

Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization
Quarterly Meeting

CAPCO Regional Training Academy

Friday, October 4, 2002

Participants:

Michael Aulick	Executive Director, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
Walt Bailey	City Planner, City of Marble Falls
George Blume	Mayor Pro Tem, City of Lakeway
Eric Carlson	Mayor, City of Elgin
Tina Collier	Councilmember, City of Cedar Park
Ed Collins	Advanced Transportation Planning Director, TXDOT-Austin District
Maureen McCoy Daniel	Assistant Director, CAMPO
Kristine Dannheim	Executive Assistant to Travis County Commissioner Margaret Moore
Howard Falkenberg	Austin Area Research Organization
William Garbade	District Engineer, TXDOT-Austin District
John Graddy	Councilmember, City of Wimberley
Bill Hamilton	Councilmember, City of Rollingwood
Ronny Hibler	Commissioner, Burnet County
Joe Holland	Planner, TxDOT Austin District
Neal Kocurek	Austin Area Research Organization
Don Loucks	Commissioner, Bastrop County
Ross Milloy	President, Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council
Margaret Moore	Commissioner, Travis County
Caroline Murphy	Mayor, Village of Bee Cave
James Oakley	Commissioner, Burnet County
Maurice Pitts, Jr.	Commissioner, Lee County
Ray Sanders	Mayor, City of Lockhart
David Simons	Capital Projects Manager, City of Taylor
Duane Stueven	Commissioner, Llano County
Victor Tellez	Commissioner, Blanco County
Scheleen Walker	Planner/Liaison, Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources Dept.
Clay Collins	Deputy Director, CAPCO
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

Mayor Sanders introduced himself and thanked everyone for coming. He said that he had recently attended the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) Conference in Corpus Christi, and that the Texas Municipal League had cited CARTPO as an example of a successful RPO. Participants then introduced themselves, and Mayor Sanders said that he was pleased to see the amount of representation at the meeting.

II. Review new project data and submissions

Mayor Sanders began a discussion about the new project data that has been acquired since counties first submitted their projects to CARTPO on August 23, 2002. He said that staff has received new information about some of the proposed projects, but that there is still much to be acquired for others. He then mentioned that CARTPO has more proposed projects than can possibly be presented to TxDOT, and that some of the work that TxDOT has been asked to do is lengthy and expensive. Because of this, the group needs to narrow the list down to three to five projects that could be taken to the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) meeting in April.

Commissioner Tellez, from Blanco County, asked how much money CARTPO could realistically ask for from the Commission. Mayor Sanders said that projects requiring lower amounts probably have the greatest chance of getting funding. This is why CARTPO will particularly want to look at projects in which the right-of-way has already been acquired.

Commissioner Loucks, from Bastrop County, wanted to provide some new information that would potentially affect Bastrop County's transportation system: he said that LCRA will soon be having a meeting to consider a proposal of putting in water and sewer service between Austin and Bastrop along Highway 71. The meeting will be a preliminary planning session, but it puts new emphasis on the transportation system in Bastrop County – new services will obviously produce a lot of development along 71.

Mayor Sanders then asked Erin Toedtman, CAPCO Planner, to explain the existing project data and the criteria that will be used to evaluate the proposed projects. Ms. Toedtman referred to item three in the agenda packet, which included a list of all projects that have been submitted to CARTPO to date. She mentioned that CARTPO has not yet received proposed projects from Hays, Llano, and Williamson Counties, and is not sure if these counties are planning to submit any projects for the group's consideration. Fayette County has decided not to submit projects for the current process.

Ms. Toedtman then discussed the project matrix included in the agenda packet. The matrix contained all of the information that had been received to date for each project. She mentioned that TxDOT provided a lot of the information, including traffic counts and accident data. She then explained the project matrix data, which included the following for each project: a description of the proposed project; the general and specific project location; expected cost; cost effectiveness (to be provided by TxDOT after the projects are narrowed down); current and projected traffic volumes (current as of 2000, projected to 2020); number of accidents (from 1997 to 2000); local support and participation (i.e., cost participation and/or political or public support); economic development opportunities; ease of implementation (i.e., project's "readiness"); and regional connectivity and/or impact. She added that the Planning & Project Development Subcommittee reviewed all of these criteria at its last meeting, and cooperatively developed a Project Evaluation Score Sheet to help local officials complete missing portions of the matrix.

Ms. Toedtman next discussed how each of the project criteria would be evaluated. She mentioned that the Planning & Project Development Subcommittee decided that each of the criteria would be rated on a scale of one to ten points, with "10" being a perfect score. The Subcommittee also developed a criteria "weighting system" that would ultimately allocate more points for those criteria deemed more important than others by the TTC. The cost effectiveness criterion has traditionally been given slightly more consideration by the TTC than others, so the Planning & Project Development Subcommittee gave it a weight of 1.5. The traffic volume and accident criteria were both given a 1.25 weight. The Subcommittee felt that local support and participation were very important, so this criterion was given a weight of 1.5. Economic development and ease of implementation were not given any additional weight, while the regional impact criterion was given a weight of 1.5.

