The following are minutes for the meeting of the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Committee which was held May 13, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. in Commission Chambers at Dona Ana County Government Building, 845 Motel Blvd., Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Billy Garrett (DAC)
Commissioner Leticia Benavidez (DAC) arrived 1:15
Trent Doolittle (NMDOT)
Trustee Linda Flores (Town of Mesilla) arrived 1:27
Councillor Olga Pedroza (CLC) departed 1:32
Commissioner Wayne Hancock (DAC)
Mayor Nora Barraza (Town of Mesilla)
Councillor Gill Sorg (CLC) departed 1:32
Councillor Nathan Small (CLC) departed 1:53

MEMBERS ABSENT: Trustee Sam Bernal (Town of Mesilla)

STAFF PRESENT: Tom Murphy (MPO staff)
Andrew Wray (MPO staff)
Michael McAdams (MPO staff)
Sharon Nebbia (MPO staff)

OTHERS PRESENT: Jolene Herrera (NMDOT)
Harold Love (NMDOT) arrived 1:36
Hilary Binnegar
Becky Baum, RC Creations, LLC, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER (1:20 p.m.)

Sorg: As the Vice-Chair of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee I call the meeting to order.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST INQUIRY

Does any Committee Member have any known or perceived conflict of interest with any item on the agenda? If so, that Committee Member may recuse themselves from voting on a specific matter, or if they feel that they can be impartial, we will put their participation up to a vote by the rest of the Committee.

Sorg: Any conflict of interest?

NO CONFLICT OF INTEREST INDICATED.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sorg: Public comment?
Murphy: None.
Sorg: Seeing none.

4. CONSENT AGENDA *

Sorg: We'll go to the Consent Agenda.
Garrett: Mr. Chair I move approval of the Consent Agenda.
Hancock: Second.
Sorg: Moved by Commissioner, Commissioner Little, Commissioner ...
Garrett: Garrett.
Sorg: Billy Garrett. And second by who was it?
Hancock: Hancock.
Sorg: Hancock. Action Items. First Action Item is 6.1, Resolution 15-04, motion to approve.
Murphy: Excuse me mister, we want to take a, take a vote.
Sorg: Oh yeah. We need a vote.
Murphy: A vote on the Consent Agenda.
Sorg: Yes.
Murphy: All, all those in favor signify.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
Murphy: Any opposed? No. Okay so it passes unanimously.
Sorg: Okay. Unanimous.
5. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES*

5.1 *April 8, 2015* – Minutes approved under the Consent Agenda vote.

6. ACTION ITEMS

6.1 Resolution 15-04: A Resolution Amending the 2014-2019 Transportation Improvement Program


Hancock: Motion to approve.

Sorg: Is there a second?

Garrett: Second.

Sorg: A motion, moved by Hancock, second, second by Garrett. Any discussion?

Wray: I’m here to provide information but I won’t give a presentation in view of the time constraints.

Sorg: Any questions or, or discussion?

Small: Mr. Vice Chair.

Sorg: Yes.

Small: Very briefly, this can be amended after today should things come up, correct?

Wray: Mr. Chair, Councilor Small. I’m not sure what you mean.

Small: That is if there’s additional projects or other amendments. I saw Commissioner Hancock shaking his head yes. If there’s things that reach that level of being appropriate for amendment after today with the, yeah.

Wray: Oh, yes the TIP can be amended.


Sorg: Okay. Any other discussion?

Hancock: Question.
Sorg: Or questions?

Hancock: Mr. Chair. Call the question.

Sorg: Questions called. Would the, Andrew call the roll.

Wray: Councilor Small.

Small: Yes.

Wray: Commissioner Garrett.

Garrett: Yes.

Wray: Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: Yes.

Wray: Mayor Barraza.

Barraza: Yes.

Wray: Mr. Doolittle.

Doolittle: Yes.

Wray: Commissioner Benavidez.

Benavidez: Yes.

Wray: Councilor Pedroza.

Pedroza: Yes.

Wray: Mr. Chair.

Sorg: Yes.

Motion passes – vote 8 – 0 (1 member absent).

6.2 A Resolution Authorizing the MPO Chair to sign a letter of support for the Dona Ana County TIGER grant

Sorg: Next item on the agenda is the 6.2, A Resolution Authorizing the MPO Chair to sign a letter of support for the Dona Ana County TIGER grant.
Hancock: Motion to approve.
Garrett: Second.
Sorg: Motion to approve by Hancock and second by Garrett. Is there any discussion or questions?
Garrett: Mr. Vice Chair.
Sorg: Yes.
Garrett: I've read the letter. I think it covers the topic well and will serve us well.
Sorg: Thank you. Thank you. Any other comments? Mr. Murphy, would you call the roll.
Murphy: Councilor Small.
Small: Yes.
Murphy: Commissioner Garrett.
Garrett: Yes.
Murphy: Commissioner Hancock.
Hancock: Yes.
Murphy: Mayor Barraza.
Barraza: Yes.
Murphy: District Engineer Doolittle.
Doolittle: Yes.
Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez.
Benavidez: Yes.
Murphy: Councilor Pedroza.
Pedroza: Yes.
Murphy: Councilor Sorg.
Sorg: Yes.

Motion passes – vote 8 – 0 (1 member absent)

6.3 Appointment to Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Advisory Committee

Sorg: Next item on the Action Items is 6.3, Appointing, Appointment of Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Advisory Committee and that is an appointment of, let me get the name right. Oh, that’s TIGER grant.

