

Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization
Quarterly Meeting

United Way Capital Area
Friday, August 23, 2002

Participants:

Michael Aulick	Executive Director, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
Walt Bailey	City Planner, City of Marble Falls
Sam Biscoe	County Judge, Travis County
George Blume	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Lakeway
Bobby Bradshaw	Building Official, City of Burnet
Eric Carlson	Mayor, City of Elgin
Norm Chafetz	Interested Citizen
Ed Collins	Advanced Transportation Planning Director, TXDOT-Austin District
Kristine Dannheim	Executive Assistant to Travis County Commissioner Margaret Moore
Gerald Daugherty	Interested Citizen
Phil Duprey	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Cedar Park
Howard Falkenberg	Austin Area Research Organization
Steve Floyd	Programs Manager, GIS & 9-1-1 Addressing, Hays County
William Garbade	District Engineer, TXDOT-Austin District
Gus Garcia	Mayor, City of Austin
Courtney Grant	VISTA Volunteer, Williamson County & Cities Health District
Bill Hamilton	Councilmember, City of Rollingwood
Paul Hamilton	Director of Service Development, CARTS
Douglas Hartfield	Commissioner, Lee County
Ronny Hibler	Commissioner, Burnet County
Jeff Holberg	City Manager, City of Bastrop
Joe Holland	Planner, TxDOT Austin District
Butch Johnson	Commissioner, Lee County
Neal Kocurek	Austin Area Research Organization
Don Loucks	Commissioner, Bastrop County
Randy Meeks	Code Enforcement Officer, City of Burnet
Ross Milloy	President, Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council
Margaret Moore	Commissioner, Travis County
James Oakley	Commissioner, Burnet County
Ray Sanders	Mayor, City of Lockhart
Herb Schulze	Commissioner, Caldwell County
Marge Tripp	Division Director, Williamson County & Cities Health District
Betty Voights	Executive Director, Capital Area Planning Council
Jeff Kaufman	Research and Planning Analyst, CAPCO
Richard Kelly	Regional Services Director, CAPCO
Erin Toedtman	Comprehensive Planner, CAPCO

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

II. Presentation on Possible Expansion of the MPO Boundaries – Michael Aulick, Executive Director of the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Mr. Aulick began his presentation with a discussion about the boundary expansion options currently being considered by the CAMPO Policy Advisory Committee (PAC). At a minimum, the boundaries will be expanded to include areas east of Round Rock. A second option would be to expand to the remainder of Williamson and Hays Counties. A third option would be to expand to a five-county area consisting of Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop Counties. The Governor must approve the MPO boundaries.

Mr. Aulick then discussed recent population trends in the five-county area, and said that we need to consider commuting patterns when determining CAMPO's boundaries. Although the 2000 Census Journey to Work data is not yet available, 1990 data indicated that a large percentage of workers in Williamson (58%), Hays (32%), Bastrop (49%), and Caldwell (29%) Counties commuted to Travis County for employment.

Mr. Aulick next discussed funding eligibility, stating that counties would not lose funding by joining the MPO. On the contrary, they would be eligible for additional funding under the STP 4C (Metropolitan Mobility) category. These funds are distributed at the discretion of the CAMPO PAC, the membership of which is currently governed by a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) that was signed by counties, cities, and Capital Metro in 1996. The membership structure set forth in the current JPA must be modified because there are now more state representative districts in the CAMPO area than there were in 1996. In fact, leaders may wish to consider terminating the existing JPA and revising CAMPO's bylaws to reflect any changes in the PAC structure.

Mr. Aulick concluded his presentation by listing the benefits of joining CAMPO, one of which was the availability of highly qualified technical staff to assist in transportation planning. The only potential disadvantage would be that federally funded transportation projects would require CAMPO approval, although the PAC has never rejected a project. Mr. Aulick then invited questions from the group.

Phil DuPrey, Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Cedar Park, expressed his concern about the possible "dilution" of funding that would occur if additional counties and cities were brought into CAMPO's jurisdiction. Mr. Aulick explained that this should not be a problem, and that CAMPO would support individual delegations that wish to pursue additional funding on their own. Bill Garbade, TxDOT Austin District Engineer, confirmed that there is no loss of funding if other areas join the MPO.

Gus Garcia, Mayor of Austin, pointed out that there would always be competition for funds. More importantly, however, is the need to plan on a regional scale. He acknowledged the strong commuting link between Austin and surrounding areas, and said that we cannot handle regional problems with an MPO that covers only the existing area. Mayor Sanders agreed with this assessment.

James Oakley, Commissioner for Burnet County, then asked Mr. Aulick if any studies have been conducted on the relationship between Burnet County and the existing MPO area, adding that Highway 281 is increasingly being used as an alternate to I-35. Mr. Aulick said that if the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) expands to Burnet County, then the MPO would consider expanding there, as well.

Mr. Aulick then mentioned that a five-county area expansion is under consideration because all five counties are facing possible nonattainment designation, and are also all part of the Central Texas Regional Visioning Project, "Envision Central Texas." He said that the MPO is also considering forming a Technical Advisory Committee.

Eric Carlson, Mayor of Elgin, asked Bill Garbade, TxDOT District Engineer, how TxDOT feels about the possible MPO expansion. Mr. Garbade responded by saying that money will still be scarce, but that it makes sense to plan regionally and to have continuity. Howard Falkenberg, from the Austin Area Research Organization, added that every CARTPO meeting brings in additional elected officials, which should yield much stronger results. He said that the possible CAMPO expansion should be given serious consideration because it would formalize the planning process in the counties that are not currently served by the MPO.

