

ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
COORDINATING COMMITTEE
October 8, 2009

Voting members present:

Billy Kretzer, Vice Chairperson (arrived after start of meeting)	City of Savannah
Jim Richardson	City of Wathena
Donna Jean Boyer	City of St. Joseph
Bill Falkner	City of St. Joseph
Jerry Russell	Citizen Representative
Mike Bozarth	City of St. Joseph
Cyndee Merritt	City of Savannah

Staff members present:

Bruce Woody	City of St. Joseph
Andy Clements	City of St. Joseph
Kelsy Marr	City of St. Joseph
Elaine Buckner	City of St. Joseph

Others present:

Shannon Kusilek	MoDOT District #1
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OPENING REPORTS

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-chair when the meeting opened, Jim Richardson directed the meeting.

Roll Call. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes. **Mr. Falkner moved to approve the minutes of the June 11th meeting as submitted. Ms. Merritt seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

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

NEW BUSINESS

RideShare Connection Program - Update on the carpool website. Ms. Marr said this is a TIP project, done in coordination with the Kansas City metro area. A St. Joseph exclusive website was created for users to register and log on for area-specific information about traffic and people who are interested in sharing rides. Project planning began in May 2009.

There was an initial investment to join and purchase other amenities. The cost was spread between Lawrence, Kansas City and St. Joseph. FTA funds were used to develop the site and pay the fees. The service is basically a carpool matching web site. There is an employer service module as well as an employee service module. The employer can see who is carpooling before searching the data base.

To qualify, a person must work or live in St. Joseph and be a regional commuter. For people who are unsure about ride sharing if they don't have a guaranteed ride home, a once-a year free pass can be given (\$70 maximum) to cover cab fare home. The official launch is this month. Promotions and news coverage has begun. Mr. Clements noted that the perception is that more people leave St. Joseph to work in Kansas City but it is the opposite. Ride share supports St. Joseph employers by helping them stay competitive. Another benefit is that it frees up parking spaces.

National Bicycle & Pedestrian Documentation Project. Presentation on the national project and St. Joseph MPO's involvement. Ms. Marr said the MPO is helping to sponsor a national program to document the number of bicyclists and pedestrians walking. They used 10 volunteers for manual counts at 10 locations. The project is needed because it is hard to get funding for a project without accurate counts. By taking counts on a semi annual or annual basis, trends can be noted. The data will be submitted to the national website to be used for national and local purposes. Mr. Kuselik asked what locations were counted. Ms. Marr responded 22nd and Frederick, Cook & Belt, Belt & Frederick, the bike trail near Pickett bridge, Ashland and Noyes near Central, and the Riverfront.

Update on Long-Range Transportation Plan & Schedule. In the absence of the consultant, URS, Mr. Clements gave the presentation. He noted that MPO member Jerry Russell serves on this committee.

Mr. Clements explained that much attention has been given to public involvement activities in an effort to learn what people want and to try to make it happen. Next week a workplace survey will go out to industries in the greater St. Joseph area. Different projects and attitudinal questions are included and areas are being cut up by regions. A lot will be asked of MPO members over the next few months. The Steering Committee will go over the draft recommendation on October 27th. A draft version will go to the Technical Committee in November and in December the Coordinating committee will see it. The final version will go to the Technical Committee in January and Coordinating Committee in February to adopt. If the LRTP is not adopted by February 28th, 2010, all federal projects stop for MoDOT, the City of St. Joseph, Transit, Buchanan County, Wathena and Elwood.

Hard copies will be supplied 7-14 days before the meetings. He asked the members to be prepared to discuss the document which will guide investments for the next five years. Ms. Marr stressed the importance of the community being in agreement with the contents of the document.

Mr. Clements described Phase I to upgrade the base ITS system in the amount of \$900,000. He remarked that population growth is expected to be flat to modest. In 2035 it is expected that north of Country Club Village the roadway will be over capacity, as well as Cook Road west of the Belt Highway, the Belt Highway between Faraon and Jules, the I-229 interchange south of 36 Highway, and 752 east from the south end. Under the current trend, 20.9 miles is approaching capacity. The reason you don't see much difference is we have had such dramatic sprawl and low density population that it will take 25-30 years to grow into that sprawl. We have done such a poor job of managing growth and have dug ourselves a deep hole and it will take decades to dig ourselves out. Elwood is concerned about using the freight connection. Another big desire is for 36 Highway to change to interstate status. Key growth areas will be Riverside Road and Rt. 752.

Preliminary 2030 results shows the need for an “east loop”. A new boulevard concept (greenway beltway) is part of that and the U.S. 36 corridor upgraded to interstate status (a new interchange is needed along that section).

Existing roadways in the eastern part of St. Joseph are poor. An east/west connection on Mitchell is needed to relieve traffic from the Belt Highway. Looking to 2035, as the industrial park grows, perhaps a new east alignment needs to go further east than indicated back in the original 1969 alignment. Also, if the interstate status happens, we should look at future interchanges. There are no arterials and collectors where development will occur. Connectivity must be improved to the north. From the golf course to Country Club there is still a whole section road intact. A road in this area needs to be developed to arterial, then develop I-229 to the Belt.

Because the population is aging and relying more on transit, we need to think about optimizing or expanding the existing system. Overall, 70% of the core city population is served within one-fourth mile of transit in St. Joseph, showing that the routes are well laid out.

He said the message is tough. Federal law requires fiscally constrained projects. Since 1998 there has only been one roadway project funded in St. Joseph (Faraon). In putting together a fiscally constrained plan it will have very few projects on the highway side because this community hasn't documented a track record of funding. You may see two or three projects in St. Joseph. Savannah has a better track record. In a financially constrained plan, projects in Year “A” move into the TIP. If it is a project not in Year “A”, the entire LRTP must be amended to get it in the TIP. This track record of not being able to fund local projects has put several hurdles in our way. We haven't done ourselves or this community a service by painting a rosy picture.

The Steering Committee will hold an official public open house on November 12th. Funding constraints will impact project plans. Savannah passed a sales tax for street construction. Their success as a community can justify why they are getting more road projects because they are going toward communities that have been successful.

Mr. Woody said it doesn't mean this community can't have funds coming along, but if they do and the project has not already been identified in the LRTP, the time line would be much longer. Mr. Russell said this plan has never been taken seriously by the government agencies until the counties and cities jointly adopt this plan. The government considers the LRTP as a toy to get funds and no one takes it seriously. It should be part of planning and zoning in every community. He continued by saying people in Savannah and St. Joseph need a good Highway 71 to move between work and home. St. Joseph has so many TIFs we will see no growth until they are paid out. Mr. Clements said they have to go with what they have now. If decision makers are willing to take recommendations forward, maybe a more positive course can be charted. It is not too late. Many things can be done as a community to address that.

OTHER/ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 10th, 2009 at 12:00 noon.

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