

Houma – Thibodaux
Metropolitan Planning Organization (HTMPO)

South Central Planning and Development Commission Office
5058 West Main Street, Gray, LA 70359
985-851-2900

M E E T I N G M I N U T E S

HTMPO Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Date: March 8, 2012

Meeting Location: SCPDC's Pelican Room, Gray, LA.

In Attendance

Committee:	Director of Planning and Zoning, TPCG – Patrick Gordon, Present Director of Public Works, TPCG – Greg Bush, Present Engineering Division, TPCG – Represented by Joan Schexnayder, Present Operations Manager, Roads and Bridges Division, TPCG – Perry Blanchard, Present Public Transit Manager, TPCG – Wendell Voisin, Absent Public Works Director, Lafourche Parish – Represented by Terry Arabie, Present Planning Department, Lafourche Parish – Pat Matherne, Present Parish Manager/Public Works Director, Assumption Parish – Represented by Erin Watson, Absent Public Works Director, City of Thibodaux – Miguel Maggio, Absent Grants Director, City of Thibodaux – Luci Sposito, Absent Mayor, Town of Lockport – Richard Champagne, Absent Office of Planning and Programming, LA DOTD – Dan Broussard, Present District 02 Traffic Engineer, LA DOTD – Dennis Hebert, Present District 02 Maintenance Engineer, LA DOTD – Lyle Leblanc, Absent Public Transportation Administrator, LA DOTD – Donna Lavigne, Absent Federal Highway Administration – Jamie Setze, Absent
Staff:	Kevin Belanger, SCPDC Leo Marretta, SCPDC Joshua Manning, SCPDC Rudynah Capone, SCPDC Cassie Parker, SCPDC
Others in Attendance:	Emery Chauvin III, LADOTD Dawn Sholmire, DOTD Matt Trahan, LSP Troop C Danny Babin, TPCG

Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves.

L. Marretta announced that Mr. Babin was recently elected to Mr. Clayton Voisin's old district. When Clayton left, he also vacated the MPO chairman position. Mr. Babin graciously stepped in to direct us at the policy committee level.

L. Marretta reminded everyone that all parishes need to be represented. Attendance must improve over time. Thibodaux, Assumption, and Lockport were not represented.

Agenda Item # 1

LA DOTD Project Update

J. Manning opened discussions for the LA DOTD Project Update.

Lyle Leblanc, LA DOTD District 02 Maintenance Engineer, is usually depended on for the report; however, he was unable to attend the meeting today. There was no report prepared on the status of Houma-Thibodaux.

J. Manning asked if there was anything statewide that we should be aware of at this time. D. Broussard reported that there were no new updates.

P. Gordon stated that at the Police Jury association, Scott Angele mentioned that natural gas needs to be pressed. There are stations throughout the state, although the locations of all of the stations are not known. P. Gordon then asked if DOTD is working with the department of natural resources on promoting the use of natural gas in the region.

D. Broussard explains that what they are doing is a pilot program. They do not have anything "on the ground" yet, but they are hiring a consultant because they do not have any in-house staff that is familiar with the details of implementing compressed natural gas for the DOT or any other vehicles. They are just starting to get someone hired to look at DOTD fleets, particularly in our district offices, where it would be most appropriate to begin. If not converting, at least start acquiring compressed natural gas vehicles for our DOTC vehicles. That's why they need someone who is knowledgeable about what is appropriate, whether it is pick-up trucks or light or heavy duty equipment. From DOTD's understanding, they will start in District 61 (Baton Rouge Area) and see how it goes. Nothing dramatic right now, but they are looking at that. He also stated that he is not aware of any coordination with department of natural resources, maybe at some level, but not at his, though the Deputy Secretary has given them a directive to begin this process.

P. Gordon then stated that Terrebonne Parish purchases vehicles all the time and would like to move forward with compressed natural gas; however, if there are no stations, then there is no ability for us to move forward.

D. Broussard was told that Lafayette has really embraced natural gas technology for their school buses or transit systems. He states that he was told they were in the process of getting stations built, but in the meantime they have the compressed natural gas buses with no stations. They have had to go to Baton Rouge to fuel the buses in the meantime. It seems like it would defeat the purpose, but I'm sure that was just a temporary measure for them to start "rolling".

