

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
Policy Committee Minutes
October 4, 2007, 12:30 PM

As approved at the January 17, 2008 PC Meeting

Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Leo Marretta called roll.

Lafourche Parish President, Charlotte Randolph – Present, proxy Pat Matherne
Terrebonne Parish President, Don Schwab – Present
City of Thibodaux Mayor, Charles Caillouet – Present, proxy Bonnie Lafont
Terrebonne Parish Council Member, Harold Lapeyre – Present, proxy Pat Gordon
Terrebonne Parish Council Member, Peter Rhodes – Present
Terrebonne Parish Council Member, Alvin Tillman – Present
Terrebonne Parish Council Member, Clayton Voisin – Absent
LADOTD, Michael Stack – Present, proxy Lyle Leblanc

Others in attendance were:

Kevin Belanger, SCPDC
Leo Marretta, SCPDC
Scott Leger, SCPDC
Lee Prosperie, SCPDC
Missy Menuet, SCPDC
Emma Bergeron, SCPDC
Al Levron, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
Barry Blackwell, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
Mitch McDonald, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
Joan Schexnayder, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
Perry Blanchard, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
Philip Poche, Louisiana State Police Troop C
L. Badeaux, Louisiana State Police Troop C
Gilbert Dardar, Louisiana State Police Troop C
L.P. Ledet, Neel-Schaffer, Inc
Mike Brossette, Tri-Parish Times
Genevieve Smith, FHWA
Dennis Babin, LADOTD Safe Routes to School

Approval of Minutes from June 14, 2007 meeting

It was moved by D. Schwab, seconded by A. Levron, to approve the minutes of June 14, 2007.
Motion carried.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Web Based Traffic Count Database System (TCDS) – Ben Chen, MS2, Inc.

Mr. Ben Chen of MS2 Inc. was introduced to the forum via teleconference. He gave a presentation from his office in Michigan on the web based traffic count data base system (TCDS). The TCDS allows all citizens to access “free” traffic count data. This system enables citizens, as well as officials, to research volume trend counts, classification, speed, gap, DATA, partial counts, and archived counts. Each subject of interest is able to be broken down for in-depth detail. One can research any given location at the Houma Thibodaux MPO’s website www.htmppo.org by clicking on the “traffic count data” button.

Note: Al Levron served as Alvin Tillman’s proxy until Mr. Tillman arrived at approximately 12:40.

After Mr. Chen’s presentation, K. Belanger explained how all of the traffic counts taken within the Commission were included. It is believed TCDS is a good way to interface with the public, especially developers who call daily requesting traffic counts. This system helps to eliminate a great deal of un-useful time spent on the phone tracking down traffic counts, making maps for them. This is something that will be interactive for them. Discussion ensued. P. Rhodes feels the Louisiana State Police Department will benefit from the TCDS. L. Leblanc comments that the TCDS is user-friendly and useful.

Report on the September 26, 2007 Technical Advisory Committee meeting – Including recommendation that the by-laws specify the TAC membership by positions held for each of our member jurisdictions.

Chairman Rhodes introduced the report on the September 26, 2007 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting. K. Belanger explained that at the time when the Houma-Thibodaux MPO was created bylaws were adopted to govern its operation. In Article 5 of the By-Laws it states that “The Policy Committee will establish and appoint members to the Technical Advisory Committee.” However, inside that ordinance there was no mention as to the composition of the Technical Advisory Committee or any statement regarding positions held in member organizations who should be represented and thereby sit on the TAC. Over the years we have prepared the unified the Unified Work Program which is the work scope of what we plan to do over that year. Inside certain individuals were identified as to who were going to participate as the TAC. The TAC met and they have moved the recommendation to the Policy Committee to adopt those positions that are recognized in the UPWP as being the participants as the TAC. Discussion ensued.

It was motioned by A. Tillman, seconded by D. Schwab to accept the recommendation of the TAC that the by-laws specify the TAC membership by positions held for each of our member jurisdictions. Motion carried.

Valhi Blvd Extension – Modeling & Analysis Results Presentation – L.P. Ledet, Neel-Schaffer, Inc Committee discussion and action on proposed resolution

L.P. Ledet presented Neel-Schaffer’s capacity analysis study of the Valhi Blvd Extension. He explained the cause and effect by showing model runs with the projected 2025 No Build Ratios, the 2025 Alternate Hwy 90 volumes, the 2025 Alternate Hwy 311 volumes, and the 2025 volumes with the current transportation system. When Hwy 90 is upgraded into I-49 and with the projected significant development in the Houma-Thibodaux area due to that change, traffic will

increase tremendously. It is projected the volumes of traffic will exceed the capacity on all North-South corridors by more than 50%. A study as to adding a Valhi Blvd extension paralleling Hwy 311 creating a new interchange at Hwy 90/I-49, consisting of a 4-lane road, shows the traffic volume greatly decreases on all other North-South corridors. From a traffic standpoint a Valhi Blvd extension works well. Environmentally, design of an interchange at Hwy 90/I-49 is possible. A line and grade study at the proposed location would be needed to further address possible issues. Mr. Ledet recommended the MPO study this alternative. An amendment would be required in the Long Range Transportation Master Plan to include the extension of Valhi Blvd instead of supporting the widening of Hwy 311 which is already included in the master plan. Discussion ensued. L. Leblanc believes the Valhi Blvd extension would be more feasible rather than widening Hwy 311.

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 Representative Gordon Dove is informed of the study. Motion carried.

