MESILLA VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
POLICY COMMITTEE (PC) MEETING

Following are the minutes from the Mesilla Valley MPO Policy Committee (PC) meeting held on Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at 1:00 p.m. at the Dona Ana County Commission Chambers, 845 N. Motel Blvd.

MEMBERS PRESENT:  Councilor Olga Pedroza (CLC)
                    Commissioner Billy Garrett (DAC)
                    Mayor Nora Barraza (Town of Mesilla)
                    Councilor Gill Sorg (CLC)
                    Trustee Linda Flores (Town of Mesilla)
                    Commissioner Leticia Benavidez (DAC)
                    Commissioner Wayne Hancock (DAC)
                    Trustee Sam Bernal (Town of Mesilla)
                    Trent Doolittle (NMDOT)

STAFF PRESENT:     Tom Murphy (MPO)
                    Andrew Wray (MPO)
                    Chowdhury Siddiqui (MPO)
                    Orlando Fierro (MPO)

OTHERS PRESENT:    Harold Love (NMDOT)
                    Jolene Herrera (NMDOT)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m. Roll was taken to establish quorum.

Murphy: Commissioner Garrett

Garrett: Present

Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez

Benavidez: Here

Murphy: Trustee Flores

Flores: Here

Murphy: Councillor Sorg

Sorg: Here

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock
Hancock: Here
Murphy: Trustee Bernal
Bernal: Here
Murphy: Mayor Barraza
Barraza: Here
Murphy: Mr. Doolittle
Doolittle: Here
Murphy: Councillor Pedroza
Pedroza: Here
Quorum present.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Tom Murphy gave a brief history regarding election of officers and duties.
Councillor Pedroza opened nominations for the position of Chair.
Mayor Barraza nominated Commissioner Garrett for the position of Chair.
Commissioner Benavidez seconded the motion.
Councillor Pedroza asked for a motion to close nominations.
Commissioner Hancock motioned to close nominations.
Trustee Flores seconded the motion.
Councillor Pedroza stated it was moved and seconded that the nominations for chairman be closed. She asked those in favor to signify by saying ‘aye’.
All in favor, motion passes.
Councillor Pedroza opened nominations for Vice Chair.
Mayor Barraza nominated Trustee Sam Bernal for the position of Vice Chair.
Commissioner Hancock seconded the motion.
Councillor Pedroza asked for a motion to close nominations for Vice Chair.
Trustee Flores motioned to close the nominations.
Commissioner Hancock seconded the motion.

Councillor Pedroza stated it was moved and seconded that the nominations for chairman be closed. She asked those in favor to signify by saying 'aye'.

All in favor, motion passes.

Commissioner Garrett thanked Councillor Pedroza for her service as Chair.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST INQUIRY – No conflict of interest

4. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comments

5. CONSENT AGENDA*

Commissioner Garrett asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.
Trustee Bernal motioned to approve the Consent Agenda.
Councillor Pedroza seconded the motion.

Murphy: Mr. Doolittle
Doolittle: Yes

Murphy: Mayor Baraza
Baraza: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Bernal
Bernal: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Pedroza
Pedroza: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock
Hancock: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Sorg
Sorg: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Flores
Flores: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez
Benavidez: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Garrett
Garrett: Yes

Motion passes, vote 9 – 0 (1 position vacant)


6.1 *November 13, 2013
6.2 *December 11, 2013

7. ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Resolution 14-01: A Resolution Certifying Compliance with the Open Meetings Act for the 2014 Calendar Year by the Mesilla Valley MPO

Annually, the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization is required to adopt an Open Meetings Resolution pursuant to the State of New Mexico’s Open Meetings Act (NMSA 1978, Article 10, Chapter 15). This Resolution affirms the Policy Committee’s intent to follow the Open Meetings Act. The Open Meetings Act specifies how meetings that formulate and adopt public policy are to be conducted. In addition, it also identifies the notice requirements of regular meetings, special meetings, and emergency meetings.

