

Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)¹
April 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting hosted via Zoom

Opitz called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Roll Call

Members present: Samba Baldeh (joined during item #4), Margaret Bergamini, Yogesh Chawla, Paul Esser (left after item #7), Steve Flottmeyer, Grant Foster, Patrick Heck, Dorothy Krause, Tom Lynch, Jerry Mandli, Ed Minihan (left after item #7), Mark Opitz, Mike Tierney, Doug Wood

Members absent: None

MPO staff present: Bill Schaefer, Colleen Hoesly, Zia Brucaya

Others present in an official capacity: Chris Petykowski (City of Madison Engineering), Diane Paoni (WisDOT Planning), Forbes McIntosh (DCCVA)

Speaking: Roger Springman and Royce Williams

2. Approval of March 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Esser moved, Wood seconded, to approve the March 3, 2021 meeting minutes with correction to spelling of Lynch's name. Motion carried with Chawla abstaining.

3. Communications

- Email submitted by Roger Springman, city of Stoughton resident, to share the Dangerous by Design 2021 report with the board.
- Letter from WisDOT approving Amendment 3 to the 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program to add the U.S. Highway 51 (McFarland to Stoughton) reconstruction project and others, which was approved by the MPO at the March meeting.
- Notice from WisDOT regarding the public hearing on the environmental assessment for the Highway 51 project.

4. Public Comment (for items *not* on MPO Agenda)

Springman commented further on the letter he submitted regarding the Highway 51 project at the March meeting. His concern is the danger of roundabouts for pedestrians and bicyclists in Stoughton. There are many existing and planned large developments along Highway 51, many with seniors. He felt roundabouts were not appropriate in an urban area, and had expressed this to WisDOT. This will cause many seniors and others to drive rather than walk to destinations due to safety concerns. A grade-separated crossing would be better. The Dangerous by Design 2021 report lays out the importance of focusing on public safety first when designing roadways.

Williams, who is on the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee, expressed concern about the lack of public access to technical documents related to the BRT project, the cost of the BRT project in light of ridership decline due to the pandemic, and the impact of the network redesign study on the project. He questioned the decision to route BRT to West Towne versus to Middleton given traffic from USH

¹ Formerly named Madison Area Transportation Planning Board

12 and 14. Finally, he said he was concerned about the cost impacts of moving to center-running for segments of the corridor. Opitz requested an update on the BRT project at a future meeting.

5. Update on University Avenue (Shorewood Blvd. to University Bay Dr./Farley Ave.) Reconstruction Project (Chris Petykowski, City of Madison Engineering)

Schaefer stated that the MPO is providing funding for this project, which is scheduled for construction in 2022. He said Petykowski presented to the board previously, but several design details had not yet been finalized, including whether the ped/bike overpass of University Bay Drive would be feasible.

Petykowski shared a presentation on the project background, purpose, and proposed improvements for all modes and storm water management. He noted it is a joint project with the Village of Shorewood Hills. There have been three public input meetings. Geometrics were approved in April 2020. The city is now working on final design. The project is scheduled to begin construction in winter/spring 2022 and finish in fall 2022.

Krause asked whether the bushes with Christmas lights will be removed. Petykowski said that some will need to be removed to install footings for the bike/ped overpass, but the area will be able to be re-planted if the organization that manages it would like to do so. In response to question from Opitz, Petykowski confirmed there will be no dedicated bus lanes for BRT within the project extent. Schaefer asked whether a bus queue jump was still proposed at WB University Bay Drive intersection. Petykowski said yes, but buses will share the lane with right-turning traffic. Lynch noted that there will be a far-side bus stop, so a queue jump will not provide a large benefit.

6. Review of Proposed Draft Revisions to the MPO's Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) – Urban Policies and Project Evaluation Criteria

Schaefer shared a presentation on the history of the proposed revisions; examples of how project scoring criteria relate to current RTP goals and policies; and the proposed point revisions to each scoring criteria categories. The purpose of this revision to the scoring criteria was to revisit them in light of the current RTP 2050 goals and policies and ensure consistency with current emphasis areas of safety and equity.

