

# ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

## Technical Committee

June 13, 2013

### Voting Members Present:

Dustin Smith	City of St. Joseph
Jody Carlson	City of St. Joseph
Dan Hausman	Buchanan County
Ty Nagle	City of St. Joseph
Gunnar Hand	City of St. Joseph
Shannon Kusilek	MoDOT - NW
Gary Leftin	City of St. Joseph
Andrew Clements	City of St. Joseph
Scott Gatewood	City of St. Joseph
Abe Forney	City of St. Joseph
Angie Hoecker	MoDOT - CO
Kenny Lance	City of Savannah
Jim Richardson	City of Wathena

### Other:

Paul Cockram	ATU Local #847
Mary Gaston	St. Joseph Transit
Elaine Buckner	City of St. Joseph
Michael Rinehart	MoDOT – NW
Laura Handke	Live Well St. Joseph
John Hontz	City of Wathena
Bill Robinett	Mo-DOT Transit
Megan Carroll	Mo-Kan Regional Council
Sharon Cornelius	Ag Expo

**OPENING REPORTS** - Roll Call of Voting Members. A quorum was present.

Approval of April 11, 2013 meeting minutes. **Member Hausman moved, and Member Hand seconded, that the minutes of the April 11, 2013 meeting be approved as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.**

Opportunity for Public Comments. None were given.

**OLD BUSINESS** – None.

**NEW BUSINESS** – Better Block – Reporting of 2013 event. Mr. Nagle presented a power point overview of the second year's event held in conjunction with Mo-Kan Regional Council. Snow caused postponement to a week after the Apple Blossom Parade. Plants and street trees were donated and distributed downtown at the end of the event. The event featured live music, outdoor vendors, and the improved streetscape which opened up pedestrian space. Pop up businesses were operating out of vacant buildings. Permanent street signs were installed in the

700-800 block of Francis. Member Hand said the MPO focused on streetscape. The Street Department was a great help, cleaning the streets, delivering sand bags, trimming overgrowth, etc. Member Carlson asked if there has been any discussion about coordinating with businesses to continue to grow beyond an isolated street segment. Ms. Carroll replied that Mo-Kan staff have not started planning the next event, but they will meet with business and community leaders to decide the next step, whether to continue with pop up businesses or something new. Member Hand said 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets will be the focus next year.

Bike Month Reporting. Member Hand reported Bike to Work Day had 110+ participants representing 40 businesses. More outreach yielded a dramatic increase over previous years. Benefits were enjoyed from MoDOT's Blueprint for Safety grant. Heartland Health won first place in number of participants. The photo contest was won by Christian Johannsen. The 2014 grant request has been submitted to assist with public outreach for 2014. He hopes to see the day event moved to "Bike to Work Week" and then "Bike to Work Month".

Member Nagle reported that each year the MPO participates in a National Bike Pedestrian documentation project, performing counts on two days in eight locations throughout the city. Trends are starting to be evident. To get a base line, St. Joseph Avenue was added because of the proposed bike lane project. He thanked the many people in the meeting which helped take counts. The results greatly help with Urban Trail grant applications. Results are also beneficial in showing annual usership when presenting plans to other communities. Member Hausman asked why counts at Belt & Cook reduced from 157 to 48. Member Clements explained that the weather was bitter cold.

2014-2017 TIP Update. Member Nagle said the draft document was out for comment and has been sent digitally to this Committee. Of 67 total projects, 45 were carried over from the last TIP. 22 were new projects. Two projects had issues: 1) OATS operates in the entire county, an area larger than the MPO limits, so they were asked to split their future applications for just the MPO area. There was not time enough to separate it for this TIP; and 2) the US 36 Interchange (to be discussed in the next item). **Member Kusilek moved to approve the 2014-2017 TIP update. Member Hausman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

US 36 Interchange Waiver Request – Application for Bridge Deck Policy exemption and MPO response. Chairman Smith said the item was on the agenda as a result of federal funding being involved. It is the function of the MPO to review projects which include federal funding. The MPO and MoDOT has previously provided information to the members on this subject. It will require a vote by this committee.