P. Gordon then stated that there needs to be an overall statewide initiative, not just certain departments or regions.

L. Marretta states that it seems like there might be willingness on behalf of certain administrations within our jurisdiction that are interested in this. L. Marretta heard from Mike Hollier, and part of why they are making strides with this is because they have "a center of

gravity". They have buses that bring students from the parking lot to the college and the public transit buses--they already have a lot of people on board. A coalition of similar people that would be willing to jump in, should this become available, needs to be created. If DOTD hears anything, certainly let the MPO know. A list of interested parties will be made on our side, so the MPO can be prepared when this sort of thing happens.

P. Gordon informs everyone that Mike Hollier gave a presentation on the buses, but it needs to be taken further.

L. Marretta agreed that the MPO should take it further. Although L. Marretta would rather not create another subcommittee, he would like to get e-mails circulating and compile a list of individuals that are interested in that topic, specifically. The MPO will start with Terrebonne (P. Gordon). He goes further to state that it seems like it would be a natural jump to make because of the local service fleets that we have.

P. Gordon stated that he would support a subcommittee on that.

L. Marretta expressed that South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) is interested. Then responding to P. Gordon, he stated that maybe instead of a subcommittee, at least a place where information can start being disseminated. L. Marretta goes further to state that if we can disseminate information to a list of people that are interested, instead of the whole group, it may start to get some momentum built up around the issue. An e-mail list, at the very least, is appropriate.

Agenda Item # 2

Other Local Project Updates

J. Manning opens up discussion to the jurisdiction representatives to give any project updates.

Lafourche

T. Arabie gave the project review for Lafourche:

The bid was opened for the third and final phase of the town of Golden Meadow streets. A bid of \$1,894,000 was received, and will be awarded on the project. The project is to finish and complete all of the streets of the town of Golden Meadow.

Lafourche Parish also awarded the contract to Dolphin Services for the Burma Bridge project. This project will begin on April 1, 2012. Approximately \$300,000 came in, so Lafourche Parish will begin to install a new bridge on Burma Bridge.

The plans for Laurel Valley Road is about 75% complete. The parish anticipates to begin taking bids sometime in May. This project is estimated to cost 5,500,000 million dollars.

The relocation of Highway 24 and LA 1 is still in the design phase. Hopefully Lafourche Parish can relocate that road so the gap in it can be closed, which will eliminate the use of sand baskets. This project is estimated at \$1,200,000.

Terrebonne

J. Schexnayder gave the project update for Terrebonne.

The construction for a turn lane going in at Hollywood and Alma should begin this month.

Terrebonne Parish has another turn lane going in at Corporate and Tunnel Blvd. Hopefully the bid for that will be ready next month.

Valhi extinction from Equity to Savanne is under construction at this time.

The new Dularge Bridge is in the design phase right now.

Terrebonne Parish should be appointing an engineer this month for the replacement of the Falgout Canal Pontoon Bridge.

Terrebonne Parish is just about completed with the Thompson Road embankment. That should be finished this month or next.

The design embankment is at 95 percent for the Bayou Gardens extinction from Coteau Road to Bayou Blue.

J. Manning asked the State Police if they have any project updates. The State Police representative did not have any updates.

L. Marretta asked if the “bicycle folks” had anything to add.

P. Gordon stated that Terrebonne Parish just heard that the contract is in route for the 2010 Trails Grant. So, construction should begin on the on-road/off-road Southdown Trails Project. Nothing has been heard about the 2011 grant. After speaking with “the state,” it seems that award letters will be sent out within the next couple of weeks, so maybe that will be funded.

They are also asking for applications for the 2013 fiscal year for trails. Terrebonne Parish is going to apply, probably for a bike trail on the Eastside. There are two bike trails on the Westside that funding has been provided for. Terrebonne now wants to create a bike trail on the Eastside from City Park (airbase) location down 57, hit the crossover road at Bayou Sally, hit 56 and come back up to City Park again. After reviewing that trail, it should be strictly striping and signage.

L. Marretta states, adventure tourism. That is a very scenic route for those who would like to come down and immerse themselves with a bicycle or on foot.

L. Marretta also reminds everyone that the MPO normally has quarterly meetings with the individuals that are interested in the bicycle and pedestrian regional planning effort, which is being done for the six parishes. This quarter’s meeting has been cancelled and in lieu of that, what SCPDC is doing is meeting with each jurisdiction, independently, and making sure SCPDC has each parish’s information. The MPO is about to come out with a map that depicts what was discussed at each meeting. The next step is to find and prioritize some projects. Once the projects are prioritized and ranked, then, the MPO can go after money to fund certain things

that are within our region, and that will promote bicycles and pedestrians. Get people to and from places without necessarily having to get in a car.

