improvement Plan went out for public comment, and one comment was received, from Ms. Lisa Rutherford of Ivins. She complained that the TIP was hard to find, and, once found, hard to understand. Further, she wants to make sure that these projects are based on valid population projections. The MPO’s response was that we will work harder in the future to make the TIP more accessible. She was assured that this TIP is based on the most recent and accurate population projections.

Motion: Motion by Councilman Ence to Acknowledge Receipt of the Public Comment(s) and Approve the TIP. Motion seconded by Mayor Hart and carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. ~~On-Board Household Travel~~ Survey Update

Mr. Lee said that as part of the ongoing household travel survey, \$15,000 was set aside as our contribution to the household travel survey to do an on-board survey with our transit riders. Basically, we are asking people who ride SunTran questions about their trip: where they are going to and coming from, the purpose of the trip, details about themselves, and, if services were expanded, what their desires would be. That data, along with the rest of the survey, should be delivered on or about October 24th and it will be provided to all planning and transportation organizations for use in updating travel demand models.

b. Scenario-based Planning

In the Salt Lake area right now there is an effort to determine different ways to develop roads and other transportation facilities, using population projections and growth rates. When we put together our 2040 plans and look at future roads, we assumed that in the future we would have some fee and tax increases, some “funding assumptions.” For planning purposes, we assumed those funds would be available for future transportation needs. What the Wasatch Front group has done is assume the funding increases will not happen and removed them from the planning. In recent weeks the Dixie Our-MPO has also considered planning based on no funding increases in the future by rearranging the order of the projects.

If the MPO moves forward with planning road projects in Phase I, we would need about \$564 million to fund those projects, whereas funds received would only be about \$467 million, representing a \$93 million shortfall. Getting into Phase II, the shortfall decreases, and by Phase III, there is a surplus. The scenario of building a future road network without future tax increases is possible if land use plans are changed to accommodate higher residential densities in heavily urbanized areas and “city centers”.

Mr. Lee asked the group for suggestions and opinions on whether to ~~do the same thing that proceed with scenario-based planning in coordination with~~ the Wasatch Choice for 2040 group ~~is doing, which is an update of the Envision Utah process or~~. Specifically, should the Dixie MPO draw up new plans and compare them with our current plan containing those future funding assumptions to a different type of plan where we’re increasing density in urban centers and relying more heavily on biking, walking, and mass transit.

Chairman Eardley asked how Vision Dixie fits into the process, and Mr. Lee agreed noted that Vision Dixie looked-looks at in-growth and the creation of walkable communities, and those same principles could be used to come up with a drive scenario-based planning. Larry Bulloch said he thinks we have been following Vision Dixie all along with transit service and walkable communities. Councilman Turek added that it is important to determine the type of transit being considered, because if it's bus transit, the same roads need to be built. If the transit is light rail, as in northern Utah, how does the cost of that compare with the cost of building roads?

Chairman Eardley suggested bringing the Vision Dixie booklets to the next meeting for discussion regarding the concept of urban centers, open spaces, and future development. Everyone agreed that these plans may change with additional growth, which is happening at a higher percentage that than the Governor's Office of Planning & Budget predicts. Mr. Lee said that our 30-year transportation plan makes the assumption that additional revenue tax increases will be coming implemented into this area, not just from local increases-entities like Washington County and St. George City but also from the state level, bringing more general fund money into to fund the planned transportation projects. Ron Whitehead said that, regardless of which direction the MPO takes, additional road infrastructure will be required. Commissioner Lewis said that some of these items will change as the long-range plan is updated every four years. If something urgent came up that wasn't contained in the plan, the long-range plan would be amended to take that into account. Chairman Eardley asked the UDOT representatives about the attitude of the legislature towards developing potential sources of highway revenue; Mr. Meier said that he assumes the legislature will continue to support transportation but that it may not be at the same level of funding as shown in our current assumptions. Revenues are declining, and the atmosphere is not conducive to raising taxes. Another question is how to force increased densities in urban areas. Councilman Hughes pointed out the inherent problem in forcing density: if only a two-lane road is built, and people are urged to use mass transit or walk, then those who decline to do so will complain that the road is insufficient.

Mr. Lee asked whether the committee wants him to bring back data concerning the transportation costs for a high-density model for consideration. Larry Bulloch said that the MPO should follow the Master Plans for the various communities, and Mr. Lee said they are already doing that. Current land-use plans indicate there will be build-out in 2035, and perhaps the cities need to take a closer look at their land-use plans with a view toward building up densities. Councilman Ence said that he thinks where the County will end up is somewhere short of the forty-year projected principles expressed by Vision Dixie.

