

**SUMMARY MINUTES
CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
CAPITAL AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
ORGANIZATION (CARTPO)**

**CAPCOG BOARDROOM
6800 BURLESON RD, SUITE 310
AUSTIN, TX 78744**

Friday, October 5, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Comm. Debbie Ingalsbe, Hays County
Comm. Ronny Hibler, Burnet County
Comm. James Sultemeir, Blanco County
Brooke Winburn, City of Bee Cave
Councilmember Brian Shirley, City of Marble Falls
Steve Zoromsky, LCRA
David Powell, TxDOT- TTA
Joe Ternus, Bastrop County
Steve Pustelnyk, CTRMA
Elizabeth Ascott, TxDOT
Howard Falkenberg, AARO
Joe Holland, TxDOT
Stacy Snell, City of Bastrop

Comm. Joe Roland, Caldwell County
Leroy Click, Travis County
Ed Collins, TxDOT
Meredith Highsmith, Capital Metro
Sandy Hentges, Greater Austin Chamber
Comm. Maurice Pitts, Jr., Lee County
Comm. Will Conley, Hays County
Comm. Gerald Daugherty, Travis County
Judge Donna Klaeger, Burnet County
Comm. Cynthia Long, Williamson County
Judge Wayne Brascom, Llano County
Bob Daigh, TxDOT
Michael Aulick, CAMPO

STAFF PRESENT:

Betty Voights, CAPCOG

Chris Ramser, CAPCOG

1. Call to Order –Chairman Conley

Commissioner Conley opened the meeting and asked for introductions.

2. Introductions

3. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

4. Presentation on the Capital Metro Commuter Rail Projects – Meredith Highsmith, Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Meredith Highsmith gave an overview of the services offered through Capital Metro and also talked about Capital Metro's Long Range Transit Plan, which was developed in 2004 to cover a planning horizon of 2025. Projects that are under development include the *Red Line*, which is set to open in Fall 2008 and *Rapid* which is slated to begin in 2010. New Transit Center and park and rides are under development, including the South Congress Center at Ben White and Ratum

Lane, which is under construction, while real estate options are being considered for a South I-35 park and ride. Ms. Highsmith gave a detailed description of the Red Line project (Leander Commuter line). The line runs 32 miles along an existing freight line with 9 planned stations. The vehicle serving the line is being tested and will be delivered on time and on budget. The vehicles will run at thirty minute intervals, while the final schedule is currently being developed. Ms. Highsmith talked about the safety programs and outreach that Capital Metro has done along the rail corridor. Several diagrams were shown of the train interior and exterior and some of the stations under construction.

Ms. Highsmith talked about how the system will connect to other transit options. She talked about how passengers will transfer to other modes of transportations offered by Capital Metro. The next steps in the development will include several public outreach initiatives in the Spring 2008 and development of a schedule by Summer 2008. Work will also be done by Spring 2008 on revising connector services for ease of transfer. Ms. Highsmith showed several photographs of the rail line and stations.

Several questions were asked about the Red Line. Commissioner Hibler asked what the estimated travel time would be from the Leander Station to downtown. Ms. Highsmith explained that travel time has been estimated at 50 minutes. Commissioner Daugherty talked about some of the actual travel time on the 983 bus vs. the commuter rail line, which he said would take about 1/3 longer than the other bus service. He cautioned Capital Metro about what the public's response will be when they figure out the increased time it takes for one to use the rail versus other options. Commissioner Daugherty also talked about ridership versus how much the project cost. He said that he believed the project was not on budget and the system will not be delivered as promised to the public. Mr. Daugherty also talked about the financing problems the community faces for some of the transportation projects and he encouraged projects that are flexible, such as HOV lanes combined with bus service. Ms. Highsmith said that Capital Metro is working on evaluating the bus system to ensure that it provides a good solid service.

Commissioner Pitts asked about the rail line owned by Capital Metro out towards Giddings. Ms. Highsmith said that there are not any current plans for that particular line; however, she said there has been some discussion. She said that there has also been a lot of discussion on the potential for service along the Manor/Elgin line increased bus ridership. Commissioner Pitts said there were some comments at a public hearing about the rail line and some concerns by citizen's that if the line is not used by Capital Metro, then there might be other uses for it. Other questions asked included the speed and cost to ride on the Red Line. Ms. Highsmith said the speed on straight track that is not within a neighborhood or commercial area would be 70-75 mph, while the speed in neighborhoods would be 20-35 mph. The cost to ride would be \$2 with a farecard system available. Another question was about rail into Burnet and Llano County. Ms. Highsmith said there are not any current plans for service in these areas, but said that Capital Metro's 2050 considers project like that one.