OPTIONS:
1. Vote “aye” to approve Resolution 14-01 approving the 2014 Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Open Meetings Resolution.
2. Vote “aye” to approve Resolution 14-01 with additional amendments or modifications.
3. Vote “nay” and do not approve Resolution 14-01 as presented. This action would result in the Open Meetings Resolution being denied by the Policy Committee and would result in the MPO’s committees being in violation of the State’s Open Meetings Act.

Councillor Sorg motioned to approve Resolution 14-01.
Councillor Pedroza seconded the motion.

Trustee Flores motioned to amend Resolution 14-01.
Flores: If you look down to the “Now therefore that” it gives the reasons, basically the reason why we are doing this is to comply with the Open Meetings Act and say that we are complying but the last sentence ‘that all meetings of committees of the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization shall be held in accordance with,” it doesn’t say Open Meetings Act, it says ‘with the provisions contained in the MPO Bylaws and the Public Participation Plan as amended’ and so forth and it ought to say ‘in accordance with the Open Meetings Act’ and then you can say and the provisions in the MPO Bylaws and Public Participation Plan.

Garrett: Alright, Mr. Murphy do you have any comment on that?

Thomas: Staff spoke with Trustee Flores before the meeting and we agree with that change.

Garrett: Okay, could I have a motion to well you want to make the motion to amend.

Flores: Yeah, to amend it to basically say that we’re complying with the Open Meetings Act.

Baraza: And I will second that amendment.

Garrett: Thank you, we have a motion by Trustee Flores, seconded by Mayor Baraza to amend the Resolution by inserting language showing compliance with the Open Meetings Act in Section I, any further discussion about that. In that case would you poll the Board relative to the proposed amendment?

Murphy: Mr. Doolittle

Doolittle: Yes

Murphy: Mayor Baraza

Baraza: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Bernal

Bernal: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Pedroza

Pedroza: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock

Hancock: Yes
Murphy: Councillor Sorg
Sorg: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Flores
Flores: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez
Benavidez: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Garrett
Garrett: Yes

Motion passes, vote 9 – 0 (1 position vacant).

Garrett: Thank you we have a unanimous consent relative to the amendment. Now move onto a vote on the amended motion to approve Resolution 14-01. Would you poll the Board?

Murphy: Mr. Doolittle
Doolittle: Yes

Murphy: Mayor Barraza
Barraza: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Bernal
Bernal: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Pedroza
Pedroza: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock
Hancock: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Sorg
Sorg: Yes
Murphy: Trustee Flores
Flores: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez
Benavidez: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Garrett
Garrett: Yes

Motion passes, vote 9 – 0 (1 position vacant).

7.2 Resolution 14-02: A Resolution Authorizing the MPO Chair to sign a letter of support for the New Mexico State Rail Plan

Tom Murphy gave a brief presentation.

Barraza: Mr. Chair I’d like to make a motion to approve Resolution 14-02.

Hancock: Second.

Garrett: It is interesting chairing the meeting from the end of the ..... so we have a motion and a second to approve Resolution 14-02, any discussion about the letter.

Flores: I think there is a little typo; over a million I think sounds better on the second to last paragraph. The one that starts ‘we also would like to emphasize our interest in establishing north/south passenger route service’, the next line ‘a combined population of Dona Ana and El Paso Counties being over a million’ I think over a million with employment centers sounds better.

Garrett: (inaudible) to let as a friendly amendment, is everybody okay with that?

Flores: Just maybe perhaps at the end of that sentence to attract workers you might want to say and employers too but I don’t know (inaudible) emotionally attached to it but ..................

Murphy: So add to attract workers and employers.

Flores: Right because if you have a rail going through that can supply you with workers than you are sure to have employers.

Hancock: Mr. Chair could we make that employers and workers.
Flores: Okay.

Garrett: Any further suggestions, comments.

Flores: Also I kind of thought that that last sentence and hope that we convey the importance of these; I mean it sounded good to say it but I just thought it was strange to start a sentence with and hope. It seemed like a run on sentence from the beginning from the first sentence where it said we thank you for your effort. It just seemed awkward to me to start a sentence with and hope.

