

TPO Technical Committee Minutes
November 12, 2013
9:00 a.m.
Small Assembly Room
City/County Building
Knoxville, Tennessee

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Technical Committee met on November 12, 2013 at 9 a.m. in the Small Assembly Room of the City/County Building in Knoxville. Chair Cindy Pionke presided and called the meeting to order. It was determined that there was a quorum. Committee members were asked to introduce themselves.

*Kathryn Baldwin	City of Oak Ridge
*Brian Boone	City of Maryville
*Don Brown	ETDD, <i>for Terry Bobrowski</i>
*Rich DesGroseilliers	LAMTPO
*Mark Donaldson	MPC
*Karen Estes	CAC
*Jim Hagerman	City of Knoxville
*John Lamb	Blount County
*Ted Newsom	Knoxville Commuter Pool
*Mike Patterson	ETHRA, <i>for Gary Holiway</i>
*Jeff Ownby	Sevier County, <i>for Greg Patterson</i>
*Pat Phillips	Loudon County
*Cindy Pionke	Knox County, <i>for Dwight Van de Vate</i>
*Jack Qualls	Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT)
*Melissa Roberson	Knoxville Area Transit (KAT)
*Darryl Smith	Town of Farragut
*Andrew Sonner	City of Alcoa
TPO Staff	
Partner Agency Staff	
Members of the Public	
*voting members	

1. Approval of October 8, 2013 Minutes

Presenter: Cindy Pionke, Chair

Item Summary: Approval of October 8, 2013, TPO Technical Committee Minutes.

A Motion was made by John Lamb and seconded by Jim Hagerman to approve the October 8, 2013 TPO Technical Committee Minutes. The Motion carried unanimously.

2. Transit Corridor Study Presentation

Presenter: TPO Staff

Item Summary: Staff will provide an overview of a recently completed transit corridors study for the urban area. With funding from TDOT the TPO undertook this study to assess corridors in the urban area for possible increased transit investments.

Discussion: Doug Burton noted that in addition to the assessment of our major corridors for increased transit investments/services the consultants also assisted staff in building an enhanced transit model for our travel demand forecasting model. He stated that over multiple previous studies, 12 corridors were identified as candidates warranting additional transit analysis. Following a two-tier screening process, the parameters of which were briefly reviewed by Mr. Burton, the consultants ultimately identified 3 corridors which may support what is called a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) type of service.

He noted these 3 corridors are Cumberland Avenue/Kingston Pike, Magnolia Avenue and North Broadway (Knoxville). Mr. Burton described BRT as similar to a light rail service in that it involves very sophisticated stations, frequent service, often uses its own lane and also has the potential for enhanced electronics such as signal timing offering the bus priority through interchanges. He then noted that all of the corridors identified as candidates for BRT in the study have adequate right of way for a dedicated BRT lane. There are modifications that can be made if a BRT needs to be located along existing traffic lanes. Mr. Burton noted this study was done at a very conceptual level and we need to further define the corridors. He then touched on estimated costs and possible funding options for each of the potential corridors identified. Mr. Burton noted that the consultants provided the following recommendations: creation of a Transit Alliance to raise community awareness on the benefits of transit, the addition of regional express busses, continuing to build up our existing corridors to make them more transit friendly and lastly explore creation of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA). He also noted at staff's request the UT Transportation Research Center is updating a white paper (with current legislation and models) which explores the development of an RTA in our region, further noting state law has very specific mandates regarding how RTA's are formed. He stated the corridor study is available on the TPO website.

3. **TDOT Presentation on Chapman Highway Improvements**

Presenter: TDOT

Item Summary: TDOT staff will share the status of operational and safety projects along Chapman Highway. Design and construction issues as well as preliminary timelines will be discussed.