5. Presentation on Toll Road Traffic Counts

a. US183A- Steve Pustelnyk, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority

Mr. Pustelnyk gave several handouts including an annual report, information about TxTag, and an overview of US 183. He talked about the history of how the road was planned. He said that several entities could not bring available finances together to build the road. As the Central Texas Turnpike program was developed, Williamson and Travis Counties came together to form the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority in 2002. The first project that CTRMA started working on was the US 183A. The road is publicly owned by CTRMA and was built under Compressive Development Agreements. The road went through a design and build process, which allowed the project to be finished in March 2007, a two year process instead of perhaps eight years. The toll road is unique because it is the first in Texas to have all electronic toll collection for some portions of the road. Toll collection on half of the road is entirely electronic and half includes electronic and cash booths. This decision was based on the new trend in the industry, new technology, and the expense and complications of having cash plazas. The electronic system has been successful and eventually CTRMA may transition to electronic only collection.

Mr. Pustelnyk provided a new handout of the average daily traffic on the US 183A and also the percentage of users who have a TxTag. Based on the numbers through September, the daily usage of around 58,000 is almost double what was originally projected. Additionally, the percentage of drivers who have a TxTag system (around 80%) far exceeded industry standards. Additionally, Mr. Pustelnyk gave a map of the percentage of users who live in each Zip Code. This map showed higher usage from people living in the Zip Codes surrounding the road, but pretty good distribution throughout the Austin region. Lastly, Mr. Pustelnyk showed a report of traffic counts on surrounding roads before the opening of US 183A and after the opening of the highway. Several adjacent roads showed a 1/3 reduction in users of those facilities in the counts taken after the road was open. Lastly, a travel time study of the non-tolled US 183 from South San Gabriel River to RM 620 in 2004 showed an average of 36 minutes for a morning peak hour trip, while the September 2007 study taken after completion of US 183A showed a average travel time of 19 minutes on the non-tolled US 183. The conclusion from these numbers shows that a greater number of people use US 183A than were projected and the roadway has reduced the number of trips on the non-tolled roads.

b. SH 130 & SH 45- David Powell, TxDOT

Mr. David Powell began by talking about the billing system that TxDOT uses on the toll roads maintained through the TxDOT turnpike division. He said that the industry is starting to embrace electronic billing. The electronic system relies on TxTag and the video billing program, which bills people who do not have a tag through the mail (but at an increased fee).

Mr. Powell discussed the traffic usage on the SH 130 and SH 45. He explained that the statistic collected to measure traffic on the TxDOT toll roads is the average weekday transaction. In June, the numbers released showed that the usage was around 64% over the forecasts. For SH 45 usage was around 160% over forecast, while other roads showed 30% over forecast. The forecast numbers were the volumes used to sell the bonds on the road construction. Seventy-five percent of transactions for these two roads were done through TxTag. He said that over 300,000 tags have been sold in Central Texas. He also showed a map of penetration of TxTag system by Zip Codes.

Commissioner Conley asked whether there was a way to calculate truck traffic on the toll roads. Mr. Powell said that the toll rates in Austin are based on the number of axels. This allows tracking of truck traffic through looking at the number of axels. However, TxDOT has not reported on the data. Stacy Snell mentioned that she has heard complaints about the increased commute time to Austin on SH 71 in Bastrop due to the new intersection at SH 130. Mr. Bob Daigh talked about the extra signal at SH 130 and SH 71 intersection. He also talked about additional signals that will result along the highway as development increases. He said that this is inevitable until there is a controlled access facility built from Bastrop to Austin. He stated that additional ramps at the SH130 interchange, which will improve the driving conditions on that road will be built as financing allows.

6. Consider Resolution of Support for CAMPO's 2030 Mobility Plan and FY2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program Amendments– Mike Aulick, CAMPO

Commissioner Long started this item by talking about how the mobility in the three MPO counties impacts the lives of the folks living in the surrounding counties. Because of the regional nature of the projects in the CAMPO plan, CARTPO as a body which makes up the entire Capital Area has an interest in the outcome of the discussion regarding these projects. Commissioner Long said that a resolution of support has been drafted for CARTPO to consider after the CAMPO Executive Director Mike Aulick goes over the plan amendments.

Mr. Aulick explained the CAMPO Mobility Plan goes through the year 2030, while the Transportation Improvement Program covers a four year period. He said the process the CAMPO board has utilized to review the plan amendments will culminate in the vote next Monday night. Mr. Aulick referred to a memo which explained the amendments and said that the projects receiving the greatest interest were known as the Major Highway Projects. These are the ones that TxDOT has requested that new lanes be tolled because there was no other funding source to build them. Mr. Aulick showed a map depicting the already approved tolled projects, the currently requested tolled projects, and several proposed managed lanes. Mr. Aulick also explained that in addition to the Major Highway Projects several local jurisdictions had submitted amendments to projects.

