

Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)¹
September 2, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting hosted via Zoom

Chair Opitz called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

1. Roll Call

Members present: Paul Esser, Steve Flottmeyer, Patrick Heck, Grant Foster, Dorothy Krause, Tom Lynch, Jerry Mandli, Ed Minihan (left after item #9), Mark Opitz, Mike Tierney, Doug Wood

Members absent: Samba Baldeh, Margaret Bergamini,

MPO staff present: Bill Schaefer, Ben Lyman, Zia Brucaya

Others present in an official capacity: Diane Paoni, WisDOT; Yogesh Chawla, pending MPO Board member

2. Approval of August 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Minihan moved, Krause seconded, to approve August 5, 2020 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. Communications

- Letter from WisDOT approving Amendment #7 to the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program to add USH 14 Mill & Overlay project in Fitchburg.

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

None

5. Public Hearing on the Draft 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program for the Madison Metropolitan Area & Dane County

Opitz opened the hearing. Schaefer explained that staff has reviewed the draft TIP for consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan 2050. He said the TIP includes the Transportation Alternative Program projects previously approved by the board. He reviewed the final schedules and revised funding estimates for the previously approved STBG-Urban projects, noting all of the major projects were funded at less than 60%. He then reviewed the major Metro Transit capital projects and some of the other major roadway and bicycle projects. Lynch added that for the Bus Rapid Transit project, the city is revising the budget and moving some of the line items around, which will both save the city money and make the application more competitive during the FTA Small Starts funding process. The following person registered to speak, but was not present: Andrea Keapproth. Opitz closed the hearing.

Wood asked whether there is a concern that some of the STBG-Urban projects are funded at significantly less than 60% with the revised cost estimates. Schaefer said it was not an issue from an MPO or FHWA perspective given the large amount of federal funding for the projects, however it is an issue for project sponsors as it requires a greater local match. It is difficult because communities do not want to get too far along with project design before applying for and receiving federal funding, but the environmental study and design process can result in large cost increases. The MPO doesn't have the flexibility to move funding around between projects once approved. The MPO could institute a policy to require projects to be at least at 30% design before applying for funding, but that may discourage applications from small communities for

¹ Formerly named Madison Area Transportation Planning Board

projects with less certainty of being funded. This can be discussed as part of the upcoming update to program policies and scoring criteria. Wood asked if the City of Madison bike project being held up by the railroad (Capital City Trail extension) was within a state-owned rail corridor. Schaefer said it was not. Lynch added that the project goes under I-94, and the railroad will not allow the path to be as close to the tracks as necessary in order for the path to route to the outside of the overpass pillars. Schaefer noted this project had been approved for TAP funding and the city recently had to release the funding.

6. Review of Section 5310 Program (Enhanced Services for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) Grant Project Applications for 2021 and Preliminary Approval of Draft Project Funding Recommendations

Schaefer stated that this is one of three federal programs for which the MPO selects and funds projects. Metro Transit administers the program. Projects are reviewed and funding recommendations made by a small committee that includes a staff person from WisDOT Transit Bureau, a member of the MPO citizen advisory committee with expertise in specialized transportation, and an MPO staff person (Lyman). Lyman then reviewed the six project applications prior to short presentations from three of the applicants. Lyman stated that the MPO received six applications for a \$313,000 funding allotment this year. Applicants were offered an extra page in their application to explain how their operations have been, and may continue to be, affected by COVID-19. Based on a board member suggestion during the last 5310 funding cycle, applicants were also offered the opportunity to make informational presentations to the board prior to board action on this item, but this was not required. Applicants include the Dane County Department of Human Services, Madison Metro, Capitol Express, City of Stoughton, and Carepool Innovation.

