

ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
COORDINATING COMMITTEE
1ST Floor Conference Room – 12:00 Noon
June 27, 2013

Voting members present:

Bryon Myers, Sr.	City of St. Joseph
Donna Jean Boyer	City of St. Joseph
Jeff Penland	City of St. Joseph
J. Bruce Woody	City of St. Joseph
Dan Hausman	Buchanan County
Larry Atkins	Andrew County

Staff members present:

Jody Carlson	City of St. Joseph
Ty Nagle	City of St. Joseph
Elaine Buckner	City of St. Joseph
Andy Clements	City of St. Joseph
Dustin Smith	City of St. Joseph

Others present:

Don Wichern	MoDOT District #1
Mike Rinehart	MoDOT District #1
Shannon Kusilek	MoDOT District #1
Paul Cockram	ATU Local #847
Fred Hannah	Ag Expo
Gerald R. Sprong	Ag Expo
Donald L. Milles	Ag Expo
Sharon Cornelius	Ag Expo

OPENING REPORTS

In the absence of the Chairperson, Member Myers opened the meeting.

Roll Call. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes. **Member Boyer moved to approve the minutes of the April 25th meeting. Member Penland seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.** Mr. Nagle noted that effective this meeting, the Technical Committee's last meeting minutes will be included in the Coordinating Committee's agenda packet.

Opportunity for public comment. No one appeared for comment.

OLD BUSINESS – No old business was brought before the committee.

NEW BUSINESS – Mr. Nagle requested that Agenda Item C. wait to be addressed until Mr. Bruce Woody, City Manager, arrived. No one objected.

May Event Reporting.

Better Block - Mr. Nagle reported that the event concentrated on the 700 block of Francis. \$1,000 was raised through a Ground Source grant. Additionally, MoKan secured \$1,200 through sponsorships. Funds were used to purchase a permanent bike rack and to buy trees and paint. The trees were planted, storefronts painted, and bike rack installed. Snow on Apple Blossom weekend forced postponement of the event for a week. City Council waived all business fees. Entertainment included live music and outdoor movies. Following the event, food vendors now set up at Felix Street Square on Monday's during the lunch hour, as most restaurants close on Mondays. Pedestrian space was made for outdoor seating. Signs were purchased for the 700-800 block of Francis to identify it as the focus area. The Street Department trimmed trees, cleaned streets, and placed 400 sandbags to use in traffic control. The MPO is interested in the streetscape improvements.

Bike to Work Day May 17th. Mr. Nagle noted that the number of participants grew from 25 last year to 115 this year. 40 businesses participated. There was an after party and photo contest. First, second and third place received gift cards (HHS, Boehringer, City of St. Joseph). Christian Johannesen won the photo contest.

Bike/Ped Counts. Mr. Nagle explained this is the fifth year for the counts. Data has been entered but not compared for trends.

Website updated. stjoempo.org. The MPO now has its own website. It will take time for everything to be transferred to the site.

2014-2017 TIP Update – Approval of new TIP Plan and Updated Evaluation. Mr. Nagle, by power point presentation, showed future work. Part of the TIP update will include improved evaluation forms to reflect projects and balance categories that rate the projects.

He explained that a project from OATS did not make it through the evaluation process. Their work covers the entire county and the TIP must reflect only activity happening in the MPO area. Their next application will be broken out to include only the MPO area. A second project, a U.S. 36 Highway bridge, did not conform to the MPO's bridge deck policy (more later in the meeting minutes).

Bruce Woody arrived at the meeting.

Member Hausman asked if there is a map of the 67 project locations. Mr. Nagle responded no, but he could create one. **Member Hausman moved to approve the TIP Plan and Updated Evaluation form. Member Boyer seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Safe Routes to School – presentation and approval of the plan for all schools in the St. Joseph School District. Mr. Nagle explained the goal is to encourage biking and walking. A two block radius of every school was assessed and ranked 1-5 for condition, \$0 to \$9/sq. ft. He showed maps for each school and where neighborhood school blocks overlap. The documents are helpful for the District to apply for funding. They can break the projects down into phases for applying. Calculations were provided through GIS. The next step will be approval from the St. Joseph School District.

Member Hausman asked if it is the School District which applies for the grants and decides which schools are chosen. Mr. Clements said the District makes application for grants, but either the District or the city could decide which schools are selected. The MPO only provides the assessment.

Andrew County has approved their Safe Routes to School Plan.

Member Hausman moved to approve the St. Joseph School Districts' Safe Routes to School Plan. Member Penland seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Title VI – EJ – approval of updated document. Mr. Nagle said the document was amended as KDOT came out with new regulations. He explained that Title VI is based on income and how well the MPO interacts with the minority public. **Member Penland moved to approve the updated Title VI-EJ. Member Woody seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

US 36 Interchange Waiver Request – application for bridge deck policy exemption and MPO response. Mr. Clements said this has been a contentious issue. The focus on today's agenda is a waiver request for sidewalks.

