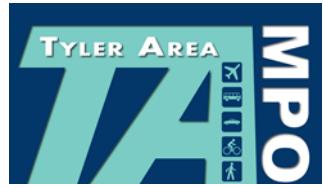


**TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2020
REGULAR MEETING, COUNCIL CHAMBERS
212 NORTH BONNER AVENUE, TYLER, TEXAS**



Members Present:

Martin Heines, Chair; Ed Broussard; Nathaniel Moran; Gary Halbrooks; Riley Harris; Leslie Black; Frank Davis; Lisa Crossman; and Carolyn Caldwell

Members Absent:

Vernon Webb.

Staff Present:

Heather Nick; Michael Howell; Stephanie Franklin; Cameron Williams; John Haenftling and Zach Clark.

Others Present:

Brooke Droptini, TxDOT; and Tom Mullins, Tyler Economic Development Center.

Martin Heines called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Jeff Warr moved, seconded by Carolyn Caldwell, to approve the minutes from January 23, 2020. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Presentation Items:

1. Receive a presentation from Tyler Transit on the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)

John Haenftling gave an overview of how Tyler Transit was increasing their public safety. Mr. Haenftling noted they have created a mandatory mask policy, put up barriers around the bus drivers, as well as having monthly safety meetings to receive input from the staff. Mr. Haenftling stated this plan had been done in accordance with TxDOT and the Tyler MPO.

Mr. Heines asked who pays for these additions to the plan. Mr. Haenftling clarified that TxDOT pays for these improvements.

Mr. Heines asked what percentage the City of Tyler matches for funding. Mr. Haenftling clarified that the City of Tyler matches up to 50%, however the Federal Government pays for 80% of the capital and the City of Tyler pays 20%.

Action Items:

1. Consider approving adoption of a Resolution to support modifications to the National Highway System (NHS) within the MPO boundary

Mr. Howell presented the item stating that the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TP&P) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reviewed various thoroughfares in the region. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made recommendations to the TP&P and FHWA in April of 2019, to remove and add thoroughfares to the National Highway System.

Mr. Howell discussed the projects that were recommended to be added to the National Highway System: State Highway 31 beginning from South Southeast Loop 323 and continuing east to State Highway 135, a Section of Highway 64 and would continue to Toll 49, a section of Highway 271 beginning from I-20 and extending to the Greg County Line, and a section of FM 2493, beginning at West Grande Boulevard extending to Toll 49.

Mr. Howell discussed projects that were recommended to be removed from the National Highway System: a section of North Broadway Avenue, beginning at Spur 147 extending to Highway 31, and a section of Loop 235 beginning at Highway 31 and extending to Highway 64.

Mr. Howell noted that there were additional thoroughfares that requested to be a part of the NHS, however these are recommended to be looked at with more review and analysis, which the TP&P does about every five years.

Lisa Crossman moved, seconded by Nathaniel Moran, to adopt a Resolution to support modifications to the National Highway System (NHS) within the MPO boundary. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

2. Consider adoption of a Resolution approving an amendment to the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Mr. Howell presented the item stating the MTP was last adopted on November 1, 2019 and was taken into effect on December 4, 2019. Mr. Howell noted the City of Lindale was awarded a Transportation Alternative Set Aside, which provides them funding to build one and a quarter miles of sidewalk. Mr. Howell noted that this was Federal funding and was required to be in the short-range and long-range programs.

Ms. Caldwell stated this funding will allow them to connect five schools.

Carolyn Caldwell moved, seconded by Nathaniel Moran, to adopt a Resolution approving an amendment to the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

3. Consider adoption of a Resolution either approving the continuance of the FY 2021-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) until such time as a new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is ready to be adopted, or approving the adoption of the FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Howell presented the item stating the Federal law requires all MPO's adopt a short-range plan, TIP. Mr. Howell noted the TIP would list all projects scheduled to be implemented within the next four years. Mr. Howell stated any Federal money being used for MPO projects, must be included on the TIP, including the funding the City of Lindale had received for sidewalk expansions. Mr. Howell discussed the four performance measures adopted by the State, safety, bridge conditions,

paved conditions, and travel time. Mr. Howell stated that the TIP is required to have how much money is being requested for projects, as well as what type of project it is, in order for the City to be refunded by the Federal Highway Administration. Mr. Howell noted the funding categories, capital expenses, preventative maintenance expenses, and operating expenses.

