



COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee convened in a regular meeting on Monday, August 4, 2014 at 301 W. Second Street, Room #1101, Austin, Texas.

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Mayor Pro Tem Cole (Chair)
Council Member Morrison
Council Member Riley

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Cole called the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

Mr. Bruce Melton, representing the 290 coalition which is a group of neighbors in Oak Hill who are concerned with how TxDOT was going to impact their neighborhood and environment. Mr. Melton stated as a neighborhood they have come together to presented to TxDOT alternative routes using 71 due to the congestion. They are asking the City of Austin to encourage TxDOT to do more objective evaluation of Alternative F.

Mr. Ralph Lake, retired technology executive from the Austin area and a very concerned citizen of Oak Hill. Mr. Lake thought the best way to summarize some of his concerns was to read a letter he had written to Linda White the facilitator at most of these meetings and to James TxDOT Project Manager requesting they put more of an effort into Concept F and please take another look at this design.

Council Member Riley, asked about the concern of A?

Mr. Lake, stated that is a large elevated section. Both A&C pass through Oak Hill without much access.

Mr. Alan Watts, has lived in Oak Hill since 1999. Discussed the elevated highway is really an overkill for their community. They are more expensive, more vulnerable to weather and maintenance issues, decrease property values and creates the physical barriers. The big issue is the elevated highway.

Ms. Beki Halpin, discussed the cost of option F is considerable less than the other options, but when you look at the evaluation matrix the cost wasn't listed. The cost of everything matters and the most economical option which was F should get extra recognition for that benefit.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about proposition 1 how would that work with respect to this project?

Ms. Halpin, stated there will be a proposition that will be on the ballot for November which will allow half of the rainy day funds that would go to Transportation, but are limited to non-toll projects which is 1.4 Billion annually.

Mr. Steve Beers, covered the Environmental sensitive's of this area. There are historic trees there oaks and pecans. The important thing is that the TxDOT project will go through this area. The concerns are the Williamson creek that goes through that area, the structure and the cutting down of trees.

Council Member Riley, asked Mr. Beers from an Environmental stand point do you see an issue with depressing lanes in this area?

Mr. Beers, stated he certainly hope so. He hadn't studied it, but even without detailed study the matrix could had elevated crudely things like noise. There is obviously a lot more noise on elevated sections.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 4, 2014 – Approved the August 4, 2014, minutes on a 2-0 vote with Council Member Morrison off the dais.

3. BRIEFING ON THE CENTRAL TEXAS OZONE ADVANCE PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORT, TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

Mr. Hoekzema, Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), Air Quality Program Manager discussed what Ozone is and why it's a problem. Ozone is an odorless, colorless gas; there is a distinction between ground-level Ozone and Ozone layer. Ozone layer is up high and that is what protects us from the Ozone layer light and Ground level layer of Ozone can cause upper respiratory problems. Ozone is one of six pollutants with National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Local ozone levels can be a problem for children, seniors and people with asthma.

Regional Efforts to Reduce Ozone that have been taken into effort to date are: 2002: One-hour ozone flex plan; 2004: early action compact SIP; 2008: eight-hour ozone flex plan; 2009: the "big push" and 2013: ozone advance program

action plan. The OAP action plan “goals” are stay in attainment of 75 ppb standard, continue reducing ozone to avoid nonattainment designation for new ozone standard, position region to attain a new ozone standard as quickly if possible if designated nonattainment, reduce exposure when high ozone occurs, minimize costs to region of potential nonattainment designation, include the state rules/programs applicable to the region, regional emission reduction measures, local/voluntary emission reduction measures, ongoing technical research, annual reporting and annual plan updates.

Ms. Andrews, Austin Transportation Department, Environmental Program Coordinator discussed the City of Austin commitments: fleet and fuel efficiencies measures, commuter trip reduction program measures, transportation emission reduction measures, heavy duty idling restrictions, ozone action program measures, energy efficiency and resource conservation policies, measures to cool developed areas, special event emission reduction policies, regional emission reduction measures and annual tracking and reporting.

The ongoing planning efforts are clean air coalition (CAC), CAC advisory committee, regional outreach and education plan, technical research projects (emphasis on quantifying costs and benefits and regional survey to be conducted in September), air quality reports by June 30th each year and OAP action plan updates by December 31st each year.

Council Member Morrison, asked about the impact of being identified as non-attainment. What does that mean for us?