Murphy: The, the gentleman’s name is Duane Bentley. He was invited to be here but we weren’t able to ascertain whether he was able to, you know job constraints and everything. He is replacing Leslie Kryder on the, on the Committee who submitted her letter of resignation a few months ago. We advertised and this was the only applicant that we had received for it and his letter was included in the packet.

Sorg: Okay. Is there a motion to approve?

Hancock: So moved.

Small: Second.

Sorg: Moved by Hancock, second by Small. Any further discussion or questions? Mr. Murphy call the roll.

Murphy: Councilor Small.

Small: Yes.

Murphy: Commissioner Garrett.

Garrett: Yes.

Murphy: Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: Yes.

Murphy: Mayor Barraza.

Barraza: Yes.

Murphy: District Engineer Doolittle.
Doolittle: Yes.

Murphy: Commissioner Benavidez.

Benavidez: Yes.

Murphy: Councilor Pedroza.

Pedroza: Yes.

Murphy: Councilor Sorg.

Sorg: Yes. Okay.

Motion passes – vote 8 – 0 (1 member absent).

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

7.1 NMDOT Update

Sorg: Okay we go to Discussion Items, NMDOT update.

Doolittle: You’ll see on the, on the agenda there’s a few projects there. I’ll just give a quick update. That 11610 is the I-10 mill and inlay from the 146 to the 164. That’s a project that we actually moved up, only because another district had some, had some funding they couldn’t spend so we’re going to move that project up. We’re looking at a September production, November bid. So you’re probably looking at spring that we’ll start on that project. What that is, is that’s the section, that’s the six-lane section between the I-10/I-25 interchange and the Texas state line. Basically it’s to fix the lanes that we didn’t do anything with when we did the six-lane widening. Again it’s just a simple mill and inlay project.

The next one on there is the I-10/Union bridge replacement. I do need to clarify a little bit. I guess there was some, some discussion or, or incomplete information provided at the last meeting. I did talk to Commissioner Garrett a little bit before the meeting but ultimately what that project is going to do is replace the bridges at Union, the two bridges that go over Union, we’ll replace those two bridges. The ramp from Whataburger, you know which is basically an extension of Valley Drive we’ll extend that ramp and I did find out, Commissioner Garrett that we’re actually going to replace the decks on those bridges so it’d just be replacing the riding surface. The Union bridge we’re going to do replacement of the pier caps, the abutments, a lot more extensive work but because we’re already in the area we’re going to replace the deck at those two bridges where the ramp goes under I-10. That project is currently, we actually have a pre-con next week. It does have a 60-day
ramp up time so I would expect that we won’t start any work on that project until probably the end of July and then we’ll get in and you know it’s, it’s a pretty extensive project. I think we have ten months on that project.

The next one is the I-25/Missouri bridge replacement project and that project, for those of you that have been out there is moving very quickly. They’re actually hoping to be finished by December which is about three months ahead of schedule so it’s, it’s good to see those guys getting out there and working so, working so hard to get them finished.

The next one on here is the, the second section of I-10. This is basically from the Corralitos interchange to the I-10/I-25 interchange. Again, again it’s just a mill and inlay project. That one is scheduled for a June production which is an August letting. We may see some work late in the fall but depending on temperatures that one may be suspended until the spring, it just kind of depends on what the weather does for us, again just a simple mill and inlay project.

They have one here, the NM188 which is the Valley Drive reconstruction project. We’re currently in project development on that one and will continue to work with Molzen Corbin and the City to develop that project but we’re in the very beginning stages, working on the Phase A-B study on that one.

The other two are just railroad crossing projects. I don’t currently have an update as that’s a different section but if we need an update on those I can certainly provide staff with that information for distribution.

The other one that’s not on here that I just want to touch, touch bases on real quickly is the North Main project. It seems like we’re finally out of the sub grade which means getting away from a lot of the utility conflicts which has really hampered the progress of that project so we’ll start to see some progress at the top. They’ve moved over to the west side of the roadway. Currently the expected completion date of that project is the end of July. And I think that’s all the projects that we have in the area unless anybody has any specific questions.

Sorg: Any questions by the Committee? There is one question but before you start Mayor Barraza, I would like to turn the meeting over to our Chairperson Linda Flores.

Flores: Yes and I apologize for being late. I don’t know what happened. I just lost track of time. Okay so seeing no questions ...

Benavidez: Madam Chair.

Flores: Yes.

Benavidez: I just, Trent I just have a question or a comment. Someone brought to my attention, I can’t remember if it was at a Council meeting or at another
meeting that when they’re getting off the ramps there on Avenida de Mesilla where they’re, you’re coming from the, is it south and west or however, when they exit the ramps there’s not a sign indicating which way is Las Cruces and which way is Mesilla. So, and I think it was probably at one of our meetings and one of the businesses said that some of their customers said they had gone to Las Cruces instead of coming into Mesilla to visit for the day, so I don’t know if it’s something that you can address or not.

Doolittle: Mayor do, do you recall which, do you know if it’s the eastbound or the westbound ramps, or both?

Benavidez: Both.

Doolittle: Both, okay. Absolutely. I’ll, I’ll send somebody out there to take a look at that.

Benavidez: Okay. Thank you.

Flores: And did we have a comment from some, question, no, yes? Commissioner Garrett.

