



DRAFT MINUTES

December 11, 2008, 1:30 p.m.
Illinois Municipal League, 500 E. Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the MPO Advisory Council was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chairman Moore.

II. ROLL CALL

Board: Cameron Moore, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission; Terry Kohlbuss, Peoria Tri-County Regional Planning Commission; Denise Bulat, Bi-State Regional Commission; Norm Sims, Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission; Paul Russell, McLean County Regional Planning; Mike Lammey, Kankakee Area Transportation Study, Brian Dickson, DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study; Mark Smith, Decatur Area Transportation Study; Bob Soltau, Stateline Area Transportation Study; Steve Ernst, Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Les Serman, East-West Gateway Council of Governments; Randy Blankenhorn, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and Adam Aull, Danville Area Transportation Study.

III. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Kohlbuss informed board members that the remaining balance should suffice until the end of June 2009. He informed members that rent and administrative expenses are not covered under the IDOT grant and recommended a meeting with Les Nunes at IDOT. Mr. Kohlbuss motioned to request IDOT's assistance in the matter and to seek a better understanding of expense reimbursements. Motion was seconded by Ms. Bulat. Motion passed. Mr. Kohlbuss told members that CMAP received 74% of the comprehensive regional planning funds and contributed 78% of the local match to IL MPO Advisory Council. Mr. Kohlbuss asked staff how often they utilize the Springfield office. Staff responded that they rarely use it. Terry motioned to inquire of ILARC to suspend the office rental agreement as soon as possible. Motion seconded by Mr. Soltau. Motion passed.

IV. MINUTES

Mr. Sims motioned to accept the October 2nd and November 3rd minutes. Motion seconded by Mr. Ernst. Motion passed.

V. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Moore updated members on the Technical Committee. Gena McCullough accepted the position as Technical Committee Chair. The committee will look for training opportunities. Their goal is to find training opportunities with little or no cost from existing federal and state entities. Mr. Stevenson from the FHWA stated that they have a resource center in Olympia Fields. Ms. Bulat informed members of an upcoming training session on January 20, 2009 in Iowa for engineers and public safety directors; the

topic is “Safety for All Modes.” Mr. Ernst told members that the Bureau of the Census is also conducting training sessions.

Mr. Moore updated members about the Travel Demand Model grant. They have hit a few snags on the contract and the project has been delayed. One of the goals is to identify what small and mid-sized MPOs are doing in terms of travel demand modeling.

VI. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Perales provided a legislative update to members. With the recent activities at the Governor’s office, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding any capital bill and there are a lot of unknowns. There may be a final decision by the end of the year. Mr. Nunes indicated that there are nine bills on the Governor’s desk which can be signed by the end of the year. Ms. Perales is also meeting with three MPOs within the next few weeks to tour their region and discuss strengths and weaknesses at their MPO office.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Vice-Chair Blankenhorn updated members of the legislative working group meeting. Representative Ryg has been tapped as the lead sponsor of the bill. The Chicago business community spearheaded the proposed language in an effort to bring value and performance based outcomes in any capital bill. The goal of the legislation is to set overarching goals for the State and create a Transportation Commission made up primarily of MPOs.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Blankenhorn to compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of the proposed Transportation Commission and IDOT. Mr. Blankenhorn responded that the draft legislation sets overarching goals for the state and the implementation process is still the same as IDOT’s but will fall to the new commission. Mr. Kohlbus stated, there is momentum nationally to give MPOs more internal authority and decision making abilities. He believes that the bill provides a significant change and is a major shift in policy.

Mr. Kohlbus stated that he could not support the legislation but understands the principle behind it. He suggested a half step shift in power since the current legislation could create complex political bodies for the MPOs. Ms. Bulat stated that MPOs would make the final decision. Iowa has a commission and they receive a lot of feedback from their MPOs in the process.

Mr. Sims stated that at the national levels, there are still a lot of unknowns. In Illinois, the bulk of the state is concerned about fund allocation. He would like to see a CDBG block grant process. Mr. Nunes indicated that the legislation takes away the ability to tackle a crisis. Mr. Sims doesn’t want to take that away and he also doesn’t want a District #1 versus District #4 situation. He asked for clarification regarding the exact problem that Mr. Blankenhorn is trying to fix. Many feel that regional decision making is important and that there needs to be some mechanism in place. Mr. Blankenhorn stated, the business community has no authority on how projects are selected. Mr. Ernst is not sure that the Advisory Council would be ready by January to pick three downstate MPOs.

Mr. Kohlbus believes that a half step needs to be taken. MPOs can be involved in the process earlier, for example, IDOT has to submit the draft plan to the MPOs by a specific date. He believes the issue may or may not require any legislation. The IL MPO Advisory Council should sit down with IDOT or give plans to the IDOT district offices.

