

**Johnson City Metropolitan Planning Organization
Executive Board and Executive Staff Meeting
Friday, August 15, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.
Johnson City Transit Center, 1st Floor Training Room
137 West Market Street, Johnson City, TN**

Executive Board Present

Jack Qualls for Governor Bill Haslam, State of Tennessee
Pete Peterson for the Honorable Mayor Ralph Van Brocklin, City of Johnson City
Jon Hartman for the Honorable Mayor Curt Alexander, City of Elizabethton
Bob Browning for the Honorable Mayor Kelly Wolfe, Town of Jonesborough
Gary Carver for the Honorable Mayor Johnny Lynch, Town of Unicoi
The Honorable Mayor Dan Eldridge, Washington County
The Honorable Mayor Leon Humphrey, Carter County

Executive Board Not Present

Executive Staff Present

Pete Peterson, City of Johnson City
Jerome Kitchens, City of Elizabethton
Bob Browning, Town of Jonesborough
Gary Carver for Larry Rea, Town of Unicoi
Chris Craig, First Tennessee Development District

Executive Staff Not Present

John Deakins, Jr., Washington County Highway Superintendent
Jack Perkins, Carter County Highway Superintendent
Eldonna Janutolo, Johnson City Transit System

Others Attending

Glenn Berry, Johnson City MTPO
Mary Butler, Johnson City MTPO
Randy Dodson, Mattern & Craig
Jason Carder, Mattern & Craig
Ambre Torbett, Sullivan County

Summary of Motions Passed:

- **Approved** – Minutes from December 19, 2013.
- **Approved** – Resolution 2014-01 – re-approval and re-adoption of the FY 2014-2015 UPWP.

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Mr. Pete Peterson representing Mayor Van Brocklin. A sign-in sheet was passed to each person.

Agenda Item 1: The minutes from the December 19, 2013 meeting were reviewed.

Mr. Qualls made a motion for the board to approve the document. Mr. Hartman seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 2: Consider re-approval and re-adoption of FY 2014-2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) (**Resolution 2014-01**).

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Glenn Berry to give an overview of the UPWP. Mr. Berry stated that an Executive Board vote was required to re-approve and re-adopt the FY 2014-2015 UPWP. Mr. Berry explained that additional federal initiatives were added to the UPWP and that another federal review process was required. Mr. Berry explained that the UPWP describes the tasks to be conducted by the MTPO and funding to complete these tasks. He stated this included required tasks such as the maintenance on the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, along with studies that would be beneficial but not required, such as a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan. Mr. Berry made note of the local funding issues and that non-required studies or plans would be difficult to fund due to Johnson City's tight budget and that the local match would be an issue in completing nonessential task. Mr. Berry pointed out that there was good regional cooperation and financial support for studies on sub areas of the MTPO. Specifically, he noted local match has been provided by Washington County, Elizabethton and Jonesborough for studies in their respective subareas of the MTPO.

Mr. Berry stated the UPWP covered a two-year period but in actuality it was treated as a one-year UPWP, which required state and federal review on the same cycle as the one-year UPWP. Mr. Peterson asked if it would not be financially prudent to adopt a two-year UPWP to protect federal funds. Mr. Qualls stated this was a misconception and that the UPWP did not protect federal funds from being rescinded by Congress. Mr. Berry then stated the MTPO received comments from FHWA on the current approved UPWP for the current year (2014). In light of the federal review process and that federal funds were not protected, Mr. Berry stated there was no real gain in submitting a two-year UPWP at this point unless some of these issues could be streamlined. In response to Mr. Peterson's question regarding financial planning, Mr. Berry stated they would continue to plan for future years but most likely only submit a one-year UPWP in the future since they were still required through the one-year process. Mr. Browning stated there did not seem to be any real benefit in submitting a two-year UPWP if it was going to go through the same review process yearly.

Mr. Browning made a motion for the board to approve the 2014-2015 UPWP as submitted. Mr. Humphrey seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 3: Status of the Highway Trust Fund and Transportation Act.

Mr. Glenn Berry informed the Board of the recent passage of H.R. 5201 “Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014,” which extended and funded the current transportation act, MAP-21, until May of 2015. Mr. Berry explained the act did not truly address transportation funding and merely postponed the inevitable issue of finding an equitable and fiscally responsible way of funding the transportation system in the United States. He stated it is hard to plan for projects with no long term transportation authorization.

Mr. Peterson initiated a discussion with Mr. Jack Qualls regarding transportation funding and all the federal requirements, or red tape, with projects, specifically the Right of Way and environmental process. Mr. Peterson stated we know it is not you personally that is holding up the process; however, it seems there are a lot of delays when dealing through TDOT and federal law. Mr. Qualls responded that TDOT was aware of the issues and TDOT is working to improve this process. Mr. Berry said he would work with local members and TDOT to improve this process. Mr. Berry informed the Board of one initiative TDOT was implementing to improve this process called Accelerated Delivery Pilot Program. He further stated he had only heard about the announcement from TDOT but there was an upcoming webinar on August 27 by TDOT introducing the new Local Programs Accelerated Delivery Pilot Program.