Garrett: Yeah. Thank you. One other question and that has to do with the interchange where, the intersection between Stern and the Mesquite exit whether there’s been any examination of that particular configuration.

Doolittle: Not that I’m aware of. The proposed ...

Garrett: I, I brought that up at the last meeting, that, that would, became apparent to people because of the construction and there were concerns about visibility to the north as you go west but it’s also that the road drops off and curves so it’s, it’s hard for people to see the traffic and there was just a question about how that interchange might be handled, that intersection might be handled to make it safer.

Doolittle: I, I don’t recall Commissioner Garrett. Which intersection are we talking, on the frontage road or an actual interchange?

Garrett: It’s, it’s, it’s not an, the interchange, it’s when you come off the interchange and you ...

Doolittle: Oh. Yes. I, I, I do remember that. I did talk very briefly with our traffic section to do a, a sight triangle study. Honestly, I failed to follow up after I asked them that question. I’ll, I’ll make that a priority and I’ll, I’ll give you an update. I, I didn’t ...
Garrett:  Thanks.  I, I, just know that that’s an issue that’s going to come back up in some of my district meetings.

Flores:  Anyone else?  All right.

7.2 Transport 2040 Update

Flores:  Then we’ll move along to Transport 2040 update.

Murphy:  Okay, Madam Chair, Members of the Committee.  I don’t have a presentation.  Before I get, we included some, a couple of letters into your packet but before I discuss those, something, we had a, held three public meetings and there’s you know, our, the plan we had one downtown Las Cruces, one Mesilla Community Center, and one in the Del Cerro Community Center down in the south valley.  Turnout was, was rather light.  I think we had six or seven at the, at the downtown and at the, at the Del Cerro one.  We had one attendee at the Town of Mesilla.  Trustee Flores and I did a, did have the pleasure to, to be on KRWG where we announced the updating of plan but it didn’t generate the interest that I felt it would.

In addition to that we sent out requests to various organizations, did get a, I did meet with the Government Affairs Community, Committee for the Chamber of Commerce, presented to them on the plan, got that, got, got some feedback from them.  I believe we are holding, or we’re taking comments through the end of this month of which, well actually I, I think the comment period officially closes Monday but comments can always that, that’s for inclusion into the draft.  We plan on asking the BPAC next Tuesday for a recommendation, the TAC on their June meeting, and then back again at this Committee for your June meeting for approval of that.  Now absent any, any game-changing comments.  In the, the letters in the packet that we submitted we got I guess some concerns or interest in what, what’s proposed for future Sonoma Ranch Boulevard south of Dripping Springs.  Although it’s not listed on the proposed transportation priorities plan it is on the right-of-way preservation plan and it’s been, come a, a, a point of contention I believe at, at the Extraterritorial P&Z as there’s a zone change in the vicinity of that.  We’ve had some citizens that are asking us to downgrade it and/or move it to the west and then we’ve got a letter from the University stating that it’s vital for, for their long-range plans.  At this point I’d like to kind of open it up for discussion, kind of see where the Committee members, what the Committee members feel on this and then staff can amend the maps accordingly.

Flores:  Anyone have any discussion?  I see Commissioner Garrett going towards the mic.
Garrett: Thank you. I’ve been aware of the issue about the designation of this, this section of road probably from the beginning of the, my tenure as a County Commissioner and I think that, that an elegant solution if it’s possible would be to have an indication in the plan that the designation and specific alignment of that road needs to be something that should be worked out through area planning in that location. I, I can appreciate the point of view about the University and they’re going through negotiations now, all 25 years ago or so. A lot has changed and I think that in order to consider all of the different values that there needs to be a, an area plan developed that would be done in conjunction with the University. The University is not the only property owner in that area and they’re not the only ones who are going to be affected by both the road configuration, the amount of traffic that we’re intending to send through those areas, as well as what happens with, with the properties themselves. So I, I think it’s, it’s, personally I think it’s premature to either change it or to simply ignore it and, and just say, “No this is, this is fine.” I think that this is something that we need to recognize as a potential area of additional work and just as we have made some, put some language into the plan that addressed the, the issues that have to do with the, the roads going around, the ring roads, I think this might be a good way to simply recognize that there is an issue there and at some point we’re going to have to get into it but it needs to be done in more detail. I would also say that an important part of that has to do with what kind of public input we have in that process. I don’t know what the public process was at the time that the City was going through negotiations with the City and BLM, or the University was and so that’s another question just in terms of due process and hearing the public.

Flores: Councilor Small, do you have a comment you wanted to make?

Small: Thank you Chairwoman Flores. Mr. Murphy, was there any feedback regarding multiuse trails along the laterals within the city because that’s something as we, as we hold neighborhood meetings frequently comes up where folks greatly value the La Llorona Trail, certainly the Triviz and other, the outfall channel and there’s a growing interest in the internal networks within the city along the water conveyance systems.

Murphy: Madam Chair, Councilor Small. There’s not been any specific discussion of using the laterals during this, this update of the plan. We do however have the, the trail priorities plan in place which does make use of, of most if, most of the EBID laterals. To my knowledge there’s really not been any specific request for it. The MPO has worked in the past, we had helped get some legislation through up in Santa Fe that ...

Small: Right.
Murphy: That allowed ...

Small: Right.

Murphy: Either the City, the County, or the Town to enter into agreements with EBID so that we, you know and that's, hey, we got an agreement in place that ...

Small: Right.

Murphy: Allowed the outfall channel so we got the, the mechanisms in place.

