

Area Transportation Partnership 7 (ATP 7)

Draft Minutes of December 13, 2019 Meeting – MnDOT, Mankato

Members Present: Ronda Allis, Lisa Bigham, Seth Greenwood, Steve Koehler, Greg Ous, Craig Rempp, Ryan Thilges, Don Wachal, Nick Klisch, Annette Fiedler (alternate for Matt Widboom), Vance Stuehrenberg, Peter Harff, Jeff Johnson, Jack Kolars, Mike Kuhle, Patrick La Course

Members Absent: Matt Widboom

Others Present: Shawn Schloesser (R9), Abdul Aziz (R9), Sam Parker, Angie Piltaver, Angelica Tejada, Charles Androsky, Dan Sarff, Debra Yates, Scott Roehmildt, Rebecca Arndt, Anne Wolff

Legislative attendees: Senator Nick Frentz, Representative Paul Torkelson

Welcome, Introductions and opening business

- Steve Koehler welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.
- The minutes from the September 2019 meeting were approved.
- Steve Koehler provided a handout on the ATP-7 committees
- Steve Koehler and membership recognized Annette Fiedler, who is retiring, for many years of service at the Southwest Regional Development Commission and on ATP-7

2019 – 2022 STIP Amendments

Debra Yates provided a handout with a summary of the projects that were amended since the previous meeting. These include amendments for projects located on MN Highways 30, 19, 169, and 90, and a project on CSAH 52 in Martin County. Additionally, four Rail Highway Crossing projects were moved back to FY2021 and four were advanced into FY2020.

STIP Update and Funding Guidance

Ronda Allis provided handouts and presented an update on the STIP. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved the 2020-2023 STIP on November 27, 2019. We are now operating under that STIP and the 2021-2024 draft STIP process has begun. Ronda also shared that targets were provided, but have not been approved by senior leadership.

Ronda Allis provided a handout on the ATP-managed targets, which have increased from \$5.7 million in 2023 to \$6 million in 2024. She explained that the 2024 target increase is due to the August redistribution now included in the 2024 target. The redistribution amount is an average of previous redistributions, which may change in the future. Ronda also indicated that TA and HSIP targets remain the same for 2024, and Transit will continue to be funded centrally.

Ronda Allis also provided a handout and explained the District 7 targets, which were \$71 million in 2021, \$88 million in 2022, \$62 million in 2023 and \$62 million in 2024. The 2023 target represents an increase from last year and the 2024 target is a decrease from last year.

Annette Fiedler asked whether Central Office adjusted for impacts from last year's storms that caused flooding and various slides. Ronda Allis indicated that a special pool of money was available from Central Office for slides and flooding, and that District 7 used \$1.5 million from this fund.

Steve Koehler referenced the handout showing the breakdown of funding by ATP, and asked how the allotment of money to each area is determined, noting that District 7 has the highest amount of poor quality roads, yet gets some of the lowest amount of funding. Greg Ous and Ronda Allis explained that the answer is complicated, and District 7 will create an informational sheet for ATP members to explain it better.

Transportation Alternatives Report-out and Updates

Sam Parker provided a hand-out and discussed the 2024 TA Solicitation program. The solicitation is currently open, with six LOIs submitted that have identified \$2.68 million in needs (target is \$700,000). The LOI is not required, but strongly recommended, and is worth 5 points in the scoring process.

Additionally, Sam shared that the TA subcommittee met prior to the meeting to review and recommend how to spend \$224,000 in FY 2021 TA funds as North Mankato would not be completing the previously-awarded Garfield and Monroe project due to school changes. Annette Fiedler reported out from the meeting and recommended the ATP redistribute the award on a fixed percentage basis to projects in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 that are not funded at the full 80 percent federal level. She noted this would be consistent with past ATP decisions of prioritizing previously-awarded projects that have additional federal capacity. Fairmont, North Mankato, Blue Earth County and the City of Blue Earth will receive these funds.

