

ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
COORDINATING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 8, 2007

A meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the St. Joseph Area Transportation Study was held at 12:00 noon in the 4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall, St. Joseph, Missouri, on February 8th, 2006.

Voting members present:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Gary Roach, Vice-chairman | City of St. Joseph |
| Vincent Capell | City of St. Joseph |
| Jerry Russell | Citizen Representative |
| Mary Montgomery | Country Club Village |

Staff members present:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Andrew Clements | City of St. Joseph |
| Kelsy Marr | MPO |

Others present:

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Darby Logan | MoDOT |
| Rick Kingery | MoDOT |

OPENING REPORTS - Vice-chairman Roach called the meeting to order and asked for a moment of silence to recognize the passing of Councilmember Joyce Starr's mother. A quorum was present for roll call. **Ms. Montgomery moved to approve the minutes of the December 14th, 2006 meeting. Mr. Capell seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Opportunity for public comment. No member of the public appeared to comment.

OLD BUSINESS - International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) Presentation. Mr. Clements said there has been recent attention to this sport in St. Joseph. Although it doesn't directly apply to MPO business, it is of interest due to its ties with the parkway and trail system. Dona Reynolds is a strong advocate for the sport. Mr. Clements showed examples of simple trails constructed by volunteers. Local governments take the lead with in-kind forces to construct and maintain the trails. Tourism benefits and desirability to home buyers are positives. The sport ranks in popularity just below hiking. Bikers tend to be higher income people who make trip destinations an average of four days. They prefer to camp or stay at bed and breakfasts. They seek variety in levels of terrain difficulty. In Wales, 3% of their gross national product comes from mountain biking. Local volunteers include: Roger Sparks, City Engineer; bike shop owner Shawn Force; and Ed Schilling, Risk Manager for the City. They are beginning construction on a trail along Corby. The trail is eligible for federal funds through the Missouri DNR from a subset of enhancement funds. Money is also available from the Forest Service and IMBA.

Mr. Capell asked if any response was received to letters mailed to residents informing them about trail expansion around Corby Pond. Mr. Clements replied no, probably because they are familiar and comfortable with existing trails in the area. The project is under Parks overview.

NEW BUSINESS – Amend 2005 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Ms. Marr reviewed two agenda items to amend the LRTP: an on-call contract to repair the guard cables on I-29 and; Belt/Route A intersection improvements (already approved by the Technical Committee and will be advertised for public comment on March 3rd and 4th).

Mr. Clements said the Commons developer and MoDOT are contributing to the project. Mr. Russell asked if anything is being done with the approaches. Mr. Clements said yes, there is a commitment for them to do more in the future as they build out more phases. There are already capacity and safety issues under I-29 and lane additions are needed. The big picture fix is more than the developer can handle. The developer will do a reasonable amount while not burdened with the entire project. Mr. Russell noted that traffic from the Menards area backs up onto I-29 trying to get into Loves Truck Stop. Mr. Clements said MoDOT stopped a corridor planning study a few years ago when it failed in a tax package. Mr. Capell said the best solution would be to take out the hotel and reconfigure the entire intersection. Mr. Clements said the primary goal is to get truck traffic out and around. All agreed the intersection is a “mess” and will only get worse. **Mr. Russell moved to approve amending the LRTP to include guard cable maintenance and improvements to the Belt/Route A intersection. Mr. Capell seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Amend 2007-2009 Transportation Improvement Program. On-call repair for I-29 guard cable was approved by the Technical Committee and comments were solicited. The project is eligible for federal funds. Mr. Capell noted the effectiveness of the cables. **Ms. Montgomery moved to approve adding guard cable maintenance to the TIP. Mr. Capell seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion of Lake/Alabama Bridge Preferences. Vice-chairman Roach said there has been discussion about holding a public meeting at Benton High School. There is a concern that if there is a meeting, that it be conducted effectively.

Mr. Clements showed various alignment options from MoDOT. At 7-8% grades, a bridge would not be feasible. He met with a representative of Union Pacific Railroad and Councilman Mike Bozarth to discuss different locations. Both men agreed that safety was the priority. Mr. Clements asked if the project had to include a bridge and they said yes. The first idea was to build a bridge over 59 Highway on the existing alignment from Alabama. The footprint involves houses and businesses. For the grade to work, the road must touch down further west, requiring a new intersection. After discussion, they felt that the actual idea from the community 20 years ago, although it would cause homes and businesses to be lost, was, in general, what they liked.

Mr. Clements stressed that coordination with the MPO and MoDOT is critical. He would recommend starting with a formal position statement from the MPO and then engage MoDOT directly. The project could be done in phases, using what we now have (\$3 million) for design and

right of way. Mr. Capell said it has been discussed for years. He wants to see the project off center and a preferred design selected in order to estimate a total project cost. A major concern to him is interpretation. Is there really \$3 million? Mr. Clements explained that when the Transportation Bill was passed by Congress, it was included as a "below-the-line" earmark. MoDOT isn't excited about this project, but our congressional delegation in Washington, DC wants it done. MoDOT says Congress says they don't want to do that. Realistically, no one will buck Congress and say we won't build this with our money. Mr. Capell remarked that Senator Bond and Senator Talent were involved. Mr. Clements said that MoDOT feels that political earmarks make it more difficult for them.

Mr. Capell asked how flexible is that description? Mr. Clements said the phrase was changed by Senator Talent's staff to be more general. Mr. Capell said our elected officials in Washinton, DC could be consulted to determine their intentions when they changed it from a bridge to an intersection.

