

Minutes
for the
March 22, 2021 Meeting
of the
Danville Metropolitan Planning Organization
Virtual (Online) Meeting
at 6:30 p.m.

Attendees

Lee Vogler, City of Danville
James Buckner, City of Danville
Ken Gillie, City of Danville
Ron Searce, Pittsylvania County
Emily Ragsdale, Pittsylvania County
Rick Youngblood, VDOT
David Cook, VDOT
Chris Winstead, VDOT
Taylor Jenkins, DRPT
Bill Wuensch, EPR, PC
Jeanie Alexander, EPR, PC
Phil White, EPR, PC
Dave Hoback, Danville MPO Administrator
Michael Armbrister, Danville MPO Staff
Joseph Bonanno, Danville MPO Staff

1. Call to Order by the MPO Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Election of MPO Chairman for 2021 Annual Basis Rotation

Mr. Hoback noted that the 2020 MPO Chairman had been from the City of Danville, and based on the MPO Bylaws, the Chairman for 2021 would need to be from Pittsylvania County. The floor was opened for nominations, and Mr. Vogler nominated Mr. Searce for Chairman, and this was seconded by Mr. Buckner. Mr. Hoback asked if there were any other nominations, to which there were not. Mr. Hoback then passed the Chairmanship to Mr. Searce. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

3. Election of MPO Vice-Chairman for 2021

Mr. Hoback stated that the Vice Chairman would have to be from the City of Danville for 2021. Mr. Searce opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chairman for 2021, and Mr. Buckner nominated Mr. Vogler for Vice-Chairman; this motion was seconded by Mr. Vogler. Mr. Searce asked if there were any other nominations, but hearing none, he proceeded to a vote. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

4. Approval of minutes from the December 7, 2020 Meeting

Mr. Searce asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2020 MPO meeting, to which Mr. Buckner made a motion, which seconded by Mr. Vogler. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

5. Update on Piney Forest Road Corridor Study, Bill Wuensch, Principal/Transportation Engineer, EPR, PC

Mr. Wuensch stated that over the past few months, the EPR team had been working on the Piney Forest Road corridor study, and that the team would provide an update regarding the progress of the study. Mr. Wuensch stated that the study area comprised about 2.5 miles of the corridor, which was characterized by a relatively high traffic volume in excess of 25,000 vehicles per day. Mr. Wuensch stated that the corridor was beginning to experience some congestion and safety concerns. He added that the quantity and arrangement of driveway access points were part of the problem, and multimodal needs were important as well. Mr. Wuensch stated that the Phase 2 schedule was largely due to the COVID pandemic, and he added that new traffic figures would be available in September. He added that the first phase would involve safety, access management, and opening discussion with the public. He added that he believed a final product would be available by the beginning of 2022.

Mr. White presented the safety and access management assessment. With regard to safety, Mr. White stated that the team relied upon VDOT data, with some secondary research. He presented a heat map of crashes within the corridor over a five-year period, four PSI (Potential for Safety Improvements) intersections and segments, and he described what PSI was. He noted that the two PSI intersections that were identified included Nor Dan Drive and Arnett Boulevard, and that these segments were located on the southern section of the corridor; he added that the Nor dan Drive PSI location ranked 2nd in the Lynchburg District. Mr. White stated that each dot on the screen represented a crash, and that the corridor had been characterized by many rear-end and angle

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crashes. He noted that the Arnett Boulevard intersection PSI ranked 14th in the District and had the highest rate of injury. He added that the PSI segments were mostly characterized by rear-end crashes.

Mr. White shifted discussion to access management, and he noted that the VDOT Road Design Manual was used as the resource to determine whether access driveways were in compliance with the Guidelines. He added that VDOT assessed access management by identifying spacing intervals and road standards based on functional classification and road speed limits. He added that all access points on the corridor had been mapped, and that each access point consisted of either an intersection, median opening, or driveway. He added that most signalized spacing intervals met VDOT-defined thresholds but that other access points were generally deficient. He noted that the entire corridor had an average of 72 access points per mile. He then presented maps of various sections of the corridor, with respect to access management, and he added that there was a strong correlation between the number of access points and crash rates.

Mr. Wuensch stated that the team would identify access management strategies in the corridor, and some might include an introduction of medians, which would eliminate the possibility of unpredictable left turns. He added that driveway consolidation would be a big focus of the study, as would cross-parcel access. Mr. Wuensch stated that undivided roadway facilities were often characterized by high crash rates, and he added that when medians were introduced, crash rates declined.

Mr. Bonanno discussed his role in the study process, which involved identifying the potential for parallel connections along the corridor, in the form of frontage roads, backage roads, and inter-parcel connections. He discussed the various analyses he conducted as part of this process, which involved analyzing the uses along the corridor, determining current zoning and future land use, topographical analyses, and an aerial map analysis.

Mr. Wuensch stated that there would be physical recommendations as part of the second phase of the study which would involve ways to organize the turning movements, such as R-CUT strategies, which would work hand-in-hand with the access management, and maybe some of these possible connections that Mr. Bonanno had identified. He added that the team would develop policy recommendations as well. Mr. Wuensch added that these recommendations would be long-term, and that some possible strategies the City could consider might involve cross-parcel access, and limiting the frequency of entrances, particularly within the functional areas of intersections.

Mr. Wuensch transitioned the discussion to multimodal opportunities along the corridor. He referenced the Pedestrian Safety Access Plan (PSAP), and noted that this corridor ranked as a Level 2 on that Plan. He added that, on a statewide level this corridor could use attention with regard to greater multimodal functionality. He noted that, with regard to multimodality, the team had been examining sidewalk conditions, sign placement, and the poor placement of some mailboxes. He added that the ADA ramp conditions needed improvement, and that there was little infrastructure for pedestrians at traffic signals. He then showed images of crosswalks and infrastructure, as well as locations for pedestrian improvements, and he likewise noted improvements to crosswalks, ramps, and signalization features. He noted, as some examples, pedestrian heads and buttons, suggested crosswalk locations, etc. Mr. Wuensch noted the presence of active schools in the corridor, and added that one school near Wendell Scott Drive was not currently being used, and that another school had a mid-block crossing and was being used as a distance learning center, but was expecting students back, so proposals would be put forth to serve that facility. Mr. Wuensch stated that there were no on-street accommodations for bicycles, and that an idea put forth would be to perhaps propose a multi-use path along one side of the road, as there were electrical transmission lines on the other side. With regard to transit, Mr. Wuensch stated that four transit lines served the corridor, and the project team was working to identify where the stops with the highest use were located, which would help to inform sidewalk and bus stop improvements. He added that one bus shelter existed on the corridor, and another high-use stop on the southern end of the corridor may make the addition of another shelter feasible.

Mr. Wuensch stated that the planning team would solicit public input to discuss issues and opportunities, and that this would involve a virtual meeting as well as an online survey. Mr. Cook shared the screen of a MetroQuest survey, and he stated that, as of two months prior, VDOT had given MPOs access to the MetroQuest platform. He added that MetroQuest was a very robust, engaging platform that really focused on urban transportation. He added that the surveys used a maximum of five slides, but that VDOT typically used three slides, along with an introductory slide and a concluding slide. He added that the priority ranking was very popular, and that Title VI questions were asked in the Demographics section. He added that VDOT was encouraging MPOs to use the MetroQuest platform extensively. Mr. Cook further added that, if the MPO had questions with regard to building the survey, he would be happy to help. Mr. Vogler thanked the team for the presentation, and he added that one of the proposals would likely be to consolidate driveways, and he asked how that would be achieved. Mr. Wuensch replied that driveway consolidation typically would take place over a long period of time, but there were some locations, such as at a shopping center

with multiple entrances. Mr. Vogler clarified that he believed driveway consolidations would apply to residential entrances, but Mr. Wuensch stated that it would mainly apply to commercial entrances. Mr. Wuensch stated that Mr. Armbrister and his team would be developing the survey, and he added that there was a landing page on the MPO site, which the team would be populating. With regard to the schedule, Mr. Wuensch stated that a draft document should be ready in mid-April and a public meeting would take place at the end of April, after which the public input would be used to wrap up Phase I of the process; he added that by the end of May, a strong deliverable would be available. After this, there would be a break prior to Phase II.

6. Update on New MPO Website, Michael Armbrister, Deputy MPO Administrator

Mr. Armbrister stated that staff had an opportunity to retool the MPO website, and the decision was made to separate the new MPO site from the PDC site. He noted that the new site was www.danvillempo.org. Mr. Armbrister stated that three benefits of the new site included the fact that it would be easier to operate a separate website for the MPO, that staff would have more control over the standalone site, and that it would cost less than \$200 per year to operate the separate site. He added that the Piney Forest Road corridor study was included on the landing page. He encouraged MPO Board members to send any comments they may have to him regarding the site. Mr. Hoback took the opportunity to commend Mr. Armbrister for this initiative, as it would save the organization money over the long run. Mr. Scarce asked if the new site would be advertised, to which Mr. Hoback replied that this was a good question and added that it had not been thought through at that point; he added that it was a good suggestion.

7. OIPI GAP Grant, Joe Bonanno, Regional Planner

Mr. Bonanno stated that the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) provided an opportunity for a GAP (Growth and Accessibility Planning) grant, which the MPO chose to apply for in January. He added that the intent of the grant would be to help the MPO select viable studies. He added that it was the MPO's belief that having a data-driven process would produce more effective projects for the MPO region, while increasing accountability to the residents and taxpayers. Mr. Bonanno added that OIPI announced in early February that the grant had been funded. He further added that the consultant responsible for working on this project would develop a set of performance measures by which to evaluate candidate studies, as well as a digital tool to help MPO staff to rank candidate transportation projects, which he described as being similar to VDOT's matrix tool. Mr. Bonanno added that the process was anticipated to kick off in April, with an approximate six-month timeline for completion. Mr. Hoback clarified that, rather than developing new performance measures, existing performance measures would be utilized from VTrans and the MPO Long Range Plan; he added that the MPO intended to identify projects that could maximize potential for Smart Scale and other grant programs.

8. Presentation of FY 22 MPO Unified Work Program (UWP), Dave Hoback, MPO Administrator

Mr. Hoback noted that the Unified Work Program was developed annually to enable the MPO to apply for state and federal funds. He noted that for FY 22, the UWP comprised \$167,408, 80 percent of which was from federal sources, 10 percent from the State, and 10 percent from Danville and Pittsylvania County. Mr. Hoback added that \$141,755 would be made available for FY 22, with \$25,653 being carried over from FY 21. He further added that funding was up about 5 percent over FY 21, and that an increase of approximately \$1,500 in PL funding was expected. Mr. Hoback noted that the bulk of the funding would be allocated to consultant services and staff time. He emphasized that recommendations derived from studies were used to leverage and support Smart Scale applications and other funding. For the MPO, he noted that a \$60,000 study leveraged \$70 million in funding for two phases of the Berry Hill connector road project. A major highlight noted by Mr. Hoback included the Piney Forest Road corridor study, which was the central element of the UWP; he added that about \$20,000 would be available for another transportation study. He further added that after the new fiscal year, Mr. Armbrister would likely be serving as the new MPO administrator, and he would work with the Policy Board to determine how funds would be expended. One idea Mr. Hoback put forth was an intersection or similarly small project in Pittsylvania County, and he added that \$20,000 would not fund a corridor study. He further added that the remaining UWP funds would support the PDC in administering the MPO. Mr. Scarce stated that the Berry Hill project was a great investment.

9. Adoption of FY 22 MPO Unified Work Program (UWP), Resolution 2021-1

Mr. Scarce asked for a recommendation from the Board regarding adoption of Resolution 2021-1, to which Mr. Vogler made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Buckner. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

10. Adoption of Resolution to Carryover PL funds from FY 21 to FY 22: Resolution 2021 – 2

Mr. Scarce asked for a recommendation from the Board regarding the carryover of PL funds from FY 21 to FY 22, and Mr. Buckner made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Vogler. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

11. Adoption of 2021 MPO Self-Certification, Resolution 2021-3

Mr. Hoback stated that self-certification was a normal process the MPO needed to go through. He added that this addressed Title VI and other non-discrimination activities to ensure the MPO was in compliance with state and federal laws. Mr. Hoback recommended that the Policy Board adopt the Resolution, as had been done on an annual basis. Mr. Buckner made a motion to adopt Resolution 2021-3, which was seconded by Mr. Vogler. The motion was voted upon and approved unanimously.

12. Comments/Updates from VDOT/DRPT/FHWA

Mr. Winstead stated that VDOT was planning to hold a virtual public hearing on the draft Six-Year Improvement Program on April 29 at 4 p.m., and he added that more information would be forthcoming. He added that, as always, public input would be considered prior to adoption of the SYIP. He noted that the draft publication would encompass Round 4 Smart Scale projects that were recommended for funding to include U.S. Route 29 improvements at Tightsqueeze as well as the Berry Hill Road Connector extension.

13. Other Business

Mr. Hoback stated that the MPO planned to hold a public hearing on the Piney Forest Road corridor study at the end of April, and would like to update the Policy Board sometime in May. He added that he would get a poll out to everyone to determine a date.

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.



Michael R. Armbrister
Danville MPO Administrator