Barraza: It is.

Flores: We hope to convey the importance of these programs I think sounds better.

Garrett: Could that be handled with a comma or semi-colon. I realize it becomes a long sentence but it seems to be clearer just having it be a long complex sentence that addresses a complex issue so could we just modify that, take care of the grammar, okay. Everybody is nodding yes, alright so we then have three minor editorial comments. One having to do with a million, one having to do with employers and workers, and then the last having to do with bringing the last two sentences together as a compound sentence. I think those who are going to read this are going to get what we're trying to convey.

Alright we have a motion on the floor then, any further discussion, Mr. Murphy would you poll the Committee.

Murphy: Mr. Doolittle

Doolittle: Yes

Murphy: Mayor Barraza

Barraza: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Bernal

Bernal: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Pedroza

Pedroza: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock

Hancock: Yes
Murphy: Councillor Sorg
Sorg: Yes
Murphy: Trustee Flores
Flores: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez
Benavidez: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Garrett
Garrett: Yes.

Motion passes, vote 9 – 0 (one position vacant).

7.3 Resolution 14-03: A Resolution Amending the FY 13 and FY 14 Unified Planning Work Program

Amendment 14-03 changes the Mesilla Valley MPO from the state fiscal year to the federal fiscal year in FY 14 and adjusts budget amounts to reflect FY 13 carryover and updated estimates.

Tom Murphy gave a brief presentation.

Pedroza: We spoke about this before but I think it would be important if you let everybody know. Is there any effect on any of our funding as a result of this? Would we be either in a hurry constraint to do something more quickly or in danger of losing any funding as a result of this?

Murphy: Really there is not a big danger in it. Traditionally as does seen from having the rollover amount, the planning funds are rolled over to expend and we bill the prior years to exhaustion before breaking in on the new ones. As part of the federal reviews that we have had we're going to really have to have better record and justification out of the UPWP about the money the amounts that we do spend but I don't see it as taking away any of the funding that has already been allocated. I think is just that as long as we have a strong plan in place and that we're moving towards those planned goals then the funding will remain in place.

Garrett: Any other questions, comments? Are we ready to vote? I think we need a motion.

Barraza: I'd like to make a motion that we approve Resolution 14-03.
Hancock: Second.

Garrett: Any further comments or discussion.

Flores: I have a comment to make. On Page 34 in two places when you discuss the MPO composition and the Policy Committee, you are missing the DOT representative on both paragraphs so you might want to amend that since we're already amending it.

Garrett: That's important; we don't want to have that as an oversight that's perpetuated.

Barraza: Can we just expand that saying that anywhere within that document, that Resolution where NMDOT is not included that we go ahead and include it. Thank you.

Garrett: Certainly, that's okay, that a good idea. Any further discussion. Alright in that case we have a motion made by Mayor Barraza, seconded by Commissioner Hancock to approve Resolution 14-03.

Murphy: Mr. Doolittle

Doolittle: Yes

Murphy: Mayor Barraza

Barraza: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Bernal

Bernal: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Pedroza

Pedroza: Yes

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock

Hancock: Yes

Murphy: Councillor Sorg

Sorg: Yes

Murphy: Trustee Flores
Flores: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez
Benavidez: Yes
Murphy: Commissioner Garrett
Garrett: Yes

Motion passes, vote 9 – 0 (1 position vacant)

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8.1 NMDOT Planning Procedures Document

Murphy: Mr. Chair, staff would like to remove this item from the agenda. We have
learned that the central planning office in Santa Fe is going to be doing some
amendments to this document. I understand that they had emailed it to all of
you but they want to make those amendments and get the first amendment
cycle done before we do training for the Committee. We intend to bring back at
either the April or May meeting.

