

Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)¹
February 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting hosted via Zoom

Opitz called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Roll Call

Members present: Margaret Bergamini, Yogesh Chawla, Paul Esser, Steve Flottmeyer, Grant Foster, Patrick Heck, Dorothy Krause, Tom Lynch, Jerry Mandli (joined during item #5), Ed Minihan, Mark Opitz, Mike Tierney, Doug Wood

Members absent: Samba Baldeh

MPO staff present: Bill Schaefer, Ben Lyman

Others present in an official capacity: Brandon Lamers and Michael Hoelker (WisDOT SW Region), Diane Paoni (WisDOT Planning), Caryl Terrell (CARPC), Forbes McIntosh (DCCVA)

2. Approval of January 6, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Esser moved, Chawla seconded, to approve the January 6th, 2021 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. Communications

- Letter from WisDOT regarding approval of TIP amendment #2 approved by MPO board at January meeting.

4. Public Comment (for items *not* on MPO Agenda)

None

5. Presentation on U.S. Highway 51 (McFarland to Stoughton) Project and Interstate 39/90/94 (Madison to Wisconsin Dells) Study and Brief Updates on other Major Studies (Brandon Lamers, WisDOT SW Region)

Schaefer prefaced the presentation by noting that the State Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) recently approved the U.S. Highway 51 (McFarland to Stoughton) reconstruction project for funding, and that construction is scheduled to start in a few years. The MPO will need to amend its regional transportation plan and the 2021-2025 TIP to include the project. The TPC also approved restarting the Interstate (Madison to Wisconsin Dells) Study, which will need to be added to the TIP. He noted that Brandon Lamers would be providing a presentation on the study and would also give brief updates on the Stoughton Road and Beltline studies, which are getting going again.

Lamers presented on the U.S. Highway 51 (McFarland to Stoughton) project, reviewing the design for the different sections and proposed modifications since the public meeting in 2019, summarizing the estimated impacts, and outlining the schedule. He said a public hearing could be requested for March, and it was anticipated that a Finding of No Significant Impact would be issued in spring of 2021, at which point the study would be concluded.

Chawla noted the wetland impacts in the Yahara River watershed, which has had flooding concerns in the past, and asked how the loss of wetlands would be addressed. Lamers replied that they seek to

¹ Formerly named Madison Area Transportation Planning Board

mitigate wetland impacts, and have an extensive wetland bank at the World Dairy site; he also stated that stormwater impacts were not included in the EA, but would be addressed as the project moves into final design. Minihan asked Lamers to discuss the proposed improvements for Mahoney Road in greater detail, as it is dangerous and a significant safety concern. He said plow trucks can wait up to 20 minutes to get onto USH 51 from Mahoney. Lamers stated he didn't have a graphic for that intersection, but the design calls for both a right turn lane going in the south bound direction and a left turn lane going in the north bound direction, as well as a bypass lane for traffic travelling in the northbound direction, which looks to operate well based on the volumes and the anticipated traffic in the future. He noted that they have heard concerns from stakeholders from the Town of Dunn and McFarland about this intersection and they will continue to look into it more as it moves into final design. Minihan stated that left turning traffic will still need to cross both lanes of traffic in the proposed design and it will remain dangerous, and continues to be a concern for him as the town chair as well as the town's planners. Minihan then explained that at Tower Road on USH 51 there is a sign that points to a storm shelter at a bible camp at Charles Lane further down in the middle of a trailer park. He said the town was the first community in the state to build a storm shelter for a trailer park, as 60% of deaths from tornados are from people residing in trailers. There have been two tornados that have crossed USH 51 in recent years. He said there is a sign at Tower Road pointing to the bible camp, but no sign indicating the availability of a storm shelter, so the DOT is apparently willing to save souls, but not lives. Despite the town's efforts to erect a sign there indicating there is a shelter, including agreeing to buy and install the sign, DOT has consistently refused to provide notice to the public about the existence of the storm shelter for the traveling public. Minihan stated they would continue to push for this as they have for the past five years, and that WisDOT should be interested in identifying places of safety for the motoring public. Minihan stated they have expressed this to project manager Jeff Berens many times. Berens has been very responsive, however he has been trampled down by the DOT bureaucracy that will not allow a storm shelter sign. Lamers replied this is something he would follow up on with DOT traffic and maintenance operations staff, and would pass along to Mr. Berens the comments.