Mayor Hart said that it's impossible to force density or force people to live a lifestyle that they don't want to live. Scenarios change when trends change, which is a fluid process, but he doesn't see the necessity to spend a lot of money preparing a variety of scenarios that reflect different trends. The concepts of freedom and mobility will not change dramatically over time, however.

c. Washington Parkway Status Report

Ron Whitehead said that a meeting took place recently with the BLM and the RAC committee concerning the proposed Northern Parkway (also called Washington Parkway). Twenty-five to thirty citizens showed up to go on the tour and express concerns. They were skeptical of the claims that the tortoise reserve habitat would actually be enhanced by the Parkway, ~~in that it would provide a fire break~~. Larry Bulloch participated in a conference call on the same issue and reported that the study will be completed, agencies will be consulted (with Washington County as the lead), and data will be presented to various agencies to try to present the facts. Mayor Hart said the opposition is very close-minded and emotional, with rampant speculation based on few facts. Mr. Meier said that UDOT has hired a biologist who will affirm that the tortoise habitat will be improved. ~~One~~ ~~The big~~ problem is fire, and current regulations prohibit a fire response on the Reserve. Over ~~30%-50 percent~~ of the tortoise population has been wiped out in the past ~~two-five~~ years due to fires. The prime opposition to the Parkway is a group called Citizens for Dixie's Future, which promotes zero-based growth.

d. MAP-21 Review

Mr. Lee said that last year, when the TIP was being put together, they were anticipating that MAP-21 would result in a 10-30% decrease in funding. The legislature did pass MAP-21, and money flowing into the MPO will increase by about 12% rather than decreasing. The MPO will therefore have more project money to program and start building some of the roads mentioned earlier.

Additionally, MAP-21 requires the MPO to review its boundaries. The MPO has met with the RPO, and Dave Demas, recently hired as a planner by Five County Association of Governments, reported on that meeting. Mr. Demas said that there was an excellent discussion on boundaries, with generally favorable responses to the proposition that the RPO join into the MPO boundaries. Participants asked for additional information and time to consider, but in general the response was positive. One of the key elements to be discussed is vote share. Mr. Bulloch asked how the process works, and the

response was that FHWA requires that the MPO review its boundaries every ten years during the census and reach out to the urban cluster areas to determine any interest in joining the MPO. DTEC would reach consensus on having the RPO join the MPO boundary, revise the founding documents and charter. Hurricane, LaVerkin, Toquerville, and Leeds all expressed a desire to join the MPO, but they also wanted to have a voice at the table and be voting members. The population of the current MPO with just the four current cities (Ivins, Washington, Santa Clara, and St. George) is about 106,000. MAP-21 decided to leave the population thresholds alone, so if the MPO adds the four outlying cities, it will increase the population by about 20,000 people. When UDOT gets small urban planning monies (flex monies), they divide that into five shares (not equal) based on population: each of the four MPOs and the Joint Highway Commission. Right now, the money in the RPO goes to the JHC. If we re-draw our MPO boundary to include those eastern cities, that money would then flow through the MPO and the dollar figures would be about \$398,000 additional money that would flow through the MPO instead of JCH.

Gail Bunker asked whether there were any negatives associated with these cities joining the MPO, and no one thought of any, with the possible exception of non-attainment of air quality. Mr. Lee said that if the air quality issue was a reaches non attainment it would affect the entire County ~~issue~~, not ~~the concern of just~~ the MPO. Councilman Ence asked to be informed of the future needs of each of the four cities to determine whether they are compatible with those of the MPO as a whole.

Mr. Meier said that Hurricane is the biggest community of the four and has the most resources. A lot of Hurricane's funding comes from the JHC, and they feel fortunate to receive enough money every four years to get a million-dollar match. In other words, he doesn't see money from the MPO funneled off to solve the problems of the RPO cities.

Chairman Eardley suggested inviting representatives from the RPO to join the next DTEC meeting and discuss the issue of joining the MPO. Mayor Hart agreed, saying that it is a matter of when, not if, that merger should take place.

UDOT/FHWA BUSINESS

Mr. Meier said that there is an ongoing right-of-way acquisition issue concerning the Southern Parkway. The Attorney General anticipates having the Order of Occupancy by October 1. There is a limitation of operations where we wouldn't be impacting the contractor until December 15, but there is still some concern that they are dragging their feet and trying to delay the work. Advertisement for the Southern Parkway has been delayed another month to reassess the position of the Attorney General, and it is hoped

to have a contractor on the job around the middle of October for Segment Three of the Southern Parkway. As to Segment Four, that bid was cancelled and will be re-advertised in December. Segment Six of the Washington Fields Road, that would complete the loop from Hurricane to the Airport, is being worked on.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 19, 2012, in the Downstairs Conference Room of the Washington County Administration Building located at 197 E. Tabernacle St., St. George, Utah, at 12:00 p.m.

Having no other business, Chairman Eardley adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Christine Hall