

Meeting Minutes

**Salisbury/Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization
June 20, 2005**

**City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Government Building
125 North Division Street, Salisbury, MD
Room 302**

Attendees:

SW/MPO officials:

Marvin Long, Chair, Wicomico County Council
Rick Pollitt, Vice Chair, City of Fruitland
Mike Dunn, City of Salisbury, City Council
Mayor Barrie Tilghman, City of Salisbury
Mike Thompson, Wicomico County
Mike Nixon, Maryland Department of Transportation

Others:

Gary Pusey, S/W MPO staff, City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Planning
Rob Hart, Shore Transit

Introduction

Chairman Long opened the meeting at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Minutes

The first item of business was the minutes from the Council's March 21, 2005 meeting. Chairman Long asked if anyone had any additions or corrections, and there being none, Councilman Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Nixon seconded the motion. All Board members voted aye, with none opposed, and the motion to approve the minutes was passed.

FY 2006 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Chairman Long asked Mr. Pusey to report on this item.

Mr. Pusey stated that the work program contains a list of activities that are proposed to be undertaken by the MPO in the upcoming fiscal year, along with a proposed budget for each of these activities. He further stated that the Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the work program at its meeting on June 15, 2005, and made several suggested revisions that have been included in the copy of the work program that the Council is now reviewing. They include: 1) Having three main categories, entitled "Core Planning," "MPO Administration" and "Special Studies;" 2) Moving the "Long Range Plan" from "Special Studies" to "Core Planning;" and 3) Moving the UPWP from "MPO Administration" and including it as a separate item under "Core Planning." The narrative

reflects these changes, and corresponds with the budget table. Mr. Pusey stated that the MPO budget has increased by approximately \$10,000 in comparison to last year.

Mr. Nixon added that there is still approximately \$30,000 left in this year's budget that can be carried over into the FY 2006 work program. He anticipates that this carryover will be applied to the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan, including the hiring of a consultant to assist with some of the technical aspects of the Plan. Any leftover funds from the development of the Long Range Plan would likely be allocated to the "Traffic Management Studies" activity, as noted on the budget table of the UPWP.

Mr. Thompson questioned the amount of staff time versus consultant time that would be spent on the development of the Long Range Plan, based on the level of funding allocated to this activity and his knowledge of the number of different tasks the staff is now involved with. Mr. Pusey responded that the planning staff would be instrumental in providing much of the background information that would be contained in the Plan, and the consultant would be responsible for developing the traffic component of the Plan. He further stated that the Plan needs to be adopted by October 1, 2005, so the Plan will be a major focus of his responsibilities for the next few months.

Mr. Nixon stated that his department would be providing information on the financing of future transportation projects within the MPO area that can be incorporated into the Plan. He also stated that the last note in the budget table should be revised to reflect that the Long Range Plan is now activity "A.3" and not "B.1."

There being no further discussion, Chairman Long asked for a motion from the Council. Upon a motion by Mr. Nixon, seconded by Councilman Dunn, and unanimously carried, the Council adopted the FY 2006 UPWP, with the correction in the last note of the budget table that the reference to the Long Range Plan be changed to "A.3."

Update on Status of the Long-Range Transportation Plan

Chairman Long asked Mr. Pusey to report on this item.

Mr. Pusey stated that, as discussed under the previous agenda item, the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan is the main priority of the Staff for the next few months. The Plan is required to be adopted by October 1, 2005. The Staff is working with a consultant, The Traffic Group, and a scope of work is being developed to designate the responsibilities of each of the parties. The consultant will especially be responsible for the traffic component of the Plan, including analyzing the existing road system in regards to capacity and current traffic volumes, and developing projections of traffic and its impact on the road network. Staff has been collecting background data on population and employment, including projections to the year 2030, which is the target year for the Plan. Appropriate sections from existing adopted Comprehensive Plans from each of the MPO jurisdictions are also being reviewed for possible inclusion.

Staff is meeting with the consultant on June 22, 2005, to further discuss the scope of work, and a tentative meeting has been set on June 29, 2005, with federal highway and transit representatives to clarify with those offices what the Plan should focus on since time is of the essence. The consultant will be attending that meeting, and Mr. Nixon will be attending as well.

Councilman Dunn stated that he would like the public to be informed about this process and to have an opportunity to have input into the Plan. Mr. Nixon responded that federal regulations require that public participation play a role in the Plan's development, and that a 30-day review period should be available for the public to comment on the draft Plan. He also suggested that having the draft Plan available on the County's Website would be appropriate.

No action was required by the Council for this item.

Other Business

Chairman Long welcomed Rob Hart from Shore Transit and asked Mr. Hart if he wanted to provide any updates to the Council on the status of Shore Transit's operations. A general discussion ensued focusing on the recent cutbacks that Shore Transit has had to implement, including not only a reduction in service but also the recent layoff of employees. Despite these cutbacks, Mr. Hart noted that Shore Transit still provides a high level of service, and noted in particular that the bus runs from Salisbury to Ocean City were full.

Mayor Tilghman expressed a concern that had been shared with her by others regarding the closing of the bathrooms at Shore Transit's facility in downtown Salisbury, and the inconvenience this had caused for many people. Mr. Hart agreed that this was a problem, and this was one of the cost-saving measures Shore Transit had undertaken in order to balance its budget. He stated that more investment was needed in order to provide this and other services that had been reduced as a result of their budget situation. As an example, one factor that has led to the budget problem that was not anticipated is the continuing rise in the cost of gasoline. He stated further that other cost-saving measures are still being considered, including eliminating Saturday service.

Mayor Tilghman followed up by asking what are other transit services elsewhere doing to address this type of situation. Mr. Hart responded that in conversations he has had with other transit system managers, that the solution has been to receive additional funding from the local jurisdictions, and that other transit systems have not had to cut service as Shore Transit has been required to do. As an example, he stated that the City of Cambridge contributed \$20,000 to the local service there.

Councilman Dunn asked if Ocean City had been approached since it appears businesses there are benefiting from the high ridership levels of buses traveling there from Salisbury. Mr. Hart stated he has met with the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce to discuss possible funding support, and the Chamber appeared receptive.

Mayor Tilghman stated it should be remembered that Shore Transit is a regional system designed to serve a number of jurisdictions, and is not just Salisbury's system or the system of any individual jurisdiction. Councilman Dunn agreed that the system was regional and that Salisbury residents participated in the same manner as residents in other jurisdictions, by providing funding through County taxes. Councilman Dunn suggested that perhaps a model could be developed that would clearly indicate how Shore Transit can operate and be successful, and that the Council would need to rely on Shore Transit's staff as the transportation experts to provide recommendations in developing this model. Mr. Hart responded that he and his staff would welcome the opportunity to work with this Council and governmental officials from all the jurisdictions in the region in order to make Shore Transit viable.

Mr. Thompson questioned whether the transit system and its operations would be a component of the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan. Mr. Nixon responded that it would be, and that a draft Transit Development Program has been prepared that may be incorporated into the LRTP that may address some of the issues raised today.

Mr. Hart added that he would keep the Council informed as to further developments with Shore Transit.

No action was required by the Council for this item.

Next Meeting Date

Discussion ensued concerning the next meeting date. Mr. Pusey stated that, at this point, the Council may not want to establish a firm date for the next meeting but that as progress continues on the Long-Range Transportation Plan, a meeting can be set as more information becomes available that requires the Council's action. The Council agreed to leave the next meeting date open.

Upon a request from Chairman Long for a motion to adjourn, a motion was made by Councilman Dunn, seconded by Mr. Nixon, and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 1:55 PM.