

ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

1ST Floor Conference Room – 12:00 Noon

April 26, 2012

Voting members present:

Jerry Russell, Chairperson	Citizen Representative
Donna Jean Boyer	City of St. Joseph
Byron Myers, Sr.	City of St. Joseph

Staff members present:

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

Others present:

Shannon Kuselik	MoDOT District #1
Michael Rinehart	MoDOT District #1
Matt Buchanan	MoKan Regional Council
Mark Swope	Olsson Associates

OPENING REPORTS

Chairperson Russell opened the meeting.

Roll Call. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes. **Member Myers moved to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2012 meeting as submitted. Member Clements seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Opportunity for public comment. No one appeared for comment.

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

NEW BUSINESS – Better Block St. Joseph – Presentation on Downtown Revitalization Initiative. Member Nagle explained the program as a national initiative to revitalize downtowns using a grassroots approach, one weekend at a time. Vacant structures are filled with businesses that open out to a vibrant streetscape. Member Myers applauded the initiative and asked if fees were waived. Member Nagle responded yes, and that MoKan streamlined the process. Property owners downtown were contacted to help, whether or not the project was on their block. Member Nagle shared photos of what a revitalized downtown would resemble. As it relates to MPO Transportation Planning, there are many streetscape aspects that touch on this project, such as street trees. Felix now has streetscape improvements, but there is still much more to be done to add life to downtown. Denver, Colorado; Wichita, Kansas and San Antonio, Texas have held similar events.

Nearly 30 vendors will set up shop along the 500 and 600 blocks of Felix. Featured businesses will offer food, art, jewelry/gifts, clothing, coffee, bikes, etc. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance helped other volunteers paint buildings. Media efforts included a television interview, advertisement in the Shoppers Max, and a feature

story in the St. Joseph News-Press Business Journal. Other events scheduled for the same weekend are: Apple Blossom parade (goes right through Better Block); Air Show; Civic Center Park BBQ; and a concert at the Missouri Theater. Member Myers asked what support the MPO can offer. As the MPO's staff person, Member Nagle said he has created flyers and graphics. There is no funding for the project. Member Myers said he would like to see the effort continue every year and Better Block included in the parade route. Member Boyer said the MPO appreciates Mr. Nagle and city staff getting involved in the program.

May is National Bike to Work Month. Member Nagle reported that May 18 is Bike to Work Day where businesses and employees are encouraged to bike to work. Prizes are offered and transit offers free rides to anyone boarding with a bike. Hy-Vee donates a salad bar meal to all entries. Next year he hopes to add a photo contest for the individual or group showing themselves in the most unique way during bike month. Bike Fest is set for May and the St. Joseph Bike Club is promoting several rides. Mr. Clements would like to see civic leaders and elected officials do a Bike Week promotional lap around Civic Center Park.

Transit Study – Olsson Associates' presentation for approval. Member Clements asked the committee to consider the presentation for approval to be presented to city council next week.

Mr. Swope, Olsson Associates, said the study began in September 2011. The purpose of the study was to identify ways the system could be made more efficient and cost effective and identify changes in service due to demographic changes. They worked closely with First Transit and they are in full agreement with these changes. Wholesale changes to the system are not needed as it operates pretty efficiently today. There are no major flaws in the current system.

Public input was sought and extra effort made to understand the transportation needs of Missouri Western students. Results were: 1) most users have no other option for transportation; 2) most trips are work related; 3) college students desire to see more and better service to the campus; 4) riders desire to see better and more direct service to the Belt Highway; 5) riders want more frequent Saturday service (1 hr. vs. 2 hr.); 6) accessibility could be improved (sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, etc.) and 7) riders don't want to be inconvenienced by the mid-morning and mid-afternoon break in service.

The consultant recommends an immediate change to eliminate driver breaks. In the longer term, efforts can be made to provide direct service to the Belt Highway. To make this happen, Hy-Vee would need to accommodate 8 buses rather than the current 4. This is a vital component to Belt Highway service. When contacted, Hy-Vee management was amenable to allowing this part of their parking lot to stage four more buses.

Elwood service is now on a fixed schedule but "demand response" service would be more responsive to this low-demand area. Saturday service is recommended to increase. There are great opportunities to work with the college to serve more students.

