MESILLA VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The following are minutes from the Technical Advisory Committee of the Mesilla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which was held on August 7, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall Council Chambers, 700 N. Main, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Bartholomew (CLC Transit)
David Wallace (BLM) - proxy for Bill Childress
Steve Self (NMSU) – (proxy for Greg Walke)
John Gwynne (DAC Flood Commission)
Larry Altamirano (LCPS)
Louis Grijalva (CLC Public Works)
David Wallace (BLM)
Jack Valencia - arrived 4:24
Willie Roman (CLC Transportation)
Jolene Herrera (NMDOT)

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Greg White (NMDOT)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 4:06 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Larry Altamirano motioned to approve the agenda.
Louis Grijalva seconds the motion.
All in favor.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3.1 June 5, 2014

Bartholomew: I had a, just a couple of corrections, I think Tom just little grammatical things throughout it. Page 5, looks like line 24 it says “gonna”, it should probably be going to. On page 7 there’s also a couple of other “gonna’s” in there on line 28 and line 40 just, going to.

Murphy: Okay we’ll do a universal find replace, but I probably short-cutted on my speech patterns.
Bartholomew: And on page 8, line 5 I think it should be the Policy Committee, instead of the Police Committee.

John Gwynne motioned to approve the minutes of June 5, 2014.
Jolene Herrera seconds the motion.
All in favor.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comment

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Coordinated public transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

White: Mr. Chairmen, good to see you, members of the Committee, thanks for giving me the time to speak today. I promise I won’t go through the slides one by one and read them. What I’m here to do essentially today is to describe the process and ask for your help and for your input in this planning process. Seven years ago the NMDOT did a coordinated public transit human services transportation plan. A coordinated plan is a requirement for transit agencies to receive certain types of funding.

Bartholomew: Mr. White are you doing a presentation, I don’t think we’ve got it up here on the … or we don’t have our monitors up here.

White: Oh I see, well I’m so sorry. I’ve got one right here. I’m going to give you the gist of this presentation that I have in front of me and it’s up here but I’m not going read every slide. You know as I was saying a few minutes ago, seven years ago the New Mexico Department of Transportation Transit and Rail Division did a coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan. A coordinated plan is a requirement for transit agencies to receive certain kinds of funding 5310. In addition though, we consider a coordinated plan to be an invaluable tool for any entity involved in transportation planning; whether it be a social services agencies, the education systems, the hospital, the systems for the elderly care, for any entity that needs to justify getting funding for regional transit, coordinated plan is invaluable. And what we do through the coordinated planning process is come out to the entities, come out the agencies that RTPO’s (Regional Transportation Planning Organizations) and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and request input. We’ve based our planning process on the RTPO boundaries throughout the state because RTPO’s include every area of New Mexico. Metropolitan Planning Organizations are all included within the boundaries of a MTP in one way or another. We are currently working with all of the RTPO’s except for the mid-region and the reason is they’ve done their own planning process. We’ll integrate our plan with there’s and the end process for this planning project. We’re looking at what kinds of steps, what kinds of information are available to
us. Statewide Multimodal Plan, local governments, general plans, long-range plans from the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations and on...can you all see this slide? Okay great. I’ve included these particular types of plans because what they are indicative of the types of planning documents that useful: hospitals, schools, other entities can also put their comments into this long-range coordinated plan, and we urge that. The reason we urge that is, we know that if an entity is going forward with a request for funding for public transit and they can say not only is this in our planning document, but it’s also in this entities, and in this entities and in this entities, your chances of getting the funding are just significantly stronger. We believe that this kind of planning process is essential to the future of this state. Several reasons, one: we all know funding is tighter and tighter and tighter and demand/need is higher and higher and higher. What we’re trying for within the transit and rail division is to create a model planning process and a model planning outcome that can be used locally. We know we’re going to have to fight every other state; we’re going to have to justify it. We’re going to do our best and we’re doing that by coming out to meet with you.