Lynch commented that the reduction in proposed lanes over the life of the study was a good right-sizing approach for the project. He further stated that he is aware that due to state law that WisDOT is limited in exercising eminent domain to acquire land for bicycle facilities, but sometimes there can be creative measures such as wider shoulders to better accommodate bikes, and asked Lamers to expand on what else might be done through McFarland and the rural portions of the project for bicyclists. Lamers noted that in the rural section they are looking at shoulders wide enough to accommodate bicycles; regarding crossing USH 51, they heard from a group that uses Dyreson Road quite extensively for biking, and they were looking for an opportunity for bicycles to cross in that area since Dyreson will become a cul-de-sac. WisDOT is proposing a bike only connection there with a two stage crossing of USH 51. Lamers noted that within McFarland they are limited since they cannot condemn for bike lanes or multi-use paths. Due to the already tight roadway section, they do not have the ability to add bike facilities in that section, however they did investigate a contingency on how the design could be modified if that restriction was repealed. Lynch asked about sidewalks, and Lamers replied there were sections in McFarland where there were not sidewalks, but the project would add them to both sides of USH 51 through the village. Tierney said one comment he hears frequently is about traffic backing up near Siggelkow Road and asked if two lanes could be added to the ramp to reduce backups. Lamers said they would continue to look at if two lanes may be needed in the future, but that it looked like adding traffic controls would solve that problem. Tierney also expressed concern that adding a roundabout to Siggelkow could make bicycling difficult, and asked how to ensure that vehicles would yield to them. Lamers replied that they have heard those concerns from multiple stakeholders and suggestions have been made, and that any additional enhancements to pedestrian crossings would be addressed in final design.

Krause echoed Minihan's frustrations with trying to get signage for things that are not approved. Krause asked if there is concern with unsafe passing where the road goes from 4 lanes down to 2. Lamers replied that transition would happen at the roundabout which would serve as the lane drop, and should help address this. Krause asked if there was much farm vehicle traffic. Lamers replied with the amount of agriculture in the area he assumed there would be, but would have to check on that. Krause also stated in her experience that with two stage crossings, cars still tend to wait until they can make the crossing all at once, and asked if there was any signage that could indicate that its ok to stop in the middle. Lamers replied he was not aware of any signage that is used for that, and that outreach and education is probably the best way to address that. Krause also echoed Tierney's concern with pedestrian safety in roundabouts. Krause also asked who could request a public hearing for the study. Lamers responded that anyone could request that, and said no one had requested one yet, but several people asked about the process for a public hearing. He explained that a public hearing was simply for people to be able to record their formal testimony about the project. Minihan stated the Town of Dunn would be making a request. Foster emphasized the importance that Siggleskow Road serves as a regional bike route connecting to the Yahara River Trail and to keep that consideration at the forefront during final design such as sidewalk width and other accommodations. Lamers stated that any suggestions from the bicycle community on how to improve the experience through these areas was welcome as the project moves into final design.

Lamers then presented on WisDOT's resumption of its I-39/90/94 (Madison to Wisconsin Dells) Interstate Corridor Study. The 53-mile corridor extends from the US 12/18 interchange in Madison to the USH 12/STH 16 interchange in Wisconsin Dells. He explained the corridor's expected worsening congestion and pavement conditions, safety concerns and the corridor's importance to freight and tourism.

Lamers then provided a schedule update on the Madison Beltline shoulder running project and Beltline PEL study. The PEL study is addressing the longer-term strategy, which may involve additional street connections, non-motorized travel improvements, and other options that could help address Beltline needs. The longer-term strategy was being developed in the PEL 1 (first Planning and Environmental Linkages study), which was discontinued about 4.5 years ago, and is now being revisited. Lamers next provided a brief presentation on the USH 51 Stoughton Road (Voges Road in Madison to Interstate 39/90/94 in DeForest) Study. The study will be reinitiated in February 2021, with the final EIS/ROD expected in mid-2023.

6. Approval to Release for Public Review and Comment Proposed Amendment to Regional Transportation Plan 2050 and Major Amendment to 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program to Add U.S. Highway 51 (McFarland to Stoughton) Reconstruction Project

Schaefer explained that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) 2050 had recommended completion of the USH 51 study and anticipated amendment of the plan to add the recommended project once the scope and design details had been finalized, Major's program funding secured, and regional agreement on the project reached. The project was listed as an illustrative project in Section 5 of Appendix A (Project and Policy Recommendations), but was not included in the fiscally constrained plan due to uncertainty about the project scope and available funding. The RTP therefore needs to be amended to add USH 51 as a capacity expansion and TSM/safety project to the fiscally constrained plan. Both the amendment to the RTP and the TIP require a notice and public hearing.

Woods moved, Krause seconded, to approve release the hearing notice for the proposed amendments to the RTP and 2021-2025 TIP. Motion carried.