Small: Sure.

Murphy: Additionally we're, we're studying West University and one of the proposals currently that's, that the consultant is looking for is to utilize some of those, some of those laterals as part of the trail system and we'll, we'll work on advancing that concept and, and a little more as we move through the process. As for any other, any other specific segments I think we need to have them probably either you know recommended through to us that we can go to the appropriate government board and say that you know, "We've heard this request and we would like, you know they would like you to develop the, this portion." It would have to go through a, the special use permit through EBID and, and then develop some kind of a, you know develop a project to implement it but the mechanisms are really all in place to, to achieve you know any of that.

Small: That's excellent and thank you for the summary.

Flores: And Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: Thank you Madam Chair. Would it be appropriate for the South Central Regional Transportation District to be including a TIP for some of these purposes in the rural sections of the county before it gets into the El Paso MPO, for example in the Viva Dona Ana plan there are the, there's the, the trails proposal and, and I've been in the process of talking with a growth, with Growth Management at the County about how the upcoming transit district stops could be oriented to those trails in order to advocate for bike trails and walking trails from some, for some of the little areas that are off of the main transit route. Since we obviously don't have the resources to get our transit into those routes, it makes good sense to utilize those trails so that people can walk to or take bikes to the, and put in, and then we could put in transit stops at those points but identifying those. So what, would, would this be the appropriate process for achieving that?
Murphy: Madam Chair, Commissioner Hancock. I think the, the process you'd want to do and, and the TIP is really once we have funding identified to, to make a particular improvement and then if it's a trail segment that depends on geographically whether it's located within our area or the El Paso MPO area. As for, as for general system overall approval that would probably have to go into both TIPs, but to get back to the specific of, of recommending certain trail I, trail segments to be improved I think that that would probably be a priority recommendation through the MTP so I think if the district had, had some specific, specific laterals in mind that they wanted to see advanced, you know they could comment that to a process and then you know that would just, just be something that we could put in as, as part of the prioritization process as far as advancing projects.

Hancock: Very good. Thank you Madam Chair.

Flores: The only thing that I would add to that is just I am concerned about the reliance that the University has put on the planning and that they already thought that they had an agreement and I can see how that would be upsetting so, all right. So shall we move on to Committee Training: Transportation Funding, 7.3?

Doolittle: Madam Chair.

Flores: Oh, I'm sorry.

Doolittle: No, that's okay.

Flores: You had asked, you wanted to make a comment and I (inaudible).

Doolittle: I, I don't have any comment specifically to the two letters that were in here but I do have a few tied to the plan itself if you don't mind. Tom, Jolene's going to submit all of the comments from the department just in general but I do have a few that I just want to touch on real quick here I think is important just because it's been discussed with some of the, the Policy Board Members. If you would turn to page 65, in that first column under the, the truck traffic and loop roads, the first paragraph the very last sentence and this is something I've talked to Councilor Sorg about says "based on public input MPO staff is also proposing a redesignation of US-70 on Main and Picacho to a local roadway and to not permit hazardous cargo." You know that's something that we have talked about but at this point, honestly is not realistic so I would hate to mislead the public by saying that we're going to eliminate or restrict traffic on US-70 so my proposal would be to eliminate that, that sentence completely just because I don't want to mislead somebody with statements in here that you know at this point is, is just not realistic.
Flores: Does anybody have another, a comment to add to that or a problem? No?
Okay. Just want to check.

Doolittle: All right. My next one just real quickly on page 71 in the second column, the last paragraph on that page starts talking about the City of Las Cruces Pavement Preservation Program and it continues on and starts listing the pavement and asphalt treatment schedule with costs. I think we need to be real clear that that's specific to the City of Las Cruces.

Flores: Las Cruces, yeah.

Doolittle: Only because the department's costs are substantially different and we don't have a 50-year schedule and I don't know what Mesilla's or the County's are but maybe what you can do is separate that out with a different header or something along the line that makes that very clear that's the City's.

Flores: Yes.

Doolittle: Kind of reads that way but ...

Flores: Yeah.

Doolittle: For someone who wouldn't, wouldn't understand the process it may be also a little bit confusing. And then the last, in that same section on page 73 you, you put on here "figure 6-4 above shows the range of pavement conditions throughout the MPO." That is only within the City of Las Cruces. That map only references the City's map. And then the, the last comment that I've got on the very last page, page 78 you know staff read through this and one of the comments was it reads kind of negative. I think the language can be, can be written a little bit differently, specifically the very last paragraph. It says, "While this MPO can do little to influence State or National decisions, it's able to decide which projects are built in this region." Our feeling is eliminate that sentence and then start immediately with, "this MPO is committed to projects that supports the livability principles." I think that's more of a positive comment tied to what our goals and, and objectives are of the department rather than saying the MPO can decide which projects we're going to build. You know something along the lines of, "work cooperatively with the MPO entities to provide a transportation infrastructure." It just, that, that last paragraph it, it to us it also kind of summarizes the entire plan not just the financial plan, so I don't know if the intent was to summarize the entire plan in, in, in general. You know I don't know what any of the other Board Members think but it just, it just read a little bit ...
Flores: What do you think about changing from "while" to "although" like "although we can't" direct them? Would that make it better or you still think that's too negative?

