

Meeting Minutes

**Salisbury/Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization
March 9, 2009**

**City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Government Building
125 North Division Street, Salisbury, MD
Room 301 (Council Chambers)**

Attendees:

S/W MPO officials:

Matt Creamer, Chair, Wicomico County Council Administrator

Luther Hitchens, Vice Chair, Deputy Mayor, Delmar, MD

Louise Smith, City Council President, City of Salisbury

Mike Nixon, Maryland Department of Transportation

John McDonnell, City of Fruitland (By Telephone)

Ralph Reeb, Delaware Department of Transportation

Others:

Gary Pusey, S/W MPO staff, City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Planning

Becky Robinson, Delmarva Water Transport Committee

Ian Beam, Maryland Department of Transportation

Introduction

Chairman Creamer opened the meeting at 1 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Minutes

The first item of business was the minutes from the Council's October 1, 2008 meeting. Chairman Creamer asked if anyone had any additions or corrections, and there were none. Ms. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes, with the motion seconded by Mr. Hitchens. All Board members voted aye, with none opposed, and the motion to approve the minutes was passed.

FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Administrative Modification and Adoption

Mr. Creamer introduced this item and asked Mr. Nixon to present the materials.

Mr. Nixon handed out a Powerpoint presentation prepared by MDOT that explains the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (otherwise known as the Federal stimulus bill) and what its effects will be on transportation projects in the State. He stated that stimulus funding will result in more than \$5,100,000 being spent on road projects within the MPO Area this year.

This is Phase I of the stimulus package, with Phase II occurring later in the year. All projects are on State roads and consist of road resurfacing (and including associated shoulder and drainage improvements), traffic signals, signage and safety improvements such as guardrails and curbing. The projects added to the existing TIP that was previously approved by the MPO Council include resurfacing and rehabilitation of U.S. Route 13 Business from Boundary Street to the Salisbury Bypass; U.S. Route 50 from Civic Avenue to East Main Street; and the U.S. Route 13 bridge over Leonards Mill Pond to the Delaware State Line. It is estimated that the projects being funded by the stimulus bill will support 83 jobs.

Mr. Nixon stated that the projects must begin within 180 days, and he noted that the Technical Committee reviewed and recommended approval of these projects. He noted that the Committee did have a concern that no County road improvements were being funded. He explained that there will be two phases of funding, and the decision was made in the Governor's Office to limit all Phase I funding to State roads everywhere in the State, since the deadlines were very strict. Phase 2 will have more flexibility and it is anticipated that local projects will be funded at that time, which should occur in the late Spring/early Summer time frame.

Upon a motion by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Hitchens, the Council unanimously approved the administrative modification to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program.

Presentation and Discussion – Becky Robinson of the Delmarva Water Transport Committee

Mr. Creamer introduced this item, and welcomed Ms. Robinson from the Delmarva Water Transport Committee to the meeting.

Ms. Robinson stated that the DWTC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage the continuation and further development of water-borne commerce on the Delmarva Peninsula's waterways. The DWTC's main concern in recent years has been to ensure that waterways are dredged to an adequate depth to accommodate shipping commerce. Federal funding for dredging has been limited, and locating spoil sites is becoming more difficult.

She noted that waterborne commerce accounts for more than \$7 billion on the Delmarva Peninsula and supports more than 45,000 jobs (direct and indirect) in the area. Currently, almost 1,000 barges travel Delmarva's waterways annually, carrying 3-4 million tons of petroleum, grain and aggregate. Five power plants on the Peninsula depend on fuel delivered by water transportation. At least 90% of all petroleum is now brought in by barge, from either Delaware City or from Virginia. If adequate dredging cannot be maintained, petroleum will have to be delivered by truck or rail, and since petroleum products cannot be transported through the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel and refineries are not equipped to ship petroleum by rail, options will be limited to trucking in products from either Baltimore or Delaware City, leading to increased costs. She pointed out that

it takes approximately 150 tractor trailers to equal one barge. The impact on roads would be drastically increased. Grain and aggregates are also barged in, and the poultry industry, which is in a continued deficit for grain, relies on barged grain to keep feed costs down.

Given the importance of waterborne commerce on the Peninsula, Ms. Robinson asked that the MPO be aware of these concerns as it develops future plans.

There was a discussion about dredge spoil sites, and Mr. Nixon noted that Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay was being used extensively. Ms. Robinson replied that Poplar Island has been approved for use exclusively for spoil from the Baltimore Harbor. She further stated that DWTC is exploring the possibility of using Janes Island in Somerset County as a future site. Mr. Creamer noted that dredged material makes for an excellent landfill cover.

No action was necessary by the Council as this presentation was for informational purposes only, and the Council thanked Ms. Robinson for bringing the concerns of the DWTC to them.

Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Next Meeting Date/Adjourn

Mr. Pusey will contact members when a meeting needs to be scheduled and an appropriate date and time will then be determined.

A motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Hitchens, and unanimously approved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.