



Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Policy Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

3:30 pm

In Person:

Groesbeck Room
 Manhattan Public Library
 629 Poyntz Ave
 Manhattan, KS 66502

Virtual:

Zoom meeting
 Meeting ID: 919 154 6755
 Passcode: 148813

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT		
x	Keith Ascher	Geary County Commission
x	Mike Moriarty	KS Dept of Transportation
x	Peter Oppelt	Manhattan City Commission
	Dee McKee	Pottawatomie Co. Commission
x	Ronna Larson	Junction City Commission
x	John Ford	Riley County Commission
	Clifford Baughman	Wamego City Commission
NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT		
	Will Sharp	Federal Highway Admin.
	Kelley Paskow	Fort Riley Representative
	Eva Steinman	Federal Transit Admin.
x	Anne Smith	Flint Hills ATA

Staff Present		
x	Jared Tremblay	MPO
x	Abigail Danner	MPO

Guests Present		
	Desree Pettera	
	Randy Pettera	
	Ryne Dowling	KDOT
	Diane Novak	

1. Welcome
 - Meeting called to order at 3:32p
2. Public Comment Opportunity (for items not on the agenda)
3. Financial Update
 - Jared Tremblay gave an overview of the accounts and monthly statements.
4. Staff Updates
 - TDM/Connect 2050 - EVRP progress
 - Jared Tremblay noted the FHMPO hosted 7 public meetings across the region the last week of January and first week of February, with high attendance rates. He noted the public survey has received almost 200 responses.

Special Accommodations: Please notify the MPO at (785) 620-3070 or FHMPO@FlintHillsMPO.org at least 72 hours in advance if you require special accommodations to attend this meeting. We will make every effort to meet reasonable requests. The MPO does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, or national origin, according to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. For more information or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, visit the MPO office at the address above or www.FlintHillsMPO.org.

- EVRP – Jared Tremblay noted the consultant has sent a final draft for staff review, and that the hope is the final copy is ready in March.
 - Keith Ascher asked if the EVRP was required by the State and if the change in administration would affect EVRP funding & timelines.
 - Jared Tremblay stated that it was not required, rather requested by City of Manhattan and K-State. He stated the new administration will not be affecting the project as the funds were already obligated.
- KDOT Letter of Support – DCIP – Jared Tremblay provided an overview of the DCIP process that Junction City is undertaking, and that they'd like a letter of support from KDOT.
 - Mike Moriarty recommended reaching out to Joel Skelley – director of policy at KDOT.
 - Jared Tremblay state he would contact Mr. Skelley
 - John Ford asked if it would be possible to go after DCIP for Ogden's Riley Ave project as well, as he's concerned that if JC's grant is funded then Ogden's is not likely to be funded.
 - Jared Tremblay noted that DCIP is for construction only and that JC is paying for design work now
 - Ronna Larson stated that JC's DCIP application will be ready to go, and that working out a collaboration with Ogden is unlikely to be done on time.
 - John Ford stated he thinks Ogden's project would be ready next year for DCIP.

5. KDOT Update:

- Mike Moriarty stated KDOT is monitoring the USDOT & FHWA updates per the new administration. He noted that there have been employee dismissals and that it may affect processes and workloads, specifically that all actions normally approved at local district level are now to be sent to DC for review/preapproval prior to KS offices issuing their approval. This will affect TIP, STIP, UPWP, NEPA clearance, design exceptions, etc.
- Mike Moriarty noted that FHWA is currently not processing STIP amendments, and there is no work on when that injunction will be lifted. KDOT is monitoring this situation and trying to move forward with projects.
 - Jared Tremblay asked about updates on I-70 & K-18, as construction is set to start this spring/summer.

- Mike Moriarty stated that project is on hold, but he will check on a project timeline now.
 - Keith Ascher asked if I-70 & Taylor Rd was also on hold.
 - Ryne Dowling stated he would look into the project
6. **ACTION ITEM:** Approval of the January 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- Keith Ascher moved and John Ford seconded. Motion passed.
7. **ACTION ITEM:** Approval of 2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #6
- Jared Tremblay described the updates in the amendment.
 - John Ford moved and Peter Oppelt seconded. Motion passed.
8. **ACTION ITEM:** Election of Chair
- Ronna Larson moved to elect John Ford as chair. Peter Oppelt seconded. Motion passed
9. **ACTION ITEM:** I-70 & Taylor Rd Interchange Letter of Support
- Jared Tremblay stated that the City of JC staff requested a letter of support from the MPO for the I70 & Taylor Road project. 2 years ago, Board voted to put it into the TIP for preliminary engineering. Full interchange was supported and is in C2040 list of projects – there was support of it in the past, but 2 years have passed.
 - Desiree Pettera provided public comment. Her view is that MPO is not in position to support/not support; should be up to local governments (JC/County/residents).
 - John Ford: Strictly transportation, not economic development. He is unsure what exactly would be covered in the letter of support: bridge or interchange?
 - Jared Tremblay noted the project is in the TIP, \$1.8 mil for fed money, 200k in state money for interchange.
 - Ryne Dowling: PE phase is obligated, but no construction has been obligated.
 - Desiree Pettera: City of JC cannot afford development for roads in that area.
 - Keith Ascher state he was bothered by last-minute request/uncertainty of funding. He supports that the bridge needs to be replaced; but wanted to know if the state will purchase ROW for future interchange? He believes state will cover the bridge replacement.
 - Ronna Larson stated her last update was that there were multiple options: bridge, bridge w/ interchange. She believed the request was for a grant that needed to be submitted, but agreed the timing felt rushed. She does not feel

