Minutes of the Madison Area Transportation Planning Board
Technical Coordinating Committee

February 26, 2014 Fitchburg Community Center, Prairie View Room 2:00 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Kugler, D. Paoni (for Beaupre), Beck, Coville, Dryer, Dunphy, Stauske, Hessling, Stephany, Wydeven, Phillips, Woodard, Violante

Members Absent: Baker, Bertch, Cornwell, Scheel, Even, Kennedy, McComb, Sayre

Others Present: W. Schaefer, M. Cechvala, L. Barta, B. Czebotar

2. Approval of January 22, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Woodard moved, Dunphy seconded, to approve the January 22, 2014 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. Presentation on the Interstate 39/90/94 Traffic Impact Analysis Study – Tier 1 Screening Analysis of Interchange Locations (WisDOT SW Region Staff)

Schaefer introduced Larry Barta from WisDOT SW Region, project manager for the Interstate study. Barta explained that this first phase of the larger EIS study is analyzing the impacts of potential future Interstate crossings and interchanges. He said FHWA had asked that such a system-wide analysis of potential interchanges be conducted. The goal is to examine the viability of potential crossings and interchanges should they be requested by local communities in the future. The first level of analysis, which was just completed, was a high level screening using the regional travel model to identify those interchanges with “fatal flaws” (i.e., unacceptable impacts to Interstate operations). He said a future interchange would need to make it through FHWA’s 8-step approval process for new interchanges which addresses the spacing of interchanges and other factors. Barta went through the 14 potential new interchange locations identified by local communities and others. He reviewed the criteria used for evaluating the interchanges, including spacing, safety, congestion impacts, regional significance of the intersecting roadway, and others.

Barta presented a map showing the locations of interchanges that were recommended for moving forward to the next level of analysis. These were: 1) Cuba Valley Road, 2) Hoepker Road, 3) Hanson Road, 4) Milwaukee Street Extended, and 5) Gaston Road. Both Hoepker and Hanson and Milwaukee Street extended and Gaston were alternative locations. One might be approved, but not both. That left a total of three new potential interchange locations. Some of them would require the addition of a collector/distributor roadway system. Barta said the next step would be modeling these interchanges in Paramics to determine how they would operate. It is possible that WisDOT would sponsor a project to add a new interchange, but unlikely unless it would improve traffic operations at another interchange. The responsibility for requesting and sponsoring new interchanges at these locations, if feasible, would likely fall to local communities. He said a final report on this phase of the study is due in August 2014.

Woodard said that he was told that new collector/distributor roads were not acceptable, but some locations were showing them. Barta responded that he was not aware of any blanket policy against them. Phillips asked about the remainder of the study, and Barta said the EIS study extends from Madison to Portage and will look at capacity expansion of the Interstate. Dunphy asked whether the airport had commented on the Hanson Road location. Barta said they would not support a signal at the Hanson/Stoughton Road intersection so that would need to be a right in/right out only.

Schaefer said staff initiated a comprehensive review and revision of the MPO’s policies and criteria for ranking STP-Urban projects. Such a review had not been done since the criteria were developed in the late 1990s. Federal law and emphasis areas (e.g., livability/sustainability) and MPO policy objectives have changed to some extent since that time. Schaefer said that staff had researched criteria used by other MPOs in coming up with the proposed changes, which he emphasized should be considered a work in progress. He said that from the standpoint of the categories used for scoring and the weight assigned to them, the proposed new system was not significantly different than the current one. The proposed new system would use a 100-point scale, similar to the one just finalized for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects. Also, rather than having all projects rated using the same criteria, the criteria would be tailored to the type of project. The categories would still be the same. The category weights would vary somewhat by project type. For example, maintenance-type projects would have slightly different weights than capacity expansion projects for the system preservation and congestion mitigation categories. He referred to the table distributed comparing the two systems.

Schaefer first reviewed the program objectives and the proposed policies. Most of the eligible types of projects under federal law would be eligible under MPO policy other than purely recreational and environmental mitigation projects. No change was proposed to the eligible cost categories. Only construction would be funded, not real estate or design. Minimum costs were being proposed for the different project types, including $500,000 for roadway projects. There are currently no minimum project costs, but larger projects are recommended. A sliding scale cost share for lower cost projects is proposed similar to that to be used for the TAP projects. No set percentage or sub-allocation is proposed for certain types of projects.

Schaefer reviewed the screening criteria, including the financial requirements. He said it was proposed to now require project applications to include an itemized cost estimate. Phillips stated that an itemized project budget could be difficult for some project sponsors, depending on the level of design that had been done for a project. Asked how the information would be used, Schaefer said MPO staff would not scrutinize every aspect of the budget, but would review to determine if the cost estimates seemed out of line compared to other or previous applications. Stauske asked if a contingency cost should be used and, if so, how much. Schaefer said he thought 20% was appropriate depending on the project, but said MPO staff didn’t have expertise on that. It was discussed that different agencies use different line items and costs vary depending on the project.

