

HAGERSTOWN/EASTERN PANHANDLE MPO REGULAR MEETING – OCTOBER 20, 2004

The Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle MPO held its regular meeting on Wednesday, October 20, 2004 in the Berkeley County Planning Commission Meeting Room, Dunn Building, 400 Stephen Street, 2nd Floor, Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Present were: Chairman, Gregory I. Snook, President, Washington County Board of County Commissioners; Vice-Chairman, Jim Knode, Jefferson County Commissioner; Mike Nixon, MD DOT; Donald C. Bailey and Jack Pascoli, WV DOT-Urban Study Section; Howard Strauss, President, Berkeley County Board of County Commissioners; Mark Baldwin, Martinsburg City Manager; Kathleen A. Maher, Planning Director, City of Hagerstown; Bob Gordon, Region 9-Planning and Development Council; Lynn Weiger, Eastern Panhandle Transit Authority; Jim Kercheval, Washington County Board of County Commissioners; Michael C. Thompson, Planning Director for Washington County; Jill Baker, Associate Planner, and Sandy Coffman, Administrative Assistant, Washington County Planning Commission. Lewis Grimm and Ryan Harris of Cambridge Systematics, Inc. were also present.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Mr. Strauss made a motion to accept the minutes of May 19, 2004, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Kercheval. Unanimously approved.

Before proceeding, Mr. Snook stated that a T.I.P. Amendment for West Virginia would be added to the agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

- **T.I.P. Amendments – Maryland**

Mr. Nixon presented the Maryland T.I.P. amendments. The first amendments were to amend the current T.I.P. for FY 2004-2006, adding the maintenance rehabilitation of U.S. 11 at the Potomac River (W2000-4, STIP# A-39-4), and resurfacing projects (W2000-5, A-39-3). Mr. Kercheval made a motion to approve the T.I.P. amendments for FY 2004-2006, as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Knode. Unanimously approved.

The Maryland T.I.P. Amendments for FY 2005-2007, include W2000-2 (A-32-6), W-2000-3 (A-32-5), W2000-4 (A-32-4), W 2000-5, (A-32-3), W2000-6 (A-32-2), W2000-7 (A-32-1), W2001-5 (H-218-4), and W2001-8 (H-215-2). The FY 2005 submission will be combined with the other five MPOs of Maryland, plus the non-urbanized area projects, which are consolidated into a State T.I.P. and forwarded to the Governor for approval. Approval is anticipated in February 2005. The amendments include two amendments for capital assistance and operating funds for the Small Urban Transit System of Washington County – County Commuter services. The operating funds for FY 2005 include the purchase of three small buses (van style) for the County Commuter system and shop equipment. Funding for FY 2006 proposes 3 to 4 larger buses, and FY 2007 funding proposes 3 to 4 larger buses. Mr. Nixon stated that there is a program to replace the entire fleet at 3 to 4 buses per year.

Mr. Snook questioned what Washington County's allotment was for FY 2004 and whether the County has an option on the size of the buses proposed. Mr. Snook stated that, in the past, the Board of County Commissioners for Washington County have discussed the type of buses that would provide better efficiency and still provide room for growth. Mr. Nixon stated that he would have the regional planner of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) contact Mr. Snook to address his questions. Mr. Kercheval made a motion to approve the T.I.P. amendments for FY 2005-2007, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Strauss. The motion was unanimously approved.

- **T.I.P Amendments – West Virginia**

Mr. Bailey presented a T.I.P. amendment for FY 2004-2007. This project is currently listed in the FY 2004-2006, with a pending status for Federal funding. This project now has an assigned Federal project number of STP-0009 (161)C for paving 4 lanes (2.5 miles) of the new West Virginia Route 9 with asphalt, from County Route 8 to 0.38 mile west of County Route 1. The total cost of the project is \$7,945,000. Mr. Knode made a motion to approve the West Virginia T.I.P. amendment, as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Maryland State Highway Administration – I-81 Widening Project Status Review**

Nicole Washington, Project Manager for the Project Planning Division of the Maryland State Highway Administration, was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment. Mr. Nixon provided a handout on the I-81 Improvement Project for Maryland, extending from the West Virginia State Line to the Pennsylvania State Line. He proceeded to provide a brief overview of the recent public meeting held on October 6, 2004 in Hagerstown, Maryland. The presentation was about the locations and options to improve traffic operations and safety along I-81. Toll options and a truck weigh station are being considered along the I-81 corridor in Maryland. There were approximately 6 or 7 citizens who spoke at the public meeting, including Commissioner Snook. A decision is anticipated later this year. The decision will be submitted to the Federal government for approval and will be carried forward approximately one year from now.