Doolittle: I think if you just start by saying that, "We as an MPO are committed to the projects that support the principles," you know that kind of starts off on what our, what our objectives are as an MPO. And, you know it further states you know that we're going to support that and we're committed to it so. It, it, and I think we still have some comments and I don't know what your public comments will show to be of any but you know those, that was something that I think we as an MPO ought to consider is, is really writing that more as a positive statement as opposed to seems, seems pretty direct. And then I do have, I do have a few small ones that I just need to clarify with you but we can do that after the meeting.

Flores: Okay. Anyone else? All right. So ...

Garrett: Madam Chair.

Flores: Yes Commissioner Garrett.

Garrett: I concur. I think that those are good recommendations by Mr. Doolittle. I don't know that we actually ended up providing direction relative to the Sonoma Ranch Road question and my proposal just to be clear about that is not to try to address that in this version of the update for the, the Transportation Plan but to recognize that it is an issue. And I understand, you know I've read the, the letter from President Carruthers too. What I'm concerned with is that there were decisions that might've been made 25 years ago that didn't take into consideration all of the kinds of things that have happened around that area. Centennial High School was not even thought about in, in terms of location at that particular place. The amount of development that's out on the east side of A Mountain and, and I, I think that this is an area that would be really worth a, a more detailed examination in terms of both transportation but also land use and I think that that needs to be done in conjunction with the University. This isn't about saying that what they're doing is right or wrong but there are many other interests that are at play in that larger area and I think that by doing planning for that location, probably in conjunction with the County in other words not, don't do this just in terms of the Transportation Plan but actually look at it as a larger area plan that, especially after completion of the Comp Plan for the County. This would be a good area to actually sit down and take as a test case in terms of how do some of these new principles apply. So I'm looking for inclusion of, of some language that simply recognizes this as a, an area of interest to multiple entities that needs to be more closely examined as we move forward and, and just something to that effect so we have a place in the plan to hang a TIP
Flores: I see Councilor Small.

Small: Oh, Madam Chair. I just, I apologize. I have to head out now.

Flores: Okay.

Small: But, and I'll circle back with folks after. Thank you. Thank you.

1:53 NO QUORUM - ALL MEMBERS OF THE CITY OF LAS CRUCES HAD DEPARTED THE MEETING.

Garrett: So Madam Chair. I guess my question again is closure. Is that the, I think that Mr. Murphy's looking for direction and we don't, we're not doing a motion or anything like that but I don't have a sense that how, where the rest of the Board is in terms of this as an approach to including some language and, and I'm talking way too much by myself.

Flores: No, no I don't have an objection to saying we're purposely leaving this open because this needs more work, just stating that you have issues on both sides and that we need to look at where, when use has, where growth has affected the area and maybe get some more coordination on that and planning.

Murphy: Madam Chair, Commissioner Garret. I, I think we can, we can accommodate what is the, the, what's being requested. I, Sonoma Ranch is, that, that segment of proposed Sonoma Ranch has been in contention since, since I came to the MPO back in, back in '03 and every time we do the Transportation Update it, it gets discussed and people, people grab their opposite sides of the rope and starts tugging it. So I really like the idea of formally declaring, you know declaring it a study area, put it as a priority that in the next five years we find funding to conduct such a study that does get all of the players, all of the interests to the, to the table to the process to discuss that so that we can come up with, with something that is, you know least agreeable or least objectionable to all parties in, involved and I, so I, I think that's one of the things we can, as far as this, this update to the plan we just amend that, that this study area is a priority for the MPO that we go and we find funds to conduct such a study so that we can, you know we could have it out then.

Flores: Okay. So ...
Hancock: Madam Chair.

Garrett: Madam Chair. That would meet my, my concerns.

Flores: Okay. And Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: I would, I, I think where it could be particularly appropriate would be to include the cultural and heritage significance of the, of the area. To, to only be considering the commercial value of a place leaves out too many parts and too many groups and so I would think that they, the cultural and heritage significance should be closely monitored and given particular significance. Thank you Madam Chair.

Flores: So assuming that you will include that as part of the concerns when you write about ...

Murphy: Yes.

Flores: The need for the study area.

Murphy: Yes Madam, Madam Chair, Commissioner Hancock. In fact those, you know the, those, those cultural, historic, environmental resources you know stem from the livability principles that we based on, they’re are also re-echoed in the transportation principles that, that we’ve adopted through this process that specifically talks to those points so I would, I would, I would say that any study that we, we conduct would have to take, take that into account or we’d be in violation of our own documents.

Flores: Okay. And ...

Doolittle: Madam Chair, Tom. The only, the only thing I heard you say is we would seek funding for this study within five years. I would be very hesitant about putting a timeline in there just because we don’t have any idea what the funding source is going to be and then we as a Board determine what kind of priority it is but I, we put a timeline in there we’re going to be held to it.

Murphy: Madam Chair, District Engineer Doolittle. I, I, I think probably what I really meant to say was we, we would commit to study it whether we got funding to, to bring on a, a consultant or if we utilized internal resources and handled it as a UPWP item but to, to make further study of this issue a priority.

7.3 Committee Training: Transportation Funding

Flores: We'll move on to Committee Training and Transportation Funding, 7.3.