As background, he explained that in 2003 and again in 2007, the MPO got involved in talking about maintenance activities regarding bridge re-decking within the urbanized area. The 36 Highway Interchange, however, is new construction.

Secondly, the urbanized area line is set every 10 years by the US Bureau of Census. The Metro area is set by the MPO. The difference between those two lines is the urbanizing part of the area. Because the area where the bridge is proposed is sub-urban, the bridge deck policy does not apply. The policy is not directed at new construction in sub-urban areas, and a vote would not be appropriate. He read the section of federal law relating to MPO staff and this board's response related to the transportation plan "MPO..people and freight including access pm walks and foster economic growth and development while m transpoirtation and costs".

Mr. Clements stated that the grant program is administered from MoDOT's Jefferson City office, not the local office, which is trying to help facilitate the project. The developer received funding and has approached the MPO about 1.5 years ago regarding doing a traffic study about access related to the development. On behalf of the MPO, at a cost of \$10,000, URS completed the study. At that time federal grant funds were not involved. URS provided feedback, but the MPO did not know of the study results. In April 2013, both to the MPO and MoDOT's surprise, the funds were identified as federal and then the MPO "had a dog in the fight". MPO staff noted the plans showed only one sidewalk, which we did not want. Unfortunately, that became the battle cry, but the issue is not the sidewalk. MPO staff did a tremendous job of trying to digest the issues in 30 days. ASHTO minimum design principals state "Sidewalks should be provided along urban and connector streets". This is the federal guide.

The next issue is that the location of the interchange is too close to a planned future interchange and an existing interchange. The Riverside Road interchange is the #2 priority for remedy of congestion problems in the city. MPO staff is saying we need to fix what we have before we build new things. While one mile minimum spacing is not ideal, it can be worked around. There are access points closer than that. The issue is it is driven by the grant making process and the developer. The developer applied for federal money and it was approved by Jefferson City. Now \$5 million is coming to St. Joseph, but the local conversation between the St. Joseph City Council and Buchanan County regarding impacts has not happened. Who will pay to upgrade existing north and south roads? Will funds from Buchanan County and St. Joseph be diverted at some point from another project? What if the units of government say we will not do it? The point is that there needs to be a committee discussion about who will do what. No one in their right mind will say we don't want the grant funds. However, we have been boxed in. At some point you have to shift funding priorities or do something on our own. In the grant making process, the MPO and local community was not included. In the short term, there were assumptions made that things would work out. It is a broken process. There have been lessons learned.

In August this project should be added to the LRTP. It would then be out for 30 days notice, and at the same time, advertise the amended TIP, hopefully before the August meeting. If the city wants to talk about a second sidewalk they can, but there is no policy driving it. If MoDOT says it will cost \$80,000 and the MPO wants to

fund it, they can do that or say it is fine as it is. The two steps are: 1) amend the LRP to bring in the interchange project; and 2) amend the TIP to include the project itself. The issue is not sidewalks or spacing of the interchange. They are symptoms of a broken process.

The bigger part is the conversation. The fall out is frustration. The MPO was put in an impossible situation at the last meeting. Hopefully the air has been cleared and everyone is on the same page.

He believes the MPO should approve a vote to accept the funds. Member Boyer asked who caused the conflict, was it a lack of communication? Mr. Clements responded yes. Member Hausman remarked that at the Technical Committee it was suggested to take the money and use it in another project. Mr. Clements said if someone told him we have \$5 million for an access, I would say “how can we address an existing problem at the same time”. But you can’t do that with a grant that is tied to a specific location. You have to look at other options to serve both purposes.

Member Hausman said the project would be put in limbo for two months. They are starting design work which does not involve federal funds. What if the TIP amendment is not approved. The developer would be up a creek. Mr. Clements said he believes the MPO will vote for it. He would think they could take an unofficial vote now. Member Woody said between now and August there are things that must be done. Mr. Clements said changes must be put out for comment for 30 days. Member Boyer asked who applied for the grant? Member Hausman said we did (developer) with MoKan.

Mr. Wichern explained that MHTC puts aside \$5 million a year state money for economic development for local regions to apply for. They can “federalize” the money by using state money to match federal money so it isn’t lost. With a 20% match, they can receive an extra \$20 million for transportation improvements throughout the state. It is a regionally significant project. Anyone can apply for the funds, but they have to put money up front, like the Ag Expo Center has to guarantee they must create 60 non-retail jobs or they won’t get it. It is a development. This is the first one brought to Northwest Missouri. Usually it goes to Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield. Typically, developers do not put money up front. The study didn’t look at an at-grade crossing, but they are not nearly as safe. The interchange can be connected. He recently worked with Mr. Clements to try to put a TIGER grant together but there was not enough time to gather detail. They will pursue it next year. The interchange is spaced one mile from Riverside so it will not affect future 36 Highway interstate status. It could be joined with an outer loop to go north. Because the project initially was to use only state funds, it was MoDOT’s oversight not to bring it to the TIP process faster. MoDOT headquarters decided to put it with federal dollars. If they figure out how to connect it, there is a great potential for traffic circulation. Member Boyer said the City of St. Joseph might have to pay for upgrading Mitchell or Pickett, whether they want to or not.