Mr. Snook stated that there were several toll options proposed by the State of Maryland, and one option is close to the Williamsport area between Exit 1 and the bridge that would probably have an effect on West Virginia. One of the issues raised was the truck traffic trying to bypass the toll would go through the Town of Williamsport and Marlow. Another option presented by the State Highway Administration was a proposed truck weigh station on the southbound side of I-81 between Halfway Boulevard and US 40. There have also been discussions about a weigh station on the northbound side of I-81 in the West Virginia area. A discussion followed on the toll option. The proposed toll fee would be approximately up to \$2.00, with an easy pass option. Mr. Kercheval stated that the toll option is being considered because the collection of a toll fee could advance the process of the widening project. Mr. Snook stated that the West Virginia County officials could submit their written testimony on the I-81 Improvement Project for Maryland to the Project Manager, Ms. Washington. The handout included a form for anyone who wishes to comment on the proposed I-81 widening project. The public record is open until November 10, 2004. Another meeting will be held in the spring on I-81 Improvement Project for Maryland.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Long-Range Transportation Plan Update – Cambridge Systematics, Inc.**

Mr. Grimm, Project Manager for Cambridge Systematics, Inc., presented an update on the Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The last update was provided in May 2004. He proceeded to provide a brief overview on the status of the LRTP. Cambridge is in the process of developing the

Needs Plan, which outlines those improvements that would be necessary “above and beyond” the projects already planned for the next 5 to 10 years. The estimated total needs requirement for Washington County is approximately 1.1 billion dollars, which is a combination of major regional projects and other County and City projects. The total estimate for the Needs Plan for Berkeley and Jefferson counties is \$750 million, with a large portion of that estimate being the improvements to I-81 and Route 340. They have identified the costs for each of the projects and then prioritized the projects as to which one would provide the most benefits. They are also beginning to combine the cost estimates against the projected revenues. The projected revenues of both states are substantially less than what the anticipated costs of the projects would be. The consultant is currently identifying which projects are likely to be funded and what projects would still be identified in the long range plan as a needed project, but no funds can be identified at the current time. Mr. Grimm stated that a series of public information meetings have been scheduled in mid November. The meeting in Berkeley County will be held on November 16 in the James Rumsey Tech School, Jefferson County’s meeting will be held on November 17 in the Jefferson High 9th Grade School, and in Washington County the meeting will be held on November 18 at South Hagerstown High School. The meetings will include a presentation of the Needs Plan, which will begin to identify the needs that are most likely to be funded, and the projects that are beyond those identified by the needs process to accommodate demands up to the year 2030. The meetings will also request input from the community as to what they believe are the most important projects, all factors being considered.

Mr. Baldwin asked if the local government could receive advance copies of what would be presented at the public information meetings. He also requested that a meeting be held with the consultant, to review the information that will be presented and the projects that have been identified before November 10th. Mr. Grimm stated that his staff would meet with City of Martinsburg and Berkeley County staff, to provide a more detailed briefing before the public meetings. Mr. Strauss recommended that the LRTP should include a plan for a corridor area around Martinsburg, which would provide assistance to the County Planning Commission and encourage them to also include it in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Grimm stated that they can define the general corridor in the LRTP, and even though it might not attract that much traffic during their horizon frame, one of the purposes of having the MPO process is to continue to update and refine the plan, as new development occurs. Mr. Knode stated that he believes the connection of Route 9 at Louden County in Virginia should also be addressed at the public information meeting.

Mr. Grimm stated that Cambridge Systematics, Inc. is still on schedule to have the Long-Range Transportation Plan project completed by the end of February, and they were working towards an earlier completion date. Mr. Snook thanked Mr. Grimm for his presentation and the information provided.

- **Future Meeting(s)**

Mr. Strauss stated that included with the agenda packet for this meeting was a letter from Bob Gordon of Region 9. He asked if Mr. Gordon wished to review any of the issues, as outlined in his letter. Mr. Gordon stated that he was concerned about some of the MPO functions and suggested that a committee or someone could review the operation of the MPO functions and determine how to make it work better in the future. He stated that some of his concerns were MPO meetings, data collection, budgetary matters, MPO policy, public involvement, T.I.P. amendments approved via a telephone poll without advertising, I-81 project, issues with air quality, and ensuring communication between the two States. Mr. Snook stated that he was receptive and open to modifying the format of meetings, but would request specifics before a meeting is called. Meetings are held when necessary with consideration given to those members who travel a considerable distance. He further stated that he believes that both West Virginia and Maryland have been receptive to one another with involvement in projects.

Mr. Baldwin stated that he believes that the agenda procedures should be followed, per the MPO’s by laws, with proper advertising and notification, and that the agenda published should be the one

followed and that perhaps these items could be tightened up. Mr. Strauss agreed with Mr. Baldwin's comments and added that he wants to be sure that there is a system in place that will properly notify the media. He suggested that, since Bob Gordon is their contact on the West Virginia side, he could confirm with the Staff of Washington County that the media has been contacted and that the agenda has been properly posted. Mr. Nixon suggested that the issues raised should be handled at the Staff level and recommendations could be brought back to the Interstate Council at the next meeting. Mr. Snook thanked Mr. Gordon for his input.

The next regular Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting will be held in Jefferson County.

ADJOURMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Michael C. Thompson, MPO Coordinator