The following three applicants present at the meeting, who registered to speak, provided brief remarks about their applications:

- Bob Brancel, Capitol Express Transportation, stated that they are planning to replace an accessible van from 2008 that has over 550,000 miles on it. They installed solar panels on their building in order to operate more efficiently and have one electric vehicle, which gets 10 mpg more than their average van. They are interested in purchasing another electric vehicle if they can, but they are operating at about revenue neutral right now. They are a primary provider for several nursing homes, and work with assisted living centers and others. Their goal is to serve the community and provide better service.
- Ryan Wiesen, City of Stoughton, explained that they are looking to replace the last non-accessible vehicle in their shared-ride taxi fleet. Ridership and revenue have increased over the last three years, and they recently expanded their hours of service. They have built the local cost share into the 2021 capital budget. Minihan commented that they had been discussing expansion into the Town of Dunn prior to the pandemic, and thinks this is something that can work. He expressed support for the application.
- Brent Benner, Carepool Innovation, Inc., shared a short Powerpoint presentation explaining that Carepool's goal is to increase coordination, transparency, and mobility for people with disabilities through the development of a modern, user-friendly ridematching app, that mimics the capabilities of modern apps like Kayak and Yelp. Badger Bus, VanGo Taxi, and Union Cab have sent letters of commitment to participate in the design process. This proposal acts on an idea generated during the last annual transportation partners meeting.

Lyman then discussed the scoring process and results. The projects recommended for funding are the Dane County Call Center and Mobility Training Programs, Metro Transit's Paratransit Eligibility/Mobility Coordinator, vehicle for Capitol Express, and vehicle for City of Stoughton. The two Carepool projects are not recommended. Concerns with the Carpool projects included the lack of quarterly benchmarks and metrics, the uncertainty of tech development processes, and the high funding request. The proposed funding allocation will leave \$19,000 that can be moved to the 2021 funding cycle. Wood asked what the MPO would be paying for as part of the Dane County and Metro Transit projects. Lyman stated that the call center

cost is primarily the staff person. Around \$10,000 goes to the administration costs of RSVP for running the volunteer driver program, which connects people to nutrition and health services, and the rest goes to the MTLIP program, which is a travel mobility program that takes seniors and people with disabilities on outings. The Metro funding primarily goes to the staff person conducting in-person paratransit assessments, and signing people up for travel training who are no longer qualified for paratransit. Wood asked whether these are annual allocations, and Lyman stated that yes, the MPO has been funding these programs for many years. Wood noted that these projects account for over half of the total allocation, and was trying to figure out how a project like Carepool's could be funded. Lyman noted that the program scoring metrics prioritize continuing existing services and replacing existing vehicles over starting new services and expanding service areas. Schaefer added that there was a discussion several years about whether to automatically fund the county and Metro projects at a fixed amount, but the board decided to leave it flexible in case there would be a future desire to reduce their allocation in order to fund another project in a given year.

Opitz noted that the recommendations are presented for preliminary approval and asked the board to express any concerns or questions now, as they will be approved at the next meeting as part of action on the TIP. There were no questions or concerns expressed.

7. Presentation on Metro Transit Public Transit Agency Safety Action Plan

Schaefer stated that this item is on the agenda because of federal rules that require transit agencies to adopt transit asset management and safety plans and performance measures related to federal goals, which MPOs must then incorporate into the regional planning process, including setting targets for these performance measures in coordination with transit agencies. MPOs also must conduct an analysis as part of the RTP and TIP processes to show how investments will support achieving both transit and roadway performance measures. Schaefer said that he wanted the board to have a chance to hear from Metro about their safety plan and performance measures, in advance of the board considering targets for these measures at a future meeting.

Phil Gadke, the safety supervisor in Metro's bus operations unit, then shared that Metro is excited to move forward with the new safety plan and operationalize these measures. He said it will have a positive effect on ridership and on the workplace environment. Metro has a very good safety record, so it was difficult to establish targets beyond the current good performance. For most of the targets, Metro used National Transit Database (NTD) data. Targets were set for four categories: fatalities, injuries, safety events (note: Metro's own data used for this, which includes any safety event reported by drivers and the public), and vehicle performance (distance between road calls for maintenance). Metro is at the beginning of this process and looking forward to working with the MPO.

Lynch asked whether Metro had looked at the proposed targets against 2019 data. Gadke said yes, adding that 2020 will be tricky due to decreased mileage and service due to COVID. Lynch noted that it would be interesting to see performance targets from Milwaukee and Wausau compared to Madison's. Gadke said that Milwaukee has shared their targets and there are definitely differences. Krause asked how issues with passengers, such as medical or behavior issues, are factored into the safety event numbers, and also asked what kind of trainings drivers go through to handle these incidents. Gadke stated that safety events are considered to be anything that Metro has a role in that might result in a claim. The most frequent event is a slip and fall on the bus. An example of something that would not be recorded is if a rider has a drug- or alcohol-related behavioral incident on the bus, which is not caused by Metro. Metro drivers go through many trainings, both as new drivers and on an annual basis. These include mental health trainings and the Transportation Safety Institute's bus driver training program. Metro also recently received dementia-friendly status.