McAdams: Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen. We were talking about funding and I think that's the appropriate thing to sort of talk about funding in general. As you know that transportation has been around for a long time and here's an example of an engineering feat in the Andes Mountains. *(inaudible)* done, they're going without, you think without really tools, only Bronze Age tools. They did cliff you know paths etc. so really what I'm saying is maintenance and construction is not a new thing. It's been around for many, many years and it's an issue of connecting people together and activities. If you look at transportation it's the glue for communities. It enables us to go to work, shopping, medical, social trips, and at every, they rely on quality, rely on quality and reliable transportation. I think if you look at two, there's two questions at the core of urban transportation planning: What are the various alternative options to adequately address the transportation needs of a planning area in the short and long term? And then the second thing is: How will they be implemented given the financial constraints at all levels of government? I think that's what we're really talking about. Do we have the money to do what we want to do? If not we have to look at alternatives. And here's where we talk about the facts in general not in the, overall we're spending more on expansion than repair. If you look at this figure, $20.4 billion are spent on expansion as opposed to $16.5 so again, in other words we're going to build but how do we maintain it.

Annually the needs, repair needs are far exceeding what's being spent. If you look at repair the needs are $45.2 billion as opposed to $16.5 billion on current spending. The deficits is, is incredible. In New Mexico we have also, not as bad as other states you would think but still significant differences: 23% of all major locally and state maintained urban roads are in poor condition; 41% are in mediocre or fair condition. So that's approximately 60%, no 50, 50% of all roads are in bad condition over and one, one in six bridges are of locally and state maintained bridges so significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards. So this, we in New Mexico we have a, a condition where really we should concentrate on repair and on, and maintenance. If you look at this, this graph: Percent difference of actual and, of annual actual needs and spending by state. So I mean, we're going to, New Mexico if you look in red is not that bad but not that good, right. Other places like Texas have a lot more they need to spend on, right. So we're not doing too bad but still improvement. If you look at this figure, this other, the, the figure we're, we're doing pretty well about, approximately 70% of our budget in New Mexico is spent on repair as opposed to expansion so we're doing pretty good. We're up in that top tier, can almost see the divisions of steps of those in groups. We're not doing too bad. Doesn't mean we can
lay back though. The question is, the ultimate question is how do we pay
for transportation improvements? We pay either from federal and state
fuel taxes, property taxes, sale taxes, gross receipts tax, gross receipts
tax, bonds, special district tax, user fee, tolls but they're not authorized in
New Mexico, and other sources, so really a variety of different sources.

What is a big myth and that roads pay for themself. They don't. A
lot of people think, "Oh, well I ride the roads. I pay the, I'm paying taxes,
my fuel tax." That's just not true. In fact if you look at this figure, in urban
areas 50-200 thousand, only 55%, well 55% of all roads don't pay for
themselves. That's between vehicle miles, gas taxes as opposed to the,
how much it cost to construct them. Overall it's 48% pay for themselves,
13% break even. So more or less 50, 60% or really not over 50% don't
pay themselves. And we've been doing this for a while, right that, that
we've been supplementing federal gas taxes with other funds, general
property tax, general tax from other areas too. If you look by state New
Mexico is not, the federal taxes, or the federal fuel, federal and state fuel
taxes are not really making a, a good dent in this. So we're, so that
means what, we're, we are supplementing our transportation budget with
other sources which we know. This is nothing new. This is not, if you look
at the trend for fuel taxes take less, paying for less, this trend's been going
on for quite a while but you can see there's different levels. You see that
in the '50s we're all driving around in cars, we're spending gas all over the
place and we were not fuel efficient so a lot of this, then fuel, the fuel taxes
were paying for a large amount of the roads. But then when cars got more
fuel efficient, we, we actually are driving less, that's a new phenomena,
you see it drops about '79. That's the, the oil embargo, a tremendous
drop, pretty much steady and then recently we found an alarming trend
and I'm not sure, you can attribute this to many things but now we've
crossed that barrier. We're paying, we're having to pay to supplement that
fuel tax with, with other funds and I think that's, so if you look it's the
annual base for this, this turnover year, you can see right here bond
revenue is only 10%, user revenue 48%, that means fuel taxes etc. and
non-user revenue, that's property tax etc. bonds, who are only 40, or 42%
so almost, close to 50% are being paid out by other sources, all right. So
if anybody tells you as a transportation, transportation person that either
fuel taxes pay for the roads, "I'm paying for the roads," you can say, "No,
they don't. We're having to supplement," you know.

I like to call this challenges instead of conclusions. I think that in a
sustainable transportation system both maintenance and new construction
has to be addressed, right. Many of the states we see are not in a
sustainable situation, place and they're going to find in the future that
they're going to have to repair the roads. New Mexico's not so bad, all
right but we're going to, eventually we'll have to pay for them too in taxes,
all right. We're going to make up the difference because we're a, a federal
system not a state system. The maintenance needs far exceed what is
being spent. There's a great need for repair for roads and bridges that are
exceeding the present projected revenue. This must be a priority for the
MPO and it is for our MPO. While future, while, while fuel taxes generate
a significant amount of the revenue, they are not reliable, right. They're
going up and down. We know that people are traveling less, fuel tax are
even less and not sufficient for future transportation needs and this is
absolutely true.

