

**MINUTES
HAGERSTOWN EASTERN PANHANDLE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

January 24, 2007

The HEPMPO held its regular meeting on Wednesday, January 24, 2007 at 5:30 p.m. in the Berkeley County Commission Chambers (Room 205), Dunn Building, 400 West Stephen Street, Martinsburg, West Virginia.

The following members were present:

- Bob Gordon, HEPMPO Director
- Jim Kercheval and John Barr, Washington County Board of County Commissioners
- Mike Nixon and Ian Beam, Maryland Dept. of Transportation
- Don Bailey, West Virginia Dept. of Transportation
- Carol Crabtree, Eastern Panhandle Region 9 Planning & Development Council
- Greg Corliss, Jefferson County Commissioner
- Mark Baldwin, City of Martinsburg
- Martin E. Brubaker, City of Hagerstown
- David Mills, City of Ranson
- Kevin Cerrone, Washington County Commuter
- Bill Stubblefield, Berkeley County Commission
- Kathy Maher, City of Hagerstown Planning Dept.
- Mike Thompson, Director of Planning, Washington County Planning Dept.
- Jill Baker, Washington County Planning Dept.
- Jeff Blanton, Federal Highway Administration
- Debra Eckard, Federal Highway Administration

CALL TO ORDER

HEPMPO Director Robert Gordon called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

MINUTES

Mr. Baldwin made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 27, 2006 regular meeting as presented. Seconded by Mr. Kercheval. Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

- Election of Officers

Discussion: Mr. Gordon stated that due to recent local elections in Maryland and West Virginia, the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the HEPMPO are vacant. The Chairman's role is to conduct the meetings, oversee and sign resolutions, and works directly with the MPO Director and Board. Mr. Nixon recommended that the Chairman should be someone who has previously served on the MPO Board; however DOT representatives do not serve in that position. Ms. Baker noted that the By-laws state that the Chairman is from one state and the Vice Chairman must be from the other state and elected officials must hold both positions. Mr. Gordon stated that as a matter of convenience, he would suggest that the Chairman should be from Maryland since all documentation is maintained in Washington County. He also stated that new officers should be elected at the beginning of each fiscal year, which is July 1st; therefore, these appointments would only be effective until June 30, 2007.

Mr. Corliss made a motion to nominate Mr. Kercheval for the position of Chairman of the MPO Interstate Council Committee for the duration of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2007. Seconded by Mr. Brubaker. Unanimously approved.

At this point in time, Chairman Kercheval conducted the remainder of the meeting.

Mr. Stubblefield made a motion to nominate Mr. Corliss for the position of Vice-Chairman of the MPO Interstate Council Committee for the duration of fiscal year ending June 30, 2007.

- TIP Amendments

- **West Virginia**

Mr. Don Bailey presented for review and approval the following TIP Amendments for Berkeley and Jefferson Counties in West Virginia:

Berkeley County

New Projects

- Project Name: King Street Crossing – Resurface and install LED flashers, Federal ID: STPG-0015(076)E, Funding Level: FY 2007- \$235,000
- Project Name: Beddington Crossing – Install LED flashers, Federal ID: STPG-0005(105)E, Funding Level: FY 2007 - \$130,000
- Project Name: Bunker Hill Crossing – Install and high-type surface and flashing lights, Federal ID: STPG-0011(117)E, Funding level: FY 2007- \$325,000

Revised Projects

- Project Name: WV 9 – CR 9/19 to Jefferson CR 1, Change funding source and level (Previous Fed ID no. EBNH-0009(170)C), New Fed ID No. NHST-009170C, Project Cost increase to \$27,492,000 with a Federal share of \$21,994,000

Jefferson County

New Projects

- Project Name: Wheatland Railroad Crossing – Install flashing lights, Federal ID: STPG-3402(002)E, Funding Level: FY 2007 - \$120,000

Revised Projects

- Project Name: WV – CR 9/3 to CR 27 Bridge, Change in funding source and level, (Previous Fed ID No. MG-0009(171)C) New Fed. ID No. NHST 0009-178C; Total Project Cost \$22,900,000, Federal share \$10,000,000
- Project Name: WV 9 – Shenandoah River Bridge – Upgrade four lanes and bridge, Change: Funding source and level (Previous Fed ID No. MG-0009(172)T) New Fed ID No. NHST 0009-177T; Total Project Cost \$22,200,000, Federal share \$17,760,000

Mr. Nixon made a motion to approve the TIP Amendments as presented. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin.