Mr. Howell discussed the construction projects listed in the TIP and Metropolitan Transit Plan (MTP). Mr. Howell stated these projects are expected to be kicked off within the next four years. Mr. Howell noted the widening of Old Jacksonville Highway from 4 lanes to 6 lanes. Mr. Howell stated this project was currently going from Gresham to Flint, however the new project would be from the lower limits in Flint south to Cherokee County lines. Mr. Howell additionally discussed the widening of Jeff Davis Drive to Paluxy Drive from 2 lanes to 4 lanes.

Mr. Heines asked if the widening of Jeff Davis Drive to Paluxy Drive had been funded. Mr. Green confirmed that this project had been funded.

Mr. Heines asked how long projects may have been talked about before actually being implemented. Mr. Howell noted that some projects can be talked about for 20 years. Mr. Green clarified that there is a difference between talking about a project and having a project on a plan.

Mr. Howell discussed the projects listed in the Engineering and R-O-W sections of the TIP, specifically the overpass at FM 756 and FM 346, the improvement of ramps for I-20 and Highway 69, and a recommendation for an overpass at Old Jacksonville Highway and Loop 323. Mr. Howell noted these projects did not have any construction dollar amounts assigned to them yet.

Mr. Moran asked how do projects move from the Engineering and R-O-W sections to the Construction section of the TIP. Mr. Howell clarified that everything in the TIP must have a funding source, as well the MPO Board must take action to approve an amendment of the TIP in order to move to the Construction section.

Mr. Howell discussed the maintenance section of the TIP, noting roadway resurfacing, guard rail and culvert improvements as well as bridge replacements.

Mr. Howell noted during the draft comment period for the TIP 2024 they had been in contact with the “Stop The Overpass Folly” Collation and noted they had concerns regarding operation and access to the proposed overpass at Old Jacksonville Highway and Loop 323. Mr. Howell additionally noted staff had received a letter from “Grass Roots America” and various businesses which supported the overpass. Mr. Howell stated the policy for the Environmental Assessment Stage is to submit all items at once, and then they will be separated when it comes to time of construction. Mr. Howell noted that TxDOT had stated if the overpass is removed from the TIP at this point it could jeopardize funding for the Old Jacksonville Highway expansion, about \$26 million of State funding.

Mr. Morran asked if the overpass was removed from the Environmental Assessment, who would prevent the expansion of Old Jacksonville Highway. Mr. Green clarified that they would have to stop and redo the environmental assessment to show the overpass had been removed. Mr. Green

noted that they would not have time to complete the environmental assessment before the next MTP update, and only projects ready will be funded.

Mr. Warr stated that he was fine with the environmental assessment of the overpass, but did not want to approve the overpass right away.

Mr. Howell stated that they had hired BGE in 2015 to perform the corridor study. Mr. Heines asked if this was the same consultant the whole time. Mr. Howell confirmed they were the same consultant.

Mr. Howell noted that the biggest thing that they had discussed at the previous meeting was the widening of Old Jacksonville Highway.

Mr. Howell stated staff had recommended approval of the draft FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program with an amendment to the language for the overpass project (CSJ: 2075-02-066) to strike the project description “Construct New Interchange” and replace it with “Construct Intersection Improvements”.

Mr. Warr stated that he appreciated staff and TxDOT’s work.

Red Brookshire, stated they were in opposition to the overpass and the expansion of Old Jacksonville from 4 lanes to 6 lanes. Mr. Brookshire had concerns that the overpass will not provide a south exit and noted this overpass was originally proposed to go over Broadway.

Mr. Heines asked if Mr. Brookshire was opposed to the overpass and the expansion. Mr. Brookshire confirmed he was opposed to both projects.

Michael Allure, stated that he was opposed to the overpass. Mr. Allure noted that TxDOT first emailed in February of 2019 to talk about the expansion of Old Jacksonville and that the overpass became a part of this proposal. Mr. Allure stated that he had contacted other businesses and formed the coalition in August of 2019. Mr. Allure stated that this proposal does not meet the TxDOT guidelines on the TxDOT website.