Mayor Sanders then asked Mr. Aulick why so many State Legislators are on the PAC. Mr. Aulick stated that there was a disagreement between Austin and Travis County at the time the PAC was established, and that the legislators were added to "referee" the process. He said that it is rare to have so many legislators on an MPO Board, and reiterated that possible changes to the Board membership are also under consideration. He added that he believes it is beneficial to have at least one or two state legislators on the PAC to keep up with and support transportation legislation. The signatories of the Joint Powers Agreement are responsible for making a final decision about the membership.

As a final note, Mr. Aulick mentioned that Senator Barrientos has had discussions with the area's County Judges about the possible MPO expansion, and that Georgetown recently passed a resolution to join the MPO (with the condition that every city with over 25,000 in population be given a seat on the PAC).

III.

Discussion and selection of projects to be presented to the Texas Transportation Commission for possible funding – Planning & Project Development Subcommittee Chair Bill Hamilton, Alderman, City of Rollingwood

Mr. Hamilton provided a brief introduction about the Planning & Project Development Subcommittee's initiative to begin compiling and prioritizing projects to be presented to the Texas Transportation Commission as part of a request for discretionary funds. He then invited county and city officials to present their respective projects to the entire group for consideration. The following projects were presented and substantiated by representatives from Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Lee, and Travis Counties:

Caldwell County

- Widen and divide SH 21 through Caldwell County
 - Concerns about fatalities and speeds on this road
- Widen and add shoulders to SH 142 from CR 219 to Bois D'arc (final stage)
 - Road is narrow with blind curves
 - There have been a number of fatality accidents
 - The surrounding area is experiencing new growth
- Representatives also wished to expand the FM road system in Caldwell County

Burnet County

- Construct US 281 Loop around Marble Falls
 - \$30 million estimated cost
 - River crossing is a safety concern
 - Congestion is a problem
 - Would relieve some I-35 traffic
 - There have been some local contributions for this project
- Construct Loop around Burnet
 - There is new growth in this area
- Add turn lanes to SH 29 east of Burnet
 - R-O-W has already been acquired

Bastrop County

- Widen US 290 to 4-lane divided east of Elgin
 - \$20 million estimated cost
 - Congestion is a problem
 - Concerns about safety
 - Funding is likely
- Construct main lanes, frontage roads, and grade separations on SH 71 through Bastrop
 - \$50 million estimated cost
 - Congestion is a problem
 - Improvements would help Austin-Houston traffic
- Upgrade FM 20 to 2-12' with 10' shoulders
 - \$2.7 million estimated cost
 - Safety is a problem
 - There are no shoulders

Lee County

- Widen US 290 to 4-lane divided west of Giddings
 - \$4.2 million estimated cost
 - Road carries a large volume of traffic
 - A large number of accidents and a few deaths have occurred on this stretch of road
- Widen US 290 to 4-lane divided east of Giddings

- \$9.7 million estimated cost
- Congestion is a problem
- Road carries a large volume of traffic
- A large number of accidents and a few deaths have occurred on this stretch of road
- R-O-W has been acquired
- Environmental Impact Study is complete
- Widen and construct turn lanes on FM 696 from Lexington to US 290
 - Safety is a problem
 - There is a lot of new growth in the surrounding area
 - Does not currently have shoulders

Travis County

- Widen intersection of FM 2769 and RR 620 from 2 to 4 lanes
 - \$4.5 million estimated cost
 - Would make Anderson Mill Road a reliever for US 182
- Add 2 lanes and a shoulder to FM 2304 at FM 1626
 - \$2.7 million estimated cost
 - Would help Hays County residents who commute to Austin

Stephen Floyd, Hays County GIS/911 Addressing Programs Manager, also offered a few suggested projects for Hays County, though county officials had not yet provided input about them:

- Bypass around Wimberley has been suggested
- RR12 experiences flooding and traffic routing problems
- Rail road crossings in San Marcos are problematic
- An additional connector through San Marcos is needed

After county representatives presented their projects, Ross Milloy, President of the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council added that it would be a good idea for CARTPO to consider the reauthorization of TEA-21, as well as rail issues when selecting projects. He also noted that commuter rail could be an option to be incorporated into an RMA – excess revenue could go towards rail projects.

Mr. Milloy was then asked to make additional comments about TEA-21 authorization. He stated that TEA-21 will continue, with significant changes: there will not be a lot of new money available, and we will have to fight for what we already have. The “Corridor and Borders” Program funding should be spent in areas that handle NAFTA traffic, but this is not happening in reality. We need to change this, especially since I-35 carries a large percentage of the nation’s freight.

Mayor Sanders then thanked everyone for their input, and led a discussion about the next steps in the project development and selection process. TxDOT staff suggested that the group consider submitting a request to be placed on the Transportation Commission’s agenda as soon as possible because the spots fill up quickly. The group decided to schedule another meeting on **October 4, 2002** for project selection.

IV. Lunch

- V.** The Planning & Project Development and Legislation & Policy Initiatives Subcommittees then broke out into groups for special work sessions. The Planning & Project Development Subcommittee decided to prepare a project matrix that would aid counties and cities in providing information about their proposed projects, and agreed to meet again on September 20, 2002 to discuss project evaluation criteria and CARTPO bylaws. The Legislation & Policy Initiatives Subcommittee identified legislative issues that it would like to address during the upcoming legislative session, and chose Travis County Margaret Moore as its new subcommittee chair.

- VI.** The meeting was adjourned.