

**Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)  
July 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting hosted via Zoom

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Opitz called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

**1. Roll Call and Introductions**

**Members present:** Yogesh Chawla, Paul Esser, Grant Foster, Gary Halverson Dorothy Krause, Tom Lynch, Jerry Mandli, Ed Minihan, Barbara Harrington-McKinney, Mark Opitz, Nasra Wehelie

**Members absent:** Margaret Bergamini, Steve Flottmeyer, Doug Wood

**MPO staff present:** Bill Schaefer, Ben Lyman, Neil Janes

**Others present in an official capacity:** Forbes McIntosh (DCCVA), Diane Paoni (WisDOT), Tom Wilson (Town of Westport – left after item #5), Tim Semmann (Village of Waunakee – left after item #5), Pam Dunphy (Dane County Highway – left after item #5), Gerry Schmitt (KL Engineering – left after item #5)

**2. Approval of May 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Schaefer noted that he was informed that Larry Palm was not re-appointed to CARPC, but continues to serve on CARPC until he is replaced.

Esser moved, Krause seconded, to approve the May 5, 2021 meeting minutes with the correction noted above. Motion carried.

**3. Communications**

- Comments submitted on behalf of the MPO to U.S. Census Bureau regarding proposed changes to definition of urban areas.
- Letter of support to Senator Baldwin regarding the Autumn Ridge Path & Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpass project
- Letter of support to Senator Baldwin regarding the University Ave. Reconstruction Project & Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpass project.

Lynch noted that an additional project (Atwood Ave.) was submitted to Representative Poca's office. Krause asked which cities and villages would no longer be within the MPO Planning Area under the proposed Census definition change. Schaefer indicated that the City of Stoughton and Village of Cross Plains would likely fall out of the urbanized area, and that the Villages of Cottage Grove, DeForest, and Windsor could possibly fall out as well.

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

None

**5. Brief Update on the County Trunk Highway M (Oncken Rd. to STH 113) Reconstruction Project**

Gerry Schmitt, KL Engineering, provided background information and a status update on the project, including recent design changes. Most notably, the CTH K/MM intersection is now proposed to be a signalized intersection instead of a roundabout with the North Shore Bay Dr. intersection with CTH M and K no longer needing to be relocated.

Krause asked about construction timing and the potential for night work. Schmitt indicated that they try to avoid night work in residential areas. Krause suggested that it might be worth asking the area residents before finalizing that schedule, and asked about a particular piece of property and its role in the project. Schmitt responded that the property in question is still part of the project. Schaefer asked about the history of right angle crashes seen at Woodland and CTH K, and Schmitt described the most common type of crash in the vicinity of the intersections as rear end crashes resulting from the leading vehicle slowing or stopping unexpectedly and being struck by the following vehicle. Schaefer suggested perhaps using advance warning lights to help alert drivers of the signals to help reduce this type of crash.

**6. MPO 2021 Resolution No. 6 Approving Amendment #4 to the 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program**

Schaefer described the project for which the TIP amendment was sought. It is at the USH 14 and Deming Way intersection, and would add a westbound left-turn lane and widen the shoulder.

Krause moved, Esser seconded, to approve MPO 2020 Resolution No. 6 Approving Amendment #4 to the 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion carried.

**7. Approval of Draft Letter to Municipalities Seeking Financial Contribution to Support the 2022 MPO Budget**

Schaefer provided background on the item, which was discussed at the February, 2021 MPO Policy Board meeting. The board requested that a letter requesting local funding contributions be drafted. He explained that ultimately, the City of Madison is responsible for providing the required local match for federal funding of the MPO; however, other planning area communities are encouraged to contribute a proportional share based on population. The MPO has sent out requests for local funding in the past, but the last time this was done was in 2012. Schaefer requested feedback and suggestions on the content of the letter, its delivery, and potential follow-up.

Foster asked if there was any benefit to obtaining commitment for contribution by a given date for budgeting purposes. Schaefer related that city Finance staff have indicated that they need to know by the week of August 16 the total amount of additional match needed to leverage all federal funding in order to make a request for more local match funding. Having an indication from communities whether they will make a contribution and the amount by that date would be helpful. Foster recommended requesting a commitment then by August 12. He also recommended including another column in the table indicating the current year contribution by each community. Krause suggested sending an email ahead of the mailed letter notifying them to expect the letter. She also suggested including a statement that the MPO would send them an invoice for the recommended amount next year. Schaefer asked for clarification: Krause stated that we would be requesting contribution this year, but would be invoicing communities starting next year. She asked if each letter would be personalized, or if it would be generic. Schaefer responded that the letters would be personalized.

Esser recommended sending the request via email and not by mail. He suggested sending the letter to both administrators and mayors. He also stated mayors can't make a firm commitment to a contribution until the budget is approved by the council in the fall. Lynch spoke on the power of the collective group that composes the MPO, and how contributions to support the MPO are the exception but should be the rule. He suggested including points in the project scoring criteria for whether or not the applicant is a contributing member of the MPO, with the desired result of strengthening the group by expanding its local participation. He clarified that he wasn't sure such an action would be legal, but suggested looking into it. Minihan suggested sending the letter to Town Clerks as well, and spoke to the budgetary limits imposed by levy limits. Lynch concurred.

Opitz called on McIntosh, who indicated that he suspects many communities don't even know that the MPO is requesting funding; he will include this issue in his weekly update to cities and villages. He stated that even the discussion of withholding funding based on financial contribution to the MPO would be "a lightning rod." Lynch clarified that he was not suggesting approval or denial of project funding based on contributing to the MPO; he wants to encourage participation in the team, and recognizes that many towns do not have roads that would qualify for MPO funding. He referred to MPO staff planners and the support they can provide to area communities. He stated that he feels fine requesting assistance from MPO staff, since the city of Madison contributes to the MPO budget.

Foster stated that the goal this year should be to hear from every community, even if they do not contribute. This year should be used to make a connection with community officials to help them understand what the MPO does and what they get from participating in the MPO's support. Wehelie stated that she agrees that the narrative of why the MPO is important should be central to the message; she recommended changing the letter language to highlight how their support impacts the outcome of MPO work and funding.

#### **8. Discussion on Beltline (USH 12/14/18/151) Planning & Environmental Linkages Study and Approval of Draft Comments**

Schaefer reviewed selected slides from the presentations provided in the packet on the Planning & Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, and described the feedback being requested by WisDOT. WisDOT seeks to dismiss out-of-corridor strategies that have been reviewed using the regional travel model and found to not significantly reduce Beltline traffic volumes, and is looking for feedback on the study goals and objectives. The out-of-corridor strategies that WisDOT seeks to dismiss include the North Mendota Parkway, a South Reliever, transit improvements, and a land use strategy assuming 85% infill/redevelopment. The land use strategy actually resulted in increased traffic on the Beltline (as well as increased use of BRT). Various motorized and non-motorized crossings of the Beltline were also reviewed. Comment on priority crossings will be provided in the future.

Krause suggested consideration of rail transit on the existing rail line through Fitchburg to the Dane County Airport with the provision of a park and ride lot south of the Beltline. Opitz pointed out that the Transport 2020 plan reviewed this proposal and found it wouldn't be helpful in addressing Beltline traffic. Schaefer stated that BRT has been identified as the appropriate high capacity transit service for the region due to its cost effectiveness and efficiency in serving transit supportive areas. The plan is for BRT to run on Fish Hatchery Road. Rail service would be duplicative of that. Lynch stated that BRT costs about \$8 million/mile, while rail costs about \$70-100 million/mile just for capital costs. Krause stated that there is not a good location for a park & ride facility near the south terminus of BRT planned in Fitchburg unless the state is willing to sell property. Lynch stated that Madison is going to be planning the north-south BRT route starting in 2022, and can look at this issue.

Schaefer provided an overview of the draft MPO comments on the PEL Study goal, objectives, and strategy screening completed to date. In addition to the suggested edits to goal and objectives, the MPO supports dismissing the out-of-corridor strategies as stand alone improvements. He asked for any suggested edits or support for the draft comments.

Esser stated that he agreed with the proposed comments. Opitz asked for additional comments, and there were none. Esser moved, Foster seconded, to approve the comments.

## 9. Review of STBG – Urban Project Applications for the 2022-2027 Program Cycle and Discussion on Use of COVID-19 Related Funding

Schaefer provided a brief description of STBG – Urban project selection and funding cycles. He stated that only the city of Madison submitted applications: three roadway, one bicycle/pedestrian, and two ITS projects. He then reviewed the projects selected for STBG – Urban funding in recent years and described the city's six projects. Schaefer said he was interested in getting initial feedback from the board on how to allocate the supplemental funding that will be received through Coronavirus relief packages (ARPA and CRRSAA). This funding must be spent by 2024 while the STBG funding is for projects in state fiscal years 2026-2027. Although WisDOT has not announced how much funding the MPO will have available in regular STBG Urban and supplemental COVID related funding, Schaefer said he anticipated that there would be around \$9 million in STBG funding and another perhaps \$6 million in COVID funding. The question is whether some or all of the COVID funding should be used to supplement funding of already-awarded projects currently funded well below 60% federal share. These include University Avenue, CTH M, and Pleasant View Road.