Mr. Heines asked if Mr. Allure was opposed to the Old Jacksonville Highway expansion. Mr. Allure clarified that he was indifferent to the expansion on Old Jacksonville Highway.

Gaylord Hughey, stated he was representing the coalition and that they were opposed to the overpass. Mr. Hughey noted that TxDOT states “TxDOT will not build a project the community does not want” on their website. Mr. Hughey additionally noted that there is a lack of an economic impact study. Mr. Hughey stated that he had submitted a public information request to TxDOT and they stated they had no documents.

Mr. Heines asked if the public hearings conducted in 2019 had mentioned the environmental assessment study. Mr. Hughey stated that it currently is too late, as TxDOT hearings will be asking how to go about a project, and not how do people like a project.

Mr. Heines asked if the coalition was opposed to the 6 lane expansion on Old Jacksonville Highway. Mr. Hughey stated that he was not sure as it was not the focus of their meetings.

Gene Shawl, stated he was in support of the overpass and wanted the TPC to adopt the staff's recommendation.

Mr. Moran asked for some clarification on the environmental assessment. Mr. Green stated the Open Records Request document which asked for documents on the overpass and the expansion of Old Jacksonville Highway to be done together, which does not exist.

Mr. Moran asked when an economic impact study is conducted. Mr. Green stated TxDOT follows Federal guidelines, and an economic impact study is not currently required. Mr. Howell noted that part of each project looks at the economic impact and is included with the score of these projects.

Mr. Moran asked what the estimated projected cost of the overpass was. Mr. Green clarified it is roughly \$38 million to \$40 million but it could be more or less as the design is not set.

Mr. Halbrooks stated that he recommended to accept staff's recommendation, and that TxDOT study every option available at this location. Mr. Halbrooks additionally asked if TxDOT requires a financial study. Mr. Green clarified that it is not a requirement and the NEPA process does not take that into consideration.

Mr. Heines asked if the coalition can provide financial numbers. Mr. Hughey stated they can if the Board would like to see it. Mr. Green stated that TxDOT would not be able to look at it most likely.

Trey Brewer, 3150 Dominion Plaza, asked if the overpass on Grande Boulevard and Old Jacksonville Highway is going through. Mr. Green stated nothing had been stopped yet.

Ms. Crossman asked what are the options they can vote on. Mr. Howell clarified that there are four options to vote on, the original draft with the overpass, adopt the TIP with amended language without overpass and with improvement projects, remove the overpass project completely, or not adopt the new TIP amendment today. Mr. Moran asked what happens if they did not adopt the new TIP amendment today. Mr. Howell clarified that nothing would be approved, including the funding for sidewalks in Lindale.

Mr. Moran asked if this overpass was removed from the TIP if it would delay the widening of Old Jacksonville Highway. Mr. Green confirmed it would delay that project.

Mr. Moran asked if the environmental assessment could go to the construction phase without the MPO approval. Mr. Howell confirmed that the project would have to be approved by the MPO to move to the construction phase. Mr. Green noted that approval is needed from the MPO, City, and County for TxDOT projects, and specified that this is not a written rule.

Linda Sellers asked how did the two projects connect. Mr. Green stated it was a standard practice of evaluating projects together instead of evaluating them individually.

Mr. Green stated the only intent here is to better the community and address traffic concerns. Mr. Green noted that they are open to working with everyone and if the project is not wanted by the community they will not do it.

Mr. Moran stated his thanks for Mr. Green and the work that TxDOT had done.

Gary Halbrooks moved, seconded by Glen Green to approval of the draft FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program with an amendment to the language for the overpass project (CSJ: 2075-02-066) to strike the project description “Construct New Interchange” and replace it with “Construct Intersection Improvements”. Motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Staff Updates:

1. MPO Executive Director’s Report

Ms. Nick stated the public can access the online Tyler Area MPO surveys. Ms. Nick noted that when the public comment is closed a draft plan will be made, which should be around September or October.

Ms. Nick noted the U.S. Census Bureau was working on the 2020 update and stressed the importance of Census participation.

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.