Discussion: Paul Beebe and David Jordan from TDOT addressed the committee. Mr. Jordan noted that the existing conditions on several one mile stretches on Chapman Highway are limited to 11 feet wide and are only 4 lanes. He stated TDOT was going to improve 2 sections of this road by adding a center turn lane for 5 lanes, greatly increasing safety and in addition, the lanes will be increased to 12 feet wide. The first of these projects is out of Sevier County, is in the preliminary stages of design and goes from Burnett Lane to Evans Road. A major issue in this stretch is Simpson Road. A challenge in the improvement of this stretch is the rock faces on both sides at one portion which contain pyrite, which in turn would generate additional cost and permitting issues. He stated they will not be widening this part of the road. He also noted current inadequate site triangles are also a large part of the problem. He noted TDOT will re-align the interchanges at Simpson to allow for safer side road visibility. At Sevierville Pike, they will cul-de-sac the area and close off the unsafe turn. On Evans Road at the very end of the project, the hill and embankment create a very unsafe situation and TDOT will look at how they can realign it closer to the hill to increase visibility. The second project is not yet in the design stage nor has it been surveyed. This section is from a different Simpson Road towards both Knoxville and Seymour with very poor visibility in both directions also due to hills, short distances and being set very low. This will also be widened to 5 wider lanes to include a center turn lane. Mr. Beebe touched on proposed timelines for the projects but noted that with land acquisition and permitting they are not set in stone. He also stated these are considered limited scope safety projects and will be funded out a pool of safety funds.

Mr. Beebe noted that TDOT did review the entire section of Chapman Highway at one point and there may be other projects in the pipeline. Jack Qualls noted that one criterion in selection of these areas is crash data. Jeff Welch also noted approximately 7 years ago Palmer Engineering did a corridor study for TDOT on the entire length that looked at crash data from that time period which identified many opportunities for the potential of additional street closures and realignment of streets. He then stated staff could explore having the study updated with current traffic figures and newer crash data. Mr. Beebe acknowledged that there are additional areas of concern. John Lamb requested that a systematic study be done from Seymour to Knoxville. Melissa Roberson requested that any new or updated study include transit needs/issues.

Public Comment: Citizen Bill Cox spoke and expressed concern over the lack of sidewalks along the Highway and asked that more consideration be given to pedestrians. He highlighted the area near Fort Dix as being particularly dangerous especially seeing that it is a park should be considered for safety improvements. Mr. Cox stated TDOT needs to weigh economic feasibility verses safety and the potential for loss of life.

4. TDOT Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Presenter: TDOT

Item Summary: TDOT will discuss their 25-Year Long Range Transportation Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to address how changing demographics will impact transportation demands across the State. Additional information of the 25-Year Long Range Transportation Plan can be found here:

<http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/transportationplan/>

Discussion: Jack Qualls stated that during today's presentation, TDOT will be polling Committee members as part of their public input process for their Long Range Transportation Plan. He noted that per Commissioner Schroer, this Plan is a strategic plan with fiscal constraints with 10 year projects, and is a feeder into the 3 year Plan. He then described the polling process. He noted that by 2040, Tennessee is predicted to have 8.25 million people, with Sevierville projected to have significant growth. He also noted Tennessee has the 8th fastest growing economy in the nation. As TDOT is funded via gas tax, growing fuel efficiency in cars reduces TDOT's revenue coupled with traffic boards and other technology being expensive. He noted current revenue is not keeping up with the growth. There has not been an increase in gas tax in over 20 years but we continue to grow, our population over 65 continues to increase, and our infrastructure is also aging. Mr. Qualls conducted the public input survey with Committee members. He noted there is an additional survey on TDOT's website under Long Range Planning and offered to speak to any community organizations that would be interested in offering their input. Input for the plan will continue for another 6 months.

5. TDOT Multimodal Access Grant Program

Presenter: TPO Staff

Item Summary: TDOT is accepting applications for the new Multimodal Access Program. The state is seeking projects that will meet the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users, and will fill in gaps along state routes. Funding is 95 percent state funds, 5 percent local. Projects may not exceed \$1 million. The TPO is invited to submit two applications from our urbanized area. TPO staff has come up with a proposed timeline for submittal and ranking of local projects.