8.2 MPO Bylaws Update

Murphy: Mr. Chair, members of the Committee, we apologize we don't have anything to
hand on this subject but recently we've been working through the TAC and the
BPAC on amendments to the bylaws relative to the new JPA that went into
effect this past calendar year. One of the questions that we wanted to bring
forward to this Committee was what you wanted your quorum to be.
Traditionally I guess, by default, under Robert's Rules the quorum would be
50% plus 1. In this instance with a 10 member board we'd have a quorum of
six and we're not sure that that is actually the number we want to have.
Through discussions among staff and with the other committees we thought
that perhaps the quorum number be set at five and that we have each of the
governing agencies represented meaning the Town, the City and the County to
make quorum measures. Additional discussions centered on the new member
of the Board, the district engineer from the DOT, through the bylaws we also
need to establish who if any proxy or alternate that the district engineer would
have, staff and the committees are going to be recommending that the
assistant district engineer be an authorized alternate to the district engineer on
this Board and with that I would like to open it up for your discussion so that we
can hear your feedback on those ideas.

Garrett: Could we take those in order then and the first one having to do with the
question of a quorum. How do you feel about the idea of five provided that we
have a representative, that the five would include a member from Mesilla, the County and City of Las Cruces?

Baraza: I like that idea.

Pedroza: And I also like the idea and one of the reason to possibly go with five is not only the fact that is easier to get five members here but also that it is an odd number and makes for easier control of voting but I would agree with that.

Garrett: Any other questions or comments? Mr. Doolittle how do you feel that because it does not stipulate in membership or presence from NMDOT.

Doolittle: I think that’s okay. The one comment I do have is I like Tom’s recommendation that the ADE’s be allowed to be a proxy and I would ask that they also be allowed to be a voting proxy. That would allow ultimately three alternates to me based on what our schedules are and with that option I wouldn’t guess on any given meeting the DOT wouldn’t be represented.

Garrett: Okay so that still would we could still have the basic rule that it has to be five and you have to have one from each of the jurisdictions but that would mean that we would normally under almost every circumstance expect that we would have a member from DOT present to help make up that quorum. Does that sound good to people? Alright that constitutes direction.

Murphy: Yes, thank you for the direction.

Garrett: Anything else on that item, just to make sure.

Murphy: Just I guess to kind of fill you in on the other. We are doing a similar situation with the Technical Advisory Committee. We’re setting that quorum number I believe at seven. We have a 15 member committee at that point, which the tradition or the default would go through 8 but we’ve had difficulty reaching a quorum with that body often times so we thought that the lower number would be justifiable.

8.3 NMDOT updates

Trent Doolittle stated he would be providing the updates. He thanked everyone for their support and assistance for the December Transportation Commission meeting that was held in Las Cruces. He stated that it was nice to have the Commission in Las Cruces. He appreciated Commissioner Garrett’s presentation and bringing to light some of the issues we have in this area.

Doolittle: One of the things that we did that we haven’t ever done in the past is we actually took a tour of the border area. Secretary Church participated and four of our Transportation Commissioners also participated so it was a really good
opportunity for us to take them down there and show them the development with rail yard. The things that we're seeing at the port of entry, they actually took us to the fabrication plant and we could kind of get an idea of the trucks that are coming in and out so we are slowly but surely bringing their awareness to the needs that we're going to have down there in the south, more specifically come April when they open the rail yard fully. That is actually part of my presentation I will be giving next week to the Transportation Sub-Committee prior to legislature starting, so we are certainly getting the word out that we need money to deal with our infrastructure so I appreciate all the assistance that we had at the December Commission meeting.

With that I will jump in real quickly to our project updates.