The Belt "spine" service would run the full length of the Belt from north to south Wal-Mart and anchored by Hy-Vee's transit center. Connections could occur at both ends and the middle. Chairman Russell commented that the recommendations are sensible. Mr. Rinehart asked how transit service could be safely operated on a highway like the Belt. Mr. Swope responded that it is best to stop buses in the traffic lane (as opposed to pull-outs). Stopping buses tend to slow traffic down a bit and that is desirable on the Belt. MoDOT will control where stops will be allowed on the Belt

OTHER - Ag Center. Member Nagle said the MPO asked their consultant, URS, to develop a traffic study to show the impacts of adding the Ag Center along 36 Highway east of Riverside Road. They modeled two scenarios, one with a full diamond interchange and the other a “J” turn across 36 Highway. The 3-way stop for the outer road that serves Altec was examined from the perspective that the location is already congested and would be further impacted with this development.

Member Clements said that MoDOT requested the MPO look at the big picture. It was examined from two perspectives: 1) the existing level of service; and 2) spending dollars once and wisely.

He went on to say that adding another interchange with on/off ramps or a “J” turn at grade access or median “J” was analyzed. Putting in another interchange would not necessarily help the intersection of Riverside Road and 36 Highway. Should 36 Highway become an interstate, it will cost more to clean it up. If a frontage road could be developed on the southeast corner of 36 Highway & Riverside, all access could go through the frontage road and the money could be used to make the interchange function better. A break in access doesn’t follow the Long Range Transportation Plan and is not the best action to take to solve existing problems. The focus should be to do work in the existing interchange and tie into a frontage road.

Member Boyer asked if he shared this information with the Ag Expo group. Member Clements said that he did, but it is all in their hands as it is a county issue, not City. Mr. ? said the developer wanted the MPO to be involved because of the effect of added traffic in the 36 Highway corridor. He said they examined the idea of a frontage road but don’t believe there is room for one. The “J” turn was attractive because of the cost, but the Ag Expo Center developers settled on the idea of an interchange. It will be one mile from the I-29 interchange. Chairman Russell commented that I-29 and Frederick is a nightmare. He said it defeats the Long Range Transportation Plan. He is seeing more and more limited access on the east side of Missouri. Cameron will be a big problem if 36 Highway goes to interstate status. Anything that impedes moving 36 Highway to interstate status he will not tip his hand to. He has always carried the flag of 272. If something like this interchange is done, taxpayers will have to come back later to spend money to clean it up. Traffic merging from two busy interchanges within a mile is undesirable. Mr. Rinehart said if it went forward it would not have a negative influence on interstate standards. It is the fastest and safest way to cross the highway. A break in access causes T-bone and head-on accidents.

Member Clements said an interchange access break will function safely. Various at-grade breaks will not function as safely. Everyone would agree the fewer interchanges the better. An access road is better, but if that isn’t possible, then an interchange is the safest way. He doubts that MoDOT wants an access break, but if it has to be approved, this is the way to do it.

Member Boyer said if taxpayers are funding this interchange, it doesn’t seem right. Mr. Rinehart responded that Ag Expo is funding the entire \$2.5 million interchange.

Member Clements said it will put additional traffic on Pickett Road if the Ag Expo Center connects a north/south through road. Chairman Russell agreed. Member Clements said that one connection made through the development to Pickett is like a clogged drain seeking relief through another place. Member Carlson said by making access a full blown interchange, then we need to look at how we continue to open up areas for development and growth. With a 50% jump to Rt. AC (Riverside Road) traffic if the interchange is developed, we need to look at what can be done long term to handle growth and development in the city as we continue to expand infrastructure.

Member Clements said impacts to Pickett, Route AC, and the possibility of 36 Highway becoming an interstate should all be taken into account. If traffic could go to Mitchell, it could stub east at the county road which would have to be paved. Member Nagle asked the distance between ramps. Mr. Rinehart replied “one half mile”.

TIP Amendments - MoDOT presentation. 1) TIP# HRR-66, US 59 Overlay and Int. Improvements; 2) TIP#HRR-68, US 169 Resurfacing and Shoulder Replacements; 3) TIP#BR-40, US 59 Bridge Replacement; and TIP#HE-29, Job order contracting for guardrail/cable repair. Member Kuselik reported that MoDOT just finished their 2013 TIP and explained the amendment requests in detail. Work in the amount of \$50,000 is committed to the MPO area in the next three years. Chairman Russell called for a vote. **Member Boyer moved to accept MoDOT's aforementioned TIP amendments, Member Myers seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 23rd, 2012 at 12:00 noon. Lunch will be served.

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