Lynch commented that the EJ map labels are misleading and suggested that rather than say “non-priority,” say something like “second priority.” Schaefer agreed. Foster commented that there have been a lot of improvements since this last came to the board. He would still like to see congestion mitigation revised relative to the roadway category, so that the MPO is not rewarding capacity expansions; relative to ITS, the points for congestion mitigation are okay. Schaefer acknowledged that the category does relate to roadway expansions as well as TSM such as intersection improvements. Foster wondered if these different types of projects could be better differentiated. He would also like to see the Environment/Green Infrastructure weight increased. Heck asked about the criteria for transit and bike projects under the Environment/Green Infrastructure category. Schaefer noted that there are two components to the scoring for that category: one for whether the project would result in substantially more bicycle and transit use, thereby reducing VMT; the other relates to “green infrastructure” and only applies to roadway projects. Staff is proposing to focus that just on stormwater control. He said the category name should be shortened to Environment.

Wood asked whether there is a set breakdown of funding among the four project categories. Schaefer said the MPO's policy is to not have targets or set-asides for allocating funding as some very large MPOs do. With the limited amount of funding that we receive, this allows the MPO more flexibility to fund the best, highest priority projects in any given application cycle. Wood asked to clarify that the scoring is to evaluate bike projects, for example, against other bike projects. Schaefer

said yes, but in cases where the board is evaluating different types of projects the scoring is still meaningful, but would not compel the board to fund the highest scoring projects because they are scored using different criteria. Wood wondered if the board would want to state a preference among the four categories, since evaluating projects across the categories is apples to oranges. Schaefer said he thinks that maintaining the current flexibility is important, given the relatively small number of applications that the MPO receives. Wood added that cost-benefit analyses can change depending on their inputs, and people tend to review the results as the final answer to whether a project is good or not, which is problematic. Lynch said he appreciates the increased weight of System Preservation, because sometimes there are very important projects that are not very exciting. He also likes where the Green Infrastructure weighting is set, because often on urban roadway projects there is simply not space for things like a rain garden.

Schaefer then shared a mock scoring for several roadway and bike projects with the new evaluation criteria, compared to how they scored under the current criteria. Chawla asked how the Dane County Parks grant program plays into the funding for bike infrastructure. Schaefer said that Dane County park grants tend to fund a higher number of smaller projects at smaller amounts, whereas the projects the MPO funds through TAP and potentially STBG tend to be much higher cost. The county also tends to focus more on recreation, whereas the MPO prioritizes funding for transportation projects that connect people to destinations. Chawla noted that the county typically accepts applications every two years due to the high administrative costs of staff time working with applicants. Perhaps the city could assist with that. Schaefer noted that the MPO usually receives \$600,000-\$700,000 through TAP, and the county's current funding for PARC is \$500,000. Mandli noted that demand continues to increase beyond funding availability, and also that MPO funding comes with much more rigorous federal reporting requirements.

Opitz asked whether board members want any further refinements before this comes to the board for a decision in May. Foster requested that the board discuss whether it wants to set priorities among the four project categories. Schaefer noted that staff received comments from the TCC and made a few adjustments, but did not hear major concerns.

7. Discussion Regarding the Makeup and Role of the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee in Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Schaefer stated that staff has conducted additional research and discussed the issue with the citizen advisory committee (CAC) since the last board meeting. Hoesly shared a presentation with information about the background and purpose of the CAC; feedback from the CAC at its most recent meeting; results of staff research into the status of CACs with other MPOs in Wisconsin and other states; and takeaways based on this information.

