

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES –AUGUST 18, 2015

TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION SEPTEMBER 15, 2015



Members Present: Mayor Proteome Denis Pitman, Commissioner Kennedy, Board of County Commissioners; Richard Clark, City/County Planning Board; Stefan Streeter, MDT District Office.

Staff Present: Mayor Tom Hanel, City of Billings; Commissioner Jim Reno, Board of County Commissioners; Commissioner John Ostlund, Board of County Commissioners; Candi Millar, Director, Planning & Community Services Department; Scott Walker, Transportation Planner, Planning & Community Services Department; Wyeth Friday, Planning Division Manager; Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner; Jeffery Butts, Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; David Mumford, Public Works Director; Vern Heisler, Deputy Public Works Director; Tim Miller, Director, Yellowstone County Public Works Department.

Conference Call Participants: Carol Strizich, MDT Planning; Lynn Zanto, MDT Planning; Kenn Winegar, MDT Planning

Others Present: Gary Neville, MDT Billings; Rod Nelson, MDT Billings; Director Mike Tooley, MDT, Meg O’Leary, Department of Commerce; Katie Potts, MDT; Alan Woodmansey, FHWA; Kevin McLaury, FHWA; Barb Skelton, District 5, Highway Commissioner; Steve Arveschough, BSEDA; Sara Hudson, BSEDA; Dianne Lehm, BSEDA; Patrick Klugman, BSEDA; Donna Forbes, City/County Planning Board; Don Reed, City/County Planning Board; Dean Clark; City/County Planning Board; David Goodridge, C/C Planning Board; JW Papez, Peaks to Plains Design; Mick Johnson, HDR Engineering; Tim Erickson, HDR Engineering; Woody Woods, Lockwood Pedestrian & Safety District; Oscar L. Heinrich, MOP; Evelyn Pyburn, Yellowstone County News

1. Call to Order: Commissioner Kennedy called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., Board of County Commissioners Board Room, Yellowstone County Courthouse

Commissioner Kennedy called the meeting to order in the Board of County Commissioners Board Room, welcomed everyone in attendance, and led the pledge to the American Flag.

2. Communication from the Audience

Commissioner Kennedy asked for communication from the audience. There was none.

3. Minutes of July 21, 2015 Commissioner Kennedy called for approval of the July 21, 2015 meeting minutes.

Motion

Denis Pitman made a motion and Richard Clark seconded the motion to approve the July 21, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted.

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES –AUGUST 18, 2015

TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION SEPTEMBER 15, 2015



The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

4. Old Business: There is no Old Business.

5. New Business:

**A. Round Table Discussion. Director Mike Tooley, MDT
Presentation**

Commissioner Kennedy introduced Director Mike Tooley, MDT and thanked him for his attendance today. Director Tooley thanked the Committee for this opportunity and said Director Meg O’Leary, Montana Department of Commerce, is in attendance today. He commented there is more and more coordination at the State and highest government levels and said transportation and commerce affect each other. He commended the community for rallying around transportation and transportation investment, and working to ensure all modes and all people from all walks of life are adequately served. He said he is very excited with the possibilities that exist for Billings and Yellowstone County, especially when it comes to the future Billings Bypass. It is important as there will be improvements along the route for safety, access, and better opportunities for businesses. He commented on his recent visit with Sara Hudson, BSEDA, and their tour of Dover Park and the location where the bridge will eventually cross the Yellowstone River and his visit.

Collaboration: Director Meg O’Leary, Montana Department of Commerce, said she is very willing to work with Director Tooley. She said they realized how important collaboration between departments is while working together on a highway signage project. She stressed the importance of focusing on momentum and collaboration between agencies in order to use the resources in front of us, and she is here in support of this effort.

Director Tooley said this an expectation of Governor Bullock for the betterment of Montana. He spoke to these challenging times as Congress is struggling with approval of a long term Transportation Bill. He has met with both Montana Senators and Representative Ryan Zinke, who feel transportation is important and agree on the need for a fully funded long term bill.

Funding/Transportation Bill: Director Tooley said the discussion on funding is not limited to parties. The funding stop is October 29, 2015 and the first phase of the Bypass project is scheduled for 2019. Currently, there is a lot of uncertainty which doesn’t work well for an agency that plans for projects years in advance. The Bypass project is just one of 400 projects MDT is managing in various phases of design or construction. He reiterated Montana’s need for a long term Transportation Bill from the Federal government as it has a big system and a few people to pay for it. The Senate “Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy”, (DRIVE), Act has suggestions for funding for the first two years and is helpful. He explained that the House prefers shorter duration fixes but others feel the states should be totally

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES –AUGUST 18, 2015

TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION SEPTEMBER 15, 2015

responsible for their own transportation systems. He stated we cannot afford to do what we do in Montana without a strong Federal partnership.



State Gas Tax: Director Tooley said the State gas tax raises about \$5 million for every penny of gas tax and the state receives about \$4 million from the Federal government to construct highways. If the state had to make up the monies from the Federal government the cost would be extremely high. The Gas Tax Fund is used to initially pay contractors and MDT requests reimbursement from Federal Highways. The State’s Special Revenue Fund almost exclusively pays for maintenance after construction. Director Tooley gave the scenario if the Department were to expend its entire appropriation, the state's Special Revenue Fund would be “in the red” but they do not allow that to happen as cash on hand is needed to pay for improvements.

