

**Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
August 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting hosted via Zoom

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

1. Roll Call and Introductions

Members present: Margaret Bergamini, Paul Esser, Steve Flottmeyer, Grant Foster, Gary Halverson Dorothy Krause, Tom Lynch (joined during item #6, left after item #7), Barbara Harrington-McKinney (joined during item #6), Mark Opitz, Nasra Wehelie, Doug Wood

Members absent: Yogesh Chawla, Jerry Mandli, Ed Minihan

MPO staff present: Bill Schaefer, Neil Janes

Others present in an official capacity: Mike Cechvala (City of Madison Transportation), Forbes McIntosh (DCCVA), Diane Paoni (WisDOT Planning), Chris Petykowski (City of Madison Engineering)

2. Approval of July 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Esser moved, Krause seconded, to approve the July 7, 2021 meeting minutes. Motion carried, with Bergamini and Flottmeyer abstaining.

3. Communications

- Letter from WisDOT approving 2021-2025 TIP amendment #4.

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

None.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Esser nominated Opitz to continue to serve as Chair. There were no other nominations. Unanimous ballot was cast for Opitz. Esser nominated Wood to continue to serve as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations. Unanimous ballot was cast for Wood.

6. Update on Bus Rapid Transit Project and Metro Transit Network Design Study

Mike Cechvala (City of Madison Transportation) gave a presentation on the East-West BRT project and the Metro Transit Network Design Study. He explained that the planned route for the East-West BRT will extend from Junction Rd south of Mineral Point Rd to East Towne Mall. There will be local BRT service extensions – to Middleton and the other on east side to American Center and Sun Prairie PNR Lot. The main route will be roughly 1/3 center-running, 1/3 side-running, and 1/3 mixed traffic. Station designs on State St have been adjusted to ameliorate some of the concerns raised by stakeholders. The project is currently in the project development phase, which will continue into 2022, and construction is expected to take place during 2023 and 2024 with service starting in late summer '24. The City has received 30% design plans from the consultant, and there will be public outreach events later this year to share those plans more widely.

Next, Cechvala described the Transit Network Redesign Study, which is envisioned as a ground-up redesign effort. He explained the two competing goals of ridership and coverage area that must be balanced as a part of any effort to design a transit network. A focus on ridership requires

concentrating service on high-ridership corridors to reduce travel and wait times and attract more riders. Focusing on coverage involves spreading routes across the area, offering infrequent service that can be accessed by all residents but which leads to longer travel times and is not attractive to riders with other transportation options. He then exhibited maps of a coverage and ridership alternatives, which are being used as starting points for engaging the community in the discussion about how to best balance these goals. Implementation of the network redesign will be largely completed in 2022 and 2023, with BRT to be added in 2024.

Wood asked what happens to bicycles when BRT is implemented and the outside lanes are opened up to traffic at rush hour on East Washington Avenue. Cechvala replied that bikes would still be able to use the lane but they would be biking in mixed traffic, which would make it prohibitively stressful for many people. He said that the City would be working to improve biking conditions on parallel routes between STH 30 and Capital Square. Wehelie asked two questions: What has been the process of the network redesign in terms of the criteria used and the coverage and ridership alternatives? What is being done to increase bus stop accessibility and bus frequency for residents of District 7? Cechvala responded that the decision about how to balance ridership and coverage is a pure policy decision; our current network leans towards coverage. Staff will be engaging the public as well as transportation bodies. There is value in moving more towards ridership; various policy documents support the goal of shifting more people onto buses from private cars, but this is a policy decision. He noted that District 7 (in the vicinity of Maple Grove Rd and McKee Rd on Madison's southwest side) is a known transit service coverage gap, which used to have only rush-hour service and now has all-day but infrequent service. Under almost any scenario, service to this area will improve following the network redesign. Wehelie asked if there was any way to provide better service to residents that live south of McKee Rd. Cechvala replied that nothing is set at this point, and that it may be possible to adjust the routes to provide better access to residents in that area.