Wood noted that the board does not currently receive minutes from the CAC meetings, which was a recommendation from a recent discussion on the CAC. He is not sure that minutes are the best way to communicate information, however. Schaefer noted that staff had included CAC minutes at one point and then stopped due to the length of the board packets. He suggested that staff could include a report on significant comments and recommendations rather than the full minutes. He noted that the CAC has provided helpful comments in the past related to things like the recent public survey, but other topics like the scoring criteria revisions are very technical and do not generate many comments. Foster stated that he favors dissolving the CAC, largely in light of the recent Task Force on Government Structure report released in Madison, which highlighted that committee structures like this are a barrier to diverse representation. He stated that citizen committees for specific, time-bound projects such as the bike plan could be useful. He would rather allocate staff time to engaging directly with communities. Esser stated that he does not see significant advice coming from the CAC, or the

need for input from the CAC by the board, and that it would be a significant effort to try to fix the issues that would need to be addressed, such as a diverse representation. Esser moved to disband the CAC. Opitz stated that the board is not taking action at this time, but it will be listed for action on the next board meeting agenda. Bergamini asked whether the policy board has the authority to disband the CAC. Opitz said yes, it is advisory to the board and Wisconsin does not require MPOs to have CACs. Bergamini recognized that there are passionate people on the CAC, but that it has no power; therefore she would prefer to see these members' time used in bodies with power if they choose. She would like the discussion at the next meeting to be short. Krause stated that Bill is the conduit for information between the two bodies and that he may receive the most benefit from having both. She does not have an opinion about whether the CAC should be disbanded or not. Schaefer stated that staff has been torn about this issue and therefore did not make a recommendation. He recognizes that staff could do a better job of relaying information between the two, but also that it would take a major effort to improve the current challenges of the CAC.

8. Appointments to the MPO Citizen Advisory Committee (Contingent on Item #7 Discussion)

Wood moved, Krause seconded, to table. Motion carried.

9. Report on Planned Focus Groups as Part of Public Engagement for the Update of the Regional Transportation Plan

Schaefer stated that staff is planning to organize focus groups as part of the equitable engagement plan for the RTP process. Draft questions for the focus group discussions are included in the packet.

Brucaya stated that staff is planning to work with four to five organizations in the region to gather input from communities that are traditionally underrepresented at public meetings. The focus groups will be largely organized and led by the community organizations with MPO staff support. The MPO will compensate the organizations and participants for their time. Staff is currently working with the Latino Academy and Bayview Foundation. Other possible groups are Sun Prairie neighborhood navigators and Badger Rock Community Center. Staff is coordinating and will share feedback with CARPC and City of Madison staff working on other planning projects that may benefit from the input.

Bergamini noted that Bayview Foundation was recently involved in a very long neighborhood planning process that involved a lot of transportation issues, so it may be worth reviewing that testimony and those results. Lynch stated that this is a novel approach, reaching out to a few groups to ask for representative input. It may hold potential if it works. Krause asked whether staff has considered doing something like this with a group of drivers to understand what we can do to help get people out of their cars. Brucaya stated that staff has not discussed doing a separate focus group on this topic, but did include a discussion question that asks why people make the transportation mode decisions that they do. This will help tease out some of that information, which will also support the activities of the MPO's TDM program. Schaefer noted that the MPO received some of this information through the 2017 Household Travel Survey, though that is different from the kind of input gathered in a focus group.

10. Status Report on Capital Area RPC Activities

No update.

11. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings

Schaefer congratulated Baldeh on his recent election and thanked him for his service on the MPO Policy Board. This is his last meeting.

Schaefer noted that Amtrak released an aspirational plan that could be used to direct federal funding if it becomes available. Opitz suggested discussing it at a future board meeting. Lynch noted that city staff had a conference call with Amtrak on Friday and met with representatives to look at station locations, but that as Schaefer said, the plan is aspirational at this point.

The next board meeting is Wednesday May 5th.

12. Adjournment

Moved by Chawla, seconded by Foster, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.