The update of ... the planning process is an update of a 2007 plan and graphics will be developed and I’m going to kind of skip a little bit here. Actually I’m going to go back. I thought I had it. Sorry I won’t be able to go back, but the planning process that we’re involved in now is two parts, one: meeting with the committees and commissions and the other is we’ve hired a consultant to do demographic research. They’re currently looking at population trends, population needs, existing services and gaps between the needs for services and the existing services. That’s the first phase. Me coming out here and them doing that research. We are going to have four chapters, four sections on this. I’m not going to read all those, but we’re also going to go in and include a section on input that we received from the different committees and commissions that we had to meet with. We’re looking at a timeline of preliminary meetings in August and September. I will be coming back out to meet the policy committees in November and December and a final plan will be developed in January. Final plan will be sent to each of the organizations that we meet with. We’ll also send the draft out, and I said you know we’re going to ask for help from you, I’m asking for help from you. What I need is when you look through the existing policies and recommendations at the end of this document, tell me if they’re still valid. If they’re not valid, tell me why. If they need to be expanded, tell me that. If they’re new goals, objectives and plans that need to be added to this planning document, tell us. We’ll integrate those into the document. We’ll then send out a ... we’ve already gone over this. Existing strategy, these are from the 2007 plan. We will also go in and when we integrate the comments that we receive from you, we’ll put in an analysis of why these are important. We will send out the draft plan to this committee and to the other committees and we’ll ask for your input. Timing is essential, it’s a very tight timeline and we know it.
Our funding stream is contractually limited at this time and so we are going to stick with this process. And essentially that’s what I came here to do, give you this input. I will be sending out a revised set of slides and I’ll ask that those be distributed, PowerPoints and so that each of you will have the existing goals and objectives. The 2007 plan is also available online, so you can go online, you’ll be able to look at the plan in its entirety and you’ll be able to take some time I think with that. I’m always available, my phone number, my office phone is right there, my email address is there. If I’m not in the office, feel free leave a message. I’m really good about getting back with people within 24 hours unless I’m just not available. I think that this is an essential kind of a project. For those of you who don’t know me, my first job was as an intern with Dona Ana County, I became senior land use planner for Dona Ana County, went on to work in Socorro County as a land use planner and I’ve been in transportation planning for the last 12 years, totally committed to this process and to the future of Dona Ana County. We support transit and we support the processes of planning for transportation issues in the state. I thank you all for your time, but I’ll stand for questions, if you have any.

Bartholomew: Thank you Mr. White. Are there any questions from the committee at the moment? And you said your timeline; you’re going to be coming back to RPO’s and MPO’s in ...

White: November and December.

Bartholomew: Okay and then the final draft in your timeline …

White: I’m going to send out a draft in late November

Bartholomew: Late November

White: And then I will have a final document in January.

Bartholomew: Okay thank you.

White: Thank you also, thank all of you.

Bartholomew: Thank you Greg.

5.2 Transportation Alternative Program Process Discussion

Herrera: Mr. Chair, I guess I’m up. So before the meeting I handed out a piece of paper, it’s the draft FY16-17 transportation alternatives programs schedule, so if you can just pull that out. The stuff that I’m going over isn’t on that piece of paper, but it’s good to know kind of where we are in the
process. I don’t have a formal presentation plan; I was just going to go
over some of the points because we are still internally developing the
criteria and some of the guidelines for the TAP program. But so far there’s
been some major changes based on some feedback that we received
from the MPO’s and RPO’s back in May. We had a meeting and got a
bunch of feedback and so we try to incorporate a lot of that into our new
process. The first big change, I don’t know if you all remember the
ranking sheets, but the very first kind of section was asking for
certifications, and that confused I think a lot of the agencies, because
without funding it’s impossible to kind of have your certifications already
done and we were awarding points for that. And so it really wasn’t fair to a
lot of the programmatic types of applications like safe routes to schools,
transit stuff and so we took that section completely out, so we won’t be
asking for certifications … if you happen to have them for some reason
you can always put that in your application, but it’s not something that’s
going to be given points anymore. And it’s also a way for us to not ding
the programmatic applications.