TDOT application and guidelines can be found here: <http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/publictrans/fund.htm>

Discussion: Ellen Zavisca briefly reviewed the parameters and timeline of the new program. She noted the guidelines from TDOT require that the projects be focused along a state route or within ¼ mile from a state route and connect to that state route, or that they provide a connection to a transit hub (primary or secondary transit facility). The criteria TDOT will be using will be heavily weighted towards transit connections, either current or future transit. Ms. Zavisca noted the full criteria are outlined on the website (as noted above). She noted staff is requesting that proposals be submitted to the TPO by November 22. She noted the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) will be actively involved in the project selection process. She further noted the project ranking generated by staff and the BAC will be included in the December Agenda Package mailing as the Committee will be asked for their feedback and support of the selected projects, which will then go before the Executive Board on December 18th. She reiterated that the final selection of projects submitted statewide will be made by TDOT. It was clarified that member jurisdictions could submit projects over \$1 million but would need to cover additional costs beyond what TDOT has committed to fund. Ms. Zavisca stated the applications are on TDOT's website and once completed can be emailed directly to her (ellen.zavisca@knoxtrans.org). TDOT will not be using any federal funds for these projects and such they will not be required to be part of the Transportation Improvement Program. It was also clarified that project management (local verses state) will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

6. Review of Accommodation Policy on Transportation Projects

Presenter: TPO Staff

Item Summary: As TDOT has announced a Multimodal Access Grant Program staff thought it would be appropriate to review of federal, state and TPO accommodation policies.

Discussion: Kelley Segars briefly reviewed the Bicycle – Pedestrian Accommodation Policies from USDOT, TDOT and the TPO. She noted that in 2010, USDOT revised their policy to strengthen their commitment to bike-ped issues. She noted they asked that government agencies consider walking and bicycling as equal to other modes of transportation and to give them the same priority. She noted that also in 2010, TDOT revised their policy which states that bike-ped accommodations shall be provided in all new construction and reconstruction of roadway projects and that bike-ped access along corridors served by new or reconstructed roadways shall not be made more difficult or impossible by roadway improvements. She further noted TDOT’s policy states that agencies should look at alternate routes that provide continuity and enhanced safety for pedestrians and cyclists should it be impossible to include bike-ped facilities within the existing or proposed right of way. Jeff Welch noted TDOT’s policy has a cost guidance provision allowing for up to 20% of the total project cost for bike-ped accommodations as reasonable. She noted the TPO’s policy is basically the same and was based on FHWA’s 1998 policy.

Public Comment: David Harper, Chairman of the BAC, noted that starting back in 2008, the BAC has been identifying critical gaps in the region for bicycling, one of which is the Broadway connection under I-640. He noted the TDOT project slated for this interchange was an opportunity to change the flow of traffic, bridging a significant gap and increasing safety in establishing a connection between the Halls and North Knoxville communities to downtown and the rest of Knoxville. He then noted at present, TDOT has not demonstrated that they have included any bicycle - pedestrian accommodations to make this a safe corridor although TDOT had stated it was under consideration. Mr. Harper noted that in June the BAC reviewed plans of the project and provided feedback to TDOT. He noted if TDOT does not plan to make accommodations they are required to make exceptions to their policy.

Mr. Cox stated he supports all modes of traffic have increased safety. He further expressed frustration that bicyclists are not taxed nor required to demonstrate identity in any way, as well as not being cited when not adhering to the rules of the road.

7. Other Business

- Technical Committee Meeting Tuesday, December 10, at 9 a.m. in the Small Assembly Room of the City County Building.
- Executive Board Meeting *Wednesday, December 18*, at 9 a.m. in the Small Assembly Room of the City County Building.
- 2014 TPO Technical Committee and Executive Board meeting schedule.
- Upcoming PlanET Events. For complete and up to date information please visit the PlanET website at: <http://www.planeasttn.org> . Jeff Welch highlighted 2 upcoming events: The PlanET Capstone event will take place November 19th at 8:00 am at the Standard. PlanET staff will lay out major strategies, goals and objectives that have emerged out of PlanET. On November 21st, Randall Arendt, a landscape architect and planner who will be speaking about rural conservation and how to manage and better develop commercial strips.
- Jack Qualls introduced Nick Weander, the new Community Transportation Planner with TDOT Region 1.

8. Public comment

Members of the public may address the Technical Committee with a five-minute time limitation for each person. There was no additional public comment.

9. Adjournment

A Motion was made by Kathryn Baldwin and seconded by Darryl Smith to adjourn. The Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.