Member Nagle explained that the MPO letter should have said the "MPO Staff recommended", not "the MPO". Member Hand went over the timeline of the MPO's involvement. More than a year ago, the MPO was in a meeting where they discussed three alternatives for the access. At that time the MPO asked the consultant to provide setbacks and do traffic studies for the three alternatives. A year later the MPO approved a TIP amendment for \$5,000 for engineering which became a part of the TIP. This past Spring, MoDOT submitted updated materials for the 2014-17 TIP. Everything was signed saying the project was in accordance with MPO policies and MPO staff thought everything was in order. It scored fine in the last evaluation and was believed

to meet the MPO's criteria. In April 2013, both the Technical and Coordinating Committees met and MoDOT showed there was one, not two, sidewalks. The MPO policy stipulates two sidewalks, one on each side. It didn't meet the bridge deck policy, thus a waiver request today. When the waiver request was received from MoDOT, MPO staff delved deeper into the project. In forming their response, they followed the reasoning and information that was provided for why MoDOT didn't think they need a sidewalk on the east side of the proposed project.

Member Hand went on to say that in the 2035 LRTP there is a proposed project 30 years out for an extension of I-229 to US 36, somewhat aligning with Rt. W. The LRTP states we want to maintain a one mile distance between intersections in order to upgrade to interstate standards. It is pretty close to one mile. In addition, from a project's beginning, access for future buildings and pedestrian use must be anticipated. His concern is that a sidewalk on one side does not consider potential future development. An Ag Expo Center is a regional draw with year round events which leads to concerns about transportation impacts near the interchange. The Riverside-US 36 interchange is the #2 problem in the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan. Even without the Ag Expo Center, that interchange will need improved in the foreseeable future.

A meeting was held with MoDOT prior to today's meeting where they discussed the cost of a second sidewalk. Based on the last re-decking project, which is comparable, \$200,000 seems somewhat expensive. MPO staff thought the sidewalk could have been done rather than some aesthetics.

In the end, what it came down to for staff was the request waiver justified only one sidewalk as there is no planned connection to the north and they see no future development around the Ag Expo Center. Therefore, staff believes these same points also argue the integrity and need for the bridge to the Ag Expo Center. In March 2012, URS recommended the MPO staff not approve a waiver as it violates MPO policy. Instead, Riverside should be improved and a frontage road provided along US 36. Member Hausman asked how Riverside improvements would be funded. Member Hand said it would have to be looked at. Member Hausman asked Member Hand if he would give up \$5 million dollars for this community. Member Hand contended that Riverside has already been identified as a priority. Member Hausman said there is no funding. Member Hand said there is an Economic Development grant to build an interchange and staff thinks the money would be better spent improving a different interchange. Member Clements said you can't spend money in a different location. Mr. Kusilek explained that the grant is Economic Development funding to create jobs, part of MoDOT's statewide mission. A \$15 million project could get up to \$5 million/year for three years. The Ag Expo group applied for funds and Jefferson City approved it as a good project for economic development for St. Joseph. Cities like Springfield, St. Louis and Kansas City usually get this money. It is the first time a major economic development project has been given to St. Joseph.

Chairman Smith said if the interchange is built, where does the money come from to upgrade the rest of the infrastructure around the property. Member Hausman said the Ag Expo Board will have to improve Riverside from the interchange to Pickett. The industrial development to the south could use this interchange to access US 36. They will have to address Pickett Road and he is well aware of that, but it is not in their initial budget. Pickett to Riverside to the end of our property will be enhanced by the Ag Expo Center, but the rest they will have to talk to the City

about. Chairman Smith said he has not seen anything that says the other improvements would be ready. Member Sparks said it is not free if the City has to spend their money to upgrade Pickett Road, the connection to Mitchell, and Mitchell Rd..

Member Hausman said he recently looked at TIGER grants. What would really help is going north to Mitchell and improving it over to Riverside and Pickett back out to the new building. Member Sparks agreed it makes sense to go north, but isn't sure Bayer, a closed gated facility, will allow public right of way through their property. Member Hausman said Bayer has 150 acres. The Ag Expo Board has not discussed this with Bayer, but the fences could be moved and a road taken north. Member Sparks said a road would run straight into the building. Member Hausman noted it could jog onto an undeveloped lot near Mitchell. Member Hand said that traffic studies show traffic increases around Riverside and US 36, even with the Ag Expo Center. He believes that additional development will occur because of the Ag Expo Center which will impact the larger transportation system. Although \$5 million is being tied to one interchange, other transportation projects need to occur which are not being addressed and which are being compounded by this project.

Member Kusilek said they examined at-grade crossings and "J" turns, but in the end, the interchange was the best alternative for traffic coming in and out on a periodic basis. MoDOT had a letter of support from the MPO for that location. They feel location is a mute point.

