



**Preliminary Engineering/NEPA Analysis
for the
Dane County/Greater Madison Metropolitan Area**

For additional project information: www.transport2020.net

Minutes

TRANSPORT 2020: MANAGEMENT TEAM

Thursday, March 2, 2006

12:00 noon

Madison Municipal Building, Room 260

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

Madison, WI

-- **ROLL CALL**

ITF Members Present: Sandy Beaupre; Ald. Ken Golden; Dick Wagner.

TAC/Staff Present: Barbara Feeny (WisDOT, Southwest Region); Rob Kennedy (UW-Madison, Facilities Planning and Management); Elizabeth Kluesner (Dane County Executive's Office); Bob McDonald (Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization); Arun Rao (WisDOT, Urban Planning); Bill Schaefer (Madison Area MPO); David Trowbridge (Madison Planning and Development; *Transport 2020 Project Manager*); Michael Waidelich (Madison Planning and Development).

Others Present: Fred Bartol (Dane Alliance for Rail Transit); Terry Beuthling (HNTB); Laurie Hussey (Cambridge Systematics); Ken Kinney (*HNTB Project Manager*); Caron Kloser (HNTB).

1. OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

Ken Kinney opened the meeting reviewing the study schedule, emphasizing the focus on achieving a New Starts application in December 2006 and a Draft EIS in spring 2007.

Caron Kloser reviewed public participation activities, which are focused on preparation for an Agency Scoping meeting and public information meeting on April 26 at Monona Terrace. Agencies will meet at 1:00 p.m., followed by the public meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Run-up activities prior to the meeting include preparing a press release, a newsletter and updating the website by April 6, which follows the ITF meeting on April 5. Public mailing lists and agency mailing lists are being updated now.

2. REVIEW PURPOSE AND NEED: KEY POINTS

Caron Kloser reviewed the key talking points of the purpose and need statement. The Purpose of the project is based on Madison's and Dane County's unified vision that transit is a catalyst to maintain a high quality of life in the central city and the region. The need is based on several key points:

- Madison/Dane County growth continues
- Isthmus is regional activity hub
- Traffic congestion continues to grow
- Roadway capacity expansion is not an option
 - Impacts to neighborhoods and businesses
 - Capacity expansion could adversely affect low income/minority populations in the Isthmus
- Limited parking expansion opportunities

Management team members commented to make sure the Purpose and Need makes a central point of confining geography that lends itself to transit considerations. The Goals and Objectives from the previous 2020 study will be carried forward in this Purpose and Need statement and will be used to screen the Preliminary Alternatives.

3. CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES UPDATE

Ken Kinney updated the Management Team on the progress of developing alternatives. The study team is moving forward with developing preliminary alternatives, which will be ready for review at the next Management Team meeting on March 14. Preliminary alternatives will include the No-Build, the Baseline, and three Build alternatives (which will include the Minimum Operating Segment of the Locally Preferred Alternative of the previous 2020 Alternatives Analysis). The Transit Operations Subcommittee will meet on March 15 to review the alternatives. A formal ITF meeting will be held on April 5 to seek approval on the study Purpose and Need and Preliminary Alternatives. The final alternatives to be evaluated in detail will be determined after the April 26 Public Information Meeting and a May 11 meeting with the ITF.

4. NEW STARTS REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The balance of the meeting was devoted to a presentation from Laurie Hussey to review the following discussion topics:

- New Starts process
- Proposed changes in the New Starts process
- Decision timelines for the 2020 study
- A summary of recent New Starts applications at FTA
- Strategies to gain a favorable New Starts evaluation for Transport 2020

Laurie emphasized the New Starts application process is changing in response to SAFETEA-LU legislation and we will need to continue to be aware of developments as they affect our project application. Regardless of changes, the process is very competitive and the 2020 application needs to emphasize project justification through cost effectiveness and transit supportive land use, as well as a strong local financial commitment for capital and operating costs. Cost effectiveness is based on Transit System User Benefits/annualized costs. TSUB is basically hours of travel time savings, as compared to a baseline alternative.

FTA is also changing its project rating nomenclature from the “Highly Recommended, Recommended, Not recommended” to more objective terms that include a range of high, medium and low ratings.

Laurie noted that early and often coordination with FTA will continue to be important and to start documenting the study process and decisions so that FTA is informed. FTA will be looking for documentation on:

- Scope of work
- Problem statement, goals, and objectives
- Definition of alternatives, including the baseline definition
- Study assumptions and methodologies
- Study results

The FTA does not appear to have prescribed notions of the documentation, but it should demonstrate a well-thought out process for developing the study alternatives and their evaluation and how the sponsors arrived at conclusions.

A comment was raised as to how Public Involvement activities influence FTA review of the New Starts application. Public involvement does not weigh in the evaluation, but letters of support from key constituencies are important.

Laurie noted that FTA is requiring a “Before-and-After” evaluation to document consistency in key assumptions – primarily ridership and costs as the project advances through planning and development phases. She noted that there are many changes that will occur between planning and implementation that will affect this consistency and it will be important to document and explain those project changes along the way to explain why performance changes.

Laurie listed and discussed the following proposed changes to the New Starts process:

- Project must have progressed beyond the NEPA scoping phase before entering PE
- Final EIS must present the New Starts rating for its LPA
- Before-and-after study data must be prepared and reported to FTA during AA and project development
- Person responsible for developing tools and techniques must certify that they have been properly developed
- Analysis of uncertainties must be included for forecasts of costs and ridership Project Development Agreements (PDAs) may be required in cases where either delays advancing the process or risks to implementation are identified
- Cap to be placed on FFGA New Starts funding amount at the point of approval to enter into final design
- FTA considering use of pre-established mode-specific constants

The baseline alternative was discussed at length and will be a subject of discussion with the FTA in April.

Key milestone dates to meet the December 2006 New Starts application date were presented to the Management Team:

- **Spring 2006:** Define baseline alternative/submit for FTA review and approval
- **Early Summer 2006:** Agree on “default” governance plan for PE request (e.g., Metro)
- **September 2006:** Finalize Project Management Plan per FTA requirements

- **September 2006:** Identify planned local sources of funding (subject of future PDA)
- **October 2006:** Select LPA/re-adopt in LRP
- **November 2006:** Finalize action steps for final governance plan (subject of future PDA)
- **December 2006:** Submit PE request for FTA approval, including
 - Project description and “Making the Case”
 - Travel forecasts (Summit reports and maps)
 - Operating and maintenance costs
 - Standard cost categories worksheets
 - Certification of technical methods and planning assumptions
 - Project justification templates (mobility, environmental, operating efficiencies, cost effectiveness, land use)
 - Local financial commitment, finance plan, and worksheet
 - Additional supporting documentation

Laurie gave a summary of recent New Starts activity at FTA for the Management Team:

- Volume of activity
 - 30 FFGAs since TEA-21
 - 7 more in negotiation/planned
- Ratings
 - Average cost-effectiveness = \$21.20 (medium)
- Funding
 - Average New Starts share = 54%
 - Average New Starts funds = \$342 million
- Schedule
 - Average months in PE = 33
 - Average months in final design = 17

There is a steady flow of New Starts requests that FTA processes. The Transport 2020 alternatives need to have no more than a \$22 average cost-effectiveness to receive a favorable rating. Laurie noted that the PE schedule may be exaggerated due to past FTA policies that allowed dormant projects to remain in the PE phase. New policy may reduce that time frame for PE.

Laurie concluded the presentation with the following strategies the Management Team should consider to improve a favorable rating of Transport 2020 in the New Starts process:

- Coordinate early and often with FTA, including initial meeting in April
- Maximize to the extent possible transit-supportive land uses and policies in station areas, including potential transit overlay districts
- Consider nontraditional strategies to boost ridership, for example limits on parking in the vicinity of key destinations

The group discussed that there are many planning policies practiced now that are consistent with the strategies, including encouraging density in the central city and having no parking requirements in the downtown area. Furthermore, the UW-Madison has a cap for on-campus parking.

There will be additional interaction with the Management Team on developing the Preliminary Alternatives at the next Management Team meeting on March 14. Ken will be in town most of that week to meet with others to refine the preliminary alternatives.

A question was raised as to whether overlay districts for higher intensity land use around stations would be a reasonable financial strategy. Laurie responded that the strategy is likely too speculative to assume in a financial plan, but that the idea should not be abandoned.

Another question was raised that once stations are identified, can the New Starts application note that transit oriented development is projected? Transit oriented development plans and policies must be adopted in order to get credit in the New Starts evaluation process.

A last question raised asked if there is benefit from transit oriented development around existing bus transfer points. The benefit would be applied to the baseline alternative. The Build alternative must demonstrate how it captures new benefit. But the existing development should be documented since it demonstrates activities that encourage transit use.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Management Team adjourned its meeting at 1:15 p.m. The next Management Team meeting is scheduled for March 14, 12:00 noon, Room LL-110 MMB.

These minutes represent the writers' interpretation of discussion and resolution of key points. Please contact Caron Kloser of HNTB (414/359-2300) to discussion questions, modifications or corrections.