

# Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization Quarterly Meeting

## CAPCO Regional Training Academy Friday, April 19, 2002

### Participants:

Carl Aglio	Executive Assistant to Commissioner Moore, Travis County
Walt Bailey	City Planner, City of Marble Falls
Dave Benson	City Manager, City of Lakeway
Eric Carlson	Mayor, City of Elgin
Norm Chafetz	
Ed Collins	Advanced Transportation Planning Director, TXDOT-Austin District
Howard Falkenberg	Austin Area Research Organization
William Garbade	District Engineer, TXDOT-Austin District
Bill Hamilton	Councilmember, City of Rollingwood
Paul Hamilton	Director of Service Development, CARTS
Kris Heckmann	Director of Transportation Policy, Office of the Governor
Ronny Hibler	Commissioner, Burnet County
Jeff Holberg	City Manager, City of Bastrop
Joe Holland	Planner, TxDOT Austin District
Neal Kocurek	Austin Area Research Organization
Russ Molenaar	Commissioner, Hays County
David Noak	Commissioner, Fayette County
Travis Nedrich	Data Analyst, Alamo Area Council of Governments
James Oakley	Commissioner, Burnet County
Maurice Pitts, Jr.	Commissioner, Lee County
Ray Sanders	Mayor, City of Lockhart
Alison Schulze	Assistant Director, CAMPO
Herb Schulze	Commissioner, Caldwell County
Victor Tellez	Commissioner, Blanco County
Bob VanTil	Director of Community Development, City of Taylor
Robert J. Wood	City Manager, City of Flatonia
Betty Voights	Executive Director, Capital Area Planning Council
Jeff Kaufman	Research and Planning Analyst, CAPCO
Bill Gill	Environmental Resources Director, CAPCO
Erin Toedtman	Comprehensive Planner, CAPCO

### **I. Call to Order – Chairman Ray Sanders, Mayor of Lockhart**

Mayor Sanders thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and led introductions. He stated that a lot of the population growth in the CAPCO area will begin to shift towards the more rural counties, which will make transportation an even more critical issue in the future. He said that CARTPO provides a forum for representatives from all ten counties to offer input and help TXDOT in the transportation planning process.

### **II. Introduction – Betty Voights, CAPCO Executive Director**

Ms. Voights added that the CAPCO Board created CARTPO to focus on transportation and to become a mechanism for cities and counties to use however they see fit - it can be used to push legislative issues, conduct planning, and do anything else the members choose to do with it. It is not intended to circumvent anything that CAMPO is doing; rather, it should complement CAMPO's work and move beyond CAMPO boundaries to the more rural areas.

Mayor Sanders then referred to a handout of population projections that was recently compiled and reported by CAMPO. Alison Shulze, from CAMPO, explained that all of the projections shown in the

handout (except those for Williamson County) reflect the State Data Center's 1.0 (or highest) scenario. Mayor Sanders mentioned that CAPCO has developed its own set of population projections for the ten counties in the region. Ms. Voights clarified that CAPCO uses the REMI model, which takes employment characteristics into consideration to develop projections. The initial REMI model runs conducted by CAPCO produced lower population projections for 2025 than those used by CAMPO, but the CAPCO Board has adopted projections only through 2010. Mayor Sanders said that regardless of which population projections we use, it looks like the CAPCO region will double in size over the next twenty years, which will make transportation a very key issue in the future.

### **III. Subcommittee Updates**

Mayor Sanders mentioned that the CARTPO subcommittees are open to anyone who would like to participate. He then introduced James Oakley, Burnet County Commissioner and Chairman of the CARTPO Legislation and Policy Initiatives Subcommittee.

#### Legislation and Policy Initiatives Subcommittee:

Commissioner Oakley said that the Subcommittee's first official activity was to develop a response to TxDOT's proposal to streamline its funding process and modify its Unified Transportation Program (UTP). He then summarized CARTPO's response to TxDOT:

- We want to make sure that communities have more input into the process and that TxDOT is a little more attuned to what local officials want and need.
- We want the District Engineer to have more discretionary funding (under Category 11), and we support the proposed increase in the District Engineer's authority to allocate funding where he or she sees fit.
- There is a lot of attention going towards the interstate connections between urban areas, but we want to make sure that Farm-to-Market (FM) roads are not forgotten. We want to continue maintenance of the FM system and increase the number of FM miles, if possible.