Ms. Toedtman next provided a brief overview of each of the project criteria listed in the Draft Project Evaluation Score Sheet, and invited questions from CARTPO attendees.

Mayor Carlson, from Elgin, indicated that he was somewhat concerned about the cost participation criterion. He stated that even if a community is able to provide a relatively large sum of money for a local match, that sum might be just a small percentage of the total project cost.

Mr. Garbade clarified that the Subcommittee was simply trying to develop a way to distinguish between those projects that are ready for funding, those projects that would be nice but are not quite ready yet, and those that still require a lot of work. Mayor Sanders agreed, and said that this criterion should not keep a project off the list of CARTPO priorities, but it may keep a project from moving as high as those that do have funding. He also added that CARTPO would go through this process again later, so projects that do not make it onto the list this year may be ready next year.

Mr. Bailey, Planner for the City of Marble Falls, pointed out that the Marble Falls project does not meet any of the "Ease of Implementation" criteria, which would keep the project from receiving any points in

this category. Mr. Graddy, Councilmember from the City of Wimberley, also added that he believes the “Regional Impact” criterion should be given even greater weight than 1.5.

Mr. Hamilton acknowledged these concerns, and pointed out that the Planning & Project Development Subcommittee collectively agreed upon these criteria, with input from TxDOT. The Subcommittee tried to give extra consideration to those criteria traditionally given greater weight by the Transportation Commission.

Mr. Collins and Mr. Aulick suggested that under the local match criteria, perhaps a 25% match should be given the highest number of points since it is not likely that communities would be able to give more than that. Mr. Aulick also suggested that this criterion possibly be considered at the end of the project evaluation process as a tiebreaker. He then added that CAMPO takes a delegation to the Commission every year. The CAMPO Board looks at all of the highway projects that are ready to go, and does a less detailed evaluation than the one being used in the CARTPO process. The CAMPO Board then selects the top three projects and prioritizes them. This year, they took \$100 million worth of projects, and offered \$13.4 million of CAMPO money (STP-4C); Travis County offered \$2 million in bond money for the “Y” at Oak Hill; the City of Austin offered \$7.8 million. This was roughly 20-25% of the total project values. He then offered to help CARTPO using the experience CAMPO has gained through its own attempts to get funding.

Commissioner Moore, from Travis County, said that she believes that participants need to discuss the relationship between CARTPO and CAMPO. She suggested that perhaps Travis County has been a little casual about the projects it has submitted because it is part of CAMPO. She said that she is unclear about how the two groups should interact – should CARTPO only consider projects that are not included in the CAMPO boundary, or are there some projects, such as SH 71, that are within the CAMPO boundary but are also significant to outside areas? The projects that she originally submitted to CARTPO were projects that she felt were relievers within Travis County, but would also help commuters outside of the county. These projects are not in CAMPO’s TIP. She knows that the SH 71 project will eventually be approved, but it is not currently funded. She said that she believes that the group needs to focus a little more on the interplay between CARTPO and CAMPO.

Mayor Sanders agreed with this assessment. He said that CARTPO was initially formed because the rural counties did not have an MPO to plan and provide a voice for them in the transportation arena. However, officials could not form this group to the exclusion of Hays, Williamson, and Travis Counties. Mr. Aulick said that he believes CARTPO and CAMPO have a cooperative relationship. CAMPO is currently considering expanding its boundaries. He believes that this is a partnership – together, CARTPO and CAMPO cover the entire CAPCO area with the goal of trying to find money for transportation projects.

Mayor Sanders said that he believes it is critical for the counties outside of the CAMPO boundary to have support from Williamson, Hays, and Travis Counties. This relates back to the regional issue – projects outside of the CAMPO boundary can have a significant impact on areas within CAMPO’s boundary. Mr. Aulick added that he believes having an organization like CARTPO that represents all ten counties will send a strong message to the Commission. He does not think that there is any other organization like it in the State.

Mayor Sanders stated that CARTPO can provide additional support for those CAMPO projects that it believes would have a truly regional impact. Commissioner Moore added that while it would be good to have Williamson, Hays, and Travis Counties’ support for projects outside of the CAMPO area, it could also go the other way around: CARTPO could say that SH 71 is so critical that it needs to be improved sooner than planned. She said that she could see how working together would make a stronger coalition, but she does not want to get too much further down the road without a clearer understanding about the relationship between the two organizations. She also said that she needs to inform other Travis County representatives about how the group will operate.

Councilmember Graddy had similar concerns about the relationship between CARTPO and CAMPO. Mayor Sanders then asked Mr. Aulick to provide a brief description of CAMPO. Mr. Aulick explained the CAMPO boundaries, funding mechanisms, and transportation planning functions, and mentioned that

CAMPO is currently considering expanding its boundaries to cover either three or five counties in the Capital area. CAMPO pulls together the heavily urbanized areas into one planning group. He added that the only difference between CAMPO and CARTPO is that CAMPO is working in a heavily urbanized area that is growing, while CARTPO is working in the entire CAPCO region, much of which is rural. He sees it as a complementary operation.