- Continue to pave on US 70 from the river to Fairacres, project is looking very nice
- Avenida de Mesilla pavement has started on the main line for the eastbound roadway replacing the decking; expect to switch traffic to the other side mid-February. There were some weather delays and other issues but they are working hard to try to make up that time.
- US 70 paving basically from NASA over the pass to Aguirre Springs – they do have a notice to proceed on the project and should start in February or March once the weather starts warming up. This will take care of some of the pavement issues over the pass.
- Vado/Mesquite interchanges – they do have a notice to proceed on that project, planning on starting sometime mid-spring probably around March you should start seeing some construction, as part of those there will be monthly coordination meetings, there will be one before construction starts so that DOT can get the word out on what the schedule will be, DOT just received the notice last week on what the schedule would be. Trent will let Commissioner Garrett know when the meeting will be.
- Sunland Park paving, have notice to precede, Sunland Park Drive from the Texas State line to McNutt, should start in March when weather starts warming up.
- Cable barrier – did finish and in the process out the original project with Smith and Aguirre. DOT did issue a purchase order through the district to a contractor to build that second run on the eastbound lanes. Surveying was done and started placing anchors yesterday, should start seeing additional run of cable barrier on that side. This is an enhancement due to the traffic and the speed.
- The other two that DOT has right now and are actually under review – 1) the concrete wall barrier in the median between Rinconada and I-25 on US 70, once that is finished and the second run of cable barrier, DOT has everything they need to address median cross-over accidents on US 70 from I-25 to NASA. 2) North Main/US 70 from Chestnut to almost Three Crosses – that will be full reconstruction so in the next three months or so you will see a lot of barrels etc. on an already highly congested corridor.
Pedroza: Thank you Mr. Doolittle. I think it was Sunday I went to El Paso and there was a good stretch of the highway that was totally closed, everybody going both I'm going to call it south and north even though I think it's called east and west but is there any way to, well first one question is do you know whether that work is finished or is it going to be impacted the work here in New Mexico with Vado at all because it is quite long and not only the physical distance long but the time that was added to the trip was really long too, do you coordinate with Texas in terms not having several different projects going on at the same time.

Doolittle: We do coordinate all of our traffic control. I also went to El Paso a couple of weeks ago and I guess the closure was the project at Trans Mountain.

Pedroza: Right.

Doolittle: Okay, none of their traffic control actually on that specific project comes into New Mexico so I'm not aware of the progress. I will tell you if they start having backup that gets into New Mexico we start posting it on our message boards. Bridgett Spedelari posts it through the media as a public announcement. It may delay a little bit but it shouldn't affect our Vado and Mesquite projects too much only because unlike Texas we have six lanes on I-10 so we have a little bit of room to shift some traffic around so we should be okay.

Pedroza: So unless it comes into New Mexico no kind of warning or notices go out?

Doolittle: Typically not, on events or closures like that we have had requests from their PIO to provide assistance, again, through our public announcement but on that specific project to date we have not.

Pedroza: Thank you very much. Thank you Mr. Chair.

Garrett: Any other questions, okay.

8.4 Advisory Committee Updates – No updates

9. COMMITTEE AND STAFF COMMENTS

Garrett: Anyone from the Committee anything they would like to offer? We're ripping along here. Well, let me mess that up. I just would like to ask if staff could put together some information for us to consider at a future meeting that has to do with, if you will, jurisdictions and or coordination and I'm bringing this up because in the last probably six months I've really focused on the issues of what's going on in the southern part of the County and what's going on in the northern part of the County in terms of transportation issues and in both cases whether we're talking about the south road going to the Spaceport and the connection at Upham on the interstate or whether we're talking about the
connection to Santa Teresa and the west side corridor and so on and so forth, those are largely outside of our MPO boundaries, right.

Murphy: Yes.

Garrett: And so one question I have is whether or not there is a structure that allows for us to take in, if you will, the entire County and what the implications of such a structural change would be and the second is if, I think there is an option but I think it’s complicated to get there but I’d like to note for all of us to understand more about what that might look like but then the other question is what are the alternatives we have in terms of improving our working relationship, if you will, the El Paso MPO and the, what is it.............

Murphy: South Central Council of Governments, the RTPO.

Garrett: Yeah, the ones that take care of the other stuff that goes north and I think we need to be looking at that because we’re tending to work and think on a County-wide or a larger regional scale and I just feel like that is a weak part of our planning system is that interface with what is going on in those other areas or being able to even influence what they are talking about so if that seems to be an interesting topic for the rest of the Committee I would ask that staff be able to put together some information and bring it to us at some future time. Sound okay, anybody have an objection to that at this point. I’m not making any, I don’t have any agenda here I just want us to understand what we can do to better see how all these things fit together and how it works without planning.