8. Resolution TPB No. 177 Approving Amendment #8 to the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program for the Madison Metropolitan Area & Dane County

Schaefer stated the amendment adds three recently approved local bridge replacement projects so that design can begin later this year. They are on CTH KP, Valley Road in the Town of Verona, and Windsor Road in Windsor. The amendment also adds a state pavement markings project.

Wood moved, Krause seconded, to approve Resolution TPB No. 177 Approving Amendment #8 to the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion carried.

9. Approval to Release Draft 2020 MATPB Title VI Non-Discrimination Program and Language Assistance Plan for Public Review and Comment

Lyman explained that because the MPO receives federal funding, the agency must comply with federal Title VI regulations and have a plan for how it will do so. The MPO adopted its first stand-alone Title VI plan in 2014, prior to which it had used the City of Madison's Title VI plan. The plan must be updated every three years and WisDOT has issued a new template to follow. The current plan includes minor updates, mainly to protected classes, demographic data, and board and committee membership. The document also updates acronyms and provides new information about coordination with the City of Madison language assistance program. The draft Public Participation Plan will be included as an appendix. Schaefer noted that staff did a lot of work to improve language access since the last plan, including translating vital documents into Hmong and Cantonese as well as Spanish for the first time. The MPO also created the first bi-lingual English and Spanish version of the Dane County Bike Map this year with the help of the City of Madison language assistance program, making it one of only few bi-lingual bike maps in the country.

Esser moved, Krause seconded, to approve the release of the Draft 2020 MATPB Title VI Non-Discrimination Program and Language Assistance Plan for public review and comment. Motion carried.

10. Presentation on Greater Madison Remote Work Survey

Schaefer stated that the MPO will produce a short summary to accompany the survey results. Brucaya provided a presentation on the survey and results. The survey was conducted between June 9-30, 2020 and received 1,881 responses. The purpose was to understand the unique impacts and implications of COVID-19 on workplace organization and commuter transportation trends in the Madison region, as well as to identify resources that might be provided to employers and employees, either through the MPO's TDM program or other sources, to support the continued use of remote work in the region. The survey was designed to be taken by non-managers, managers, and executive leaders at any size and type of organization or business. Findings included that the experience of working remotely for respondents included a number of challenges, both personal and professional, but that overall people were benefitting from the experience and would like to continue working remotely in some capacity on a weekly basis after the pandemic recedes. Managers and executives anticipated that remote work would continue at a greater rate after the pandemic, and the majority of all respondents expressed that they would view an employer more favorably if given the opportunity to work remotely. The implications for TDM in the region are that there could be reductions in overall vehicle miles travelled and peak hour congestion if more people are encouraged to work from home more frequently from now on. MPO staff will share the results with organizations and employers, and look for ways to provide and/or partner on providing resources to continue to support and encourage telework in the region.

Wood asked whether this information would be available on the MPO website. Brucaya stated that the results would be posted and shared when the executive summary is complete, likely this month. Results would also be sent to everyone who completed the survey and requested a copy. Lynch noted that the percent of respondents who indicated wanting to work from home at least once per week after the

pandemic was huge, and could have a major impact on VMT if this trend holds. He also noted that new employees might be struggling during this time, because they miss out on the face-to-face interaction that helps when a person is new. Krause wondered what kind of organizations survey respondents were representing. Brucaya noted that the survey did not ask what industry people worked in, but that there were large bumps in responses after the survey was sent to City of Madison and Dane County employees. There was a good spread of responses across the various workplaces sizes, and the approximately twenty NAICS codes received spanned a range of industry types. Schaefer commented that training new employees was a challenge if working remotely, and also that there could be a counterbalance to VMT reductions if more people choose to live in rural areas because they can telework.

11. Status Report on Capital Area RPC Activities

None

12. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting will be on October 7, 2020. Opitze indicated that election of officers would occur at the meeting. Krause mentioned that bicyclists are very happy that the bike bridge over CTH PD in Fitchburg is almost complete.

14. Adjournment

Krause moved, Wood seconded, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.