So how do we, how do we deal with this? I think that we, the way
we deal with it is this: Fuel taxes should be considered not as a user tax
but another source of revenue like property tax etc. So we have to, we
sort of refocus our idea about financing. General revenues generated
from a variety source have, we know that on a local, state, and national
level we have had to come up with a difference to have a transportation
budget. One of the things that supplemented the fuel tax in the, in the
past or recently has been some of the recovery acts done recently to give
more assistance but that came by general funds not fuel taxes, right. So
we know that, so we have to, pretty much we have to abandon it and it'll
be necessary to make up the difference for revenue for funding
transportation projects. In other words if you build it you have to maintain
it or you can just abandon it or you can have in some situation, like in
Minneapolis their bridges collapse and we know that's true. There's many
bridges are deficient, roads are deficient that we're going to have to
decide something. Are we going to spend all our money and really
enforce it and you look at the DOT is now recommending, there's a,
there's a, a study right now to try to force the hands of state DOTs to do
more repair and I think, I think you can see the message quite clear. And
the real question, the overall question: Can we continue on the same
paradigm? And I think that's a, that's a philosophical question but I, I think
we can say, "No. We can't." We have to go a different direction and this,
in the plan, our, our plan update is definitely saying this. We have to go in
da different direction. We can't expand any more without having a, a, a
sustainable financial source. Any questions or comments, comments too?

Flores: (inaudible) or actually Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: Thank you Madam Chair. Nice presentation. Thank you. Interesting,
interesting facts. What seems to be the trend with moving towards more
efficient vehicles? Obviously, the fuel revenue is going to continue to go
down.

McAdams: Exactly.

Hancock: So we have to move to, and I assume that that will be at a federal level,
moving more towards a, a vehicle tax rather than a consumption tax,
something that, that corresponds across the, the spectrum. What, what
seems to be the trends in that area?
McAdams: I think that, I think that it is. We're talking about it could either be like vehicle miles traveled, it could be a straight vehicle tax, it could be just maybe apportioning a financial, or a sustainable or regular funding out of the general fund, federal and the state. I think it's real at this point, I think it's really a problem and I think there's many groups who are looking at this and they're asking the federal government, "What are we going to do? We can't keep on going year to year refunding and stuff, we can't, we can't keep on complaining about the highway tax fund," and actually it's been, that's been used to offset the deficit too. That's really sort of a false figure, but I think you're right. We have to look at some kind of steady funding. The vehicle tax is maybe the way but obviously I can't answer. I think it's a really complex question but one that, it's been wafting but it has to be addressed. You know in that, that aspect so I think it'd be a good idea but I think not the only idea, you know that has to be concerned.

Hancock: Thank you Madam Chair.

Flores: We, we had somebody come and speak to us when we went to Albuquerque for the MPO, do you remember Mr. Murphy? And I don't remember his name but he was assigned with the State of New Mexico with a group of investigating ways to raise money and I know one of them was possibly doing car inspections and using that money to fund ...

Murphy: Right.

Flores: There were issues with rural people complaining about basically paying for roads in the city, and what was the solution for that? I don't ...

Murphy: I, I don't, Madam Chair I don't think they came up with a solution there.

Flores: No, those were just ideas that he was saying they had talked about and ...

Murphy: Right. Yes. Several, several years ago through direction from the legislature all the MPOs in the state worked with the State DOT and, and they did a study and they basically was, like they told, it was House Memorial 35 that came, came forward with many recommendations on, on funding sources and I think that each of those are various, various levels of either being kept, pushed along or, or, or, or as in the case of tolling, you know, you know sometimes ignored. I think it's going to be something that we continually debate and discuss and hopefully, hopefully we'll get, get some, you know get some steps in the right direction to make, make our situations better.

Garrett: Thank you Madam Chair. Are there sources of information that break down the usage of roads by commercial, residential, public?

McAdams: You mean overall, I mean by every road segment or for road, different types of roads in general?

Garrett: I think different types of roads in general.

McAdams: There is, the, the best source for this, in fact the source for all the, the, the, that I said today was the Federal Highway Statistics and every year they compose a huge book on statistics and I'm sure that that can be delineated if, anyway there's the Bureau of Transportation Statistics also, so either through the BTS or through FHWA Highway Statistics there should be an answer about usage, you know. If not that's to be something we'd research but I, I'm fairly familiar with the FHWA Statistics and I think that's one of the uses of different, different types of road facilities is there, yeah.

Garrett: Thank you. I, I think as we look at different ways to finance, we need to be considering why the roads need to be either upgraded or newly developed. Yeah, I agree with you that once they're in place they have to be maintained.

McAdams: Right.

Garrett: But there are different things that are driving why roads need to be expanded or newly constructed and part of that is population growth, part of it is economic growth and I keep going back to what's happening in the south county in particular and just, how do we address and how do we think about those roads cause there's a lot of, that's a complex network of, of roads that need to be developed, need to be improved, that need to be maintained but if we didn't have a port and we didn't have a multimodal yard there we wouldn't have to worry about that. So, unless we struck oil in, in Santa Teresa. Let's get that out as a rumor but ...

McAdams: But I think, I think you, I, I have a comment on this because I didn't add something but you have to look at what's the actual cost both if, financial and environmental, social and what are the benefits, right. And I think a lot of times transportation projects are not looked at in that way and they also when they're done they're not looking that way as well. And so I would say that if you looked at what are the benefits of developing roads in Santa Teresa I would say very much for economic benefit, right. But in combination if you look at what kind of things can we do to ameliorate air pollution, mobility things, you have to look at a whole package of, of public transportation, walking, and you know pedestrian, pedestrian, all kinds of modes to look at it comprehensively, you know. I think so saying, "Oh, well we're going to build it, it will pay for itself in fuel taxes," is not enough.
I think what are the, the good sides of the road and what are the bad sides the road and I think, you look in all the reports we're looking at that's what they're saying. We're ignoring all the complicated and multimodal and multifocal type of aspect too so it's, it's not simple and I think that you as Commissioners and us as technicians have to struggle with some of the same things so there's not a good answer and I think we all muddle through to a certain degree.

