

GREATER MORGANTOWN MPO

Minutes

May 20, 2010

City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Asel Kennedy, Joe Fisher, Bob Bell, Tom Konchesky, Don Spencer, Mike Kelly, Joe Statler, Charles Bryer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Perry Keller, Janice Goodwin, Patty Lewis, David Bruffy, Bill Byrne

PUBLIC in ATTENDANCE: Howard Goodstein, Steve Solomon, Marian Zuccari, David Biafora, George Seiler, Mr. and Mrs. Seingh

I. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

II. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Steve Solomon / American Homes. Questioned how the MPO could make a decision concerning the Mileground configuration; believes it is too premature. He stated he attended a meeting at the Airport and asked very specific questions. He was told that the idea was conceptual and there was presently no funding available. After he reviewed the drawings he felt they were too basic and nothing could really be determined from them. He asked why this idea was even considered with no input from the business people on the Mileground or without any traffic studies. He is adamantly against the proposal without more information. The comments sent to the DOH first need to be reviewed. Advised the property owners were sent letters that stated the meeting would be an informational workshop. Asked why a business park could not be done as was done for R.E. Michael. He also stated he never received answers to any questions he asked of Mr. Austin.

Howard Goodstein / BFS. Stated he was also in attendance at the meeting with Mr. Solomon and agrees with his comments. The ideas presented were conceptual. He asked about the drawings and was told the roads may shift. Informed input cannot be provided until hard facts are received from the DOH.

David Biafora / Metro Properties. Stated he was taken back by the MPO and wondered why property owners were not contacted about this evenings meeting and why the MPO did not proceed correctly. The MPO and the State need to work with the developers and business owners and invite them to discuss the Mileground proposal.

Marion Zuccari / Tireland. Stated he does not understand why no one was contacted by the DOH and/or MPO; proceeding as if this is a secret. He believes that turn arounds do not work. If the businesses on the Mileground are hurt, tax revenue will be lost.

Bob Bell. (Asked if he could step out of his position on the MPO to speak as a business owner on the Mileground). As a property owner on the Mileground he believes the plan would devalue property values; emergency vehicles would have problems; mobile homes would not be able to get in or out of American Homes or the mobile home park behind MPE. He stated the proposed new school off 705 would need to be considered.

Public Comment was closed at 7:20 PM

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Statler moved the minutes of March 2010 be approved; seconded by Mr. Konchesky. The motion unanimously passed.

IV. TIP AMENDMENTS:

A. Reconstruction of Don Nehlen Drive and 705 Intersection and Access Road.

Chairman Kelly asked Mr. Austin to discuss this project. Mr. Austin said that the realignment of Maple Drive extending to 705 is a project that Mon General Hospital has been working. The Hospital has been asked to consider staging the project to first relocate the driveway to Maple Drive so there could be better coordination with any proposed changes at Don Nehlen Drive, but the Hospital was unable to accommodate the request and they are still working on the details. The local funding source was approved by there are no Federal Highway Administration funds.

Mr. Kennedy believes the amendment is premature since the funding has not yet been secured. Mr. Austin is somewhat uncomfortable with the amount of detail that has been given to the MPO on the Project. Mr. Fisher moved this item be tabled until next month's meeting; Seconded by Mr. Statler. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Mon County Urban MassTransit TIP. Mr. Kelly then called on Mr. Austin to discuss the Monongalia County Transportation Improvement Program. Mr. Austin stated that all the funding has been secured shown in the TIP. MountainLine held all public hearings required and the TIP as advertised. Mr. Kennedy moved the Transit TIP be approved; seconded by Mr. Statler. The motion unanimously carried.

V. REVIEW of DRAFT for UPWP/INCLUSION OF LRTP UPDATE.

Mr. Austin stated a conceptual draft of the UPWP was presented last month, but it did not include an update of the LRTP. With the removal of the 705 Connector, the Plan will need updated. The description of the steps needed to update the plan were included in Mr. Austin's memo:

1. Initial data collection.
2. Revised socio-economic forecasts;
3. Modeling
4. Developing model cross sections. Standard cross-sections would be developed to be used to specify the configuration of the proposed or revised facilities in each location would be identified where improvements are proposed;
5. Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning;
6. Public Involvement throughout the Planning Process;
7. Final Document.

Mr. Austin contacted a consulting firm for a rough cost estimate for performing this work. They stated that it was anticipated that if the MPO used only consultants on the project it would cost which between \$300,000 and \$350,000. Once there is a clarification about the possibility of additional MPO Staff some of the work may not need to be contracted out, the estimate can be adjusted to reflect this work. MPO staffing issues and how the MPO will work, still need to be worked out.

Mr. Spencer stated he and Mr. Kennedy reviewed the MPO job descriptions and recommended exploring the MPO becoming a separate organization, similar to the Transit Authority, not sponsored by either the City or County. This option will be further explored and discussed with the DOH and information will be shared at next month's meeting. Mr. Kennedy advised that the County agreed to serve as the employer since the City was unable to do so. Mr. Austin stated he will do whatever is the pleasure of the Board. He also advised that there several free standing MPO's around the country, but none of them are in West Virginia.

