

Citizen Transportation Advisory Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes: January 20, 2021

Committee – Voting Members (Present)

Chair – Tristan Fessel (Albemarle County)

Vice Chair – Stuart Gardner (MPO)

Donna Chen (MPO)

Travis Pietila (MPO)

Lucas Beane (City of Charlottesville)

Joseph French (City of Charlottesville)

Patrick Healy (City of Charlottesville)

Ray Heron (City of Charlottesville)

Marty Meth (Albemarle County)

Nicholas Garber (Albemarle County)

Lee Kondor (Albemarle County)

Voting Members (Absent)

Gary Heaton (City of Charlottesville – Planning Commission)

Daniel Bailey (Albemarle County – Planning Commission)

Staff (Present)

Chuck Proctor – VDOT

Chip Boyles – TJPDC/CAMPO

Jessica Hersh-Ballering – TJPDC/CAMPO

Lucinda Shannon – TJPDC/CAMPO

Sandy Shackelford – TJPDC/CAMPO

Christine Jacobs – TJPDC/CAMPO

Call to Order

The virtual meeting (held on the Zoom platform) was called to order by Tristan Fessel at 7:05pm.

Matters from the Public

There were no matters from the public.

Approval of September 16th and November 17th 2020 Meeting Minutes

Lee Kondor moved to approve the September and November meeting minutes. Travis Pietila seconded the motion. Patrick Healy and Marty Meth abstained because they were not in attendance at those meetings. The motion passed.

Brief statement from outgoing Director Chip Boyles – Chip Boyles (TJPDC/CAMPO)

Chip Boyles confirmed that he is leaving his position as director of the TJPDC and noted that he felt he was going out on a high note with the recently announced (tentative) Smart Scale decisions.

TIP Amendment – Lucinda Shannon (CAMPO)

Lucinda Shannon presented a TIP Amendment memo that showed a projected ~\$5 million increase in project costs for Belmont Bridge reconstruction. Lucinda recommended that CTAC recommend the MPO Policy Board approve the amendment.

Travis Pietila asked if there was a reason for the project cost increase. Lucinda noted that cost of construction materials has increased because of supply chain issues due to COVID-19 impacts. Travis asked if other projects in the TIP would also be subject to project increases. Lucinda said we would have to wait and see.

Stuart Gardner moved to recommend that the MPO Policy Board accepts the proposed amendment. Marty Meth seconded the motion. Joseph French voted against the motion, noting that the project felt rushed and that there wasn't enough information included to explain the cost increase. The motion passed.

Performance Measures and Targets – Lucinda Shannon (CAMPO)

Lucinda Shannon shared a memo on this topic. Lucinda recommended that the MPO adopt the state targets for all measures because the MPO did not have any mechanisms available to change the outcomes of the measures like the state does. Lucinda noted that in the MPO Technical Committee meeting the previous day, committee members noticed that there were some measures in which the local projections/targets are “better” than the state projections/targets. Chuck Proctor from VDOT explained that the local projections were based on five-year averages, which did not accurately portray recent trends that are expected to continue and are captured in the state projections. Lucinda noted that CTAC could recommend the MPO adopt the state targets (as recommended by CAMPO staff), the local targets, or any other targets; choosing anything other than the state targets would require the MPO to explain the decision.

Nicholas Garber asked why the involvement of trucks and other heavy vehicles was not included in the performance measures. Lucinda agreed to share info with him by email after the meeting.

Lucinda noted that MPO Tech voted to recommend the adoption of the state targets.

Lucinda and Chuck Proctor reminded the committee that there are not financial ramifications for the MPO-area not meeting the targets it sets, but there are ramifications for the state when the MPO-areas do not meet their targets repeatedly.