Krause said that if we make stops too distant from residences or jobs, people won't use the system. Ensuring stops are close enough to homes and jobs has to be a preliminary consideration. She also noted the importance of providing park and ride facilities to reduce auto traffic downtown and increase transit ridership. Cechvala replied that the goal is to make it easier to use the bus—by making it simpler, easier, and faster. Bergamini asked about bus service in the near term, prior to the redesign going into effect. Is the plan to bring back the previous network to the extent possible prior to implementing the new network? Cechvala replied no; there will be some small service changes this August and the next change will be the implementation of the new network in 2022. Bergamini noted that some people are missing their previous routes—e.g., routes 56 and 19. Cechvala replied that Metro is monitoring the need for additional routes and will continue to do so as the weather gets colder, but that a primary obstacle to additional routes is a driver shortage; restoring the 19 would require at least four additional full time drivers. He said that any changes made to the network in the near term would be aimed at shifting it towards its future design. Bergamini then asked Cechvala to clarify his comment that the redesign would be implemented in 2022 and 2023. Cechvala replied that if everything comes together perfectly, it could all be done in 2022, but that due to the short timeline, it is most likely that some of the changes would occur in 2022 with the remainder being completed in 2023. Bergamini then asked Cechvala to confirm that the BRT would be implemented in 2024. Cechvala replied that the 2024 date applied to the BRT infrastructure, but that conventional buses would begin operating on the BRT route in August 2023. The electric buses, BRT stations, etc. will all begin operation in 2024.

Foster asked about the possibility of maintaining parking in the side lanes on East Washington Ave throughout the day, and allowing bikers to use the remainder of the parking/bike lane, rather than opening them up to mixed traffic during rush hour. Cechvala replied that that would not hinder BRT at all but that there would be spillover traffic onto Johnson St and Gorham St, congestion on East

Washington Ave would worsen, and WisDOT would have to approve of the plan due to the road's status as a connecting state highway. Grant commented that we should consider making East Washington Ave on the isthmus, more of a multimodal urban street.

7. Review of Draft Scoring of STBG – Urban Project Applications and Draft Priority Listing of Projects for 2022-2027

Schaefer reviewed the currently approved and proposed new STBG Urban Program projects. He noted that surprisingly only the City of Madison submitted project applications. He reported that as a result of a change to the schedule of the Pleasant View Road project, the amount of available funding for this cycle is over \$20 million, as opposed to the \$9 million that had been expected. Staff evaluated and scored the projects. The Autumn Ridge Path/Overpass and Mineral Point Road projects scored the highest, with the Atwood Ave and John Nolen Drive projects receiving essentially the same score. The adaptive signal projects had the lowest scores. Staff has proposed to fund the Autumn Ridge, Mineral Point Rd., and Atwood Ave projects, and to partially fund the John Nolen Dr. project with the remaining \$9 million, which represents about 1/3 of the project cost. He said that the Atwood Ave. and Autumn Ridge projects were also submitted for earmarks in the federal transportation authorization legislation that is currently being debated, and there is a good chance they will receive that funding. If one or both receive funding, the STBG Urban funds for these projects could be reallocated to the John Nolen Dr. project.

Schaefer noted that the project scoring had not been presented to the MPO's technical committee because the scoring wasn't completed in time and the funding allocation wasn't known. MPO staff did meet with City of Madison Engineering staff who expressed a desire for more fully funding the John Nolen Dr. project. Schaefer ran through some funding scenarios where funding was shifted to the John Nolen Dr. project. He said that the only decision for tonight is about how to prioritize the projects and how to show the funding for them in the draft TIP. The final decision is made in conjunction with approval of the TIP in October.

Wood noted that the Atwood Ave project was going to be funded a few years ago, but was removed for the Gammon Rd. project. It was not funded in the last cycle, due to the Pleasant View Rd. and CTH M projects being prioritized. He said that he would not support any change to the TIP that does away with funding for the Atwood Ave. project. He said it seemed like the John Nolen Dr. project just appeared, and wondered why it is so urgent now. Petykowski said the city had applied for funding for the John Nolen Dr. project during the last cycle. He said the city has been working on the design, but that because it is such a big, expensive project it is very difficult for the city to do without outside funding. It is a regional roadway with 50,000 cars per day and sometimes 4,000 bicyclists per day. He said the bridges have been moving since they were installed, and the city has been doing repairs on them regularly. The City's work on the bridges may actually be counting against it, in terms of being eligible for Bridge funding, by keeping the bridges in better shape than they would otherwise be.

Foster asked for clarification on whether Petykowski is advocating for Atwood Ave. to be removed and for that funding to be transferred to the John Nolen Dr project. Petykowski said that he just wanted to emphasize how important the John Nolen Dr. project is and that, if it is not close to fully funded, it would be very difficult for the City to do. Foster said he would be concerned if the Atwood project gets pushed back again.