Member Hand said the letter from the MPO only supports the Ag Expo Center and finding a safe and effective means of accessing it. Member Hausman said the letter of support was part of the grant application and was for the bridge at that location.

Member Kusilek said the bottom line is this: for the Ag Expo project to proceed it needs to be in the TIP, otherwise the project funding will be pulled. A compromise is needed. The waiver request revolves around the sidewalk.

Chairman Smith said there are many broader issues than the sidewalk. There are at least four plans, regional and city-wide, with which this project does not comply. One of the issues he has is in the LRTP the designation of the highway as a future interstate highway is a concern because it will be within one mile of Riverside. Mr. Carlson said it won't matter, that there are interchanges less than a mile in many locations. Member Kusilek noted an auxiliary lane can help alleviate some issues if it is around one mile.

Chairman Smith said the second issue is that it would nix the proposed interchange at W Highway. Mr. Rinehart noted within the LRTP it is in two different locations and showed a map aligned with a county road. Chairman Smith asked if there would be two bridges crossing the river. Mr. Rinehart said yes, if you want an outer loop. You can go another mile to have an interchange. Chairman Smith said the proposed area that crosses it west is only one half mile. Member Hausman said from the Ag Expo ramp west is one-half mile. Mr. Rinehart said it is where the bridge crosses US 36. It is no problem.

Mr. Rinehart noted that the letter to MoDOT mentioned some "shortsightedness". He has been working with the Ag Expo Center since the beginning trying to help them in their pursuit of

developing property. He read prepared comments to the group and asked that they be included in the minutes (attached).

Member Kusilek contended that having a sidewalk on one side of the bridge is not uncommon, that Kansas City and Springfield have recently built bridges with only one sidewalk. He distributed photos. One was residential with a hospital and one was near the Truman Sports project where a 10' sidewalk was built. They were approved by their local transportation group. One bridge in this MPO (Cook Road) was built with sidewalks on both sides eight year ago. The County Commission has a hard time cleaning debris underneath it. The area is still mostly undeveloped.

Member Hand clarified that the County was obligated to build sidewalks along Cook from Riverside to the bridge when it was paid for and constructed. Member Hausman said the County had no funds to do the work.

Member Carlson said the committee could vote on whether to allow the waiver. MoDOT has said if the MPO chose to fund the other sidewalk it could be done with the original construction. Member Lance said at one time the Committee was told a sidewalk is too expensive to add later. Ms. Gaston said from Transit's perspective, when development happens and they ask for transit, it will limit how they can serve the area with sidewalks on one side.

Member Lance asked if growth is not expected. Member Kusilek noted that the city property line is to the north side of the right of way at US 36. Member Hand said it starts with a waiver from MPO policy and there will be no connection to the north. For those reasons he believes the existing system should be improved rather than spend \$5 million to serve one development. Mr. Rinehart asked when will that development happen, that east of the development is flood plain. Member Hand said there will be development in the future for all sides of the interchange, that even the east side has 150' of land not in the flood plain.

Member Carlson asked if the MPO has ever funded a sidewalk and then MoDOT reimburse the MPO should the need arise for another sidewalk? Member Kusilek said it has been discussed and MoDOT would be agreeable. Member Carlson said then there is the potential for the MPO to agree to the waiver. Member Kuselik said it has been done well in other districts where the TMA would pay for it up front. In this case the road to Mitchell would be constructed in 10 years and, if that is done, MoDOT would gladly say yes, here you go.

Member Carlson said the MPO would pay for it now and if there was development within 10 years, it would be reimbursed back to the MPO. He clarified that the letter to MoDOT did not say "bridge", but the request for funds for that was tied to a bridge. The MPO supported the development for that. If it comes down to sidewalks and the MPO desires them on both sides, it could help with that. Then, if recognized growth comes, MoDOT would reimburse. Mr. Kusilek said MoDOT could put that in writing. Member Hausman said the TIGER grant is a project tool to do that. The block area and new industrial park could be enhanced. It would take traffic off Riverside. We could do a good thing working together (Mitchell Woods, Expo Center, MPO and MoDOT) for a TIGER grant which I think we could get. Mr. Kusilek said Mitchell Woods would see it as a good access for them and Bayer could see that in going through their property.