Wehelie asked about the use of an equity lens in selecting contractors for projects; Opitz and Schaefer clarified that the MPO selects projects for funding, but that contractor selection is conducted by the applicant community in accordance with federal rules which include DBE requirements. Foster indicated that his preference is to fund new projects and not those which have already been selected for funding. Harrington-McKinney requested that board members be provided with the amounts by which previously-awarded projects are under-funded (below 60% federal share). Schaefer stated that that information would be provided prior to the August board meeting. Harrington-McKinney asked about project scoring and what that entails. Schaefer referred to the link to the scoring criteria in the packet. The criteria were recently revised by the board, and are used by staff to draft funding recommendations which are reviewed and approved by the board.

Minihan warned that it appears Coronavirus relief funds are being pushed out rapidly, but that if the federal government determines that the funds were not appropriately spent they will have to be returned. Lynch asked about timing and clarification on the need for projects to be essentially shovel-ready in order to meet deadlines for expending the funds. He suggests having two funding scenarios, one with projects prioritized by project readiness, and another assuming that projects for which earmarks have been requested are approved. Schaefer suggested that if requested earmark projects are approved, the fallback plan could be to provide additional funding to already-selected projects. Halverson recommended focusing the funding on new projects. Esser said criteria are needed to guide the decision on funding and requested that staff develop criteria to guide the discussion and decision-making process. Schaefer said the MPO has the STBG project selection criteria and policies. Relative to use of COVID funds, the scores of new vs. already approved projects could be compared to inform that decision. Harrington-McKinney called for being cautious in spending Coronavirus relief funds, and taking the time to ensure the funding goes to where it is most needed and can make the most impact. Krause also requested that criteria be developed, and suggested that projects be solicited from area communities for consideration. Schaefer stated that applications had just been solicited, and that only the city of Madison submitted applications. He does not feel it is appropriate to solicit applications again at this time.

Schaefer said staff will review the draft project scoring and funding recommendations in August for consideration by the board to include in the draft TIP, but the final award of funding won't be until adoption of the TIP in October. He said staff would likely present more than one funding scenario. Foster asked why the John Nolen project might not be able to be funded; Schaefer explained that the project cost is estimated to be \$29 million, and that there is a federal policy to require at least 50% federal funding, meaning that at least \$14.5 million in federal funds would need to be dedicated to

the project. He said he will contact FHWA to see about a possible exception to this policy. Lynch stated that the cost of the John Nolen project will likely require a combination of multiple funding sources.

#### **10. Presentation on Regional Travel Forecast Model Project**

Schaefer suggested that given the time and remaining items on the agenda, this item could be postponed to the next meeting.

Foster moved, Krause seconded, to refer the item to the next meeting. Motion passed.

#### **11. Update on Connect Greater Madison: Regional Transportation Plan 2050 Update Public Engagement Activities**

Lyman provided an overview of presentations that have been provided by the MPO on the RTP Update, as well as the project web page. He then described the focus groups that have been organized with the support of community organizations and the feedback received from those discussions, and how the MPO partnered with those organizations to hold the focus group sessions. Lyman described the feedback received from the focus groups, including transportation costs, timeliness/reliability, ability to participate in community and/or family events, bicycling, sidewalk networks, and more. He stated that as the focus groups were held with participants who are often not included in transportation planning projects, this feedback provides valuable insights.

He described the status of the public survey, which was subjected to an attack by a bot that completed the survey impossibly quickly, among other flags for non-human completion. MPO staff is working to identify and remove the bot-generated responses while retaining the “real” responses from human respondents. Harrington-McKinney requested a meeting to discuss the survey results and outreach. Schaefer asked if that meeting should be held after the survey results are compiled; Harrington-McKinney indicated that she thought the survey results were questionable so wasn’t sure if they needed to wait. Lyman clarified that he was confident that the survey results could be cleaned up and that the results would be accurate when they were released.

#### **12. Discussion and Vote on Default Meeting Method (In Person or Virtual) Beginning in September**

Schaefer indicated for meetings like the MPO board the city of Madison wants to either continue virtual meetings or switch to in-person, with each board/commission selecting one or the other but not switching between the two. Foster added that the expectation is that board meetings will remain as virtual meetings unless a decision is made to move back to in-person meetings. Krause stated that she is torn between the two options, but that the convenience of virtual meetings is so much greater that it is a difficult decision. Opitz stated that Middleton held its first in-person meeting the previous night, and that the hybrid option posed a challenge from a technical standpoint. Foster agreed with Krause regarding missing in-person meetings, but that the convenience of virtual meetings is much greater and he would support continuing virtual meetings for the time being. Halverson stated that he does not know where the board usually meets [Madison Water Utility on Olin Ave], but he would currently prefer to meet virtually. Wehelie would also like to continue to meet virtually. Opitz suggested holding occasional in-person meetings (not board meetings) just to enable face-to-face interactions.

#### **13. Status Report on Capital Area RPC Activities**

None.

**14. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings**

The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 4.

**15. Adjournment**

Moved by Esser, seconded by Wehelie, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.