[Note: The following comments occurred during item #13 but more appropriately should be reflected under this item]

Schaefer noted that he had not discussed the MPO's COVID related (CRRSAA) funding as part of item #7 but that he would put it on the agenda for the next meeting if necessary. He said he is hoping that

FHWA will step in because WisDOT should not be able to use the MPO's suballocated CRRSAA funding for state projects. However, if the FHWA does not step in the MPO will have to use other means to address this. The funding amounts to \$3.2 million. He said it is frustrating because WisDOT has not passed on the correct amount of funding in the past, and FHWA had to step in. He emphasized it was a decision by WisDOT Division of Investment Management and not the SW Region, which had no say in the matter. [Ed. Note: WisDOT Bureau of Planning also had no say.]

8. Approval to Release Draft 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Madison Metropolitan Area & Dane County for Public Review and Comment

Schaefer briefly described the process of listing projects in the TIP. He said the TIP consists mainly of projects proposed by implementing agencies. The MPO's role is to ensure all projects are consistent with the MPO's plan. The main issue before the Board is how to show funding for the STBG Urban projects previously discussed in the draft TIP. Opitz asked if the projects could be shown as proposed by staff, but with an added memo describing the funding scenarios discussed earlier in this meeting. Schaefer said that would be OK. Foster said he did not think an additional memo was necessary, and that these decisions would all be hashed out later.

Bergamini moved, Foster seconded, to approve release of the draft TIP with the STBG Urban priority listings as shown in Scenario 1, as recommended by staff, with the understanding that these would be re-visited after learning whether the Atwood Ave. and/or Autumn Ridge path/overpass projects will receive a federal funding earmark in the transportation bill.

9. Presentation on Regional Travel Forecast Model Project

Schaefer gave a brief presentation on the update to the MPO's regional travel forecast model. He noted the major changes including: use of new household travel survey data and use of StreetLight origin-destination data, addition of a bike network using the bicycle level of traffic stress into the model, new intersection control/delay information, expanded trip purposes, replacement of the gravity model for trip distribution with a new destination choice model, and new time of day trip distribution. In addition, the projected 2050 Dane County population and employment figures have been revised upwards. The MPO is working with the consultant to use model for test a number scenarios related to autonomous vehicles, ridesharing, teleworking, auto operating and parking costs, online shopping, increased transit service/access, and bikeway network quality/access.

10. Review of *Connect Greater Madison: Regional Transportation Plan 2050 Update Public Survey Results*

Schaefer introduced MPO intern, Neil Janes, who presented the findings from the MPO's public survey for the RTP 2050 Update. Janes described the survey findings, challenges related to weeding out non-human (bot) responses, and demographics of respondents.

Foster noted that he was impressed by the public's interest in Vision Zero and safety, and that he would like to see the MPO continue to prioritize that in project selection and elsewhere in our work.

11. Brief Update on Responses to Letter Sent Seeking Financial Contribution to Support the 2022 MPO Budget

Schaefer noted that he was encouraged by the responses to the letter, and that some municipalities that have not previously contributed will begin to do so and that some others that currently contribute will be increasing their contribution. He said that he will be following up with municipalities that he has not heard from.

Opitz, noting Forbes McIntosh's attendance, asked if this could be a topic for the Dane County Cities and Villages Association's (DCCVA) next meeting, and also suggested reaching out to the Towns Association, specifically mentioning that the Towns of Westport, Blooming Grove, and Cottage Grove are participating in our regional planning work. Opitz said he heard that the Town of Middleton discussed contributing to the MPO but that it does not seem like they will.

Foster asked what benefits the MPO could potentially offer to contributing municipalities. Schaefer said that when the issue has been brought up before some of the ideas have included only allowing contributing municipalities to receive project funding, prioritizing MPO staff work for contributing communities, or limiting staff work to contributing communities. He said he was unsure of the legality of conditioning project funding on a community's contribution to the MPO. He said that staff support to communities could certainly be conditioned on a community's contributions to the MPO or prioritized for those communities that contribute. Foster asked that this be put on a future agenda, including rules governing what the MPO could do and examples of what other MPOs do. He suggested potentially holding an event open only to contributing members, or other ways to encourage participation, and emphasized the importance of having all of the MPO communities being full members.

Wood said "good work" to Schaefer in getting more communities to contribute. Schaefer noted that he could provide an update at the next DCCVA meeting. McIntosh said he would check with the executive committee, which sets the agenda. Opitz asked who the contacts are currently for the Towns Association. McIntosh said that Renee Lauber is the administrator and Jerry Derr is still the chair.

12. Status Report on Capital RPC Activities

Schaefer noted that there had been some sewer service amendments in the City of Stoughton and in the Village of Oregon. He said that staff will share comments made on those amendments.

13. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings

The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 1.

14. Adjournment

Moved by Esser, seconded by Krause, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM.