

**MPO POLICY BOARD MEETING
LONGVIEW METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Wednesday, March 10, 2021
2:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

With a quorum of the Longview Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board present, the meeting was called to order by Mayor of Longview Andy Mack at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, 2021 utilizing a videoconferencing tool.

Present for the videoconference were:

*Andy Mack	Longview Mayor
*Kyle Kutch	White Oak Mayor
*J.D. Shipp	Gladewater Mayor
*Phillip Mauldin	Harrison County Commissioner
*Vernon Webb	TxDOT – Tyler District
*Buddy Williams	TxDOT – Atlanta District
*Keith Bonds	City of Longview
*Michael Shirley	City of Longview
*Rolin McPhee	City of Longview
Ingrid Self	City of Longview
Bryan McBride	Longview MPO
Sharon McCord	Longview MPO

* denotes Policy Board voting member

Item I. Call meeting to order and welcome

Longview Mayor Andy Mack called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Item II. Citizen comment

No citizen comments.

Item III. Approval of the October 28, 2020 meeting minutes

Mayor Mack asked the board if there were any changes or revisions to the minutes. No comments were made and Mayor Mack asked the board for a motion to consider approval of the October 28, 2020 Policy Board meeting minutes as presented. Rolin McPhee made the motion and Michael Shirley seconded it. All were in favor and the motion carried (9-0).

Item IV. Approval of a Resolution adopting the Texas Department of Transportation's 2021 Safety Performance Measure (PM1) Targets

Ingrid Self reviewed the targets set by the State in compliance with the Federal Highways' requirements beginning with the five Federal Safety Performance Measures (PM1) targets. This year, when setting targets for the number and rate of fatalities, TxDOT modified their methodology to incorporate The Road to Zero Initiative. Acknowledging that any loss of life is unacceptable and that a majority of motor vehicle crashes can be prevented, the Texas Transportation Commission adopted an order in May of 2019 that directed TxDOT to work towards the goal of reducing the number of deaths on Texas roadways by half by the year 2035 and to zero by the year 2050. November 7, 2020 marked 20 years of daily deaths on our roadways with more than 70,000 lives lost to preventable fatal crashes. Sadly, even with the decrease in traffic levels dropping

to nearly 44% during the height of the pandemic, it did not change the death rate to the positive. The vision of eliminating fatalities on our roadways will require making intentional improvements over time and to all contributing factors, many of which are linked to driver behavior. TxDOT has approved to decrease the expected rise of fatalities to not more than a five-year average of 3,687. The calendar year target for 2021 would be 3,384 fatalities, again acknowledging that no loss of life is considered acceptable. The State also set a Rate of Fatalities, which is to Decrease the expected rise of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled to not more than a five-year average of 1.33. The calendar year target for 2021 would be 1.25 fatalities per 100 MVMT. The 2021 Targets involving serious injuries are to decrease the expected rise of serious injuries to not more than a five-year average of 17,151. The calendar year target for 2021 would be 18,835 serious injuries. The rate would decrease the serious injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled to not more than a five-year average of 6.06 serious injuries. The calendar year target for 2021 would be 6.51 serious injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. 2021 Target is to decrease the expected rise of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries to not more than a five year average of 2,316.40; the 2021 calendar year target would be 2,560. The Longview MPO has adopted safety as its highest project selection weighting criteria and applying more points to potential projects where the number and rate of crashes are above the state average. These targets are set utilizing TxDOT and TTI's extensive data collection and analysis; therefore, MPO staff recommends supporting the state's safety targets as presented.

Mayor Mack asked the board for a motion to consider approval of a Resolution adopting the Texas Department of Transportation's 2021 Safety Performance Measure (PM1) Targets. Vernon Webb made the motion and Rolin McPhee seconded it. All were in favor and the motion carried (9-0).

Item V. Approval of Resolution adopting modifications to the Texas Department of Transportation's Pavement and Bridge Performance Measure (PM2) Targets.

