

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
Technical Advisory Committee Minutes
February 22, 2008, 10:00 AM

Prayer, Kevin Belanger

Pledge of Allegiance, Kevin Belanger

Roll Call

Leo Marretta called roll.

Bonnie Lafont - City of Thibodaux, Grants Director – Present
Dan Broussard - LADOTD, Metropolitan Transportation Planning – Present
Dennis Hebert - LADOTD, Traffic Engineer, Dist 02 – Present
Donna Lavigne - LADOTD, Public Transportation Administrator – Absent
Greg Bush - TPCG, Director of Public Works – Present
Jamie Setze - Federal Highway Administration – Absent
Joan Schexnayder, TPCG, Parish Engineer – Present
Kermit Kraemer - City of Thibodaux, Public Works Director – Present
Lyle LeBlanc - LADOTD, Maintenance Engineer, Dist 02 – Present
Pat Gordon - TPCG, Director of Planning & Zoning – Proxy - Mitch McDonald
Pat Matherne - Lafourche Parish, Planning Manager – Present
Perry Blanchard, TPCG, Operations Manager, Roads & Bridges Dept – Proxy Al Levron
Ray Cheramie - Lafourche Parish, Public Works Director – Absent
Wendell Voisin - TPCG, Public Transit Administrator – Present

Others in attendance were:

Kevin Belanger, SCPDC
Leo Marretta, SCPDC
Scott Leger, SCPDC
Joshua Manning, SCPDC
Emma Bergeron, SCPDC
L.P. Ledet, Neel-Schaffer, Inc

MTP – Preparing for the beginning of our update cycle – LP Ledet, Neel Schaffer, Inc.

In 1997 Neel Schaffer, Inc. developed HTMPO's Master Transportation Plan (MTP), a long term transportation plan. It is now time to update the existing MTP. At the beginning of his presentation L.P. Ledet of Neel Schaffer, Inc. handed out two maps which showed the expansion of the U.S. Census defined urbanized area as our population has grown over time. As a result, the area that we analyze for the MTP must be expanded as well. Mr. Ledet pointed out that the Transportation Study Area for the MTP that we currently operate under was based upon information from the 1990 census and assumptions about what the 2000 census would bring. As expected, the 2000 Census changed the dimensions of the urbanized area and therefore the MPO's area of responsibility. This was anticipated in the planning of the existing MTP just as the update we are about to embark upon will take into consideration what we think will happen as a result of the 2010 Census. One of the changes noted was that the urbanized area now extends into parts of Assumption Parish.

Leo Marretta raised the question about representation for Assumption Parish on the MPO as a result of the new boundaries. Currently two parishes (Terrebonne and Lafourche) and one municipality (Thibodaux) have seats on the Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. Discussion ensued as to the effect this will have on the make up of our MPO.

Kevin Belanger said this will affect our MPO Committees and that these changes were expected as the areas in question are located in places where the models project growth to occur. Stating that he believed this to be a very good topic to discuss at future TAC meetings, Mr. Belanger said that he feels very strongly a representative from Assumption Parish is needed. He acknowledged that, if projects for the Assumption area are brought forward, it would possibly dilute funding available for other projects as the budget is not expected to expand. Staff recommended that in the course of the MTP update that the TAC study these issues further and update the Policy Committee at the appropriate time.

Mr. Ledet concluded his presentation on the MTP Update Project, stating that once the study area boundary is defined, the next step is to divide the areas into traffic analysis zones in order to forecast the data.

Leo Marretta introduced Joshua Manning to the Committee. Joshua is a new employee of SCPDC who works with the MPO assisting in traffic counting and reporting. Leo also introduced Greg Bush, the new Director of Public Works for Terrebonne Parish.

TIP – Review proposed changes and prepare recommendations for the HTMPO Policy Committee

Leo Marretta introduced the proposed 2007-2008 TIP to the Committee. All proposed changes are administrative in nature and there is not a great deal the HTMPO can do to affect them in any manner. After this set of changes has been adopted, the TAC and Policy Committee will have the option of conducting a more thorough, project by project review of the TIP. Substantive amendments to the document can be made at that time and forwarded to the state.

Emma Bergeron assisted in passing out copies of the “old” TIP and the “new” proposed TIP. Mr. Marretta pointed out three areas of change to the TIP:

(1) The administrative adjustments proposed by LADOTD on October 11, 2007 in order to align the TIP with the changes in the project programming by LADOTD. This includes the addition of a new paragraph to the TIP by which future administrative changes can be added by staff without the necessity of formal review and adoption by the Policy Committee. The HTMPO Policy Committee meeting held January 17, 2008 adopted this change.