P. Gordon asked if there are planning funds available in the Transportation Enhancement Program.

L. Marretta explains that the Transportation Enhancement Program is underfunded and there are numerous applicants; however, SCPDC has been successful in the past. R. Capone has a list of the recent funds SCPDC was able to get money from.

L. Marretta responded by explaining that SCPDC has been filling in the gap, gratis, here at South Central Planning because there is not a number to bill it to. Depending upon the expertise available to a particular jurisdiction, SCPDC attempts to fill in the planning part of that and help with the applications. The planning part of that has been absorbed through the MPO and through other sources.

L. Marretta further states that he is unsure if the MPO can get a planning grant for transportation through the Transportation Enhancement Grant.

P. Gordon was told it is an eligible item. He was just wondering how to go about doing that. Terrebonne Parish is looking for planning funds to do other studies and was told that the Transportation Enhancement Grant could be used. It is something worth checking into.

L. Marretta was unaware that planning funds were available through the Transportation Enhancement Grant. He thought it was strictly project based. Planning funds would give momentum.

P. Gordon states that it would be better if more planning was done before the projects are started.

L. Marretta explained that this is the reason for the Regional Bike Plan. This is an effort to jump start that and put some horsepower to it.

P. Gordon's reason for asking is because they are still trying to work on some sidewalks in the greater Houma area. It would be nice to see what areas should be addressed first, after an inventory is done. See what projects can be applied for to get "the biggest bang for our buck" on the interconnectivity of the sidewalks in the greater Houma area.

L. Marretta- Even the inventory, particularly in regards to sidewalks, that is a huge project that The MPO has been trying to get our hands around what it would actually take. A planning grant would certainly help the MPO to facilitate that. That is the missing piece. There are tractors, schools, playgrounds-- We have no idea what the condition of the infrastructure is around there. The MPO must know if there is adequate infrastructure if we want individuals to use that kind of transportation.

L. Marretta asked R. Capone to check The Transportation Enhancement funds to do planning? SCPDC would love to apply to our current bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts. R. Capone will check with Val, DOTD.

D. Broussard asks P. Gordon, you stated that there were two projects on the Westside? What is the second one?

P. Gordon informed D. Broussard that the second project is a bike trail, the 311 Loop. It will go down Bayou Black all the way to Highway 20, then cross over and pick up on Bull Run Road, where Terrebonne Parish already has a bike trail established, then return to the bike trail at 311. There is an outstanding grant application on that. From P. Gordon's understanding, it has been held up in Washington.

J. Manning moves on to agenda item #3 and requests TAC's approval on two documents, so they can be sent to the policy committee for approval.

Agenda Item # 3

DRAFT TIP to Recommend to Policy Committee

J. Manning begins with the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). This basically incorporates everything that was discussed at the last TAC meeting when the MPO had the "White Board" meeting. J. Manning incorporated what was discussed at that meeting into this document. I sent the TIP around, a month ago or so, for you all to review it. I hope that everyone has had time to look it over. If there are any comments, I would like to hear from anyone who is attending this meeting. Once that is done, I would like to have a motion and a second to send this to the policy committee.

L. Marretta requested that DOTD give the state's perspective of what this document is, and how it fits in with the bigger picture, especially with regards to funding.

D. Broussard responded by explaining that all of the MPO's have been creating Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) ever since 1991 because of ISTEA. It is simply the near-term list of projects that this MPO intends to work on and implement over the next four years. This TIP includes the projects for fiscal years 2013- 2016.

He goes further to explain what DOTD does with the TIPs. DOTD takes all of the MPO's individual TIPs, as far as the list of projects, and combines them with all of the other projects around the state, generally in the rural area. Then, DOTD comes up with a Statewide TIP (STIP). There has been a lot of coordination with Josh, on a daily basis, to make sure that the descriptions, project numbers, funding, and amounts of funding are correct. For the STIP to stay in good shape there needs to be continuous coordination between the MPO's and DOTD.

Every two years DOTD requests that each MPO update their existing TIP with new years. DOTD does the same thing with the STIP. Our goal is to get all of the new TIPs adopted by April of 2012.

L. Marretta explains that the "White Board" meeting was the first step. This meeting is to send the recommendation to the policy committee to approve at the next policy committee meeting.

D. Broussard comments that just like DOTD must do, all MPOs, have to go through a public process.

J. Manning states that the public notice was posted before this TAC meeting. This is a public meeting. Anyone from the public that wishes to comment, are available to.