Commissioner Oakley added that CARTPO has not yet received a response from TxDOT about the proposed changes. However, there are some other activities that the Subcommittee will need to begin focusing on, such as attending interim legislative meetings and hearings. He said that the Legislation and Policy Initiatives Subcommittee is a fledgling committee, and that it is important for participants to express their transportation interests to their local state representatives and senators. CAPCO has sent out a survey to all counties and cities in the region to help identify the most important issues that should be addressed during the next legislative session. This survey will provide an opportunity for local officials to express their transportation concerns and send a clear message to legislators about our transportation interests and needs. Ms. Voights added that the survey was sent out within the last week, and that CAPCO would like one response from each local entity's governing body.

Mayor Sanders stated that the Subcommittee will probably focus on three types of activities during the upcoming session, with emphasis on the first two:

1. Supporting introduced legislation
2. Opposing introduced legislation
3. Encouraging and/or sponsoring legislation

#### Planning and Project Development

Mayor Sanders then introduced Howard Falkenberg, from the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), as the spokesman for the Planning and Project Development Subcommittee. Mr. Falkenberg thanked the local representatives for participating in the meeting and for allowing AARO into CARTPO's deliberations. He then began a PowerPoint presentation that described the Subcommittee's activities and the components of its draft Regional Transportation Plan outline.

Mr. Falkenberg mentioned that the Planning and Project Development Subcommittee is a combination of what used to be two separate committees: "Planning and Technical Assistance" and "Project Development." He said that Marble Falls has been a steady participant in the subcommittee meetings and

that there has been some participation from other local entities. However, the group has been mostly technical, with “Blue-Ribbon” participation from TxDOT, CAMPO, and CAPCO. It has met three times since the last general CAPCO meeting, has compiled a list of existing transportation plans and data, and has developed a preliminary outline for a region-wide transportation plan. Subcommittee members wanted to bring the outline to the general membership as a basis for proceeding forward. Because the subcommittee has been largely a technical group, it has deferred selection of a chair, but hopes that a local official will soon be its champion.

Mr. Falkenberg then referred back to the population projections, stating that we all see the population growth that is occurring across the CAPCO region, as well as the increasing integration of economy and culture. County-to-county work commutes may become one of the dominant travel patterns in the region, even in those counties that are not part of the MSA. This creates a need to develop a regional transportation plan.

He next moved into a discussion about the potential benefits of regional transportation planning, which include the following:

- Improved access and integration (improved connection between the local, regional, and statewide transportation system)
- Improved safety and efficient movement of vehicles
- Enhanced mobility and quality of life
- Improved awareness, cooperation, and discovery of common interests
- Opportunities to explore new funding sources (Regional Mobility Authorities, tax increment financing, impact fees) and alternative transportation modes (expansion of CARTS program, van pools, staggered work times, etc.)

Mr. Falkenberg next discussed the stakeholders that should be brought into the process, including, but not limited to transportation agencies (TxDOT, CAMPO, CARTS, Capital Metro), municipalities, and counties. The plan would focus mainly on highways, railroad, and alternative transportation modes, which would require the involvement of organizations that deal with these types of issues.

The Planning and Project Development Subcommittee has also identified a preliminary regional vision: “Central Texas enjoys a fully developed transportation infrastructure that helps sustain and nurture economic prosperity and personal quality of life in the rapidly growing region.” In this statement, “personal quality of life” includes the ability to get to and from a job safely, to have access to diverse employment opportunities, and to not be stuck in traffic. A mission that would help CARTPO achieve this vision would be to “serve as the catalyst for transportation planning and project implementation that anticipates and meets regional infrastructure requirements.” A more specific goal related to this would be to “achieve transportation system infrastructure improvements required to contain congestion and improve mobility to meet needs of the expanding population and business base of Central Texas.”

Within this generalized context, the Subcommittee has started to identify some objectives. A lot of work still has to be done, and there will be many opportunities for new members to participate. However, the “draft” objectives have been identified as follows:

- Develop and maintain an integrated regional transportation plan for the 10-county region
- Provide regional transportation input, advocacy, organizational strength and data management
- Identify and help secure funding from traditional and alternative funding sources
- Create awareness of transportation requirements and opportunities
- Provide leadership of public sector efforts to improve regional mobility

The Subcommittee has also identified some preliminary planning strategies to help achieve the objectives, goal, and ultimately, the mission and vision:

- Adopt a 20-year planning horizon and a 10-year action plan perspective
- Focus on regional road, rail, transit and alternative transportation solutions rather than aviation, marine and pipeline modes or local pedestrian and bicycle facilities