Flores: Anyone else? All right thank you very much for the presentation.

8. COMMITTEE AND STAFF COMMENTS

Flores: We'll move on to Committee and Staff Comments. Mr. Wray.

Wray: Thank you. Thank you Madam Chair. All of you should have received except for Madam Chair who wasn't here at the time, the copies of the current drafts of the 2016-2021 Airport and Surface Transportation Improvement Program.

Flores: Okay.

Wray: We are now within the public comment period for the adoption of the next TIP. It started at the TAPP, or at the TAC meeting, excuse me of last week. Not going to do any presentation on it, just providing it ...

Flores: Okay.

Wray: For your information so that you can look over it over the course of the next several weeks and provide us with any comments that you have regarding the upcoming TIP and this will be an Action Item at the June Policy Committee meeting.

Garrett: Madam Chair.

Flores: Yes Commissioner Garrett.

Garrett: Just as a point of clarification the Airport Transportation Improvement Program is, is the City’s airport?

Wray: That's correct.

Garrett: And do we know if there's a similar TIP that's being put together for the jet port? The Dona Ana County International Jet Port and I'm assuming that that would then be part of consideration by the El Paso MPO?
Murphy: Madam Chair, Commissioner Garrett. The, the airport projects are something that this MPO has, has traditionally ...

Flores: Missed.

Murphy: Or adopted and, and concluded and put out for public information. It's, it was a, I guess done at the request of the City and the desire of this Board to put out as much information to the public as, as we could. That being said having an airport TIP is not a requirement so I do not believe that the El Paso MPO constructs one for, for projects in their area.

Garrett: Does, does the TIP as such have to go through an MPO? Is that only an instrument of the MPO?

Murphy: The TIP is an MPO document, yes.

Garrett: So the County couldn't do something for transportation related improvement projects for the Jet Port?

Murphy: I think you could probably choose to highlight it on your ICIP.

Garrett: But it just wouldn't be hooked in with the state's transportation planning, is that correct?

Murphy: If, if I'm right I, I believe we just publish it and it ends here. I don't think that the state even accepts it from us.

Wray: Mr. Murphy's correct. The state does not accept it from us. It's, the, the airport projects are all funded by the FAA and they have a completely different process. They don't know what a TIP is so it's, it, it, we're, we do this because it's the will of the, of our Policy Committee that we, that we include it in for public information but it stops here. The state doesn't want it, the federal highways doesn't want it. It, they specifically direct us not to provide them with the information, in fact.

Garrett: And it's this Committee that has asked to do this even though it doesn't go anywhere?

Wray: That's correct.

Murphy: It, it goes onto our website and its information available to the public.

Garrett: But couldn't that just as well be done by the City of Las Cruces since that's the primary entity that would be benefiting from this?
Murphy: It could be and if, I guess if, if the, if this Committee does, you know decides for us not to, not to continue that I think that's something that, that could be done but with it, yeah, it's...

Garrett: It, yeah let me just make it clear where I'm coming from. I am not in any sense indicating a lack of support for these projects. I don't want there to be a public assumption that the MPO has any role to play in this particular effort and it seems to me that if it's appropriate for this to be part of the City's ICIP process that having it highlighted there is great. It may be that what we could consider as a Committee is simply to say that there are places to go for airport transportation projects, both the City and the County to look at information about those but I think it's misleading. I'm, I've always been confused with this because I look at this and I say, "Well it's a, it's, looks like the same thing as our Surface Transportation Improvement Program," in terms of the way it's laid out and everything so I'm not sure what the point is of having you all do that staff work. We got plenty of things that need to be done so that might be something for further discussion at some future time.

Flores: Okay. Does anybody else have a comment about that (inaudible) cause I don't have a problem cutting it or just, I, but I think we state on there that it's just listed because as a, maybe we can state for, this is just listed as a courtesy and MPO doesn't have any, but I don't mind cutting it either if it helps with staff time. Did you have a comment Commissioner Hancock?

Hancock: I, I tend to agree with you. If it's not necessary then it'll be confusing.

Flores: All right.

Hancock: Thank you.

Flores: So any Committee comments? Okay. Commissioner Hancock.

Hancock: Is staff complete?

Wray: I believe so, yes.

Hancock: Thank you. On behalf of the County and South Central Regional Transportation District we thank the Board for, and MPO for the positive vote on the support of the TIGER grant. That's really appreciated. As a matter of information the NMDOT this week has notified me that the, they have approved the South Central Regional Transportation District Five-Year Plan and Budget. So that's good news. We finally got that out of the way. In addition to that I received notification today that, from NMDOT, that I have a notice of obligation so the full $440,000 legislative appropriation for buses is totally consumed and we will be buying five new
buses at South Central Regional Transportation District and moving forward with the Five-Year plan and we're looking forward to trying to provide the appropriate transportation for rural communities in Dona Ana and Sierra County. Thank you Madam Chair.

Flores: Okay. Thank you. Anyone else? No? Okay. We'll then, we'll move on to, and no more from staff.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

Flores: We'll move on to Public Comment. Does anybody from the public like to make a comment? No? Okay.

10. ADJOURNMENT (2:24 p.m.)

Flores: So then we'll move on to adjournment. We're adjourned.

Chairperson