(2) SAFETEA-LU mandates that the TIP calculate cost estimates using an inflation rate to reflect “year of expenditure dollars,” based on reasonable financial principles and information. Therefore our TIP update has employed an inflationary rate of 4% per year to better calculate programmed project costs.

(3) In order to have their grant applications for the next fiscal year approved public transportation providers must have their funding requests recorded in our TIP. Therefore, a new line item reporting of transit grants will be included along with Good Earth Transit’s Program of Projects in our updated TIP.

The TAC proceeded to review the proposed 2007-2008 TIP page by page in order to make any necessary corrections. Discussion ensued on proposed changes. There were a few minor changes that were necessary. i.e.: name changes, title changes, etc. Finally, Bonnie Lafont made a motion to recommend the Policy Committee adopt the changes to the TIP as reviewed by the TAC. Thereby allowing the rewrite requested by LADOTD and due by March 1, 2008 to move to the Policy Committee for adoption, seconded by Dennis Hebert. Motion carried.

UPWP – Review proposed changes and prepare recommendations for the HTMPO Policy Committee

Leo Marretta introduced the proposed 2008 - 2009 UPWP to the Committee. He reported that each year, the MPO submits a new Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to LADOTD. LADOTD has requested that this year's submittal be on the same time frame as the TIP update. As with the TIP, revisions were kept to a minimum in order to meet this deadline.

Mr. Marretta made note of the proposed changes. These include updating the project numbers, correcting the number of members of the Policy Committee to reflect what appears in the By-Laws, updating the membership rosters to reflect the post-election make up of our committees and inserting the new amounts for both the FHWA and the FTA grants that fund the MPO's activities for the upcoming year.

The TAC proceeded to review the proposed 2008 – 2009 UPWP page by page in order to make any necessary corrections. Discussion ensued on proposed changes. Mr. Marretta suggested adding an annual report for both the FTA (transit) and FHWA (highway) grant work programs. Lyle LeBlanc forwarded a motion to recommend the Policy Committee adopt the changes to the UPWP as reviewed by the TAC. This allows the annual update of the UPWP to move to the Policy Committee for adoption in time to meet the LADOTD deadline. Bonnie Lafont seconded. Motion carried.

Intergovernmental Coordination Efforts – Bayou Gardens Blvd Extension

Kevin Belanger informed the TAC about an upcoming meeting to be held with Lafourche Parish Council, parish staff and delegates from the area to discuss the Bayou Gardens Blvd Extension project. This project has raised many issues which must be aired including: reports that there is some resistance to the concept of expanding the extension further than Bayou Blue and ways to deal with the wetlands mitigation bank at the end of Hwy 3087.

Proposed Valhi Blvd Extension Project and Hwy 311 Widening Project

At the March 15, 2007 HTMPO Policy Committee meeting Mr. Arthur DeFratis of GSE and Associates presented a proposal to extend Valhi Boulevard from Sugarwood Subdivision up to US Hwy 90 as a four lane facility. Discussion ensued as to whether or not this proposal would eliminate the need for the existing project to widen Hwy 311, which was supposed to address the same issues. It was moved by Mr. Gordon, seconded by Mr. Kraemer to pass a resolution to include the extension of Valhi Blvd. from Savanne Road to U.S. Hwy. 90 in the Master Transportation Plan subject to modeling efforts to justify the validity of the project. Motion carried. At the October 4, 2007 HTMPO Policy Committee meeting Mr. L.P. Ledet presented Neel-Schaffer's capacity analysis of the Valhi Blvd Extension proposal. Mr. Ledet reported that the modeling efforts show that the concept works well enough to switch the projects. It was motioned by P. Gordon, seconded by D. Schwab to table the motion of supporting the inclusion

of the Valhi extension into the Master Plan until State Representative Gordon Dove is informed of the study. Motion carried.

Today, Kevin Belanger briefed the TAC as to a meeting held by Terrebonne Parish President, Council and staff with the area's State Senators and Representatives, LADOTD, HTMPO and our MTP. While all of the area transportation projects were discussed one of our goals for this meeting was to consult with Representative Dove about the Valhi Extension proposal and its potential impacts on the Hwy 311 Widening Project. While a full consensus has yet to be reached, the current thinking seems to be that we should pursue both the existing Hwy 311 Widening Project and the proposed project to extend Valhi Boulevard to Hwy 90.

Other Business

Leo Marretta thanked everyone for their assistance in reviewing and recommending changes to the TIP and UPWP. It was determined that Mr. Marretta will present the TAC's recommendations to the Policy Committee meeting on Thursday, February 28, 2008.

While no upcoming TAC meeting was scheduled at this time members were put on notice that we will be meeting in the near future in order to further address many of the issues discussed today.

Adjournment