

**TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING, THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023
TYLER DEVELOPMENT CENTER, LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM
423 WEST FERGUSON, TYLER, TEXAS**



Members Present:

Don Warren, Chair; Ed Broussard; Darin Jennings; Leslie Black; Neal Franklin; Pam Frederick; Frank Davis; Gary Halbrooks and Vernon Webb.

Members Absent:

Carolyn Caldwell; and Dennis Ford.

Staff Present:

Michael Howell; and Heather Nick.

Others Present:

Gaylord Hughey, Attorney; Lloyd Nichols, City of Tyler; Grant Russel, HALFF Associates; and Jennifer Scott, Tyler Paper.

Don Warren called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Gary Halbrooks moved, seconded by Frank Davis, to approve the minutes from November 17, 2022. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Presentation Items:

1. Receive a presentation on the draft 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) detailing the MPO's proposed budget for the next two fiscal years

Mr. Howell presented the item providing a summary of the forecasted revenue and expenditures for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. He noted an increase in the budget for staffing costs which was attributed to two additional staff members, a part time Planning Technician and a full time Transportation Analyst. He stated that one major planning item was attributed to hiring a consultant to perform the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update in 2024.

Mr. Howell mentioned that there was funding available for a special study in 2025 and noted that Cameron Williams from the Technical Advisory Committee recommended a light rail study be considered to look at how passenger rail could potentially be implemented. He closed the presentation noting that the final draft of the UPWP would be brought for consideration in May.

Gary Halbrooks said regarding the light rail study that we had to start somewhere. He discussed the possibility of connecting rail to the proposed track going to Dallas and said he was for the proposed study. Don Warren said that he agreed with Mr. Halbrooks and mentioned the tracks running along the Midtown district and that the current usage may be only two trains a week and that a partnership with Union Pacific may be advantageous.

2. Receive a presentation on statewide and local safety performance in 2021

Mr. Howell presented the item displaying charts showing the change in the number of crashes over various years. The data showed a marked increase fatal and serious injury crashes in 2021. Mr. Howell said that the sudden increase in crashes indicated that the primary cause for the increase was driver behavior rather than the design of the roadways. Mr. Howell also shared an infographic prepared by the TxDOT district highlighting the causes of crashes in the Tyler District. The infographic listed an increase in distracted driving, drunk driving, and people driving without a seatbelt in reported crashes in 2021. Mr. Howell said that, according to the data, the best way to address crash rates would be to have City and County partners help get the word out about the statistics and reaffirm the importance of driver safety to the community.

Vernon Webb talked about the number of fatalities that TxDOT had seen for 2022 were slightly less than 2021 and that the crash rate went down. He said that he was holding town hall meetings in every county in the Tyler District and was saving Smith and Gregg Counties for last. He said that a lot of fatalities were in rural areas on two lane roads and were single-vehicle crashes where the car went off the road and the driver was not wearing a seatbelt. Mr. Webb said that trying to plan safety improvements for these conditions is very difficult and that most of the drivers in these cases are younger demographics.

Judge Franklin said he appreciated TxDOT for helping to implement lighted chevron signs at major curves on some county roads.

Action Items:

1. Consider supporting the 2023 statewide performance targets adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission

Mr. Howell presented the item showing the adopted statewide targets for safety (PM1), bridge and pavement conditions (PM2) and travel time reliability (PM3). Mr. Howell reminded the Committee that the targets are not a mechanism by which the MPO will be graded or penalized by the State or Federal Highway Administration if a target is not met. The staff recommended the TAC support the statewide targets.

Pam Frederick ask what the criteria was for being reliable. Mr. Howell responded that it was based on speed studies over a 24 period. He said that a significant difference in peak hour speeds versus non-peak hour speeds means the road is unreliable.

Gaylord Hughey asked in there was an impact on federal funding by adopting the measures. Mr. Howell replied that safety targets were the only ones that could change funding because if a state fails to meet its safety targets, it is then mandated to program more funding into the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HISP).

Neal Franklin moved, seconded by Darin Jennings, to support the 2023 statewide performance targets. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Staff Updates:**1. Director's Report**

Mr. Howell provided status updates on the Travel Demand Model, Downtown Tyler Traffic Study and Railroad Inventory and Analysis. He notified that the Census Bureau having released their list of qualified urban areas based on the 2020 census which indicated that Eagle Pass was eligible to be designated an MPO. He also shared that Bryan-College Station and Amarillo MPOs were expected to be designated Transportation Management Authorities (TMAs) which would fund them from a different source than small MPOs.

2. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Mr. Howell provided notice of the upcoming Technical Advisory Committee meeting on May 11, 2023 and the next Transportation Policy Committee meeting scheduled on May 25, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.