Manufacturer's Perspectives Presentation

Greg Ous gave a presentation and provided handouts on the District 7 Manufacturer's Perspectives study and report. He explained the study purpose and findings. Manufacturers provided feedback in areas such as infrastructure, highway safety features, winter weather and operations, communications, and policies. Greg shared that District 7 is responding to more than 600 comments and questions, and will send out the full report along with these responses. He also shared early actions taken, including a roundabout ride-along in a livestock truck to understand trailer movement and load shift, revision of the Twin Trailer map and incorporating feedback into long-range and short-range planning efforts.

Annette Fiedler commented that variable message signage (VMS) may be particularly helpful for road conditions such as slippery or icy roads, and for poor visibility situations.

Vance Stuehrenberg asked about working with Waze to have conditions available instantly. Greg Ous indicated District 7 would look into it.

2020 Construction Program Update

Peter Harff provided a map and reviewed the 2020 construction program with the ATP. Although District 7 did not receive a BUILD grant for the expansion of US 14 to four lanes from New Ulm to Nicollet, District 7 will continue to develop the plans. He also shared that District 7 will do a thin or ultra-thin overlay on this portion of 14 to provide additional time to secure funding for the four-lane project before having to do a more costly resurfacing project. Ronda Allis also explained that some projects on the 2020 construction map are funded in different fiscal years, or by additional funds that were provided in 2017 (17NEW funds).

Transportation Updates

Craig Rempp provided a transit update for Mankato Transit. Grants were received for ADA upgrades to 20 buses; however, 70 are out of compliance.

Patrick La Course provided a transit update for Brown County, indicating that a new bus storage facility in Sleepy Eye will be built.

Charles Androsky presented an update on the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO) activities. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update is in the first phase with a December 2020 delivery date. The Warren Street Corridor Study will get underway early next year. The Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) project is in the first phase. The 169 Corridor Study should begin early next year.

Shawn Schloesser with Region 9 shared that Mankato Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning effort has begun – currently identifying issues. Shawn also shared that Region 9 did not get the US EDA grant to do an economic impact study in the Henderson area.

Annette Fiedler with the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) provided an update. The Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) project is in the first phase, with two meetings already held. The structure of the RTCC and draft ideas for the work plan have been discussed. Additionally there have been discussions about insurance requirements and reimbursements for volunteer drivers. Annette also shared that Districts 6, 7 and 8 attended a development agreement meeting. Finally, she offered some parting ideas related to wind, solar and transmission line projects and road construction timing, pedestrian crossing considerations for retail operations proposed on state highways, and automated vehicle infrastructure. Annette also indicated that upon her retirement, Rosemary Bruce White will be replacing her.

Legislative Update

Greg Ous shared that a project in Lakefield will now be done sooner since the city was able to obtain a USDA grant for utilities. Greg indicated that Lakefield scored the highest among urban sections needing work, and MnDOT will move a project forward. Greg indicated that factors like having a small road section that needs work, but the larger portion of the road does not, can affect project selection. Greg also shared that the project selection website will be available soon.

Representative Torkelson provided an update. He shared that Amtrack is on the verge of making a profit and will thus update their rolling stock. The Blatnick Bridge needs work, and will be very costly. (Greg Ous indicated that this will leave the districts without bridge funds for three years.) Representative Torkelson also shared that it was disappointing to not get the BUILD grant for US14, but the work done so far will assist the future legislative discussion. He also stated some legislative topics would be bonding, changes to the way tab fees are determined, work zone injuries and speed enforcement, Gopher One Call issues, pipeline safety, silt fences, the wetland replacement program, and updating the language for Corridors of Commerce and potentially finding more funding. He also indicated that the Blatnick Bridge project would be a 50/50 project with Wisconsin, and he said it seemed like the new Hands Free Law was losing momentum. Other priorities might include multimodal freight transportation (ship to truck, ship to train) and issues surrounding weight restrictions, e-logs and truck parking.

Senator Frentz stated he thought the Hands Free Law was working, and congratulated the effort to get the law passed. Additionally, he stated it was disappointing to not get the federal BUILD grant for US14 four-lane expansion from Nicollet to New Ulm. He also indicated that electric vehicles and hybrids may be up to 50% of cars in the next 10 years. Transportation budgets may also be affected by more frequent and intense weather events, such as those that caused flooding and slides last year.

Next meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 13, 2019.