Another thing that we’re doing is we are reducing the number of
planning points that were … that are going to be allowed, so there was a
section that said you know for every plan that you have in your project you
get one point, and what we kind of discovered is that the larger entities
tend to have more plans, they know comprehensive plan and all kinds
of things that maybe some of the smaller communities don’t have and so
we felt that that was a little bit unfair maybe for the smaller communities
who just don’t have the capacity for developing a lot of the plans. So we’ll
be reducing those points. Again we haven’t really discussed how or by
what factor, but we won’t put as much emphasis on having your project in
a slew of plans.

So now the really big one, we’re going to a statewide process for
selection, so that’s something that we heard good things and bad things
about at the meeting in May. The decision was made based on the fact
that it seems like a lot of the smaller projects that were submitted were
kind of piecemealed together. Whereas if maybe more funding would
have been available, we would have received larger requests, they would
have been able to do complete projects. That’s kind of the basis for it.
The other thing that happened, is we got a whole lot of projects and that’s
not a bad thing by any means, but it’s really difficult to try to track and get
all these projects through the process when you’re tracking $120,000
projects, whereas if you had one one-million dollar project, it’s easier to
help the entity get through that process. With that being said, there still
are population goals that we’ll have to meet, so there’s the rule category of
TAP funding, there’s the small urban category, and then the flexible
category. There’s also a large urban, but that goes exclusively to El Paso
MPO and to the Albuquerque MPO region, so we won’t see any of that
funding here.
So one other thing that we’re requiring is that all TAP projects apply for both design and construction unless you receive ... your entity receives prior approval from the design regions and so for all of us, it would be the south region design local government project development engineer who would kind of make that call whether they think that your local government could handle doing your own internal design without requesting funding for that. And the reason that we made that call is because we had a lot of the smaller local governments this year who didn’t request design and didn’t realize all of the things that they had to do, and so we ended up pushing their projects and giving them a design phase. We want to try and make it as easy as we can for everybody and we found that that’s one thing that could possible help.

Again with the statewide ranking process, we do realize that we probably will be funding higher dollar projects, but that does not mean that we’re excluding the smaller dollar amounts, so for instance Las Cruces Public Schools got the safe routes to school coordinator for $30,000 a year, we’re by no means excluding those kind of projects. If you have a sidewalk project that only costs $100,000 but it’s going to make a really big difference, apply for it. We’re just I guess kind of taking the cap ... the ceiling off of how much you can apply for. And that’s kind of the major points. Like I said, we’re still developing the guide, it should be out probably towards the end of this month in preparation for this September call for projects and that will be for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. The intent being probably to have your design funds in fiscal year ‘16 and your construction in fiscal year ‘17. So if there are any questions I can try to answer them more ... talk to our TAP coordinator and get back with you.

Bartholomew: Yes Louis?

Grijalva  Mr. Chairmen, Jolene. How much money is going to be available throughout the state?

Herrera:  Oh, I’m sorry. I should have started with that. There’s just over five million dollars available. And again that’s broken up into the different population categories, but that at least gives you some sort of base point.

Bartholomew: Any other questions from the committee?

5.3 Truck Routes Discussion

Murphy:  Thank you Mr. Chair. As you walked in, you were passed out a map that was created off of some of the MPO shape files that were labeled as truck routes. Some correspondence I’ve been having back and forth with Willie and figure that this is probably a good time that we want to update this. I wanted to get this out to the committee and start thinking about what we want to change as far as this. The history of truck routes within the region
and I believe the city council adopted a truck route map back in the early '90s. At some point in the early 2000's the MPO inherited the ownership of those shape files, but I couldn't find any evidence of us formally adjusting them or adopting them as an MPO document, so I would ... I want to do that at this point and I thought this TAC meeting would be a good opportunity to introduce it to the technical staff in the region and then we can keep bringing this back until we've refined it to a point where we can adopt it through the Policy Committee. With that I'd like to entertain any discussion.

Bartholomew: Any questions from the committee on this? Mrs. Herrera.

Herrera: Mr. Chair thanks. Tom can you just tell me what the intent was or what do they mean by truck route exactly? Is that just trying to limit the trucks to those routes or ... just so we're all clear on what exactly that means?