D. Broussard- All of the MPO's TIPs are on their websites, so the public has an opportunity to review them.

L. Marretta takes it a step further to discuss the idea of being fiscally constrained, and how the MPOs three million dollar and under 200,000 in density of population money gets dispersed. He asked Dawn to explain the budget and how the MPO is fiscally constrained. How much funding is there to spend versus the projects we are trying to accomplish?

Dawn states that so much money gets allotted for the greater than 50,000 but less than 200,000 population areas. There are seven areas across the state. The state receives the money then decides how to disperse the money across the seven MPOs.

L. Marretta clarifies that DOTD helps the MPO spend our money because our MPO is small. New Orleans is larger (over 200,000); therefore, they have self-determination, to a much larger degree, as to how they spend their money. Our budget is approximately 3 million dollars per year. This document (TIP) is the fiscally constrained document that tells the MPO how it is going to spend that budget. The reason for the build-up is because everyone must understand, that traditionally SCPDC has come up with these large projects—Hollywood Road, Country Drive, Acadian Road—making new roads are very expensive.

He goes further to state that three million dollars does not touch any of that. SCPDC is committed to the projects that have been promised and will make them happen. However, if the money cannot be spent in that particular year-- either because the right of way cannot be bought in time to get to the next phase or because utilities have not been moved yet, or because consultants are moving slow-- if there are small projects and there is money there, the money can be spent on these smaller projects. The list of the smaller projects will be discussed later in the meeting.

P. Gordon asks L. Marretta about doing the Hollywood Road Project next year?

L. Marretta states – The construction phase is scheduled for next year.

J. Manning clarifies that from his understanding, that does not mean shovels digging and cement being poured. That is the funding allocation. The construction funding is obligated.

P. Gordon states that Country Drive is the big project for the year 2013-2014. However, there is no big project the following year.

J. Manning explains that he tried to be more realistic with this TIP. Instead of saying there is a year involved, so something will be put there just to have it, being more cognizant of the fact that this tip is very front-loaded. Over the course of the four years, that last one or two years of

the TIP might not have a specific project; however, that front portion of the TIP is still moving through stages.

L. Marretta states that our understanding is that Westside, because the parish took on phase B of the project, that money has been reallocated. That project is already done. The MPO does not have anything in the TIP about Westside. The parish has taken over and accomplished what was previously on our radar. They did not want to wait for the state money, which is a good thing. All of our parishes and jurisdictions should think about how fast they would like a project finished. Also, realize the constraints with state money.

J. Manning reminds everyone to consider what the eventual local match will be versus what the road can be built for today. Think about the time value of money.

It is concluded that Acadian is the last of the big projects in this TIP.

L. Marretta states that there are a couple of things that are being balanced—the length of time that it takes for a project to be conceived and vetted out to stage zero takes a certain amount of time. Then, it is figuring out the logistics—the drawings and engineering. Everything takes time; therefore, do not just look at the whole project. Think of the project as phases because the projects are all going on simultaneously.

L. Marretta further explains that recently the MPO went through what is called the Road Show. At this time, the state legislature delegation, with regards to transportation, goes to each in the DOTD district and hears public comments on the program of projects that they are going to try and implement over the next year. This takes place once the TIP gets adopted and is put into the state's TIP (STIP).

P. Gordon motions to recommend approval of the TIP by the Policy Committee.

P. Blanchard seconds the motion.

Agenda Item # 4

DRAFT UPWP to Recommend to Policy Committee

J. Manning opens discussion in regards to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

L. Marretta states that our annual work program discusses what the MPO is going to be doing to help facilitate all of these projects and ideas. It has been a work in progress for some time now. SCPDC thought we had it, but recently DOTD has informed us that we can no longer bill quarterly. Billing monthly will change some of the structure of the UPWP. L. Marretta asks that the individuals still recommend the UPWP to the Policy Committee to approve it.

J. Manning adds that none of the tasks or dollar figures will be changed. Some of the terminology may change. However, the MPO will inform the parishes of any changes that take place.

DOTD explains that DOTD's "new" internal computer system requires that invoices are processed more efficiently. Therefore, all of the MPO's are being asked to submit invoices for the month

that the funds are expended.

L. Marretta states that the funds that are being discussed are planning funds. Planning funds are the monies that the MPO receives to run this public process, where everyone has an input. This is a separate pool of money, not project money, which the federal government gives to run an MPO. The tasks that the MPO are responsible for achieving, annually, to run the MPO are what are outlined in the UPWP.