Murphy: So if I’m hearing the direction, you would like staff to kind of do a presentation on what kind of coordination exists amongst the various players throughout our region when it comes to doing transportation planning and transportation operations.

Garrett: Well it’s both how do we do that. How can we do it better because in the time I’ve been here we haven’t had a meeting that I know of with the El Paso MPO directly, this Committee and maybe we had one or whatever.

Murphy: We had one, yeah under the previous El Paso MPO director we had a couple of years in a row but that is certainly something that we would like to do.

Garrett: But I also would be interested in, I think there was some discussion at one point about whether or not there could be and it is a different kind of boundary in organizational structure but I think we all just need to understand what the other option is and I think that requires some special authorizations and so forth so could we get that........

Murphy: Yes.
Garrett: That would be good, thank you. Anyone else have anything else in terms of comments.

Doolittle: Chairman, if I may add to that, I will also continue to cover specifically with DOT in the upcoming projects or construction projects within the County. I may even go a little bit further like Alamosa Canyon on I-25 north of T or C. It’s clearly outside these boundaries but it may affect what we’re doing so as we do our updates and through Jolene, you know she does a good job of with our planning section, we’ll try to also keep you updated on things that we’re planning to do in the entire county also.

Garrett: That would be great, yeah I mean more and more I’m thinking about how we tie in with everything from Deming to Alamogordo and T or C into El Paso and Juarez so we’ve got a large area and we’re kind of in the middle of all that, thank you. Okay staff comments.

Murphy: One staff comment, I’ll turn your attention to the last page of the packet. In it is a proposed letter from MPO staff to the contractor that is conducting the West Mesa Corridor Study for the NMDOT and we had through some discussions with Commissioner Garrett and the project team we developed some comments that we’d like to submit to the project team for inclusion in their Phase A report on the West Mesa Corridor. Initially their project suggested looking at the connection from essentially the Santa Teresa Airport to the Las Cruces Airport. One of the things that we’re going to request that they explore within their planning study is what would happen if you would make that connection further east on I-10 tying with the already six lane section and perhaps keep some of the economic development within in our region. I’m presuming that you had an opportunity to read the letter and I would appreciate any kind of feedback.

Garrett: Any questions or comments about the letter?

Doolittle: Chairman, if I may. Just recently I had a conversation with Federal Highway because originally the study for the Northeast Parkway, it’s part of the El Paso MPO, including New Mexico basically up to the roundabout at 404 and then also 404 itself over to I-10, that is being removed from their study ultimately because we don’t have the funding to not only four-lane NM 404 but ultimately would result in a brand new interchange at 404 and I-10 and that is not in our current STIP nor do we have the funding to accommodate all of that, so some of this language may need to adjusted slightly only because in the second paragraph it does talk about the northern end of the parkway connects to I-10 at the 404 intersection, I don’t know that that will still be the case now that we’ve, they basically removed New Mexico from their corridor study.

Garrett: Thank you, that makes my point for coordination because I think it’s a huge issue in terms of our transportation system and what works in New Mexico and
I hear you that the money is not there but we’ve got to get the money and so maybe we could rephrase that simply to say something like the potential for connection along that line.

Doolittle: I think that would be more appropriate because I don’t think anybody doubts that it is needed.

Garrett: Good, thank you, other comments or questions.

Flores: Okay, I was just going to say when the staff is looking at possibly taking over the whole area, information that I would find useful is how that would affect us or how they think it might affect us and I’m not going to remember correctly but we’re not, non-compliance issues and how that would affect the rest us. What the unintended consequences of that would be.