Mr. Nunes used a recent contract with Wilbur Smith as an example. It created a course of action where they start meeting with the MPOs earlier in the process. Mr. Sterman stated it is normally does the

pushing when it comes to projects. He stated that it is usually the state legislature. Mr. Soltau would like the process to be opened up to include some feedback from MPOs and other stakeholders. Mr. Blankenhorn stated district offices provide program guidelines in preparation for the draft plan. Mr. Nunes believes that East-West Gateway could be reviewed. It can be a pilot of how that might look for the whole state.

Mr. Moore stated that additional discussion is needed regarding how MPOs can get involved in the process. He spent five years running the Pennsylvania MPO. They had the final decision on projects, even at times when PennDOT didn't agree with the priorities. Models exist and there could be legislation. Ms. Bulat stated that 80-90% of capitol dollars is spent on maintenance and those dollars are allocated in a fairly minimal way to downstate MPOs. Iowa wants MPOs and regional planning commissions to demonstrate some financial contribution to each of the projects.

Mr. Sims stated that if there is a new state capital bill, it will already have those projects outlined in the legislation. He feels more comfortable with IDOT since it is needs based, instead of the Governor's office. Mr. Soltau stated the current process is indicative of who has clout versus who has needs.

Mr. Kohlbuss motioned the MPO Advisory Council to endorse the idea and recognize the need for reform in the project selection process. Reform should be consistent with the statement of principles that many of the MPO's passed about a capital program and to engage with a separate working group to work out the details on how that would be accomplished. Motion was seconded by Ms. Bulat. Motion passed.

Mr. Blankenhorn stated that the accountability legislation may not be the answer. He asked members to consider the following: What are we trying to accomplish? How best to get there? Mr. Blankenhorn expressed the need to make revisions by February 1st. The working group will consist of the following members; Mr. Dickson, Mr. Ernst, Mr. Kohlbuss, Mr. Soltau, Mr. Serman, Mr. Smith, Mr. Sims and Mr. Moore.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

CMAP recently approved infrastructure principles on December 8, 2008. They believe that these projects that have lasting value. Overall the principles include: investments should be strategic but timely; make a priority in peoples' lives; demonstrate benefits, and be tied to real reform. The CMAP board views the recovery package as a bridge to the re-authorization bill. They are interested in the regional approach advantage – solving problems and meeting needs, not just building roads and fixing bridges.

Mr. Kohlbuss asked Mr. Blankenhorn about additional help on PL funds. Mr. Blankenhorn stated that it can come to states as a block grant with few restrictions, or program categories. How can MPOs fit national projects, such as CREATE, into an existing program or categories? The Transition Team is still early in the discussions; there are no details to provide at this time.

PUBLIC TRANSIT REIMBURSEMENT

Mr. Lamney expressed his concern for late payments to their local transit authority. The Illinois Public Transit Association may be following up with all downstate transit operators to discuss this issue further. Mr. Soltau stated that all social services are hurting at this time; one agency has not received a payment since July 2008. RPC is still waiting on \$800,000 of state payments. Mr. Dickson was expecting a significant increase in downstate operating funds but only received last year's allocation. Mr. Nunes stated that the state is still in limbo, and that the appropriation dollars may not be a real number.

2009 DUES

Mr. Aull asked about the 2009 dues. Mr. Kohlbus's response was that all dues are current and the big question is whether IDOT will fund the Advisory Council for another year. Mr. Moore stated that they will review the dues structure after the first of the year and will have a discussion with IDOT about the continuation of funding.

IDOT SHARE-POINT WEBSITE

IDOT staff did a presentation on the Share-Point website. All MPOs are subscribers of the password protected site. The website is a tool to communicate with the MPOs and share data. MPO fiscal items were highlighted in the presentation, along with many of the other data sets on the website. Members can sign up for alerts on the website.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kohlbus asked about the Illinois Tomorrow Program. He motioned for the Advisory Council to send a letter to the current Governor and the Lieutenant Governor to move forward with the program. Motion was seconded by Mr. Lamney. Motion passed.

VIII. CALENDAR

Mr. Moore stated that the next meeting will be on February 26, 2008.

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. by Cameron Moore.

ATTENDEES:

Others: J.D. Stevenson, FHWA, Les Nunes, IDOT, Betsy Tracy, IDOT; Gordon Smith, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Jennifer Sicks, McLean Regional Planning Commission; Maggie Maurtino, Peoria/Pekin Urban Transportation Study; Paul LaBonde, DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study; and Marta Perales, IL MPO Advisory Council.

Minutes submitted by Marta Perales