Comments before the vote: Mr. Gordon stated that the Technical Advisory Committee has reviewed the TIP Amendments and recommended approval. The above listed projects are not subject to the air quality testing because they were already in the LRTP. Mr. Gordon noted that a subcommittee for the Technical Advisory Committee is needed to make a statement on the TIP revisions, even if they are determined to be air quality neutral. Until a subcommittee is formed, a letter will be drafted to state the air quality determination for each project.

Mr. Nixon's motion passed by unanimous vote.

- Adoption of Public Involvement Process

Mr. Gordon presented for review and approval adoption of the Public Involvement Process. During the previous meeting, a few changes were recommended and are included in the Plan. Specifically, on page 4, "Specific Participation Strategies" contained a listing of specific agencies that would be contacted. The Technical Advisory Committee recommended a more generic description that is all-inclusive and the specific organizations were eliminated from the list. The plan states, "We will attempt to reach all those interested or affected by the plans and programs of the MPO." A change regarding "Regulations Concerning Public Information Act Requests", (Appendix A) was made to include fees that could be recovered for research and production of requested documents. The change was formatted following Washington County's policy.

Discussion: Mr. Kercheval noted that the Staff should be available to the public; however, if such requests are going to monopolize a great deal of Staff's time, then fees should be charged so that the MPO will "break even". It is not Washington County's policy to "make money" using the policy. Mr. Gordon noted that if Washington County's policy changes with regard to fees, then the MPO's policy would also change since it is noted by reference.

Mr. Gordon stated that Appendix B was inadvertently missed in the last "DRAFT" and has been added. Appendix B, "Potential Resource Agencies in the HEPMPO Area", provides a list of potential agencies/organizations that may have an interest in participating in the Transportation Planning Process.

Discussion: There was a brief discussion regarding the website that is being developed for the MPO that will include a sign-up page for e-mail updated on transportation issues.

Mr. Corliss made a motion to approve the Participation Plan for Transportation Planning. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin. Unanimously approved.

- Project Update – Coordinated Transit Plan for Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties

Mr. Gordon stated that a contract was initiated with RLS & Associates to prepare a Coordinated Transit Plan for Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties in West Virginia. New Federal Transportation legislation for the 5310 Program (Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities), Job Access and Reverse Commute funding, and New Freedom Initiative monies require that agencies applying for funding need to be part of a Coordinated Transportation Plan within each region. Funding for the Plan for Berkeley and Jefferson Counties came from the MPO and Morgan County received funding through Region 9 by the West Virginia Department of Transportation. The Plan has been completed and a copy is available for review. Copies will be distributed to MPO members in the future.

- FY 2008 UPWP and Budget

Mr. Gordon stated that work would begin soon on the new UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program) development. This document governs the activities of the MPO during the next Fiscal Year and will include the budget and activities that will be conducted during the year. Mr. Gordon noted that if there are issues or specific projects that may need to be included in the UPWP to please contact him as soon as possible. Information regarding the annual funding amount from the Maryland DOT has been received. Information from the West Virginia DOT is forthcoming and work will then begin on the UPWP. A "draft" will be prepared and presented for review at the March 2007 meeting.

- FY 2008-2010 TIP

Mr. Gordon stated that a new TIP document would soon be initiated. The West Virginia DOT will provide a four-year TIP and Maryland's Consolidated Transportation Program is a six-year

document and the statewide Transportation Improvement Program is a four-year document. Projects currently in the TIP will be reviewed and new projects will be added as appropriate. The TIP must be adopted and finalized by the end of June 2007.