PM2 Targets include six metrics related to the condition of key elements of roadway infrastructure, providing measurements for the good and poor conditions of Interstate pavement, non-interstate pavement, and bridges. TxDOT is responsible for collecting the necessary measurements and inspections to determine the condition ratings defined by FHWA. When the initial targets were set in 2018, TxDOT had recently switched from a method using visual pavement surveys to a more automated method of data collection. Three years later, more consistent pavement data has been used to develop the new targets. This has resulted in a slight improvement in the statewide performance target for Interstate pavement in good condition and conversely those in poor condition. For non-Interstate pavement, the 2-year target was exceeded. Much of this can be attributed to TxDOT's efforts in improved pavement management, maintenance and rehabilitation strategies. In particular, the preservation treatment strategy of "keeping good roads good" has contributed to a higher percentage of pavements in good condition and fewer in poor condition. Regionally we are doing exceptionally well for pavement quality with 0% rated poor on Interstate and only 4.4% rated poor on non-Interstate roadways. TxDOT's 2020 target projected a slight decrease from the 2018 baseline for bridges in good condition and the 2-year actual exceeded the target. Several factors can be attributed; in addition to the states consistent efforts to improve the infrastructure they are also making improvements in the lines of communication. New workflows and roles within the TxDOT bridge inspection system are helping capture and coordinate the information that comes from routine bridge inspections with the information in infrastructure maintenance plans. The target for bridges in poor condition is being adjusted in the interest of risk based planning. Accounting for the volume of bridges in fair condition, it stands to reason that some will transition into poor over the next two years. Increasing the target from .8% to 1.5% acknowledges the uncertain risk that can cause this measure to vary from year to year, including the possibility that a small number of very large bridges could fall into poor condition. In 2019, the National Bridge Inventory submittal included data on damage to several such large bridges, resulting in an unanticipated increase in the percentage of deck area rated poor. The bridges were rehabilitated and are no longer rated poor, but the work occurred after the submittal, which is why we see the increase here from .9% in 2018 to 1.3% in 2020. TxDOT is focusing on improving the link

between inventory data, improvement projects and maintenance activities and will be taking a more proactive role in ensuring that performance improvements projects are reflected in Texas' bridge inventory data. Confident in the state's data collection and number crunching methods, MPO Staff recommends supporting the State targets for pavement and bridge.

Mayor Mack asked the board for a motion to consider approval of a Resolution adopting modifications to the Texas Department of Transportation's Pavement and Bridge Performance Measures (PM2) Targets. Keith Bonds made the motion and Michael Shirley seconded it. All were in favor and the motion carried (9-0).

Item VI. Approval of Resolution adopting modifications to the Texas Department of Transportation's System Performance and Freight Performance Measure (PM3) Targets.

The System Performance Measures (PM3) are also set every four years, and modified as needed. This includes the level of travel time reliability on the interstate, on non-interstate and the truck travel time reliability index. While most travelers know what their roadway congestion points are and will anticipate some traffic delays in their daily travel, they tend to be less tolerant of unexpected congestion, which can be very disruptive especially when it results in a delayed shipment or delivery. Travelers want consistency and dependability in travel times, as measured from day-to-day and/or across different times of the day. In short, they want travel time reliability. The level of travel time reliability is the ratio of the longer travel times due to traffic incidents/inclement weather etc. to the normal time under normal circumstances for a particular segment of highway. The anticipated actual travel time reliability (2020 values) for both interstate and non-interstate appear to be improving greatly. While TxDOT has added additional capacity including 71.52 lane miles of IH and 1015.28 lane miles of non-interstate, there are many other variables at play including the availability of time series data that allows TxDOT to make adequate projections, and the changes in the amount of commuter travel. The updated targets, seemingly conservative when looking at the 2-year actuals, will be more representative to what the data will likely show for 2022. The freight reliability has continued to be below the four year targets and was adjusted this year to 1.76 from 1.79.

Longview MPO Staff recommends supporting the state adjusted targets for System Performance Measures.

Mayor Mack asked the board for a motion to consider approval of Resolution adopting modifications to the Transportation Department of Transportation's System Performance and Freight Performance Measure (PM3) Targets. Michael Shirley made the motion and Phillip Mauldin seconded it. All were in favor and the motion carried (9-0).

Item VII. Other Business

- a. Discussion regarding a recommended threshold change to the Metropolitan Statistical Area.