Marty Meth asked why we would not use the local projections (particularly for safety targets) when our local projections are currently more ambitious than the state projections/targets. Lucinda referred Marty and the committee to her explanatory document included in the meeting materials and reiterated that the safety trends are not adequately reflected in the five-year averages. Travis Pietila noted that the minutes of reliable travel time measure had a higher projection versus the state average and asked if that was also a case of the trends not accurately reflecting five-year averages. Lucinda noted multiple factors that might impact those projections.

Jessica Hersh-Ballering noted that these targets should be thought of as projections based on data, not as goals for the MPO-area and to keep that in mind as the committee votes to make their recommendation to the MPO Policy Board. Marty Meth asked when goals would be set then. Jessica noted that goal-setting is a completely separate process – the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and how that document prioritizes projects for the region.

Donna Chen noted that it seemed strange and arbitrary to rely on state averages for projections/targets when different regions of the state have such different land uses and characteristics (like higher numbers of bicyclists and pedestrians in towns with universities). Donna asked for clarification on how this process of target setting is actually helpful if we aren't using the data for local projections. Chuck Proctor responded that the process allows MPO's and localities to see how they are doing on the measures and think about how they might want to goal-set in the appropriate policies and goal-setting processes.

Donna Chen asked if it could possibly hurt the MPO to use the local projections/targets and then not meet them. Chuck Proctor said it wouldn't hurt the MPO, but the MPO would need to justify that decision with data *other than* the data that made the projection (in the workbook); the MPO would need to document ongoing projects that are intended to help meet those projections/targets.

Donna Chen expressed the concern that if the MPO-area were to adopt the less ambitious state safety targets rather than the context-specific local targets, it might appear that the MPO was doing good “on paper” while perhaps doing significantly worse than what was projected using the local data. She asked if there are any implications for that possible mis-perception. Chuck Proctor said he didn't think so. Lucinda noted that the safety targets could be revised annually and the asset targets could be revised every four years.

Travis Pietila asked what process is in place to set goals, if that is not the purpose of this target-setting process. Lucinda responded that the Long Range Transportation Plan planning process (which includes public outreach) would be the appropriate process for goal-setting. Lucinda also noted that the selection of Smart Scale project applications would also be an opportunity to choose projects that align with the community's goals.

Joseph French suggested that if this document is used internally, local projections/targets should be used. Chuck Proctor clarified that at this time, these targets are not really used internally.

Stuart Gardner noted that “projections” typically mean that that is the expected outcome if nothing is done, so he questioned the logic of MPO staff recommending the state targets because the MPO did not have the ability to institute programs/projects to impact the outcomes. He felt that if the MPO could not do anything to impact outcomes, the MPO should use the local projections/targets.

Nicholas Garber asked what data is available for the MPO to use to justify targets other than the state targets, and what funding is available to extract that data. Sandy Shackelford noted that we had access to all of the state data, but we don't have transportation modelers on staff to do much more with the data. Lucinda showed the workbooks with the state data again.

Lee Kondor moved to accept the state targets “because there really isn’t any alternative, we might as well just do it.” Tristan Fessel seconded the motion. Travis Pietila, Donna Chen Lucas Beane, and Joseph French abstained. The motion passed.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) planning for FY2022 (begins July 1, 2021) - Sandy Shackelford

Sandy Shackelford shared a memo that she stated Jessica Hersh-Ballering would share with the committee members following this meeting. Sandy explained that each fiscal year, the MPO is required to submit a unified planning work program that outlines how the MPO is going to spend the federal planning money given to the MPO to support transportation planning throughout the region.

Sandy noted that given reporting changes at the state level, a relatively new staff, and other factors, the MPO feels it could best serve the localities by having a more streamlined work plan with a narrower focus. Sandy outlined the “must-do” items for the work plan, and spoke about staff’s desire to complete a strategic plan for the MPO organization to better understand how to prioritize work and set itself up for likely re-districting following Census 2020 results. Additionally, additional time and resources must be spent on the new Smart Scale process. After accounting for these items, there are still additional resources that could be applied to one more project. This agenda item is to begin a discussion about what that one project might be. Sandy described some of the projects that MPO staff had brainstormed.