- Create consensus for a regional vision, emphasizing local and state interconnectivity
  - Mr. Falkenberg mentioned that this strategy is not intended to drive what local officials do in their communities; rather, it is intended to help coordinate and provide a broader perspective for individual communities and to offer something they can use at the local level
  - He stated that we need a regional vision because we are increasingly tied together. There are many planning jurisdictions in our area, and perhaps CARTPO can eventually become the central maintainer of a regional transportation vision that feeds into all of the other organizations.
  - Recent population projections show that our suburban counties will have dramatically rapid growth in the future, which will create a greater need to deal with a large population from a transportation infrastructure standpoint.
- Organize an information resource to support policy evaluation and planning
  - Mr. Falkenberg said that the CAPCO region already has some data to support transportation planning, including road centerline data, aerial photography, county-level transportation studies for Bastrop and Caldwell Counties, etc.
  - The Bastrop and Caldwell County reports were prepared by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) through funding provided by TxDOT. TxDOT has indicated that some funding may be available to conduct similar studies for the remaining rural counties in the CAPCO region.
  - There are also other potential funding sources that are being researched, including USDA grants. Perhaps LCRA would be another source of funding.
- Engage local officeholders from throughout the region in active planning participation

Mr. Falkenberg then identified some of the Subcommittee's suggested priorities:

- Relieve IH 35 and US 281 over-utilization from NAFTA and interregional traffic
- Support development of Central Texas Turnpike Project (SH 130, SH 45 N, Loop 1 North, US 183-A) and SH 45 S
- Achieve priority improvements to regional elements of the state highway system
- Support maintenance of the Farm-to-Market system
- Explore Statewide Connectivity Corridor and Trans Texas Corridor projects for regional impact, and support as appropriate
- Address regional rail/commuter rail, including San Antonio Commuter Rail Feasibility Study participation
- Address transit development
- Support congestion management activities
- Support connectivity of local arterials to regional structures
- Evaluate, endorse, and seek additional funding from traditional and alternative sources

Mr. Falkenberg concluded the presentation, and Mayor Sanders deferred the question/answer session until later to keep the meeting on schedule.

#### **IV. Presentation on the Trans Texas Corridor Project**

Mayor Sanders then introduced Kris Heckmann, Director of Transportation Policy for the Office of the Governor, who presented information about the Governor's Trans Texas Corridor Project. Mr. Heckmann began his presentation by showing a graphic of the State's existing transportation infrastructure, noting that all of it goes through urban areas. The development that occurs with this infrastructure creates many transportation challenges, including congestion, air quality and safety problems, loss of economic development, and transport of hazardous materials through urban areas. The Governor has recognized that what we have done in the past will not be able to get us where we need to go in the future.

Mr. Heckmann said that in 1990, there were 16.5 million people in the State of Texas. This number increased to 21 million people in the 2000 Census, representing a 23% increase in ten years. Our current population is expected to double over the next thirty to forty years. These numbers sparked questions about where the "extra" people would drive. The conclusion was that they would drive on the same roads that we

use today. The Governor's Office did not feel that this was adequate, and decided to do something dramatically different.

Mr. Heckmann then used I-35 as an example of the corridor proposal: Adding additional lanes to I-35 would create additional traffic, increase the air quality and safety problems, and fail to address hazardous materials concerns. The alternative was to create a new corridor, SH 130, which would serve as a bypass to I-35. It was decided that while we are creating this new corridor, we should plan ahead for rail, utilities, water, raw materials, etc. The money put into building this corridor would go much further than it would if used to continue expanding and improving existing roads, with a lot less disruption to the developed areas along these roads.

This concept was applied statewide as the Trans Texas Corridor Project. The Governor's Plan is for 4000 miles of an entirely new system of corridors. It would include road, rail, and utilities, and would parallel the existing system. The State has the opportunity to accomplish the plan through four new tools that were passed during the last legislative session (all under Proposition 15). The tools allow us to do several things:

1. For the first time, we have the ability to contribute State money to toll projects;
2. We also now have the ability to contract for an entire corridor;
3. We may now create Regional Mobility Authorities;
4. We created the Texas Mobility Fund, which is a separate fund of the State, though there is no money in it at this time. Any revenue placed into it by the Legislature can be used to bond.

For the first time ever, our State has the ability to negotiate contracts much like a private business does. TxDOT was given 90 working days to put together an action plan to implement the project. This summer, TxDOT will bring forward a plan that identifies how to make the Trans Texas Corridor Plan a reality, and will host a series of public meetings across the state.

