

Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization

CAPCO Board Room
2520 IH 35 S; Austin, Texas
Friday, April 11, 2003

Summary Minutes

Participants

Michael Aulick	Executive Director, CAMPO
Bruce Byron	Executive Director, Capital Area Transportation Coalition
Eric Carlson	Mayor, City of Elgin
Ed Collins	Advanced Transportation Planning Director, TxDOT-Austin District
Howard Falkenberg	Austin Area Research Organization
William Garbade	District Engineer, TxDOT-Austin District
Bill Hamilton	Alderman, City of Rollingwood
Ronny Hibler	Commissioner, Burnet County
Jeff Holberg	City Manager, City of Bastrop
Joe Holland	Planner, TxDOT, Austin District
Bob Moore	Executive Assistant to Commissioner Daugherty, Travis County
Maurice Pitts, Jr.	Commissioner, Lee County
Johnny Sanders	Commissioner, Bastrop County
Duane Stueven	Commissioner, Llano County
Jeff Webb	Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council
Meghan Wieters	Principal Planner, City of Austin
Betty Voights	Executive Director, CAPCO
Richard Kelly	Regional Services Director, CAPCO
Erin Toedtmann	Comprehensive Planner, CAPCO

I. Call to Order – Mayor Ray Sanders, CARTPO Chairman

Mayor Sanders welcomed everyone and introduced the first item on the agenda, a practice run of CARTPO's April 23, 2003 presentation to the Texas Transportation Commission. This will be the first opportunity for non-presenters to see the presentation and provide comments.

II. CARTPO Delegation PowerPoint Presentation “Run-through” – Mayor Ray Sanders (Lockhart), Alderman Bill Hamilton (Rollingwood), Commissioner Maurice Pitts (Lee County), Commissioner Johnny Sanders (Bastrop County), and Mayor Eric Carlson (Elgin)

Mayor Sanders began the presentation with a brief introduction of CARTPO, emphasizing its purpose, geographic area, membership, and regional focus. He then introduced the next speaker, Alderman Hamilton, who discussed the process used to evaluate and select the region's three priority projects. Commissioner Pitts then presented information about the US 290 project in Lee County (east of Giddings to the Lee/Fayette County line); Commissioner Sanders discussed the SH 71 project through Bastrop; and Mayor Carlson spoke about the US 290 project in Bastrop (east of Elgin to the Bastrop/Lee County line). Mayor Sanders wrapped up the presentation with a few closing remarks and invited meeting attendees to ask questions and make suggestions that would improve the overall presentation. *Copies of the PowerPoint presentation and speeches are available at <http://www.capco.state.tx.us/CARTPO/Delegation%20Pres.ppt>.*

III. Comments/Feedback on CARTPO Delegation Presentation

Mr. Garbade, with the TxDOT Austin District, suggested that the CARTPO presenters be prepared to answer questions about whether or not any of the proposed projects could be built as toll roads. Commissioner Pitts said that toll roads could be a vital part of the CARTPO region, but the current priority projects are probably not toll-viable. CARTPO is, however, considering other projects in the region that

would probably work well as toll roads. Mr. Garbade added that CARTPO is also observing the actions that TTA and the RMA are taking to get their projects implemented, and there seems to be considerable costs involved in conducting the studies necessary to get these toll projects going. CARTPO feels that because of the dollar amounts involved, any money going towards its selected priority projects might be better spent on actual construction. Mr. Aulick, with CAMPO, added that toll roads would most likely start in the larger metropolitan areas and radiate out from there, rather than starting in the rural areas. Commissioner Pitts additionally pointed out that some of the priority project roads do not have free alternatives.

Mr. Garbade then suggested that CARTPO emphasize the regional cooperation involved in selecting these projects. Mr. Aulick said that this point might be demonstrated with a map showing the locations of the fifteen projects initially submitted for CARTPO's consideration. Commissioner Stueven, from Llano County, used his county as an example of how these projects are truly regional: many hunters and visitors use US 290 and SH 71 to travel from Houston to Llano. Mr. Falkenberg, with AARO, suggested that the presenters show a greater sense of excitement and urgency and reiterated that these projects have broad inter- and intra-regional impact and support. He also recommended eliminating the vision statement from the PowerPoint presentation. Bruce Byron, with the Capital Area Transportation Coalition (CARTC) agreed, and suggested minimizing the structural discussion of CARTPO and CAPCO and focusing more on the regional idea. He also recommended adding a map of the State to show the CARTPO region in a statewide context. Mr. Aulick suggested adding some photographs of the roads to demonstrate points and make the presentation more interesting. Mr. Falkenberg added that Mayor Sanders should mention the many resolutions of support that have been passed for these projects. He also pointed out that all of the projects that seemed to be a priority for this region carry large amounts of through-traffic, which is important on a statewide basis.