Murphy: I understand the question. The implications of that if we were to formally take over the area before we get to the air quality aspects of it, the Census Bureau declares much of the southern county within the El Paso urbanized area and they do that based on contiguous census blocks with a certain population density so those areas will always be the responsibility of the El Paso MPO that said it can be a dual responsibility of the New Mexico MPO and that would be something that would have to be worked out by an agreement but it is certainly something that can be done. As far as what the aspects of the air quality are we would certainly have the air quality issues for any part of an area that we oversaw the planning duties where there were air quality violations. A lot of the conditions in Sunland due to their proximity to Mexico are going to be non-conformance areas so that would be something that would have to be dealt with, as far as more locally, the central part the Las Cruces metropolitan statistical area of which we’re in, Las Cruces, Mesilla, the ETZ area, those may or may not get dragged in based on that. The last time that there was a non-attainment area declared Dona Ana and EPA traditionally does it on a county by county basis but at that time the designation given for a partial county designation and recognizing that there are different things going and a lot of things happening in Sunland Park are not affecting Las Cruces and vice versa so there is some potential that a partial air quality designation could be given and that all depends upon what the opinion of the EPA staff, the recommendations of the New Mexico environmental department. I know when we’re an MPO and had no influence in the non-containment areas they were supportive of supporting a partial designation. I would suspect that might change something if we did have some authority over those areas planning or programming authority, so the question is a really big unknown but it necessarily doesn’t send us down where we will have the entire county be non-attainment because we took up that responsibility but then I can’t say that absolutely that won’t happen.
Sorg: Thank you Mr. Chair, very briefly and this is a question perhaps for Mr. Doolittle more so. Does the NMDOT have a presence on the El Paso MPO or a representative?

Doolittle: Yes, that’s me. I’m a voting member of the Board.

Sorg: Okay, I just didn’t know then for staff, has there been any additional work on adding McGuffey Street to the Transportation Plan, 2040 Plan to extend it to Peach Tree Hills?

Murphy: We have not done, our preview on the Major Thoroughfare Plan is major thoroughfares – collectors and above. I believe we did this in 2005, we had downgraded McGuffey to a local street at that point because of the spacing in that area. Right now we have Sonoma Ranch, which is designated as a principle arterial and then a logical spacing is Jornada Road as the collector. McGuffey itself basically splits that difference and it would have given us additional mileage of collectors, we thought that it was close and at the time when we did that we were bumping up on the high end of the percentage that FHWA set as guidelines for collector roads, that being said it is certainly something we’re in the midst of doing our Transportation Plan update right now with an expected adoption date of June or July of 2015. We would certainly throw that in the analysis if that warrants being set to a collector status.

Sorg: In any case the plan does not include locals.

Murphy: That’s correct we are silent for locals we leave that to in this case the City to dictate what developers do.

Sorg: And as many of us know the condition that Jornada Road is in. I don’t know what classification you would give it right now. It looks more local then anything that I know of. It has no curb, gutter or sidewalks, the width I’m not sure. There are going to be some deficiencies there and I just don’t know how to handle those problems that might come up as development comes along. Anyway I just wanted to make that statement.

Murphy: Just kind of to elaborate a little bit more, we do participate in the City’s review process for development. I understand your point of the need for connectivity in that area. We do champion or we are proponents for connectivity. We would certainly support having McGuffey continue as a local connecting the whole way but properly not support putting it on the federal aid system because of the percentages.

Garrett: Any further comments, this is included as part of the staff report because basically because if I’m understanding this correctly this is essentially a technical response and he is simply informing us about the fact that a technical comment is going to be submitted. There is no policy that needs to be
approved at this point. We’re not taking a position, we’re simply as I understand it recommending that this spur be considered as part of the study and I would just add I’m sending in my own letter asking for the 404 connection to be looked and that was sort of the heart of the comments that I made when I spoke before the Transportation Commission and I would just say that I mean maybe I’m slow on picking up some of this stuff, I’ve been aware of the issues of expanding our authority and I wasn’t real clear on what the benefits were but it seems to me now that I’m looking at some of these other things that there may be some significant benefits we’re missing out on. Mr. Doolittle, how many NM representatives are there on the El Paso MPO? Do you have an idea?

Doolittle: We’ve got, Jolene do you know? We have one DOT, Dona Ana County, City of Anthony, City of Sunland Park.

Murphy: There is a State Senator and State Representative.

Doolittle: Yes.

Garrett: Do they regularly go?

Doolittle: We have one DAC representative that very frequently shows up and the Mayor of Sunland Park is frequently there.