Louisiana Transportation Efficiency Analysis – Kevin Belanger

Using Prospect Bridge project as an example, K. Belanger explained how the MPOs are trying to improve the efficiency with which highways get built. In order to build a new Prospect Bridge it will take \$18m with a 4 year construction time. When one reflects back, this project began as costing only \$5m with a year long construction time now has escalated to costing \$18m with a 4 year construction time; the question arises – what is the problem? It is believed we have the opportunity to rewrite the way we do highway improvements within the state of Louisiana and it has to come from a grass roots effort beginning with the MPOs, the chambers, etc. State law prohibits the Louisiana Highway Department of managing any projects over \$200,000. Thus leading the state to bid out most all of their work and having us at the mercy of the contractors doing the work. The MPOs would like to bring in an independent third party from outside of Louisiana to evaluate the MPOs, LADOTD, and all entities involved in propagating roads in the state to see where the inefficiency lies and how to correct it. This study would provide us with a report that we can take to the legislature to try to effect change in order to redirect the way we are building projects today. There will be issues we will have to contend with. This study will be a start in which to lay out to the public the problems we have, address them and try to correct them through the legislature. K. Belanger closed the Louisiana Transportation Efficiency Analysis presentation, stating that he is before the Policy Committee today to request concurrence on the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) who have moved to bring this proposal to the Policy Committee and recommend the HT MPO join with other Louisiana MPOs to help share the cost of and participate in a 3rd party independent analysis of the whole transportation planning process including MPOs, LADOTD, and all entities involved in propagating roads in the state.

Policy Committee discussion ensued.

It was motioned by A. Tillman, seconded by P. Gordon for the Policy Committee accept the recommendation of the TAC and to join with other Louisiana MPO's in funding and participating in a 3rd party independent analysis of the whole transportation planning process including MPOs, LADOTD, and all entities involved in propagating roads in the state. Motion carried.

LA MPO Transit Design Studio – Kevin Belanger

K. Belanger explains how prior to Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita Kevin Ghirardi had met with transit leaders throughout the state. They were working towards creating a system by which local transit entities could creatively influence the design of vehicles and other elements within a transit system. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette has created within its Industrial Design Department a "Transit Design Studio" to research the pros and cons of our current thinking regarding transit vehicles and systems. HTMPO's share of the total cost to support these efforts at this time was reported to be approximately \$950 - \$1,200. K. Belanger concluded the presentation of the LA MPO Transit Design Studio proposal by relating that it was the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to bring this proposal to the Policy Committee and recommend the HT MPO join with other Louisiana MPOs to fund our share of the proposed support requested by the LA MPO Transit Design Studio.

Discussion ensued.

It was motioned by A. Tillman, seconded by D. Schwab for the MPO to contribute the MPO's share in the cost of the development of the LA MPO Transit Design Studio. Motion carried.

Intergovernmental Coordination Efforts – Bayou Gardens Blvd Extension – Kevin Belanger

K. Belanger voiced concerns brought to him and to the TAC by M. Atzenhoffer's of Lafourche Parish Council on the Bayou Gardens Blvd Extension alignment between Terrebonne Parish and Lafourche Parish. Mr. Atzenhoffer was concerned that Lafourche Parish was not involved in the overall process for this extension and the alignment which comes to an end on the boundary line of the two parishes. This alignment affects residents of both parishes who reside in the Hwy 316 Bayou Blue area where the alignment is proposed to come out. The TAC has recommended a subcommittee which would consist of planning representatives from both parishes be created to study the alignments. Discussion ensued.

It was motioned by D. Schwab, seconded by A. Tillman and P. Gordon for a subcommittee to be created in order to study proposed alignments for the Bayou Gardens Blvd Extension project. Motion carried.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards – Leo Marretta

L. Marretta reviewed with the committee a letter the MPO had received from TPCG Utilities Department which reported on the proposed changes to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the possible long-term impacts on our communities. Two main points were: the Clean Air Act prohibits the EPA administrator from considering cost impacts in setting a standard. Secondly, it appears to be generally accepted that known and reasonably anticipated technologies will be insufficient to attain the current standards in non-attainment areas. This raises a great deal of issues for the MPO. Discussion ensued.

It was motioned by P. Gordon, seconded by D. Schwab that the HTMPO draft a letter of concern that would follow the same intent as the letter addressed to Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator of U.S. EPA, from the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Motion carried.

SAFETEA-LU Compliance Review – Gap Analysis – Leo Marretta

L. Marretta explained the new planning regulations required by SAFETEA-LU and how each MPO is being required to do an analysis of their compliance efforts. Mr. Marretta detailed how the Houma-Thibodaux MPO is complying with the new planning regulations. Further action is not required at this time; he only wanted to inform the committee as to what was taking place.

Safe Routes to School Program – Dennis Babin, LADOTD

L. Marretta introduced to the committee Dennis Babin of the LADOTD. Mr. Babin presented to the committee the Safe Routes to School Program created by SAFETEA-LU. He gave a brief overview of the creation of the concept, the benefits, and its purpose to encourage children to walk to school by facilitating the creation of safe routes to the school in which they attend. A workshop on Safe Routes to School program will be held on October 16, 2007 in Baton Rouge.

Other Business

There was no other business in which to discuss at this time.

Next Meeting Date

It was agreed upon the next meeting date of the Houma-Thibodaux Policy Committee would be held on January 17, 2008 at 12:00 PM.

Adjournment

The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by P. Gordon, seconded by D. Schwab. Motion carried.