Marty Meth advocated for a focus on public transportation, specifically as it relates to affordable housing in Albemarle County and aging in place. Chip Boyles noted that later in the meeting, the committee would be updated regarding two significant transit grants the TJPDC had received and the work that would be done as part of those grants.

Tristan Fessel suggested a project regarding the ride-hailing economy (“curb management” best practices). Stuart Gardner suggested “opening the aperture a little bit” around bike and ped projects, specifically best practices for making cities more “livable” with high rates of biking and walking. Stuart also requested that any work regarding climate action plans include work on electric vehicles/busses.

Donna Chen asked about a feasibility study for a regional Vision Zero plan, including a timeline.

Joseph French noted that all of the topics brought up so far had an equity component.

Staff Updates – Jessica Hersh-Ballering (TJPDC/CAMPO)

Bike and pedestrian fall count results – Jessica Hersh-Ballering noted that the PDC has historically done bicycle and pedestrian counts, but they had been discontinued a few years ago. Previous data was not particularly useful for comparative purposes. With the help of the bicycle and pedestrian committee (City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and UVA staff), the bike and ped count was re-focused from a broad, regional count to a focus on specific locations which were about to receive (or had recently received) investment in bicycle and pedestrian

infrastructure. This is intended to give the localities before and after data to better understand the ROI of those projects. This required a brand-new count process. TJPDC staff designed a new count sheet and included the collection of demographic data. 10 locations were chosen for this first re-focused count. Those same locations will be re-counted in the spring. Volunteers completed the counts during the last two weeks of October 2020 during “peak travel times.” The data from these counts is now available as an Excel file on the TJPDC bike and pedestrian transportation planning page.

Joseph French asked about including a mid-day count period. Jessica agreed that that would be a good idea, specifically given expected COVID impacts to travel patterns.

Transit grants – Jessica reviewed the transit grant information included in the meeting packet. Jessica noted that the vision plan grant was modeled after the vision work recently completed by Richmond transit.

Marty Meth asked to define transit; Jessica answered that transit was referring to “public transportation.”

Joseph French asked about the wording of the Albemarle County Transit Expansion project to include on-demand transit options; Jessica clarified that the wording is intended to force the consultants to investigate both fixed route and on-demand options but give preference to neither.

Patrick Healy asked for a definition of a “transit leader.” Jessica noted that these were the “CEOs” of transit operating agencies. Chip noted that includes UVA transit representatives and student transportation for both the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Furthermore, JAUNT serves outside the MPO area and would provide some rural representation.

Marty Meth asked about including the community members in the conversations. Jessica noted that there would be public outreach events and a project website soliciting public feedback. Chip also noted that PDC staff and the consulting team would be going out to existing groups, such as neighborhood associations, etc.

Smart Scale – Jessica showed a list of the 20 district projects that have been (tentatively) funded of the 36 projects submitted by the district this round. Chuck explained that this is significantly more money and more projects funded than previous rounds. Chip explained that the Hydraulic project is bigger than the funding request suggests, as there was some previously awarded funding that is being applied to the project.

Tristan Fessel asked what option for the Hydraulic project was chosen for submission.

Chuck noted that funding would come online next year, but it is possible that some projects could be accelerated since there are so many of them.

Transition to monthly meetings – Jessica noted that one of the committee members suggested that meetings move from every other month to every month. Jessica noted that there is not any budget to facilitate monthly meetings this fiscal year, but it might be possible for next fiscal year.

Pros and cons for meeting frequency and meeting length were brought up by multiple members.

Jessica agreed to send out a poll in a follow-up email and revisit this topic as an agenda item in the next meeting.

Marty asked if Jessica could include in her email a list of potential meeting topics that are coming up in FY2022.

Additional Matters from the Public:

There were no matters from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.