Mr. Capell asked if we are hamstrung by the wording "intersection improvement". Mr. Clements said MoDOT has its perspective, but Senator Talent's office may have a different one. Mr. Clements said additional funds will be needed to complete the project. Vice-chairman Roach said Senator Bond mentioned a "bridge". Mr. Clements said staffers in Washington, DC generalized the project description to state "intersection work". Mr. Capell said he would like to see the MPO establish a position that can be pursued.

Mr. Kingery said a meeting is planned for March. Mr. Capell said a meeting is a mistake. It will be a big brainstorming process with 15 items on the table. He suggested to instead have one or two options that people can consider. He believed a grade separation could run \$10-\$15 million. We have been talking about this project as if it will cost \$3 million. The public may perceive the bridge as costing \$3 million. We don't have \$15 million.

Vice-chairman Roach said it is too early for a meeting. Mr. Clements said it is appropriate to streamline this if it is the Board's pleasure. If something comes up later they could come back to the MPO. The MPO can set the table and limit the initial discussion to one idea. Mr. Russell said if you put business people out of the sunlight, they won't be happy. You have to come up with a concept. He has met with Martin Rucker for years. He talked about moving it north to get out of the intersection. The number one priority was fire and emergency access across the railroad tracks. That can be gained at Missouri Avenue. Taking homes and businesses on Alabama won't fly. If you invest \$3 million into a design on Alabama, you will waste it because when push comes to shove, it won't happen because of neighborhood opposition.

Mr. Clements said the MPO might consider moving on this project in two phases: 1) improve the intersection to address existing safety issues with the \$3 million earmark and 2) deal with the bridge as a later, or sister, project. Mr. Roach said if you do anything other than a bridge, you need to have a meeting. Mr. Capell agreed that people need a chance to comment. \$3 million is probably enough to do something meaningful at the intersection but doesn't solve the public safety issue.

Mr. Capell recommended making intersection improvements with the \$3 million; view the grade separation as something separate; and let Washington, DC know what we are doing. Vice-chairman Roach said it is important that the intersection improvements not be destroyed later in the grade separation work. Mr. Russell said in the Long Range Transportation Plan interviews with people, their priority was fire safety and emergencies. A viaduct can be built anywhere to get to the other

side. The MPO and MoDOT have different ideas about earmarked money. That money was thrown in at the last minute and Senator Talent asked the MPO for input on where to put it. Mr. Russell said he would be opposed to having a meeting with the neighborhood and talking about anything but an intersection improvement.

Mr. Capell suggested the MPO establish a position paper which people could accept or reject to get off center. The MPO is one level and the City Council will have to do something. Mr. Clements said Buchanan County should be approached on it. Mr. Clements said a future crossing to the north would be more like a road on both sides of an embankment fill, not a cloverleaf. Mr. Capell suggested just building a fire station and ambulance facility on the other side of the tracts.

Mr. Capell said more detail is needed regarding justification for position of the \$3 million. Mr. Capell said whenever the meeting occurs you can take the position paper by the MPO. Any reasonable person would agree with what has been discussed today. Mr. Kingery said the earmark reads "Upgrade on 59 at rail crossing in St. Joseph - \$3 million". **Mr. Capell moved to have Mr. Clements word a position paper. Mr. Russell seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.** Vice-chairman Roach asked that MoDOT employees apprise Mr. Wichern of the position paper being written. Mr. Kingery said only three options for intersection improvements would be taken to a public meeting. MoDOT would say we are doing intersection improvements now and in a few years if bridge funds are available, we will discuss it then. Martin Rucker called Don Wichern to have a meeting with all parties involved. Mr. Russell said if the bridge becomes a possibility, the design has been started. We can approach the project with an eye towards the bridge. Mr. Clements said it is the MPO's responsibility not to spend federal dollars twice. Ms. Montgomery said that our senators should be contacted and MoDOT copied before anything is done. Mr. Capell said the most important thing is contact with everyone so when they come to the table they have already read about it.

Title VI/EJ/ADA Policy Adoption.

The MPO is required by federal regulations to adopt a policy. Title VI deals with people of minority population. In looking at projects you have to consider different options which don't impact minorities. Environmental justice focuses on income. You can't plow through a low income area because they are poor. All projects must meet ADA. In January, the U. S. Department of Transportation technically adopted the ADAAG (how to design roadways improvements and sidewalks to meet ADA). Prior to this, we have used ADAAG and ASSHTO as best practices, but when you team them up, the MPO is responsible that all projects include elements to support those populations. For example, say the MPO is monitoring what the City of St. Joseph is doing and the City's development code doesn't have sidewalk requirements; therefore, the MPO says you are not following Title VI and you are no longer eligible for funding. It is a big deal. The MPO must do the monitoring. It is federal law and we are obligated to follow it. If we receive and investigate a complaint and the local government is not following ADA, future projects can't be funded. We are now required to adopt a policy and be responsible that all governments in our area follow the rules. Do you have an ADA Plan and are you following it and providing access where you can? If you can't say "yes", you will have federal funds withheld (no projects in the TIP). It is a hammer. Mr. Kingery asked if it applies to new construction. Mr. Clements responded "yes, and rehab". If you have a rule in your town, you have an obligation to follow it. For example, if the Belt Highway

wants to maintain or attain ADA access, sidewalks will be required (it would also be linked to providing mobility access to Title VI,EJ populations as well).

Mr. Capell moved to approve adopt the Title VI/EJ/ADA Policy. Ms. Montgomery seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Roach said Glen Boos, a developer, objects to sidewalk requirements. Mr. Capell said Mr. Boos questioned why developers of commercial property are required to put in sidewalks, saying that they are “sidewalks to nowhere and developers shouldn’t have to put them in”. Mr. Capell asked if the above policy has any impact? Mr. Clements said it provides reinforcement for the City’s policy to require sidewalks.

OTHER/ADJOURN -

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 12th, 2007, at 12:00 noon.