

**TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021
REGULAR MEETING, COUNCIL CHAMBERS
212 NORTH BONNER AVENUE, TYLER, TEXAS**



Members Present:

Don Warren, Chair; Nathaniel Moran; Ed Broussard; Carolyn Caldwell; Cameron Williams; Frank Davis; Cary Nix; Vernon Webb and Gary Halbrooks.

Members Absent:

Leslie Black and Riley Harris

Staff Present:

Heather Nick; Michael Howell and Shelia Henderson.

Others Present:

Andrea Ostraka, Ashley Shultz, Bennett Powell, and Jared Draper of the Toole Design Group; Gaylord Hughey, Bob Westbrook

Don Warren called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Cameron Williams moved, seconded by Frank Davis, to approve the minutes from March 25, 2021. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Action Items:

1. Consider adopting the 2021 Transit Route Study

Andrea Ostraka of Toole Design Group and the project manager of the Tyler Transit Route Study presented the results the study. Ms. Ostraka noted that although the study began as the Covid-19 pandemic was underway, what developed was compelling and meets the objectives of evaluating the efficiency and the effectiveness of service of Tyler Transit. Identifying any route changes that might better serve the community and its' needs of the present day, and better connect residents to key employment, education, and health care destinations. Ms. Ostraka stated that virtual surveys were conducted to get feedback from the public. Even though there are recommendations for improvements, there is consistent ridership, and on time performance is very good. The recommendations that needed to be prioritized and create valued principles were summed up into three key things, simplifying the system, serve key destinations and pursue existing resources. There were also suggestions for refining route alignments, reducing headways, and adding a southern transfer station to reflect the growth in south Tyler.

Mr. Howell added that the undertaking was a partnership that the MPO did in consultation and cooperation with Tyler Transit and has been recommended for approval by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Nathaniel Moran moved, seconded by Ed Broussard, to adopt the 2021 Transit Route Study. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

2. Consider adopting the 2021 Master Street Plan

Mr. Howell presented stating that this item was presented at the previous MPO meeting. No action was taken at that time because none of the representatives from the county were present and the board didn't want to act without at least having one representative available to give their input. Mr. Howell proceeded to update the board on the things that have happened since the item was last presented. Mr. Howell noted that the long range goal was to have the two plans work in tandem. The recommendation changes received from the public have already been addressed. Mr. Howell stated the Technical Advisory Committee staff recommended the adopting of the Master Street Plan.

Frank Davis moved, seconded by Cary Nix, to adopt the 2021 Master Street Plan. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

3. Consider adopting amendments to 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Howell presented stating that both projects are being recommended for amendments have to do with old Jacksonville Highway FM 2493. One of the recommendations that came out of a corridor study commissioned by the MPO in 2015 which studied Old Jacksonville Highway from Loop 323 in Tyler to Highway 69 south of Bullard. The study forecasted congestion issues at the intersection at Loop 323 which prompted additional improvements. Initially a study looking at the impacts of improvements at the at the intersection, specifically an overpass, was looked at by the TxDOT. There was a lot of concern raised. Mr. Howell noted that the concern raised about looking into the overpass, prompted the MPO Policy Board to change the description of what was originally put into the plan.

Draft language was shared with the public specifying that an overpass would not be considered. After presenting the draft language, the MPO staff was notified that the proposed language Federal Regulation 23 CFR 771.111 (f) (3) which prohibits recipients of federal funds from eliminating construction alternatives before going through the environmental review process. Mr. Howell stated that the staff proposed an alternative solution to include the feedback received from the public in an appendix in the TIP. Mr. Howell further stated that the recommendation made by the Technical Advisory Committee was to not approved the draft amendments and instead adopt the staff proposal to include the public comments in a newly created appendix to maintain federal compliance.

Tyler City Councilman Bob Westbrook, 4116 Pine Creek Drive, stated that he was in favor of adopting the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee to not change the wording and description of the scope of work as of the improvements in the infrastructure of FM 2493, Old Jacksonville Highway and Loop 323.

Gaylord Hughey, representing several major businesses in the city, expressed his view of eliminating the overpass from consideration from both the TIP and MTP programs.

Nathaniel Moran stated that he thought that the overpass option had been eliminated based on the prior revision to the project description. Gary Halbrooks responded saying that he understood the revision to the project description was intended to ensure TxDOT reviewed all potential intersection improvements, not just an overpass.

Vernon Webb stated that the TxDOT staff had been working with a consultant to develop multiple improvement options for the Loop 323 intersection, one of those options being an overpass. Gary Halbrooks asked what the timeframe was before they would be ready to show all of the alternatives to the public. Mr. Webb said two months.

All Board members weighed in on the discussion expressing their views on addressing the public comments that had been received while also meeting the federal regulations related to project selection.

Don Warren moved to remove the intersection improvement project, CSJ: 2075-02-066, from the MTP and the TIP, seconded by Nathan Moran. A rollcall vote was requested.

Ayes: Don Warren, Ed Broussard, Nathaniel Moran, Cary Nix, and Frank Davis
Nays: Cameron Williams, Carolyn Caldwell, Gary Halbrooks, Vernon Webb

The motion carried with a 5 – 4 vote.

A second motion was made by Nathaniel Moran to amend the description of the project to widen Old Jacksonville to six lanes from Loop 323 to FM 2813, CSJ: 0191-03-084, to include the language, “The MPO strongly expresses a preference that a NEPA-approved design be adopted as part of the project description where property owners are assured safe ingress and egress including but not limited to the installation of appropriate turn lanes and traffic signals at the intersection of Old Jacksonville Highway and Capitol Drive to accommodate cross lane turning requirements of semi-tractor-trailers. the MPO reserves the right to amend or delete the project description should that preference not be approved in the NEPA review and TxDOT provide a draft of the NEPA study results before it is finalized in sufficient time for the MPO to act in accordance with its preferences as stated above.”

Ayes: Don Warren, Ed Broussard, Nathaniel Moran, Cary Nix, Frank Davis, Cameron Williams, Carolyn Caldwell, and Gary Halbrooks.
Nays:
Abstain: Vernon Webb

The motion carried.

4. Consider adopting the fiscal year 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Howell presented updates on the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Mr. Howell noted that a conservative budget is being recommended due to a lack of significant changes to electric projects, administrative costs, and managing GIS work in Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Howell stated that what is being recommended at this time is an update to the traffic demand model, which is typically done every five years. The model provides a look into the long range plan of the Metropolitan Transportation Program with studies of future congestion needs to help make the board make the best decision in 2024. Mr. Howell stated the Technical Advisory Committee staff recommended the adopting of the fiscal year 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Vernon Webb moved, seconded by Nathaniel Moran, to adopt the fiscal year 2022-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Staff Updates:

1. MPO Executive Director's Report

Ms. Nick stated the City of Tyler was awarded a grant to extend the Legacy Trail Network inside of Loop 323 and North Peete Elementary. Ms. Nick noted that there were potential changes proposed by the federal government on the minimum urban area population totals to qualify as a metropolitan statistical area. A second proposal would also significantly reduce areas that could be considered urban. An analysis by the staff was completed and found that requirements would still be met, however the state as a whole would be affected.

2. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Mr. Howell provided notice of the upcoming Technical Advisory Committee meeting on July 1, 2021 and the next Transportation Policy Committee meeting scheduled on July 22, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.