Alderman Hamilton suggested that staff make the proposed changes, and that the presenters go through one more practice run before the final presentation on the 23rd. The group then voted on the logo to be included in CARTPO's presentation handouts. Ms. Toedtman mentioned that Loree Elton, with CATC, has been working on the handouts, which should be ready soon.

IV. Legislative Update – Erin Toedtman, CAPCO Planner

Ms. Toedtman referred to a legislative “cheat sheet” in the agenda packet, which included a list of bills that members of the group might be interested in monitoring. Ms. Voights pointed out that one of the bills would expand the applicability of SB 873, which was passed during the last legislative session. SB 873 gave new planning authority to those counties with populations of 700,000 or more, or those adjacent to *and* within the MSA of counties meeting this criteria. The new proposed bill, HB 3440, would eliminate the MSA requirement, thus expanding authority to all counties contiguous to the county with a population of 700,000 or more. Ms. Voights added that CAPCO helped draft a letter from Judge Kithill (Burnet County) to the Legislature recommending that SB 873 be expanded to cover these additional counties.

Ms. Toedtman mentioned that bills related to RMAs and the Texas Mobility Funds were not included in the cheat sheet – the bills only covered general county-level transportation and land use issues. Commissioner Stueven asked if the bill that would eliminate the population requirements for establishing roads under prescription had been considered - it essentially says that a county with less than 50,000 people cannot declare a road public. Ms. Toedtman was not familiar with this bill. Ms. Voights added that the legislative sheet includes the bills that staff is tracking internally. She said that CAPCO does not have any systematic way of distributing legislative information, and invited meeting participants to let staff know about any additional bills that should be added to the list. She also said that some officials have even asked to be notified of upcoming public hearings. Alderman Hamilton pointed out that it is very late in the session, and that CARTPO may not be able to have another meeting and get organized enough to respond to bills of interest before the session is over. Ms. Voights reiterated that CAPCO will be happy to notify local officials of any upcoming hearings, if requested.

V. Discussion of the Rural FY 2004 – FY 2006 TIP – Ed Collins, TxDOT Austin District

Mr. Collins provided a brief overview of two public meetings that were recently held in Bastrop and Marble Falls to solicit input on TxDOT's proposed rural TIP. He said that FM 2147 was a big topic of discussion at the Marble Falls public hearing: community members pointed out that FM 2147 improvements were not included in the TIP presented at the meeting, but had been included in an earlier version. Mr. Collins said that TxDOT will investigate why this project was dropped from the TIP – it might have been removed due to cost increases. He added that the communities provided very good input overall, and that people can continue providing comments until April 17, 2003. Commissioner Stueven pointed out that a major portion of FM 2147 is in Llano County. Commissioner Pitts asked if CARTPO could help the folks in Marble Falls and Llano get FM 2147 back on TxDOT's radar screen. Mr. Collins answered that CARTPO could endorse the project to TxDOT.

Alderman Hamilton then made the following motion: (1) Endorse the Rural Transportation Improvement Program, as presented by TxDOT; (2) Recommend that TxDOT include the following roadway improvements in the 2004-2006 Rural TIP: Add shoulders to FM 2147 in Burnet and Llano Counties; and (3) Recommend that TxDOT continue to brief CARTPO about the status of Rural TIP projects in the future. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pitts, and was unanimously approved.

VI. Other Business

Mayor Sanders asked if anyone would be able to provide an update on TEA-21. Mr. Aulick said that the current federal law, TEA-21, expires at the end of September 2003. Congress will be reauthorizing the new bill hopefully by the end of September, though the last reauthorization was two months late. A group called SHARE, made up of states that send more gas tax money to Washington than they get back, is working to get a higher return for donor states. Texas is leading this effort. A number of different groups are forming to address special issues under the new transportation bill, and a draft bill should probably be out in the next four or five months. Mayor Sanders asked if CARTPO should participate in the lobbying efforts to get more gas tax back from the federal government. Mr. Aulick said that CARTPO may be able to help SHARE with this effort – perhaps the group could ask David Swallow (TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office) to give a status report on this at a future meeting.

Mr. Garbade mentioned that TxDOT has been working on Metropolitan, Urban, and Rural Mobility (added capacity) projects, and that the Commission will have to decide which ones to include in a four-year plan based on available funding. The current priority list of projects was passed in 2002, but the Commission never agreed on a 2003 program. This year, they will have to make some tough decisions about which projects will be funded in the next four years – some projects might need to be dropped because of the escalation in prices that has occurred over the last couple of years.