Mr. Hoekzema, stated when an area gets designated non-attainment. The process is EAP will set a standard of which they are supposed to review every 5 years and then 2 years after that they are supposed to designate areas that are non-attainment. Areas that is non-attaining. Once that happens regulations under the clean air act kicks in for those counties under the non-attainment area.

Council Member Morrison, asked for examples of cities and regions that have been in non-attainments.

Mr. Hoekzema, stated they two that are currently in Texas are the Houston/Galveston area and Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Over the past two decades they have been two other Ozone non-attainment cities which are Beaumont/Port Arthur area and El Paso area.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE OAK HILL PARKWAY PROJECT FOR POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO US 290 AND SH 71 IN OAK HILL

Mr. Mario Espinoza, Deputy Executive Director, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Ms. Melissa Hurst, Mobility Authority Central Outreach and Mr. Wade Strong, RTG.

Ms. Melissa Hurst, discussed the environmental process of US 290/SH 71 West. The beginning of this process in August 2012, staff has worked very hard to make this a community driven effort, branding effort. There have been 18 stakeholder meetings, 8 citizen workshops, 3 open houses and 5 newsletters.

The Oak Hill Parkway Tentative high level study schedule: new environmental study launched, October, 2012, kick-off public input-first scoping meeting, November, 2012, ongoing public involvement, open houses, workshops etc. development of environmental document, 2013 – 2015. Public hearing on project, 2015, environmental document finding anticipated, 2016 and if build alternative advances construction anticipated to begin to be determined.

Mr. Strong discussed the purpose and what we are trying to do? Improve mobility and operational efficiency along 290/71; promote long-term congestion management; increase multimodal travel options for people and good; improve safety and improve emergency response. The need or what we are trying to solve is traffic congestion related to population growth – Travis County has grown from 212, 000 in 1960 to just over 1 million in 2010; crashes on US 290/SH71 West, 304 between 2009 -2001, resulting in one fatality, nine incapacitating injuries, other injuries and property damage, lost time drivers waste more than 340,000 hours per year stuck in traffic (Texas Transportation Institute, 2011), lack of reliable connectivity and unreliable route for transit and emergency vehicles. The development of concepts are held two community workshops to develop concepts, these workshops resulted in 8 build concepts, during public input, two enhancements were developed that provided improved access to ACC and extended the transition past Circle Drive and a process of narrowing the concepts for additional study was developed and shared with the community.

Mr. Strong discussed the Evaluation Screening Process: Phase 1, does the concept meet the purpose and need for the project- completed. Phase 2, analyze the concepts using the purpose and need and other performance measures – draft completed. Phase 3, develop engineering and schematic-level alternatives and study all environmental, social, and economic components. Next phase to be performed. Next steps are continue to engage the public, coordinate with federal, state and local agencies, host additional workgroup, stakeholder and context sensitive solutions meetings and refine and further analyze remaining concepts.

Council Member Morrison, asked about alternative F. Evaluation Screening decision are there any number that was not carried forward or is there any number limit that is carried forward?

Mr. Strong, stated there was no predetermined number that was carried forward it was the concepts that look good and look like they could be developed further and really could result in a good mobility project that would be safe and reliable.

Council Member Morrison, asked about the environmental standards. Is it subject to SOS or TECQ standards?

Mr. Strong, stated he believes it is the TECQ standards that are followed.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about a non-toll project; there is not a gap in the federal funding that is received?

Mr. Espinoza, stated that is correct. Most of that funding will either come from public sources or private sources. Private sources there are some cases where developers or land owners nearby will find that by doing that enhancement to that roadway would then bring enhancement to their property or the ultimate use of that property.

Council Member Riley, asked about A&C, is there a bigger picture?

Mr. Strong, stated they are still called A&C, but the big difference is that A is depressed at the "Y" and C is elevated.

Council Member Riley, asked about alternative F not given a fair shake because it would not provide a route for emergency vehicles or an alternate route during accidents? What we actually heard there would be alternative routes?

Mr. Strong, stated that when you don't have parallel frontage roads that when there is an emergency or accident on those main lanes and the traffic has nowhere to go that concept will not fare as well. However, we are going back and looking at models that will show the results of that area.

Council Member Riley, asked about another concern of the elevated freeway through the area?

Mr. Strong, stated the visual impacts will be elevated in the third phase. We recognize this community really values the character of their community and would like to lower the freeway at the Y. But, the traffic that is anticipated for that area in 2015 separations is much needed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Cole adjourned the meeting with no objection at 3:50 p.m.