Member Carlson reiterated that these funds were tied to an economic development grant for that area. We need to seriously consider the involvement from our local and other political delegates. Do we want to waive this second sidewalk or try to make it work? On the transit side, if we need to serve customers there in 5-10 years, MoDOT would be willing to reimburse us for the sidewalk. We know Riverside Road is bad, but it is a matter of funding when we can get it done. Along those lines, recently the City, MoDOT, the County and the Chamber looked at submitting an application for that location but the window was too short to get it done. They are looking at applying in 2014. Member Hausman said economic development money is available through 2017. The money the Ag Expo Board received was for 2015. There is still \$5-\$10 million setting out there. We could go for that to improve economic development in that area. There are lots of possibilities.

Chairman Smith asked for a description of the USDA grant that says they have to be outside the City. Ms. Cornelius said it is a variety of grants. Member Hausman said it is a \$72 million project. \$30-\$40 million could come in the form of 0%-low interest loans. We are partnering closely with them. Everything we are doing falls within their criteria so they could fund the whole thing. They had eight proposals from engineering firms to design the plan. Three are interviewing: Burns & McDonnell, DRG and Cook Flatt & Strobel. Their proposed design costs range from \$130,000 to \$150,000.

Chairman Smith said he saw where a recent bridge sidewalk cost only \$70,000. Mr. Kuselik said that bridge did not require a cantilever on the bridge or pier caps extended. Its cost was only for barrier curb and minor items. Mr. Rinehart said the design will anticipate a future center line but not drive any pilings on the east side.

Member Carlson moved to accept the waiver based on the contingency that the MPO would fund the second sidewalk and that MoDOT would reimburse the MPO in the future. Chairman Smith asked what 60 jobs are costing us downtown. Member Hausman said he didn't think jobs will come from downtown. Chairman Smith noted that four major events would be taken from the Civic Arena. He said there is a much bigger picture than the sidewalk issue and it is not being addressed appropriately.

Mike Rinehart provided the following information. I'm an Area Engineer with MoDOT and have been working with the not-for-profit Ag Expo Board representatives from the early stages of their pursuit to develop the property they have in Buchanan County adjacent to US 36. Most of you know the group was successful in garnering support for the development and associated interchange by the MPO's Chairman Jerry Russell, United States Senator Claire McCaskill, United States Representative Sam Graves, Missouri Senator Rob Schaaf, Missouri Representatives Pat Conway, Galen Higdon, Jr., and Delus Johnson, as well as St. Joseph Metro Chamber's Steve Hamilton, Mo-Kan's Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman Bob Burnett, the University of Missouri Extension NW Regional Director, Karma Metzgar, the Missouri Department of Economic Development Deputy Director Jason Hall, and others. It was this coalition of support and the prospect of adding 60 jobs to the local economy that allowed MoDOT to accept the Ag Expo's request for future economic development fund reimbursement for costs associated with the interchange.

The Ag Expo is engaging with Alfred Benesch & Company to design and oversee the construction of the interchange. Our discussions to date have pointed them in the direction of providing a bridge over US 36 that will accommodate the potential for four future elements: A future-minded protected bicycle/pedestrian facility on the West side of the bridge will be constructed despite Point A not having a companion Point B. A design that allows for adding lane(s) and/or a protected bicycle/pedestrian facility on the East side. This equates to additional dollars being spent now for added ramp length, additional fill, and more MSE (Mechanically Stabilized Earth) wall. The purpose of this specification is to accommodate the notion of an East outer loop as identified in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (project identification number 32). Recognition that there may be a future connection to Mitchell. An area in the Northeast quadrant of the interchange fill that can receive a Welcome to St. Joseph monument for display to Westbound US 36 traffic.

There are costs associated with each of these four future-minded elements with no guarantee that any of them will reap their intended potential.

In terms of aesthetics, appropriate visual elements will be considered and funded. For example, although there are reasonable costs associated with chain link fence and it possesses an ability to meet a need in helping improve safety for non-motorized traffic when placed on the edge of a bridge, it is believed that this look would not be ideal for what may be the Eastern St. Joseph entrance for some time. Although an alternative to chain link has not been specifically suggested or approved at this point, an upgrade seems to be in order. We believe there are times when adding a reasonable degree of aesthetic value to a project has merit.

In light of the written MPO staff recommendation that the MoDOT request for a waiver be denied (as found in the information packet for the 6/13/2013 Technical Committee Meeting), it is hoped that the aforementioned comments be considered in lieu of a vote by members of both the Technical and Coordinating Committee members. We believe the approach being taken to declare Federal Funds in jeopardy and removal of the project from the Transportation Improvement Program based solely on not immediately providing non-motorized bridge access to the East side of the bridge is impractical. We find the idea promoted by Andy Clements in our last MPO meeting that a waiver be sought to be much more in tune with our sense of what should be done at this time. I would therefore ask and encourage you to vote in favor of accepting the waiver request. Thank you.