Commissioner Stueven then referred back to the earlier agenda item dealing with the Rural TIP. He said that Llano County would like to see ten-foot shoulders on SH 71 from 2233 all the way to Llano - this was not included in the TIP that was presented at the recent public hearing. Mr. Garbade said that TxDOT is doing everything it can to get this done, and continues to work on this in piecemeal fashion. Alderman Hamilton clarified that the sense of his earlier motion regarding the TIP was that items like this (i.e., adding ten-foot shoulders to SH 71 through Horseshoe Bay to the Llano City limits in Llano County) that are not currently in the TIP be added in CARTPO's recommendations to TxDOT.

Jeff Webb, from the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council, then provided a brief overview of the upcoming "Regional Issues, Local Solutions II" workshop, which will be held in San Marcos on May 2, 2003. He offered to provide information to anyone interested in attending.

Betty Voights, CAPCO Executive Director, next mentioned that CARTPO might want to begin looking at some new issues, including potential toll roads in the region. She also added that rural transit might be another item of interest, especially since CARTS is losing some funding. This prompted Mayor Sanders to ask about the status of commuter rail in the Austin area. Mr. Aulick said that \$5.6 million has been

allocated through TxDOT to do some analyses on commuter and freight rail. This will include a detailed analysis for the feasibility of relocating the Union Pacific track from its current location to SH 130. He believes that the relocation will probably be done, which is a big step forward. A lot of the railroad may go down the middle of SH 130, while some of it will follow a separate route. More details should be coming out in the next few months as the study proceeds. Mr. Garbade added that there are some engineering problems with locating rail along SH 130 because the railroad wants a 1% grade - this is difficult because the land between Lockhart and Austin is not very flat. They may have to wander away from the SH 130 alignment to maintain this grade.

Jeff Holberg, Bastrop City Manager, next asked if CARTPO should go back to the Transportation Commission agenda item and discuss the issue of toll roads, since the Transportation Commissioners have focused a lot on this issue in previous meetings. Mr. Aulick clarified that TxDOT has projected out what projects it expects to be able to fund for the next 20 years - many projects will be left unfunded. The Commissioners are asking local communities to seriously look at toll roads as a potential funding solution. Mayor Carlson, from Elgin, asked if toll roads are really a viable solution, and suggested that a better solution would be for the Legislature to step up to the plate and increase the gas tax. Commissioner Sanders, with Bastrop County, agreed, but added that sharing the gas tax with school funding, healthcare, and others will still be a problem.

Mr. Byron pointed out that there is currently a legislative proposal to extend the sales tax onto gasoline. The concept is that RMAs (e.g., Williamson and Travis Counties) would have the option of taking the sales tax at one cent increments and extending it over to gasoline – this would be exempt from the sweep of the education bill, so it would actually be a sales tax on gasoline. He asked how adjoining counties (not just the RMA counties) might feel about adopting this local option tax, as well. With a local option, the money would stay in the county from which it was collected, rather than be distributed statewide. The money collected would have to be spent on roads approved by TxDOT. Mayor Sanders said that he thinks this idea might be problematic for a lot of rural counties if the money could not be spent on the Farm-to-Market system. Mr. Garbade clarified that the money could be spent on FM roads because they are on the statewide system. Mr. Byron said that this bill has some potential to be approved because it would create a substantial amount of money for the large metropolitan areas. The question is whether or not it would give adjoining counties an unfair competitive advantage for gasoline sales – it might create problems similar to those experienced by adjoining dry and wet counties.

Mayor Sanders then asked when the next CARTPO meeting should be scheduled. Mr. Garbade suggested that CARTPO consider scheduling meetings three months in advance. Ms. Voights agreed with this idea, suggesting that members select a regular day to have the meeting each month, such as the last Friday of every month. Alderman Hamilton then made a motion to schedule future CARTPO meetings on the fourth Friday of every month. Commissioner Pitts seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously. Mayor Sanders said that the next meeting would then be scheduled for Friday, May 23rd.

Ms. Toedtman asked if the presenters for the Transportation Commission meeting would want to meet one more time before April 23rd to polish the presentation. Alderman Hamilton suggested that the group caucus after the meeting to discuss this. Ms. Toedtman then thanked Mr. Byron and Loree Elton, with CATC, for their help in putting together the CARTPO handouts and for offering to pay for the printing costs. CARTPO members recognized their contribution and thanked them for their help.

VII. Meeting Adjourned