7. Discussion Regarding Local Match Funding for MPO's Budget

Schaefer said during discussion of the MPO's 2021 budget, the board asked staff to bring back to the board information on what each municipality's share of the local match funding would be if all contributed to the MPO's budget proportionate to population. Schaefer stated the last time a letter requesting funding from local communities was sent out was in 2012, and did not receive any responses or new contributions. Fitchburg, Monona, and McFarland have all historically contributed, Middleton did in the past, and Sun Prairie recently has started to contribute towards the local match. Wood commented that as part of the marketing plan rollout, it would be a good time to talk about local match contributions when meeting with communities and discussing what the MPO has to offer. He added that in-person or zoom conversations would be more effective than just sending out a letter. Schaefer agreed that it did require personal outreach to be most successful.

Lynch commented that even a small contribution from communities would demonstrate a commitment to being part of the regional solution. Minihan agreed, and emphasized that the request should be timed in accordance with the development of local budgets. Foster added to keep in mind that the budget cycle timeline differed between communities, and the message should be clear and direct. Bergamini wanted clarification on who the letter should be coming from, staff versus board, and who would be responsible for follow up. She also stated there should be more thought about putting together a strategic communications plan regarding this outreach.

Schaefer asked for clarification on how to proceed. Krause recommended reaching out to all the municipalities and discuss their budgeting processes. Foster reiterated that it is also a good opportunity to touch base with each community and discuss what the MPO has to offer. Esser said the focus should be more on cities and villages, and less on reaching out to all the towns. Opitz stated he still thought towns should be included.

8. Review and Discussion on Application Eligibility and Selection Process for Projects to be Funded with CRRSAA (COVID Relief) Section 5310 Program Funding

Lyman provided an overview of the memo outlining staff's proposal for application eligibility, selection criteria, etc. for CRRSAA Section 5310 program funding in light of the goals of CRRSAA. CRRSAA includes \$54,368 in apportioned Section 5310 Program funding for the Madison metro area. The adopted Section 5310 Program Management Plan (PMP) establishes the process for selecting annual Section 5310 Program awards. However, CRRSAA establishes unique goals for use of Section 5310 Program funds that must be addressed in a revised project selection process for these funds. Schaefer clarified that staff's recommendation is to prioritize operations for private providers for this pool of funds, and that a local match would not be required.

Krause commented that she agreed with the recommendations in the memo, and asked what kind of assistance could be available for organizations that might not be familiar with all of the federal reporting requirements for receiving a grant. Lyman replied that he has been in contact with many of the providers and answered questions, and works with Metro Transit staff to help answer questions about grant administration. Heck asked if the furlough stipulation would prevent many of the providers from applying, and Lyman clarified that the furlough stipulation applied only to capital expenses, not to operating costs. Lyman also informed the board that he would be discussing this memo with the Dane County Specialized Transportation Commission as well.

9. Discussion Regarding Miscellaneous Issues Related to MPO Public Engagement

Schaefer gave a brief presentation on recommendations made by board members to increase the MPO's online presence and accessibility, and sought feedback on the following issues from the rest of the members. He said the recommendations mostly came from board member Samba Baldeh.

- Ask communities to include a link to the MPO on their websites: Several board members thought this was a good recommendation and would talk to their communities about it.
- Include the MPO meetings on Legistar: Schaefer explained that the MPO shows up as a committee on the City of Madison Legistar, but we have not populated it with meetings or agendas in the past. Dane County also uses Legistar, but he did not know if the MPO could be included there since MPO staff is not county staff. Bergamini and Foster were in favor of getting the MPO on Madison Legistar. Mandli stated that it is cumbersome to create agendas on Legistar and will take staff time. Chawla did think it would be helpful to see if the MPO could be added to Dane County Legistar as a way to connect with a larger audience, even if just the meetings and agendas were posted. Lynch commented he didn't think it took that much staff time to get meeting materials included on the Madison Legistar page, but it is more burdensome if the MPO was posting to multiple platforms.
- Social Media Engagement: Schaefer encouraged board members who were active on Facebook to follow and engage with the MPO Facebook page.

10. Review and Discussion on Draft Public Survey Questions for the Regional Transportation Plan Update

Schaefer provided a brief background and overview on the survey questions, which will focus on resident and stakeholder views on quality of and priorities for the transportation system and level of support for policies and strategies identified in the current plan. This survey will supplement a map-based tool that will allow respondents to identify location specific issues/problems. The survey will not cover travel habits, which were covered by the household travel survey conducted several years ago. He said the survey would be released in advance of the first public information meeting for the regional transportation plan update currently planned for early June. Opitz recommended if there were specific edits any member had to send those directly to Schaefer. Krause mentioned she would like to see a question asking respondents to generally identify where they live and where they work.

11. Status Report on Capital Area RPC Activities

No update

12. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting is Wednesday March 3rd.

13. Adjournment

Moved by Minihan, seconded by Bergamini. Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.