Mr. Wichern noted that no connection is planned to Mitchell right now, but it will connect to Pickett. Member Woody said he is concerned about a two lane stretch along Pickett between Riverside Road and Riverside Terrace. Site distance is not that great. If it provides relief to the adjacent intersection to the west at Altec, it will partly do so by way of 36 Highway and Pickett Road. Member Boyer said she sees dollar signs flashing before her eyes.

Member Hausman said his interest is to pursue a TIGER grant to construct a loop north to Mitchell, and Mitchell to Riverside, then from Pickett out to the road they are extending from Riverside to Pickett. It would take a lot of pressure off Riverside. Mr. Clements said it is a good possibility, but it will take 20% match. Member Hausman believed there will be public-private participation.

Mr. Clements said a group will formulate an approach everyone is comfortable with. It needs to be figured out between now and when the interchange is finished. The conversation will include the City, Buchanan County and the developer. Typically, the MPO would set up a committee to foster and encourage the conversation.

Now, once the TIP is updated and there is a project listing in the TIP, MPO staff puts a legal notice in the paper to comment and, depending on comment, the MPO will be asked as an agenda item to vote on it in favor and amend the TIP to bring the new project into the LRTP. If people think it is a terrible idea they could take that into consideration, but he doesn't think that the St. Joseph community will say they don't want \$5 million. Member Hausman said by the end of August they will have a preliminary plan prepared and right of way secured. Mr. Kusilek said federal funds (\$4.2 million) are only for construction.

Mr. Rinehart said it is being contended that the interchange project is not in the LRP. He thinks an assumption could be made that it already is in the outer loop. Mr. Clements said he examined that possibility but doesn't think it is in there, but it isn't a big deal to get it there. Member Woody said he liked and supported \$5 million. Complications and things to work around are the location of the bridge. There is no problem with one mile from Riverside, but one-half mile from Rt. W means that will never happen or this will have to be the connection to our loop. There are complications on the north end to bring Rt. W back in. It comes right into the middle of Bayer's campus. The campus is growing. He believes the challenges of getting connections into Mitchell Woods are legitimate. The shorter term issue is Pickett Road. Part of the relief will be on 36 Highway, but part will come on Pickett Road. Member Hausman agreed and said it will have to be addressed. Member Hausman said KCPL has already put in a substation. Member Woody said it generates only a few cars a day. The City's use of Pickett Road to get to the future pump station will be through KCP&L's driveway. Member Hausman said that traffic will increase, no matter what. Member Woody said this project will certainly increase it. Mr. Clements said it is now the overall committee's challenge and the role of the MPO to help facilitate discussion. Member Woody said city council members talked about perimeter improvements three weeks ago. This type of thing is one of those concerns as developments happen around, what services do you support i.e. Lake Contrary sewer services, fire and sewer service to an Expo Center, Country Club Village sewer? Annexation controls growth. It gets very complicated and individual projects must stand on their own merits.

Member Hausman asked Member Woody if he would invest \$200,000 between now and August? Member Woody said he believes there is momentum to push things forward and the potential for working out the Pickett Road issues as long as everyone has an open mind.

Member Penland said it is economic development. Member Woody said he wants to be sure than everyone makes an informed decision. Member Hausman asked if the City would participate in a TIGER grant application to fund the connection to the north? Mr. Woody said he would prefer to do Pickett Road. Member Hausman said that the north road is more important. Most of the property they are talking about going through is in the flood plain. Where the city wants to build the outer loop for "W" is in the flood plain. He would want to be part of that conversation. The County would consider adding that to their system as a swap. If that could be pulled off, he would think Bayer would like access onto 36 Highway rather than Riverside. That would be their partnership role. Member Woody said he sees Bayer as being cooperative around their borders but not through it. Mr. Clements said the LRP shows an outer loop interchange to Rt. W.

Member Myers said it still concerns him to get into a financial obligation for which they have no revenue stream.

Ms. Cornelius said the development paid for engineering up front. They can be reimbursed up through 2020. The time line gets tighter to create these 60 jobs when delays push it back.

MPO Strategic Plan – draft document of the MPO's 5 year scope of work / 2014 UPWP. Mr. Nagle said staff created a 5-year document to manage where they should be in five years. The next year's work plan will come out of this and each 5-years after that. FYI only.

ADJOURN - The meeting adjourned at 1:17 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 22nd at 12:00 noon. Lunch will be served during the meeting.