VI. STATUS REPORT ON MILEGROUND WIDENING PROJECT.

Mr. Austin reported the DOH held a meeting on April 20. To date, according to the newspaper they have received over 100 comments on the project. The TAC/CAC reviewed the project and recommended that the MPO Policy Board recommend the divided cross section (four lane with median access for emergency vehicles) to the DOH for their consideration. Mr. Austin also advised that the proposed roundabouts would be designed to the Federal standards so any vehicle that can travel on the Interstate could travel on the Mileground. The divided cross section recommended operates more safely and efficiently than a five lane cross section and would require less right of way. The distance between the round abouts is about a mile. Studies show that medians are generally not detrimental to businesses. He went on the say the DOH prefers concrete medians, or faux brick. It would be rolled so that large vehicles such as emergency vehicles would be able to get over them, but they would deter regular traffic from attempting to get over them.

Mr. Solomon asked if cuts could be made to accommodate bringing and/out mobile homes.

Mr. Kennedy asked if modeling was done to see what traffic would look like with the round abouts. Mr. Austin stated that the State did a micro simulation that seemed to work well, with the exception of Easton Hill because the software the State was using did not adequately model 2 lane roundabouts.

Mr. Bell asked if this issue would be voted on this evening without the MPO Policy Board not seeing any of the comments received in Charleston. This should be discussed with the business owners along the Mileground. Mr. Austin stated the DOH would like a recommendation in order to have the project ready for the next construction season. Mr. Bell then made a motion that the MPO get more information before proceeding with a recommendation to the DOH and delay making the decision for another month. The motion died for lack of a second.

Mr. Statler stated the comments received at this meeting should be submitted to the DOH, and that suggestions should be offered to the DOH. Mr. Kennedy believed, if necessary, a special MPO meeting could be held so they could update us on the comments they have received. He doesn't believe it is a good idea to vote on it right now.

Mr. Austin stated the DOH has met their public involvement requirements and, if they choose to, they could do whatever they wanted without advising the MPO of their decision on the Mileground. Mr. Austin noted that it was his understanding that DOH wished to have the plans prepared by the next construction season. Mr. Statler stated this Board needs to be careful as it may be perceived as not looking at ways to move forward. He suggested the CAC set up a workshop with the DOH, get more information on the project, and come back to advise this Board. Mr. Austin stated the DOH has not prepared a summary report. When the original recommendation was for a five lane cross section the TTAC asked the DOH to look at the four lane divided cross-section with roundabouts. The TTAC understands they provide for a better traffic flow and are safer.

Mr. Bell stated there is a much worse traffic situation on Beechurst, but no one suggested a barrier be put there. The Mileground would be the only road with a restricted left turn. Mr. Spencer believes the recommendations of both the TAC/CAC should be considered but the entire idea is not yet in a form to understand and there needs to be something more specific. We need to trust the DOH in their desire to move forward.

Mr. Solomon then asked if the public comment portion of the meeting could be reopened. Mr. Kennedy moved that public comment be opened; seconded by Mr. Bryer. The motion unanimously passed.

Mr. Biafora stated he knows there is a desire to do something about the roads, but the people need to be heard. He has done many developments and has put roads in to accommodate that development. If the Mileground is going to be widened, it needs to be done correctly. Mr. Fisher stated he may have constructed roads, but it is not the same as what we're talking about. (Mr. Statler then called for a point of order as the conversation was becoming argumentative).

Mr. Goodstein stated he had no idea this project was being planned for the DOH's next construction season. When he asked the DOH about it, they advised it was conceptual and he feels the people were misled by them.

Mr. Solomon believes the \$38 million for this project is an underestimation; the information is fragmented. They cannot target only one area.

Bill Rice / CAC Member. Taking people's property needs to be minimized and the project needs to be acceptable to everyone.

Public Comment was then closed.

Mr. Spencer stated more information is needed and may need to be looked at with "fresh eyes". Mr. Kennedy moved to have a committee to update the resolution and incorporate our needs, thoughts and concerns from this evening's meeting; then update and send the resolution to Charleston if a conclusion is reached. Mr. Statler seconded it. The motion unanimously passed. The committee will be comprised of Asel Kennedy, Joe Fisher, Charles Bryer and Bill Austin.

VII. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND TRAFFIC STUDY UPDATE:

Mr. Austin advised there has been a great response to the TDM survey; over 2400 responses were received and of those 2400, about 1300 were from WVU and 1100 from the community.

He noted that Parsons Brinckerhoff is doing a similar survey for San Francisco is and they have only received 240 responses there. Paper surveys are also being circulated but those responses were not included in this total. The press coverage has been good. There is a June time frame for the report and preliminary designs for TDM. There will be a workshop to get public feedback.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS.

A. Star City/Boyers Avenue. Mayor Konchesky URS gave a presentation offering recommendations for this project. There may be opportunities for an enhancement grant. Will be reviewed by TAC/CAC and put on the agenda for next month's meeting.

IX. NEXT MEETING. The MPO will meet on June 17 at 7 pm. If needed, a special meeting will be held. Mr. Austin requested any feedback for the UPWP be sent to him so it can be adopted at next month's meeting.

Mr. Spencer asked for an update on the pavement markings on University Avenue. Mr. Austin advised the final concern of the DOH was parking along Mon Blvd., and there is no problem with the removal of that parking. Mr. Spencer clarified that he was inquiring about the restriping project not the proposed bike lane. Mr. Austin stated that the DOH is still looking for a June/July time frame to release the project for bids. The amount budgeted in the TIP for reconfiguring University between Fayette and Foundry is approximately \$3 million. He has heard from DOH that this estimate is probably low and they will probably be asking for a TIP amendment to reflect the higher cost although the request has not yet been received.

Mr. Austin noted that the next TTAC meeting is June 8 at 1:30 and CAC is June 10 at 6:30.

X. ADJOURNMENT. Joe Fisher moved to adjourn at 8:45; Mr. Statler seconded it. The motion unanimously carried.