- Director's Report

- Transportation Planner position

Mr. Gordon began this discussion by providing a brief overview regarding the MPO's attempt to hire a transportation planner. In October and November of 2006, the position was advertised and 4 or 5 applicants responded with only one person having relative experience; however, this person's references were not acceptable. At the November 27, 2006 MPO meeting, it was suggested that Mr. Gordon should contact Jefferson County for applications of people they did not hire during a recent vacancy. Mr. Gordon contacted Jefferson County and also advertised on all free websites including available college and university websites (such as Shepherd College, Frostburg State University, University of Maryland, University of West Virginia, etc.) and on AMPO and NARC. Three applicants responded with relative experience. Two applicants have been interviewed and the third applicant will be interviewed on January 26th and seems to be the best candidate. One applicant is in the United States on a student visa, has two masters degrees in Urban Planning and Regional Planning, good practical experience; however, salary expectations may be problematic. The last applicant is a Shepherd College graduate who does not have transportation experience but has a lot of data analysis experience. The applicants received from Jefferson County were more interested in managerial positions. Mr. Gordon recommended appointing a committee to discuss an employment offer to one of the candidates following the final interview rather than waiting until the next MPO meeting in March to make an offer.

Discussion: There was a brief discussion regarding the salary, plus benefits, with regard to the current budget. Depending upon experience, Mr. Gordon believes the starting salary would be approximately \$40,000. There was also a brief discussion regarding the applicant with a student visa and moving expenses for the applicants that would need to relocate.

Mr. Kercheval believes that Mr. Gordon would be the person working closely with the new planner and he should be given the authority to hire the appropriate person contingent upon a pre-determined salary range as directed by the MPO Board. Mr. Stubblefield recommended an allowance of \$5,000 for moving expenses. Mr. Gordon suggested a maximum salary offer of \$50,000 plus \$5,000 for moving expenses.

Mr. Corliss made a motion to grant authority to Mr. Gordon to hire a transportation planner at a maximum salary of \$50,000 plus \$5,000 for moving expenses. If any portion of the offer needs to be changed, Mr. Gordon would discuss the changes with the County Commissioners of Washington, Berkeley and Jefferson Counties. Seconded by Mr. Stubblefield. Unanimously approved.

- Aerial Photography in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties

Mr. Gordon stated that Berkeley County is currently initiating a contract with L. Robert Kimbal to provide aerial photography for Berkeley County. They are proposing three different products: digital ortho-photography, the planometric data that would consist of the roadway centerlines, building footprints, fire hydrants, etc., and two-foot contours. The digital ortho-photography project would be completed first. The total cost for these projects is approximately \$1.5 million. The aerial photography portion of the project would cost approximately \$454,000. Several county agencies are participating in the cost and Region 9 and the MPO have been contacted to also participate. Mr. Gordon stated that he has been attending the meetings with regard to this project. The MPO's share of the cost for the aerial photography portion would be approximately \$44,000 to \$48,000 divided over a three-year period. Mr. Gordon noted that the project would

only cover Berkeley County; however, Jefferson County has expressed an interest in also participating in the project. He expressed his opinion that it would be more beneficial for the MPO to have information for all counties that the MPO works with and may not be an attractive offer at this time. There was a brief discussion regarding the need for such data in the future to initiate a GIS program for the MPO.

- Local Project Updates

Ms. Baker stated that Washington County is considering an update of the Transportation Planning Section of the Comprehensive Plan. The Washington County's portion of the adopted Long Range Transportation Plan does not prioritize areas that need help and how to fix them. The LRTP does not give a true depiction of needs versus money that is available.

Mr. Brubaker stated that the City of Hagerstown is currently undergoing a comprehensive plan process. He agrees that the LRTP does not provide the detail for fiscal accuracy that is needed.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Citizen Comments

No one appeared to present any comments at this meeting.

- Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 21, 2007 in Hagerstown, Maryland. There was a brief discussion regarding the time to start the meetings. Members expressed their interest in having daytime meetings rather than evening meetings. There was a brief discussion regarding public involvement problems if there are no evening meetings.

- Federal Requirement Deadlines

Mr. Kercheval made an inquiry regarding the deadlines given to the MPO to meet specific Federal requirements. Mr. Gordon stated that the requirements and deadlines are being met and a quarterly progress report is being prepared. Mr. Blanton stated his opinion that the MPO is making good progress in addressing the recommendations set forth by the Federal government.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Corliss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Baldwin. So ordered.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert S. Gordon, Director

RSG/dse