L. Marretta asks if anyone would like to add something to the UPWP.

P. Gordon asks if there is any money available to do special traffic studies.

L. Marretta states there is. The short list of the smaller projects--the intersection improvements, turn lanes, roundabouts-- traffic studies need to be done on all and of those things that need to be studied before it becomes a project. This is called the Stage Zero, which is a feasibility study. At one point, it was suggested that some of the 3 million dollars could be moved, if it was not used, to do traffic studies and be used in support of those projects.

J. Manning adds that there is a budget put aside for that program (to do more advanced planning studies). The caveat is that planning funds cannot be used for an actual engineering document. So, for us to do an actual engineering document it would need to go through the TIP and it would have to go through our STP funds.

D. Broussard states that the Federal Highway and DOTD allow MPOs, if they have approved procedures, to hire consultants to do planning and environmental studies only. None of the MPOs have permission to hire consultants to do engineering design.

L. Marretta informs everyone that the document has been approved by the MPO and DOTD. A revision was suggested by DOTD's contracting department. Therefore, I went back through the process. At this time, it has been approved again and brought back to DOTD's contracting division. They will then submit it to FHWA for final approval. Once they have done that, then they will let SCPDC know that it is ok to spend our money to hire consultants to do traffic studies or intersection analysis in support of the kinds of things that will be discussed next.

T. Arabie asks about the map. When can the map be expanded to include more of Lafourche Parish?

D. Broussard answers that DOTD has been hearing from Federal Highway that the necessary data from the census is coming sometime this year. At that time, all of the MPOs will begin the process to re-draw those maps. There are federal guidelines to follow when doing that, such as having a certain density of population. For the 2000 census, DOTD has a retainer consultant under contract with DOTD that assisted many of the MPOs with "smoothing out the boundaries".

P. Gordon motions to recommend approval of the UPWP by the Policy Committee.

T. Arabie seconds the motion.

Agenda Item # 5

Potential Intersection Improvement Studies / Safety Projects

J. Manning opens discussions for potential projects. He states that this list comes from a couple of sources. The first section of the list, *LTAP Safety Improvements*, comes from another effort that the MPO is working through with the Safe Communities Commission. He goes further to state that the MPO has been working with LTAP, out of LSU, on refining this list. This list will continue to go through refinement, which will primarily be paid with safety funds. Therefore, it may or may not be relative to conversation with STP funds. In the next section of the list, are things that have been identified by the MPO or by individuals calling to inform the MPO of problems.

J. Schexnayder, representing Terrebonne, stated that the intersection of Hollywood and Alma is about to begin construction. Therefore, it can be removed from the list.

P. Gordon shares his concerns about Enterprise Drive, specifically the driveways of Home Depot and Petco. The driveways do not line up, and there have been a number of accidents. Terrebonne Parish has asked South Central to give us recommendations on it, as well as asked for comments from DOTD. Terrebonne Parish has taken all of the recommendations and comments to their attorney, and it was stated that the improvements cannot be made because it is private property. That is the location that I would like to hire someone, such as a traffic engineer, and with the recommendations, address it through the safety funds.

L. Marretta stated if the numbers bare it out then SCPDC will try. As I recall, when the first cut analysis was done, there were not enough crashes there to make it a safety project.

J. Manning explains that LTAP has identified the stretch of road but they could not say, specifically, if it was related to that parking lot.

T. Arabie would like to add more streets to the section of LTAP Safety Improvements.

P. Gordon recommends that a criteria ranking sheet be created for the intersections.

L. Marretta agrees. He also clarifies that the safety program is for all six of South Central parishes. They have brought this program of the Road Safety Analysis (RSA) which starts to talk about ranking and prioritization, and the elements that you evaluate. Therefore, some of those things are usable for things that are not necessarily a safety problem at the moment, but it gives you a structure. The MPO is identifying projects throughout all six parishes, for safety money, and doing the RSAs. In the case of the Saint parishes on the river, that is the end of their funding stream with safety. In the case of the MPO parishes, if you do not make it on numbers (crash data and safety) there is still this other list. That is an added benefit to being part of the MPO is "while the process starts along the same road, it does not hit the same dead end."

Agenda Items # 6

Other Business

There was no other business.

Agenda Item # 7

Next Meeting Date: Thursday June 14, 2012 10 AM

Agenda Item # 8

Adjournment