Reduce expenses/reduction in services. Director Tooley stated that in the meantime, the Department is looking for ways to preserve what we have by doing more preservation projects instead of new construction. He said they don’t have the resources to address all of our needs let alone all of our wants and gave the example of the \$1.6 billion needed to bring all of the bridges and state routes up to standard. He said they plan to start the Bypass project in 2019 as they are committed to finish what they have started even though it may take longer. He stressed that the next few years will be a challenge, and said it is important to continue to work together to make this and other good things happen in Billings. Director Tooley asked for understanding and to remember it is a partnership. “Things that are worth doing are hardly ever easy”. He said he looks forward to working as a partner with this community and commended District Administrator Stefan Streeter’s efforts to get projects done in way that the community wants.

Roundtable Discussion/Questions & Answers

- **Commissioner Bill Kennedy,** noted there is no secure Highway Bill, and the anticipation of the North Bypass project breaking ground in 2019. He asked if there will be a decrease in CMAQ, TSEP, and Highway dollars if there is not a 6-year Highway Bill in place? Director Tooley replied they are not going to penalize localities due to a lack of a Transportation Bill as those funds are set in the bill and will continue. The Department will try to continue to fully fund the programs that are important.
- **Steve Arveschough, Big Sky Economic Development,** thanked Director Tooley for his commitment of time. He commented on their recent meeting to discuss the Targeted Economic District in relationship to the TEDD and said it has been helpful. He said they feel they have a good feel of what MDT is trying to accomplish. They are ready to start a Comprehensive Plan for the Targeted Economic District, and will be working with Stefan Streeter on the trail connection piece to get across the bridge. He stated he is looking forward to future partnerships and thanked Director Tooley for his commitment. Director

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES –AUGUST 18, 2015

TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION SEPTEMBER 15, 2015



Tooley commented on the new jobs left behind and the development that takes place after projects are completed. He said it is easy to invest the time as it is easy to see what will happen.

Steve Arveschough announced the Montana Economic Developers Fall Conference Town Hall meeting on infrastructure on October 13, 2015 and invited Director Tooley to attend.

- **Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner,** commented that as a planner, she has seen the impact of the now retired CTEP program and the stress on communities to continue providing alternative modes of transportation. She asked Director Tooley how he sees the Transportation Alternatives, (TA), Program working and if there will there be other sources of funding to provide the alternative modes to residents. Director Tooley said the CTEP program closed with the MAP 21 Bill. The new TA program is funded at 1/3 less than CTEP and is a competitive program. The DRIVE Act puts more money into safety, and hopefully there will be more to come as communities put it to use in amazing ways.
- **Jeffrey Butts, Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator,** works within his position to obtain funding and grants for education and construction. He asked if there has been any discussion for state wide grants. Director Tooley responded that there was a bill in last Legislature that would have increased surcharge on registration fees to go to bike path construction and education. Unfortunately, at the end of the Legislative session, this bill passed the House and died in Senate Transportation.

Commissioner Bill Kennedy- noted there may be a 6 year bill that may an avenue to fund projects. He asked if there is any indexing of gas dollars or possibility of an infrastructure bank for states like Montana with low populations. Director Tooley said they are comfortable with formula distribution of 1% to Montana through the DRIVE act, and no one to his knowledge has indexed the gas tax. He explained that the Commissioner's suggestion is to tie gas tax to inflation. He said they are advocating for the Federal side to make fixes to revenue, which must be predictable and sustainable.

Richard Clark, City/County Planning Board President- thanked the Director for coming and asked if the 2019 start time for the Bypass project could be changed if a 6 year bill passes in a reasonable amount of time? Director Tooley said a project start date is a function of finances, right-of-way acquisition, design, and permitting; and it could come sooner if these things are in place and funding becomes available.

Councilman Denis Pitman-commended Stefan Streeter for his efforts to keep projects moving forward and communicating with the public regarding issues. He said the Bench Boulevard project has gone well. He commented on the numbers

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES –AUGUST 18, 2015

TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION SEPTEMBER 15, 2015



of traffic accidents on Main Street and stressed safety as a priority. Councilman Pitman stated he appreciates anything that can be done to move forward.

Director Tooley thanked him for his comments and stated safety is his “number one priority”.

Commissioner Bill Kennedy asked how many projects in the Red Book 5-year plan for the department have been “pushed off “to future years? Director Tooley replied several projects have been “pushed” to future years, as it is a function of right-of-way design and funding. Even so, the Department always tries to have a back- up or something to “fill the gap” with projects and make every effort to spend the Federal funding available. “Something in Montana will be done”.

Commissioner Kennedy closed the discussion and thanked Director Tooley for his presentation.

6. Other Business

A. **The next PCC meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 15, 2015.**

1. Future Agenda Item: Motion/Approval of the 2016 UPWP

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

To Approved by a motion on September 15, 2015