it's appropriate for Ronna/Keith (Geary County/JC) to approve without other MPO jurisdictions discussing it.

- Keith Ascher stated he felt the Board does not have enough information to sign a letter of support.
- John Ford agreed that the Board needs more information on what options are being explored before deciding for a letter of support.
- Desiree Pettra would like to request that public be notified of future meetings about the project.
- Ryne Dowling will look into the KDOT side of the meeting and find out more about KDOT's plans.
- Jared Tremblay stated he felt there was a need more information and more consensus between City & County on this topic, to have a consolidated voice/opinion on the project.
- John Ford stated that public input should be requested to guide policymakers.
- Ronna Larson will reach out to Ray/Leon at Public Works to understand what is going on.
- Jared Tremblay asked if Junction City and Geary County have an equivalent to MHK City/County/County meetings? If so, it would be helpful to open a conversation about this topic.
- Ronna Larson noted there are joint meetings w/ city, county, school district.
- Keith Ascher state he was not necessarily opposed to interchange but disagrees with how process has gone. He is also concerned that if the State requests paving of gravel roads it will be expensive for the county.
- No motion was taken as the item was changed from ACTION ITEM to DISCUSSION ITEM.
- Jared Tremblay let Keith & Ronna know that MPO is willing to help facilitate further discussions on this project.

10. **DISCUSSION ITEM:** MSA Expansion

- Jared Tremblay went over the proposed MSA expansion first introduced at the regional leadership meeting. The Topeka Chamber of Commerce wants to join with Manhattan and Lawrence MSAs. He stated he immediately reached out to KDOT and FHWA to see what effects this could have on the MPO and local jurisdictions. He noted that KDOT & FHWA stated that if the MSA were expanded, it appears the current three MPOs (FHMPO, Topeka, & Lawrence) could all continue operating as they do; no requirement to merge into one MPO.

- He stated that if the MPOs were required to combine, then the region would exceed 250,000 people and would no longer be a small MPO. This would affect funding disbursement but would not affect funding amounts for transportation. He noted that funds would go directly to the MPO which would hold a priority/selection process and administer the funds, whereas currently, KDOT does this for the FHMPO. It could affect rural-only funding as well.
 - John Ford noted METL (Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, Lawrence) – Chambers from these locations are driving this movement. The change would involve multiple layers of bureaucracy and take a long time. Concerned about rural communities if combined MSA exceeds 250k. Will remain a fluid situation/ongoing discussion.
 - Peter Oppelt stated that to him consolidation does not make sense for such a wide geographical area. Concerned about delays in infrastructure projects. Further he does not see benefit for Manhattan.
 - Keith Ascher stated we would lose regional identity with consolidation and become a small fish in a big pond.
 - John Ford stated the interstate does not go through Manhattan like it does through other communities in this movement and he feels it would not be a benefit for us.

11. **DISCUSSION ITEM:** EO Unleashing American Energy

- Jared Tremblay presented on EO 14154 and the potential impacts to the MPO. He noted that TERS projects are not currently obligated and are likely on hold. He also stated that CPG agreements are delayed, and that the FHMPO has funds for several months to make payroll and pay bills, but that if the delay extends to summer, then the MPO will have to use our money market savings funds to float expenses.

12. **DISCUSSION ITEM:** House Bill No. 2003

- Jared Tremblay presented on the impacts of the bill which is geared to increase costs on EV users. He showed existing costs and proposed.
- Jared Tremblay asked Mike Moriarty about the Road User Charge (RUC) study KDOT is hosting.
 - Mike Moriarty stated that Joel Skelley is in charge of the study and that it will take place sometime in the spring.

13. Motion for Adjournment

- Jared Tremblay noted KDOT had replied on the I-70 & Grandview Plaza bridge request from January's meeting. He said the hope is to have the repairs done in line with I-70 but that wasn't certain
 - Keith Ascher asked if the funds for this new project were also on hold.
- Keith Ascher moved and Ronna Larson seconded. Motion passed and meeting ended at 4:45p

Next Meeting March 19, 2025, Manhattan Public Library