Mr. Heckmann stated that this plan is the equivalent of building the interstate highway system. In current dollars, the entire new network, including six lanes of road, six lanes of rail, water, natural gas lines, pipelines, and high speed Internet access, is estimated to cost \$175 billion. Any company, organization, public entity, etc., can submit a proposal to TxDOT to build a segment or corridor of the project. Some of the segments or corridors will be more profitable or easier to build than others. The State will have the ability to contribute \$500 million (or 1/6 of its construction budget) to help build the new system, while \$2.5 billion every year can be used to build, maintain, and expand our current system.

While some tax money will be used to attract private investment dollars, most of the system will be paid for through user fees. When the corridors are built using toll money and user fees, a lot of projects that the State had planned to build with tax dollars will be "erased" from the books, thus freeing up that money for other projects. For example, we will not need to add a seventh lane to I-35 if we build a bypass – the money saved can be used for other things. Transportation will for the first time be viewed as a revenue-generating asset. This is where the new money comes into the system – we cannot tax ourselves out of the hole that we are in.

Texas Transportation Commissioners do not have to accept any proposals that they do not like. They can contract with one entity for an entire section, and the Governor insists that the Commission should not accept proposals that do not allow for the construction of road and rail side by side at the same time. This will give us a complete right-of-way system that provides a cheaper alternative for pipeline companies.

Generally, the proposed system will parallel the current free system. The exact placement of lines will be determined through proposals, state interests, and engineering. The market will control toll pricing because people will have access to the existing free system. The corridor will have high-speed rail that will not pass through small towns or require at-grade crossings. Higher speed limits and separate truck lanes are also options for the new system. There will be no frontage roads, and the number of on and off-ramps will be limited. The private sector will operate the system for profit - it would only be subsidized in that some tax money will help build the system on the front end.

Mr. Heckmann said that the Plan should have as little impact as possible on the agricultural community: there will be no frontage roads and the utilities will be placed on the outside of the rail and roads so that the State can lease those areas to the agricultural community. Approximately 450 feet on either the side of the 1000-foot corridor will be available for farming, ranching, grazing, etc. at no charge. Essentially, farmers and ranchers will receive compensation for their land, and would then be allowed to use half of it at no cost. TxDOT has also promised that no one will be separated from his or her land because of the new system - if the system goes through the middle of someone's land, an over or under-pass will be built to accommodate people and/or animals. The State is still working on issues related to right-of-way acquisition and massive scale environmental mitigation.

Dr. Perryman, an economist, studied how much economic growth would be generated from the new system (not from construction jobs, but from moving raw materials and people safely and efficiently). Using very conservative estimates, Dr. Perryman concluded that if this system generates one-fourth of the growth generated by the interstate highway system, it would create 2.7 million permanent jobs.

This proposal has generated a lot of interest from citizens, bonding authorities, banks, construction companies, organizations, and governments worldwide. Oklahoma and Mexico City are extremely interested in the proposal. If this corridor were extended to Mexico, it would provide for the efficient exchange of oil and electricity. This project would literally connect Texas to the world.

The State does not want this corridor to compete with the existing system for economic growth. It wants cities to continue their patterns of growth, with new connections to other major metropolitan areas. The locations of these connections will still need to be worked out with local communities. The new system should not have a negative impact on the small towns that are located on the existing system – there should be enough traffic to go around.

The Governor's Office anticipates that some companies will buy exclusive rights to provide gas stations, snack stores, etc. along the corridor. Possible regulations on billboards, signs, gaming rights, etc. have not been determined. The State will own the right-of-way and infrastructure on the ground, and will grant exclusive operating agreements to the consortiums to operate the system. The Railroad Commission, the Public Utility Commission, and other existing governments are currently working out additional details for the Plan.

Mr. Heckmann suggested that participants go to the TxDOT web site for further information: [www.dot.state.tx.us](http://www.dot.state.tx.us).

## **V. TEA-21 Reauthorization and Air Quality Update**

Mayor Sanders recommended that the discussion of TEA-21 reauthorization and the air quality update be postponed to a later date.

## **VI. Lunch**

## **VII. Other Business**

Mayor Sanders suggested that CARTPO continue to meet on a quarterly basis, and that everyone be notified of each interim subcommittee meeting. The group then discussed the possibility of CARTPO co-hosting a meeting with AARO to encourage greater participation and perhaps begin the process of combining these efforts under "one roof."

The next general CARTPO meeting was set for Friday, July 19, 2002. Bill Hamilton, Councilmember for the City of Rollingwood, volunteered to be the Planning and Project Development Subcommittee Chairman, and the next subcommittee meeting was set for Thursday, May 23, 2002.

## **VIII. Meeting Adjourned.**