As some of you may have heard, or perhaps you read the wire story in the news journal this past weekend, a recommendation was filed in January with the Office of Management and Budget in Washington to change the minimum threshold of a metropolitan statistical area's urbanized area from 50,000 to 100,000. The only reason really cited for the recommended change was the continuing change in US population and activity patterns. The existing thresholds have been in place since the 1940's.

The Longview MSA covers Gregg, Rusk and Upshur counties and includes a population of more than 280,000. However, the urbanized area, or the nucleus or core, factors density and other criteria, as well. After the 2010 census, the urbanized area for the Longview MPO was 98,884.

The authors of the proposed change make the claim that MSA's are used by the OMB for statistical purposes only and are not tied to any funding model. The delineations provide a nationally consistent set of geographic areas for collecting, tabulating, and publishing federal statistics. However, the same language and references to urbanized areas and metropolitan areas can be found duplicated across

several transportation and housing programs. The Census Bureau also includes an urbanized area definition. This slide shows an example of this – a fact sheet on FTA’s Urbanized Area Formula Program Grants, you see the 50,000 threshold and the references to urbanized areas.

The similarity in the definitions and the way the language appears to tie back to communities being evaluated by the same thresholds is concerning. Assuming the next transportation bill follows suit with a change in threshold and definition, the outcome could be the dissolution of 144 MPO’s across the nation, 5 in Texas, and possibly including Longview MPO. Though our urbanized area was almost 99,000 in 2010, the 2020 census bureau data is not available yet and they, too, have a recommendation for comment that would completely change the way they calculate urbanized areas, focusing more on density as calculated by housing units rather than people. With all these possible changes, and no definitive time line, it is hard to say where Longview will fall.

For Longview and the Longview MPO, we feel not only are transportation dollars and regional discretion in transportation decisions at risk, but so are other government programs tied to a community being defined as “urbanized” including bus transportation funding distributed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. As you know, Longview Transit provides an essential service to minority, low income, elderly and disabled residents as it may be their only means of transportation to employment, medical facilities, and grocery stores. Longview doesn’t have “choice riders” – per Scott Lewis probably 95% of the riders rely on this means of transportation to get from point a to b.

In summary, if the MSA proposal is approved, which would be done administratively, it could be a first step towards federal programs adjusting their population thresholds when it comes to distributing funds to communities.

Some of the ripple effects from that decision could include:

- the dismantling of 5 small MPO’s in Texas and 144 in the nation, including Longview, which of course would mean a loss of discretionary funding and regional influence on transportation projects; and
- Potential loss of services and programs impacting low-income and minority populations through CDBG funding and Longview Transit.
- Not having a dynamic MSA to use as a tool in economic development to attract new development
- There are a lot of unknowns at this point and some assumptions being made in the arguments I am presently, but I do think this something where our community needs to express opposition. We do know also that a similar recommendation was made about 10 years ago and our community and others were able to put up enough resistance to kill the effort.
- So what is being worked on right now as far as formal comment back to the OMB, is two letters: One that the 5 Texas MPO’s is putting together which we hope will include our elected and concerned officials signatures; and one that Kelly Hall is working on with the other chambers in the affected communities.
- Based on the instructions posted on the federal register, when it comes to contributing comments, more is not more; in fact, letters that are too similar in nature are lumped together as duplicates. Because of this, the recommendation from the groups to put together few letters with more signatures for a greater impact.
- If any of you choose to write your own letter, that is great. You might want to review the copies of the letters going out first to ensure your comments are unique enough to count by themselves. The MPO’s are meeting tomorrow and I hope to have something to sign if you choose to by the week’s end.

Mayor Mack thanked Ingrid Self for the presentation. He has confidence that the MPO will formulate a letter to represent us to the utmost with those involved. Assistance of all members was offered to any areas needed.

b. MPO staff update

Bryan McBride was introduced and welcomed as the new Longview MPO Director and Transportation Manager for the City of Longview. Sharon McCord will continue as the Longview MPO Planning Technician,. Some of you may know Bryan from his work in the Planning and Zoning division. We are excited to have him.

Item VIII. Adjournment

Mayor Mack adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.



Respectfully submitted,
Ingrid Self, Assistant Director
City of Longview Development Services

/sm