Schaefer went through the scoring criteria for roadway projects. Stauske and others commented that it would be helpful to know how the listed criteria would be used to calculate a score for each category. It was discussed that it would be helpful for MPO staff as well to incorporate formulas for any quantitative items to ensure consistency in scoring. Schaefer said staff could look at doing that for some criteria, but scoring for many measures will remain somewhat subjective and the use of formulas would not be appropriate. Schaefer said staff had not yet thought through all of the details of how it would score projects under the different categories. Dryer asked whether the planned University Research Park Phase 2 development would be considered a “regional employment center” under the Support Transportation Efficient Land Use criterion even though it is in a green field site. Schaefer said yes, but that a project serving an existing versus planned employment center would score somewhat higher. Regarding the Timely Implementation category, Stauske asked about points given to locally programmed and budgeted projects since Middleton only budgets one year ahead but plans five years ahead. Schaefer said the project should be in the five-year capital plan. Woodard said in Fitchburg the City Council must approve a resolution authorizing grant applications. Schaefer said such a resolution would suffice as a demonstration of financial commitment.

Dunphy asked if the new criteria would be used for the 2015 project cycle. Schaefer responded they could be if approved by the May or perhaps June MPO board meeting. Otherwise, application of the
new criteria could wait until the following project application cycle. Phillips asked if projects already in the TIP would be reevaluated. Schaefer said yes, but that the commitment to projects currently programmed for the next three years was firm. He also said he didn’t think the relative priority of the projects would change significantly anyway. Dryer asked if staff had evaluated projects using the old and new criteria and compared the results. Schaefer said no, but staff planned to do that. Schaefer said he’d use old or hypothetical projects rather than currently programmed projects. Phillips encouraged committee members to review the new draft criteria and provide comments to MPO staff.

5. **Presentation on Madison Metro Bus Size Study**

Mike Cechvala said that MPO staff was wrapping up the bus size study. The need for the study was identified as part of a Metro planning effort in 2008. The purpose of the study was to determine if larger and/or smaller buses could complement Metro’s fleet of about 210 standard 40-foot transit coaches, all of which are nearly identical. The study was limited to Metro’s main-line fixed route service – Routes 1-84. Metro also operates paratransit service which uses specialized vans and Supplemental School Day Service which uses older vehicles left over from main-line service.

Cechvala noted that Metro has taken several steps to reduce overcrowding, including using extra buses, adding service, and moving to center-facing seats. There are several large bus options, but the study looked at 60-foot articulated buses which are appropriate for Metro’s service. There are several small bus options, but the study focused on heavy duty 30-foot buses because lighter-duty vehicles are not appropriate for stop-and-go urban transit service.

The study collected bus load data at several collection points near downtown Madison and at the transfer points during peak periods. The data was analyzed using criteria specifying that no more than 20% of peak trips should overload a standard bus and no more than 10% of peak trips should overload a small bus. The results were then refined using staff input and other factors. The results were then fed into a cost and fuel use model to determine the bottom line impacts. Finally, transit facilities were reviewed to see what changes would need to be made to accommodate large buses.

About five to six small buses were identified that could be incorporated into the fleet, and potentially a few more if service were restructured, where long routes would be broken so that small buses could operate in the periphery. The consultant team, led by Nelson\Nygaard from the Seattle area, recommended that at least ten buses be added to the fleet, if any, to avoid a small sub-fleet creating logistical problems. Up to 40 large buses were identified as being beneficial to reducing overcrowding, 48 with spares. However, most of the routes identified are peak-period routes, with service only during morning and afternoon commute times. Therefore, Routes 2 and 80 were identified as priority routes. Several challenges exist for large buses. The garage on Ingersoll Street is over capacity, the transfer points were not designed for them, and there is a significant capital expense and ongoing operating costs to the larger vehicles.

Woodard said restructuring service to add transfers would add travel time and make the service less attractive. Cechvala agreed and said for that reason the small buses that would require a service restructure were separate out and placed in a lower confidence level category. Stauske asked how fuel economy was being improved with new buses coming into the fleet, compared with smaller buses. Cechvala and Beck said that new buses are improving Metro’s overall fuel economy and smaller buses would keep pace with that. Hybrid buses are currently using almost 20% less fuel than standard buses but cost significantly more. Cechvala reviewed the capital costs of the different bus types. Woodard asked whether running a standard bus followed by a small bus would be feasible. Cechvala said that the operating costs are about double in that situation, so that solution was not considered.

6. **Committee Member Reports**

Item deferred.
7. **Staff Reports**
   Schaefer distributed a list of new and revised projects for a TIP amendment that would be on the agenda for the next MPO board meeting. The new ones were OCR rail crossing device projects.

8. **Next Meeting Date**
   The next meeting date is scheduled for March 26, 2014.

9. **Adjournment**
   The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

*Minutes recorded by Mike Cechvala and Bill Schaefer*