Member Lance asked if MoDOT would commit to reimbursing for the bridge sidewalk. Member Kuselik replied that MoDOT will entertain it. Member Sparks asked if anyone has spoken with Bayer. He questioned if they would go 20-50' east? Member Hausman said the Expo Center would work with them. Member Sparks asked if the bridge could move 50-100'. Member Kusilek replied yes. Member Hausman said as long as it is on Ag Expo Center property. **Member Forney seconded the motion, which passed 10-3. The dissenting votes were from Ty Nagle, Gunnar Hand and Dustin Smith.** Member Hand said it will now go to the Coordinating Committee. If it is approved by them, the LRTP will need amended. Member Nagle pointed out that all MPO funds are obligated. Using the funds for a sidewalk would cause the MPO to push other projects out which have been obligated. Member Hausman noted that the interchange will open in September 2014. Member Nagle asked what if the amount changes by then. Member Hausman asked if they would like for the engineer to prepare a plan with a second option? All agreed. Member Sparks said a discussion can be held with Bayer before the Coordinating Committee meeting. A commitment from Bayer at this time is important for the

road north. Member Hausman said he had contact information and that the road could curl into Commerce Drive, it would be cheaper. Member Sparks said the road should go from arterial to arterial.

TIP Evaluation – Project Scoring Tool. Member Hand reported that MoDOT’s comments were added to the evaluation and asked for approval of the new evaluation tool. The evaluation more closely aligns with MPO goals and policies with more discretion for staff. There had previously been no method to evaluate aviation, rail and freight. Additionally, mitigation efforts are now given one score. All forms were updated to match and the process streamlined. Signatures will be obtained in advance to have everything needed to put it in the TIP. Member Kusilek asked if maintenance projects will go through the MPO and Member Hand responded yes. Member Nagle said maintenance projects have different criteria. **Member Hausman moved to approve the new TIP evaluation forms. Member Nagle seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Safe Routes to School - presentation and approval of the plan for the St. Joseph School District. The first half of St. Joseph’s plan was brought to the committee two months ago, but completion was postponed in order to help the Riverside School District (RSD) in their grant applications.

The second half of St. Joseph’s plan has now been completed and available digitally. They’ve discussed filling in the gaps and coming up with a complete analysis of St. Joseph sidewalks. School boundaries overlap so that two schools usually benefit from one project, which will look good on funding applications. A power point presentation (attached) details the plan. Member Nagle explained a Walking School Bus program that will also be helpful in securing grants. MPO staff will work with each individual school to develop their plan.

Member Nagle said the RSD program was completed and taken to the district this week. They are reviewing it and will, hopefully, approve it. The Kansas grants were initially 100% but are now 80%-20%. **Member Kusilek moved to approve St. Joseph’s Safe Routes to School Plan. Member Hausman seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

MPO Strategic Plan – draft document of the MPO’s 5 year scope of work / 2014 UPWP. Member Hand said there has been nothing to guide the MPO staff internally in directing the LRTP which makes it easy to lose direction on a daily basis. Staff has drafted a 5-year strategic plan. A more flushed out version will be given to the Coordinating Committee. He isn’t sure if the MPO needs to approve it or keep as an internal staff product and place on the MPO website.

Title VI-EJ – approval of updated document. Member Hand said K-DOT asked for another update, mostly geographic data and updated forms and notices. Previous comments have been incorporated. **Member Hausman moved to approve the updated Title VI-EJ document. Member Leftin seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

TIGER Grant – City of St. Joseph application review. Member Hand said the focus has changed to 2014. Member Carlson said the County, City, Chamber of Commerce, Heartland, Altec and the Ag Expo Board were involved in trying to quickly put together an application for a TIGER

grant. However, the timeframe was too short to get feedback for the application. If the grant is available next year, the committee could potentially be involved in applying.

StJoeMPO.org – updated website. Member Hand noted that information on the previous website was hard to find. The updated version is more functional and easier to maneuver. We are also more active on Facebook and Twitter. Members Kusilek and Sparks agreed it is much improved.

**OTHER/ADJOURN** – Member Gaston noted the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Dump the Pump Day is June 20<sup>th</sup>. Bus rides are free all day.

The meeting adjourned by motion at 12:15 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 8, 2013 at 10:30 a.m. at the Buchanan County Courthouse.