Murphy: From my vantage point, I think it's ... where local governments ... where it allows them to place restrictions on larger trucks entering into various neighborhoods. I believe that the last time there's a portion of Alameda from Madrid to Picacho that was specifically prevented from having trucks on them. Those of you familiar with the area have seen that that place is signed for no trucks over six wheels. What this map does is enable that. We do understand that NMDOT and USDOT routes have to be on the truck route map, but beyond that I think there's local discretion.

Bartholomew: Mr. Altamirano.

Altamirano: Tom I have a question. On hazardous cargo and stuff, would this also pertain to the truck route? Is that designated in this particular document?

Murphy: This doesn't specifically address hazardous cargo. Historically within the state, we've been hesitant with ... to designate specific routes with the exception I think of the WIP route as it goes around Santa Fe. I'm not aware of any other hazardous routing in the state. I think that we have a lot of military installations within the state and so there's really been a little ... there's been hesitation because of that to limit where hazardous cargo can go. And then you know additionally the same thing applies with the US routes and the interstate routes is that those can't be limited.

Altamirano: I'm sorry, did you say can't or can?

Murphy: They cannot be limited. We can't place a hazardous cargo or truck restriction on a US route or interstate highway route.

Bartholomew: Mr. Roman.
Roman: Mr. Chair, I think it might help the committee here to understand a little bit more about how this affects us and some of the sections or departments or agency that you all represent. We get various calls from residents who want restrictions placed on roads, namely for 18 wheelers and even buses, because they feel like these types of vehicles don’t belong in certain areas or that maybe even potentially the roadways aren’t built to a specific standard to be able to accommodate the larger vehicles. And in communicating with Tom, what we do when we get a question like that or a concern is we want to look at whether a roadway is on the truck route map, because if it is we’re not going to restrict it because there’s already a general understanding somewhere that these maps are available and the information is available for public use and so people generally make their routes based on this information. That being said there probably should be some kind of mechanism and this is probably the best arena to do … to discuss this because it does effect bus routes for example, it will effect school bus, the decisions for school buses and I think even to the point of public works and the pavement conditions of some of these roads, because if we allow these trucks to go on to some of these facilities then we have to be agreeable that it’s sufficient to accommodate them. So in saying that, that’s how it effects our operations. We are mostly a maintenance type of operation, but as far as traffic engineering is concerned, if we … we will consider restricting if we have knowledge that trucks or buses or anything that’s considered a larger vehicle such as that, if they’re using that facility more often than you would expect then we will go ahead and put a restriction like that, so hopefully that will help to understand where this stems from.


Gwynne: Yes, just one quick question Tom. When it comes to the restrictions that are potentially being proposed or are already in place, is it based on the vehicle size, vehicle weight? How does all that play into that?

Murphy: Mr. Chair, Mr. Gwynne. The MPO itself does not impose any restrictions, we just merely … we’ll merely designate what’s a truck route. I believe it’ll be up to your local ordinances to define what those restrictions will be.

Gwynne: Thank you.

Bartholomew: Mr. Altamirano.

Altamirano: Mr. Chair, Tom. I understand the side … the part from the city. Now county wise, for example; let’s say the East Mesa where you have several trucks that are going up 70 and coming down either way. Somewhere down the line someone had told me that the frontage roads were built in that particular area, which would be North Main all the way up to the pass,
that the frontage roads were built ... there’s more construction put into them to account for semi-trucks off of the frontage road, would anybody have information regarding that? I don’t know if that’s a DOT or New Mexico Highway or whom, but because we’re seeing more and more semi-trucks coming off of 70 getting on and off of the frontage roads, so I was just curious especially with the construction that’s up there right now as to the frontage roads and possible lot of wear and tear that hadn’t been anticipated.

Herrera: Mr. Chair, I can probably try to answer some of that. So US-70 on the frontage roads are an NMDOT, well they’re USDOT routes and the frontage roads are indeed designed to handle the traffic from US-70, should something happen. Should there be a wreck or anything ... that there purpose is to detour traffic onto them, so they were built to withstand trucks, the lane widths and that kind of thing were determined based on semi’s. We can’t restrict them from using the frontage roads. I hope that sort of helps.

Bartholomew: Tom I had a question. You said this was developed in the ’90’s this one that we’re looking at?

