

**MINUTES
HAGERSTOWN EASTERN PANHANDLE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

April 20, 2005

The HEPMPO held its regular meeting on Wednesday, April 20, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. at the Washington County Administrative Annex, 80 West Baltimore Street, Hagerstown, Maryland.

The following members were present: Chairman, Gregory Snook, President of the Washington County Board of County Commissioners; Vice Chairman, Howard Strauss, Berkeley County Commission; Commissioner Jim Kercheval, Washington County Board of County Commissioners; Mayor William Breichner, City of Hagerstown; Mike Nixon, MD DOT; Robert Gordon, Eastern Panhandle Region 9 Planning & Development Council; Greg Corliss, Jefferson County Commissioner; Donald C. Bailey, WV DOT; Mark Baldwin, City Manager, City of Martinsburg; Bob Thomas, Franklin County; Mike Thompson, MPO Coordinator and Jill Baker, Associate Planner, Washington County Planning Department; Kathleen A. Maher, City of Hagerstown; Richard Warner, WV DOT; and Jeff Blanton, Federal Highway Administration. Also present was Lewis Grimm, Cambridge Systematics; Jeff Kayden, Tackley Mill; and Sharon Disque, consultant to North Port/Tackley Mill.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Gregory Snook, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Mr. Strauss made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

1) Appointment to Vacancy – Towns of Jefferson County

Mr. Corliss made a motion to appoint Mayor Randy Hilton, City of Charles Town, as the Jefferson County municipalities representative. Seconded by Mr. Strauss. Unanimously approved.

2) Revision to FY 2006 Unified Planning Work Program:

Ms. Baker presented a revised Unified Planning Work Program reflecting two major changes to the adopted Plan. Ms. Baker stated that there is a significant increase in West Virginia's time allocations and labor costs due to the anticipated involvement realized after the long range transportation plan process was completed. The second major change is noted on Table E "Transit Activity Line Breakdown" requested by the Federal Transit Authority. Ms. Baker explained that the FTA requires a breakdown of allocations into different categories; however, at this point in time, all allocations have been lumped together under Program Administration. Once the Pan Tran study is completed and there is more involvement with Pan Tran and the County Commuter system, these funds will be divided into different categories depending upon the need in each genre.

Mr. Bailey made a motion to table approval of the finalized UPWP stating that more time is needed to review the documents and address concerns. Seconded by Mr. Breichner. Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

1) T.I.P. Amendment – Charles Town Revitalization

Mr. Bailey stated that it would cost \$350,000.00 to continue the Charles Town Revitalization Streetscape Program.

Mr. Nixon made a motion to approve the continuation of the Charles Town Revitalization Streetscape Program. Seconded by Mr. Breichner. Unanimously approved.

2) FY 2006-2008 Transportation Improvement Plan

Mr. Bailey stated that the dates listed in the Project Package on individual projects are FY 2004-2006; should be FY 2006-2009.

Mr. Nixon stated that the projects for Maryland would be submitted in August or September 2005.

3) Presentation to extend MARC Service

Ms. Sharon Disque, consultant to North Port/Tackley Mill, presented a proposed plan to put a new MARC station between Martinsburg and Duffields. Currently there are several developments for residential and commercial units proposed along the newly improved Route 9 in Ranson. The proposed station would be within walking distance of these proposed development areas. Ms. Disque stated that neither MARC nor West Virginia Rail have the funds for a new station. All new stations must be ADA compliant and need railroad clearances. Pedestrian access must be grade separated and pedestrians cannot walk across the tracks. Pedestrians must go over the tracks via elevators or under the tracks via elevators or ramps. As discussed with DRE, the approximate cost of access is \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000. Ms. Disque discussed several advantages in placing a station at Jefferson Orchards. Currently, at this location, there is an existing tunnel under the tracks which makes it feasible to come up with the alternative of overhead access; the road access will be greatly improved with the new bridge that will be constructed over Route 9; this location is approximately 3 miles from Duffields via rail; neighboring uses will be more compatible with the high volume traffic; and future residential development will increase the need for public transportation in this area. Ms. Disque stated that the developers in the area are willing to share some of the costs involved with the proposed station.

Because this is a Maryland rail service in West Virginia and it is a transportation asset that would contribute to the area, Ms. Disque requested support from the MPO to facilitate meetings with MARC and the State of West Virginia to pursue this proposal.

Mr. Gordon stated that the expansion or replacement of the Duffields station has been previously discussed. He recommended that if more than one developer in that area is interested, they should discuss a financial plan with Jefferson County to address this proposal. There are several options that should be addressed as a follow up study by MARC, the West Virginia Rail Authority, developers and representatives from the MPO before the Council formally takes action.

Mr. Grimm stated that there should be a more detailed study addressing the exact scope to be defined collectively by the number of jurisdictions. He noted that in the pre-authorization bill for TEA 101, this type of project was discussed and funds were earmarked for planning and some construction.

Mr. Corliss stated that the MARC service is unsatisfactory and deteriorating rapidly. The West Virginia Rail Authority is not helping with the current needs at Duffield and Harpers Ferry. He would like to see service improve significantly because transportation coming into Jefferson and Berkeley counties is a major issue.

Mr. Snook suggested that representatives from Jefferson and Berkeley counties and the State of West Virginia contact MARC representatives and private developers in the area to schedule a meeting to

discuss goals and locations where new stations will be needed in the next five to ten years. Following that meeting, a plan can be developed for a conceptual type study to address concerns of all those involved.

OTHER BUSINESS

1) Final Resolution Comments for L RTP

Mr. Grimm stated that a limited number of editorial comments were received. The Washington County Department of Public Works and Engineering Department were concerned that the available money for the Capital Improvements Projects were overly optimistic. However, if the new excise tax becomes effective July 1, 2005, that will bring the amount of funds to be allocated for roadway improvements up to the levels anticipated. Comments from the City of Hagerstown and Washington County expressed their desire to segment longer projects into shorter segments so that it may be easier to implement. Also, rather than highlighting some projects as potentially city/county projects, those will be a combination of city, county and private development funded projects. These projects will be locally funded and would not be the responsibility of the State of Maryland's State Highway Administration.

Comments received from the City of Martinsburg noted the Raleigh Street extension and the Route 45, Moller Avenue intersection improvements would be two separate projects distinct from the Route 9 Bypass facility. Additional information was received from the City regarding parking spaces that are being sold off-site from the existing commuter station in Martinsburg.

All comments have been incorporated and the documents have been finalized and will be printed following this meeting.

2) MPO Organizational Issues

Ms. Baker stated that there is a critical need for data collection and tracking systems in West Virginia and a more visible public arena for regional issues that are handled through the MPO. She recommended scheduling an informal workshop meeting to define the critical needs and to formulate strategies to improve the MPO.

Mr. Gordon stated that the MPO process is a collaborative effort between elected officials on both sides of the river. He agreed that an organizational meeting to talk candidly with the MPO policy board, DOT post and FHWA officials is needed due to all the administrative changes taking place and the rate of growth in West Virginia. Mr. Gordon expressed concern that administration time from the Maryland side for work programs and TIPS are charged regionally using Federal Highway monies. There is no way to determine if West Virginia Federal money and local money is being matched.

Members of the Board agreed that an informal workshop is needed and asked Ms. Baker to prepare a list of topics that need to be addressed and to send the list to all members. A date will be scheduled at a later time for the workshop.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the MPO, Mr. Snook adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory I. Snook, Chairman