Mr. Daigh explained the only reason the projects are proposed as tolled is because there is no funding source available to build the roads within the foreseeable future. He also said that additional lanes currently in the plan as non-tolled, such as US 290 east of SH 130 may in the future be presented as tolled projects, if these projects are needed and TxDOT does not receive additional funding. Mr. Aulick also talked about corridor studies on several roads in the western part of Travis and Hays Counties because of the need to learn more about these highways before the projects are proposed. Mr. Aulick asked for questions.

Mr. Conley asked for clarification regarding SH 45, Loop 1, the Y at Oak hill, and Ben White whether there would be sections that are tolled versus non-tolled. Mr. Aulick explained that there were no plans to add capacity to non-tolled roads such as Ben White, except for managed lanes on roads such as Loop 1, I-35 which are currently proposed as non-tolled. Mr. Daigh said that the portion of Loop 1 in South Travis County from South of William Cannon consists of just frontage roads. The mainlanes for this highway is listed as non-tolled in the plan, but that could

change depending on the financial situation and when the project is developed. Mr. Aulick explained that projects typically listed in the long range plan are revised when they are developed by TxDOT or CTRMA to reflect construction.

Commissioner Long clarified the different maps included in the plan amendments. She said map 1 includes corridor preservation and planning projects, while map 2 includes the projects scheduled for funding. Commissioner Daugherty explained that anything proposed as tolled are added capacity, while any free lanes on these facilities will continue to be free lanes. Mr. Daugherty explained that the toll roads are essentially new roads and not tolls on existing roads.

Commissioner Conley asked whether building some of the roads in Travis County using a different revenue stream such as tolling would help the surrounding counties. Mr. Daigh said that it helps other Counties in the District because the gas tax revenue goes to the projects with the highest need, which means there could be more roads lower on the list that could get funded.

Commissioner Daugherty asked for clarification regarding the plan amendments supported in the resolution. Commissioner Long explained that she had written the resolution with the intention to support Map 1 and Map 2, just in case the amendments that the CAMPO board votes on Monday night are different than the ones presented here. Commissioner Long explained that both Commissioner Daugherty and she served on a Mobility Financing taskforce that looked at all options for these roadways. The recommendation from that group was that there were no other viable options to build these \$1.4 billion in projects using another mechanism. By voting no on the plan, there would be no alternative to build these roads. Discussion also occurred on how the user fee (tolling) system has been utilized all across the nation. Betty Voights explained that at a conference in Atlanta, she learned that many of the major metropolitan areas are building roads through tolling, and also using land use controls and transit to help reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Commissioner Long made a motion to adopt the resolution with the addition of attaching Map 1 and 2 and changing the word plan to program, seconded by Councilmember Brian Shirley. The motion was adopted unanimously.

7. Update on the CARTPO Projects– Joe Holland, TxDOT Austin District

Mr. Daigh applauded Commissioner Long for the effort in Williamson County and the City of Georgetown to buy right of way for roads that will not be expanded for decades. Through right of way preservation, the County will save money in the future and will possibly help those projects go to development sooner.

Mr. Joe Holland provided a report of the projects considered through the CARTPO Call for Projects. He said that he is working with CAPCOG staff to move some of the completed projects to archives. He asked that the CARTPO members work with the TxDOT area engineers to evaluate whether the projects that are not programmed should remain on the list. Mr. Ed Collins said that his staff is working on setting up a meeting in mid November with the area engineers to consider future projects. The regional projects would be brought to CARTPO for prioritization. Commissioner Ingalsbe asked why the SH 21 project was listed for removal. Mr.

Collins said that this is more of typo because the project is being developed in a different manner than presented on the list.

8. Update on the County Transportation Plan – CAPCOG

Mr. Chris Ramser said that the purpose of this item was to give CARTPO an update on the status of the County Transportation Plans. He said that approximately three weeks ago TxDOT and CAPCOG staff met with Judge McDonald to begin the Bastrop County planning effort. From that meeting, CAPCOG was asked to draft a Memorandum of Understanding for the County, City, TxDOT, CAPCOG, and CARTPO to sign. A draft of the MOU was passed out for peer review from CARTPO. Mr. Ramser also said that Burnet County has met several times to discuss their planning process. He said that the Burnet County planning process would likely begin in January. Mr. Collins said that these planning processes will be driven by the County and the County will determine the timeline for moving forward.

9. Consider future CARTPO meeting schedule – CAPCOG

Mr. Ramser presented a memo which included a proposed meeting schedule for 2008. He explained that in the past CARTPO meetings did not follow a pattern. Meetings were set based on room availability and availability of speakers and topics. The proposed schedule was based on meeting every other month on the second Friday.

A motion was made to adopt the meeting schedule. Discussion occurred on the schedule. Several CARTPO members preferred to meet on a different Friday because the CAPCOG Executive Committee meeting also occurs during the second week of the month. The motion was withdrawn and tabled for next meeting.

10. Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.