

Meeting Minutes

Salisbury/Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) January 14th, 2009

**City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Government Building
125 North Division Street, Salisbury. MD
Room 301**

Attendees:

TAC Members:

Ray Birch, City of Salisbury Public Works, Vice Chair
Ian Beam, Maryland Department of Transportation
Tracey Gordy, Maryland Department of Planning
Riggin Johnson, Shore Transit
Becky Robinson, Delmarva Water Transport Advisory Committee
Jim Magill, Salisbury/Wicomico Planning Commission
Ric Kautz, Sussex County Planning Department
Gary Pusey, S/W MPO staff, City of Salisbury/Wicomico County Planning

Others:

Gregory Oliver, Delaware Department of Transportation
Jim Thompson, Maryland State Highway Administration
Jim Dooley, Maryland State Highway Administration
Nicole Katsikides, Maryland Department of Transportation

Introduction

Vice Chairman Birch opened the meeting at 1:10 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Minutes

Vice Chairman Birch introduced the first item on the agenda, which were the minutes of the Committee's September 17, 2008 meeting. Mr. Thompson noted that on page three the reference under "Other Business" should state the "three Lower Shore counties" and not "four." Mr. Magill moved to approve the meeting minutes, and Mr. Beam seconded the motion. All Committee members voted aye, with none opposed, and the motion to approve the minutes was passed with the correction noted by Mr. Thompson.

Discussion – Delmarva Water Transport Committee

Mr. Redden introduced Becky Robinson from the Delmarva Water Transport Committee (DWTC). Mr. Pusey pointed out that the DWTC is represented on the MPO's Technical Committee, and Ms. Robinson will be attending future meetings of the Committee.

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 discussion among the members that the MPO should address freight more in its update of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and that the DWTC should coordinate with the Maryland Port Authority to address its concerns. Mr. Oliver noted that DelDOT just recently became aware of the importance of waterborne freight to the region and this will be considered in its preparation of their Freight Plan, with DWTC being invited to participate.

No action was necessary by the Committee as this presentation was for informational purposes only, and the Committee looked forward to having Ms. Robinson attend the Committee's future meetings.

FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program – Recommendation to Council

Vice Chairman Birch asked Mr. Pusey to report on this item, and Mr. Pusey deferred to Mr. Dooley.

Mr. Dooley stated that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (otherwise known as the Federal stimulus bill) 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

primarily of road resurfacing. The projects added to the existing TIP include resurfacing and rehabilitation of U.S. Route 13 Bypass from Mt. Hermon Road south to U.S. Route 13 Business, and U.S. Route 13 Business from south of the Bypass to Dagsboro Road.

Upon a motion by Mr. Magill, seconded by Ms. Gordy, the Committee unanimously recommended that the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program be amended by the Council to include the referenced stimulus projects.

Other Business

Mr. Pusey noted that MDOT has provided preliminary figures for the MPO's funding for FY 2010, and the total amount available will be several thousand less than the current year's. He stated the Unified Planning Work Program will be presented to the Committee in the spring that reflects these numbers and the projects that the MPO would like to undertake.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Committee may be aware that Shore Transit was recently notified that funding will be reduced by \$1 million, and they were still reeling from this cut. Mr. Kautz asked if the Yellow route to Delmar had been cut, and Mr. Johnson stated "yes" but that Shore Transit still goes to the Rite Aid in Delmar.

Mr. Oliver stated that both Maryland and Delaware are in the process of preparing federally-mandated Freight Plans. Due to the interrelationship between Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore for rail, water and highway service, DelDOT has decided to prepare a Freight Plan for the entire Delmarva Peninsula. He is requesting that the S/W MPO participate in the study. DelDOT is also cooperating with Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia and MDOT's Baltimore office. Mr. Oliver stated that it is anticipated that pending federal regulations will emphasize freight issues and will want "choke" points addressed in particular. In addition to the issues raised by Ms. Robinson at today's meeting, Norfolk Southern has asked DelDOT to focus on rail issues south of the C&D Canal, so a regional approach appears to be appropriate. Mr. Pusey stated that the MPO would be willing to participate and with the preparation of the Work Program being required soon, this would be a good time to plan for this.

There was no other business to report, and no action was necessary for this item.

Next Meeting Date/Adjourn

The next meeting date is scheduled for March 11, 2009 at 1 p.m. Mr. Pusey stated he will send out reminders and all relevant meeting materials prior to the meeting. [Note – The March 11, 2009 meeting was cancelled, with the next meeting scheduled for May 13, 2009.]

There being no further business, upon a motion by Ms. Gordy, seconded by Mr. Birch, with all members voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.