Agenda Item 4: Update from the MTPO Transportation Coordinator – Metropolitan Planning Area.

Mr. Berry conducted a review of the Urbanized Area and Metropolitan Planning Area boundary using a new tool called ArcGIS Online. Mr. Berry stated that ArcGIS Online allowed the MTPO to share information and maps easily through a web browser such as Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox and mobile devices such as the iPad or smart phones, without the end user having to install or purchase special software. He pointed out this would be an extremely useful tool for the MTPO in providing information to local government officials, state officials and the general public. He stated this was part of the overall strategy for the City of Johnson City in conducting the GIS Strategic Plan, to provide people with better access and transparency to useful information.

With that in mind, Mr. Berry began the presentation using ArcGIS Online interactively to demonstrate the relationship of the three MPOs in the Tri-Cities, the three Urbanized Areas as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, the respective city limits of jurisdictions in the region, and the Metropolitan Planning Area boundaries. After turning on each map layer on the display screen he stated “as you can see this gets very complicated and confusing very quick.” Next he went on to illustrate how previously Bluff City and Piney Flats had been in the Bristol MPO Planning Boundary (MPA); however, recently they (Bristol MPO) had retracted their boundary, removing Bluff City and Piney Flats. This, in conjunction with the U.S. Census Bureau redefining the Johnson City Urbanized Area to include Bluff City and Piney Flats, now made these areas part of the Johnson City MPO. Mr. Berry stated Bluff City and Piney Flats could have remained in the Bristol MPO under federal law. He explained that any area inside an Urbanized Area with a population of 50,000 or more must in a MPO, but federal law does not state what MPO it must be in.

Case in point, he continued, is the Kingsport Urbanized Area. A section of the Kingsport Urbanized Area extends into Washington County and Johnson City and has for years. The Johnson City MPO has included this section of the Kingsport Urbanized Area in Johnson City MTPO's Planning Area. This was done because it was always considered the Johnson City MTPO understood this area's transportation needs better. This area had a closer relationship to the Johnson City MTPO and Kingsport agreed. The end result is Johnson City MTPO strongly supported the upgrade of Exit 13 on I-26, included the funding for the Gray Fossil site in the MTPO's previous TIPs for funding, and recently funded the Washington County Transportation study that included this area. Mr. Berry stated while bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. have the responsibility of defining what is rural and urban, they do not necessarily know what is best for the local communities. Fortunately, federal law allows the Johnson City MTPO and Kingsport MTPO to work through issues like this locally.

Mr. Berry also recognized Ms. Ambre Torbett, Planner for Sullivan County. Ms. Torbett stated she was on the Boards of both the Kingsport MTPO and Bristol MPO. She was welcomed by the Board and at this point the discussion opened up to the floor. The question was asked if Johnson City MTPO would consider taking in additional rural areas of Sullivan County that were not in any MPO. Mr. Berry stated the major concern to the Johnson City MTPO was the impact of air quality designation and the possibility of Sullivan County being designated as "non-attainment" and could not recommend taking any addition areas in Sullivan County; however, he noted that the Kingsport MTPO could take these areas in the Planning Boundary.

At this point, Mr. Peterson suggested Johnson City and Washington County be included on the Kingsport MTPO Board. Mr. Berry stated he could draft a letter to that respect if the Board desired. Then Mr. Hartman stated it would be better if Johnson City and Washington County write individual letters representing their respective jurisdictions only to ask to be included in the Kingsport MTPO Executive Board and not the Johnson City MTPO, as it was only these two jurisdictions that were affected. Everyone agreed this was best.

Then Mr. Peterson also stated he would like a letter written to the Bristol MPO requesting they extend their MTPO planning boundary back to take Bluff City and Piney Flats into the Bristol MPO. Mr. Berry stated he would draft a letter. He also stated there was some additional work to be completed on the Johnson City MTPO MPA Boundary due to this discussion and he would be working on this over the next few weeks.

In conclusion of this discussion Mr. Berry stated, "as you can see, these are issues we have to deal with as our region grows together along transportation corridors." He explained the Tri-Cities do not have a central core city. In fact the "geographic central core" is near the Tri-Cities Airport with little growth around that region. In fact, that area is classified as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, but it is in the Kingsport MTPO Planning area.

Mr. Berry stated we need to start planning now for the next U.S. Census classification of "rural" and "urban" that will occur approximately in 6 to 8 years after the next decennial census. In 2022, the U.S. Census Bureau could define the region as one urbanized area, say the Tri-Cities Urbanized Area. This

would make us one large MPO, with a large MPO being defined by the federal government as an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or more. At this size, several of the rules change as it relates to MPOs and Transit.

Mr. Berry concluded the discussion on this topic by stating this information was presented to keep board members aware of what could happen and that the MTPO needs to start planning for “What If Scenarios” along these lines and there would be future discussions on this topic.

Agenda Item 5: Other Business Update / Citizens Concerns

No citizens’ concerns were raised and Mr. Berry thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Agenda Item 6:

Mr. Browning, designated by Mr. Peterson to chair the remainder of the meeting, stated the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:28 a.m.