Murphy: Mr. Chair, yes from my research of that I found a city council ordinance ’92 or something like that. Mr. Valencia probably voted on it where it was adopted, that was the last official action I could find. But I think here at this level, what we want to do is you know have it periodically reviewed and ratified by this body.

Bartholomew: And once more, what are the criteria that ... was it strictly empirical stuff like, you know the ability of the street to handle this or was it neighborhood concern involved with it too or?

Murphy: I imagine the bulk of it were the neighborhood concerns, the connecting industrial zoning to the major cross country and cross regional routes and then once those factors are decided, I think the construction standards will look to this map to as far as then now they do construction on any particular facility.

Bartholomew: The reason I ask is if you know there was neighborhood concerns, as Willie knows there was one and he was eluding to it in the Mesquite Street neighborhood, that I only heard from one person that city’s community liaison, Jaime, had commented that there seemed to be some issues with the type of traffic on Mesquite Street, the heavy traffic and I don’t know whether that’s something to work with her with to get more of the sense of the community sense of what the Mesquite area should be.
Murphy: That's a good ... I think I'll forward this to her for some comment. That's a good idea.

Herrera: Mr. Chair. I had another question Tom. Will this be in any way connected to the MTP update? I mean will you be taking maybe this as a portion of out for public input?

Murphy: I think that that would probably ensure that we do look at it periodically if we start including this, it would be similar to the functional classification procedure thoroughfare. So I think absolutely that's something that we can and probably should do. Thank you.

Bartholomew: Jack.

Valencia: Thank you Mr. Chair. First I'd like to apologize for being late. I had the wrong meeting location, so I was rushing around town. But in respect to Tom's comments and going back to the '92 ordinance, there were a couple of things that were evolving at that time; one with regard to the Mesquite Street stuff, is that they had some weight requirements only for delivery trucks only, as I recall to be allowed in that historic area. Secondly there were two projects that were going on simultaneous with regard to that issue; that was the main street reconstruction ... reconstructing it again but back in the '90's in Picacho Avenue also were main construction projects of interest that had high truck traffic and so there was a desire to utilize the interstate system and now that the interstate system is improved with the ability to take traffic down I-10 with the most recent improvements, that should you know create greater opportunity to move traffic that way.

Bartholomew: Any other comments from the committee? Mrs. Herrera.

Herrera: Sorry just one more. It's something that the policy committee of this MPO talks about a lot, is how to restrict trucks going down US 70, Main Street kind of through town and I know that that's mentioned a lot. Jack is the upgrade of the interchange and how trucks are able to go around now and maneuver that interchange without issues, but like Tom said earlier, until legislation really changes at the state level, we're not allowed to restrict trucks on that route, but it definitely is a discussion that happens often. The DOT is aware of the desires of the city to do that and we're not against it we just don't have the ability to do that.

Valencia: So it requires state legislation as opposed to adopting a city ordinance restricting truck traffic.

Herrera: Yes, because it is a USDOT route.
Valencia: Okay.

Bartholomew: Any other comments, seeing none, thank you Tom. Did you get some good information?

Murphy: Yes I did. I think we'll finish this up ... we'll include it in our upcoming public involvement, which ... at your September meeting, hope to have the finalized meeting schedule so everyone here can attend it they so desire. From the staff request and I think I know, Mesquite Street, but I'd like to you know any other roads that should be included or should be excluded from this map from the standpoint of this committee would be helpful for staff to hear in the next couple of months. Thank you.

Bartholomew: Thank you Tom.

6. COMMITTEE AND STAFF COMMENTS – No comments

Bartholomew: Next, comments from the committee at this point in time? Seeing none, are there any staff comments?

Murphy: Just in case, I guess we had some change in staff since we last met in June. Chowdhury Siddiqui was hired by the Mid-Region Council of Governments to work as a modeler for them, and so currently our associate transportation planner position is vacant. We'll be having interviews on that I believe beginning next week, so we hope to have that position filled rather quickly, but I think you all missed being able to tell Chowdhury goodbye.

Bartholomew: Thank you Tom.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS – No public comments

8. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.

Jack Valencia motioned to adjourn.
Larry Altamirano seconds the motion.

Chair