Garrett: Okay and then how many members are on the El Paso MPO, it’s in the 20’s right, fairly large committee?

Doolittle: I think Jolene is right. I think it’s about 29.

Garrett: I think, I mean part of my point is that this is a very important issue and quite honestly I don’t expect for El Paso to be looking out for our economic development interests nor Sierra County to be looking out for our economic development interests so there is a part of this that we need to make sure we’re in a position of some influence when it comes to things that are going to affect us and the people that live in this area, so that’s really what I’m arguing for is that we’re aware of the options and we fairly evaluate the benefits and the disadvantages that might go with that.

Doolittle: Chairman, we as a department try, you know Jolene is very active, well and even Harold Love for that matter. They are very active in both the BPAC on both sides, so we try to play that mediator or voice between the two but you’re correct sometimes it’s rather difficult if you don’t have support from the local entities so I’m all for finding a way to, you know that’s something that we can share with the El Paso MPO director as well, how do we get them more involved in coordinating with us. I think it’s a good idea.
Garrett: I appreciate that, yeah I think sometimes it's simply we need to get our political muscle into the game, not to abuse it but that's part of being elected and representing interests of the community.

Pedroza: I tend to agree very strong with you and part of the reason is that if the basis for the inclusion of those certain areas is on U.S. Census that's fine whenever it was done was probably the correct thing to do but at this point to say that we need to continue with that type of a separation when in fact things have progressed quite a bit and are about to change drastically and to affect the rest of Dona Ana County then we probably need to become a little bit more vocal and more of a presence there and I don't know exactly how that is done but that's all I wanted to say.

Garrett: Thank you. The deadline for, I would comment on this particular phase of the study, the West Mesa Corridor Study.

Murphy: I want to say January 20th or 22nd those are dates that are popping into my head. I know the Rail Plan comments are the 10th.

Garrett: Okay but it's coming up though and I'll send copies of my letter to everyone and Mr. Murphy if you would send yours, we don't I think to take, get action by any of our official bodies but if anyone wants to write a letter of support for consideration of this option as I've been told comments are sometimes weighed by weight so we want to get a number of comments in to support this as a consideration. Okay, yes Commissioner.

Benavidez: I had heard that I think we're planning to meet with the El Paso MPO, is that correct, is there a meeting scheduled to have a meeting with them or?

Murphy: We do not have a set date but what I got is a sense that the Board wants us to get back up to the level of coordination we had a few years back.

Benavidez: And by having a meeting are you seeing the whole committee meeting with the El Paso MPO or how does that work?

Murphy: The way we did it we set it up as a special joint meeting so that there may be a quorum of both boards. I think the most that we've ever had, the most participation we've ever gotten from the El Paso Board was seven of their members, which I think was the majority of their executive committee on it but we did meet and each of the staff gave a presentation on what we were working that had cross interests and then allowed the Policy members to get to know each other and share ideas back and forth and we were doing that about once a year alternating in El Paso and up here.

Benavidez: So would it be here in Las Cruces or is it their turn to come to us or.....?
Murphy: I think it’s our turn to go down there and they had also raised some Texas, they had some Texas legal concerns about meeting outside the State boundaries.

Benavidez: Okay, well I encourage you to coordinate that that would be very interesting for us to go up there, thank you.

Murphy: I’ll definitely open the dialogue and see what we can get accomplished.

Benavidez: Great, thank you.

Garrett: If I could I’d like to suggest that that meeting should be after we have had a chance to hear some of the briefing on alternatives and what our current level of coordination is and so forth and it’s clear we need to also hear from Mr. Doolittle about his perspective and overall NMDOT’s perspective in terms of the working relationship there but we’ve also got the COG piece going in the other direction so we need to know about both of those and our relationships if that would be okay Commissioner Benavidez.

Benavidez: Yes, thank you.

Doolittle: Chairman, I just have one more question to expand on what Councillor Sorg asked. I’m also a member of the executive committee on the MPO as well, so I sit on both boards.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Garrett adjourned meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Chair