Mr. Falkenberg, of the Austin Area Research Organization, then said that CARTPO has made a tremendous amount of progress in a very short period of time. There is a continued need to fine-tune the process, but it is clear that there is an enormous interest in regionalism and in looking beyond the CAMPO boundaries. He said that the Transportation Commission usually responds to a strong regional coalition. Mr. Aulick added that the exchange of knowledge among elected officials in the ten-county area is a good idea.

Mayor Sanders then asked CARTPO participants to consider narrowing down their respective county's proposed list of projects. Commissioner Moore suggested that CARTPO continue to consider SH 71, with the caveat that she would need to consult with the other Travis County Commissioners. She also added that she would need a better understanding about the relationship with CAMPO before going back to the Commissioners. She understands that there is a relationship between CAMPO priorities and the priorities of counties outside the CAMPO boundary, such as the Burnet and Hays County residents who commute to Austin on roads in Travis County. SH 71 improvements are in the CAMPO 2025 Plan, but are not high priorities and are not even close to being funded. Such improvements may be extremely high priorities for counties outside of the CAMPO boundary, however. Councilmember Graddy added that a coordination process needs to be in place for this to work.

Mayor Sanders then mentioned that CARTPO has not received any project proposals from Hays, Williamson, or Llano Counties. Mr. Hamilton added that Hays County is working with TxDOT on its own.

Mr. Garbade offered a historical perspective on CARTPO: he said that about 75 percent of the people at the current meeting were not here when this process began. CARTPO was originally started because there seemed to be a sense that rural counties in the Capital Area did not have a voice in the prioritization of projects in the rural areas. He said that Betty Voights and CAPCO staff suggested that a group be formed to provide input to help TxDOT prioritize projects in the rural areas. CARTPO has come a long way, and people are starting to communicate with one another about what is important for the region. He believes that it is on track and moving quickly towards a point of accomplishment.

Mayor Sanders then moved on to the issue of representation: CARTPO needs to make sure that whoever participates in the project evaluation process officially represents their respective counties.

County and city representatives then began eliminating some of their projects from the list. Representatives narrowed down the list to the following six projects: US 290 east of Elgin; SH 71 through Bastrop; Marble Falls Loop; SH 21 west of US 183 to Caldwell County line; US 290 east of Giddings; and SH 71 from US 290 W to Travis County line.

Mayor Sanders then said that he would talk to additional county representatives at the upcoming CAPCO Executive Committee meeting to see if any other counties would like to submit projects. Ms. Collier, Councilmember for the City of Cedar Park, said that she believes counties have been given ample opportunity to submit projects. Mayor Sanders conceded, and said that CARTPO has six good projects to consider now, though it will only be able to take three to the Commission. Mr. Garbade then added that this project list will be useful for next year, too – those projects that are not selected for presentation to the Commission in April will simply move up on the list for the next delegation appearance.

Mr. Graddy then asked why SH 71 is not on CAMPO's list. Commissioner Moore answered that it is in CAMPO's long-range plan, but that it will not be funded any time soon. Mr. Graddy said that CARTPO was originally set up to look at rural areas, which it has been doing. Now, it is also looking at a project in the urban area. He wondered how the two groups would function together, especially if CARTPO goes forward with a project that CAMPO should cover. He believes that it is extremely confusing.

Mr. Aulick clarified that the SH 71 is not on CAMPO's list for funding because it is not ready for funding. CAMPO can only take projects that are developed and ready for funding. He does not believe that there is a conflict between CAMPO and CARTPO. Mr. Garbade added that the CAMPO program must be financially constrained. This limits the number of projects that CAMPO can address.

Richard Kelly, CAPCO Director of Regional Services, said that Judge Biscoe from Travis County originally proposed changing "Rural" to "Regional" so that CARTPO could include all counties in the CAPCO region. Some road projects may be more important to the rural counties than to the MPO. These counties may be able to help move a project up on a funding priority list. By working together, the region increases its chances of getting funding.

Mayor Sanders then asked all local representatives to review their remaining projects and make sure that the appropriate justification is available for the scoring process.

III. Approve letter to be submitted to the Texas Transportation Commission requesting a delegation appearance at the April 24, 2003 TTC meeting

CARTPO unanimously approved the draft letter to be submitted to TxDOT.

IV. Other Business

The next meeting was set for November 8, 2002. Ms. Toedtman requested that officials submit any additional information by Friday, November 1, 2002.

Mr. Hamilton then suggested that CARTPO discuss the project evaluation procedures. The Planning & Project Development Subcommittee has proposed a few ideas, including each county having three votes in the process.

Mayor Sanders asked Ms. Toedtman to ask each county judge to submit a letter to CARTPO designating three scoring delegates for their respective counties. The three scores for each county would then be averaged to produce one score per county. Each county will be given equal consideration in the scoring process. Commissioner Moore said that there might be some difficulty in deciding how to choose the voters, especially since all of the Travis County participants have been from Precinct Three.

Mayor Sanders said that each county evaluation group will score all six projects, and that "voting" would only take place if there were a tie for the top three projects.

Mayor Sanders said that there would be no subcommittee breakout sessions. He then thanked CAPCO and TxDOT staff for all of the work they have put into this process.

V. Meeting Adjourned