1. Roll Call

MPO Staff present: Bill Schaefer, David Kanning

Others present in an official capacity: Rob Knorr (WisDOT SW Region), Jess Billmeyer (AECOM)

2. Approval of March 4, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Moved by R. Schmidt, seconded by Kamp, to approve the March 4, 2015 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. Communications

- Letter from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to Metro Transit approving the program management plan for administering the Section 5310 program.

Schaefer said the FTA approved the original plan, not the amended plan that reflects the fact the MPO is now using a competitive project selection process. MPO staff informed Metro staff they would need to send the revised plan to FTA. Golden expressed concern about the tone of the letter. Kamp said Metro had a good relationship with the FTA Regional Office and would follow up with them to make sure FTA did not have any concerns.

4. Public Comment (for items not on MPO Agenda)

None.

5. Presentation on the Interstate 39/90/94 (Madison to Portage) EIS Study

Schaefer summarized the status of the study and introduced presenters Rob Knorr, WisDOT SW Region, and the project consultant Jess Billmeyer, AECOM. Knorr explained that WisDOT is conducting the study to analyze existing and future conditions of the I-39/90/94 corridor. A range of alternatives will be evaluated which will ultimately lead to selection of a preferred alternative. Knorr described the other studies that are linked to the I-39/90/94 study, and provided information about the first phase of the study evaluating potential new interchanges and the results. Knorr described the public outreach activities, including an online survey intended to capture the public’s opinions about project priorities, design alternatives, and other issues. Knorr said further outreach would be directed to organizations that serve environmental justice population groups. He described upcoming field work and study process. Billmeyer summarized the results of the initial traffic operations analysis and the forecasted traffic volumes. He noted that trucks account for 20-28% of total daily traffic within the study area, a range that is significantly higher than the national average. He reviewed examples of some of the roadway/interchange deficiencies. Knorr described the economic significance of the corridor, and discussed the kinds of bicycle/pedestrian accommodations that would be considered for the study area.

Golden suggested adding Disability Rights Wisconsin as an environmental justice group to contact. He also asked whether future interchanges have or will be studied. Knorr said that the first phase of the study evaluated potential interchanges and carried forward three potential locations for further more detailed study as part of the EIS. Gust clarified that classifying a potential future interchange location as “viable” does not mean it will be constructed or that WisDOT would pay for it. Golden asked about the possibility of future
capacity expansions of crossings of the interstate. Knorr mentioned Cottage Grove Road as a likely candidate, but that other locations would be studied. Billmeyer added that pedestrian/bicycle facility crossings would also be studied. Golden suggested that the WisDOT team contact city council members from the districts affected by the project for input.

The Board discussed two design options shown for a median barrier: a concrete jersey barrier and a landscaped median with a cable barrier. The advantages and disadvantages pertaining to cost, roadway access for law enforcement, property impacts, aesthetics, maintenance and safety were discussed. Knorr said that the existing corridor has both types. The impact of construction on vegetation and animal species was also discussed. In response to a question by Minihan about studying bridge impacts, Knorr said that NEPA requires examination of the impacts improvements such as bridges will have on the natural environment, including streams, wetlands and wildlife. Archaeological surveys must also be completed in areas of potential influence. He said that searches for underground storage tanks which hold fuel or other chemicals would occur this spring.

The Board discussed existing and forecasted weekday and weekend traffic volumes within the corridor. In response to a question about why traffic was highest on Fridays, Schaefer said that Friday traffic volumes include both commuter and recreational traffic. Gust said that volumes on Friday increase from 10 a.m. through 5 p.m., a trend that does align with the traffic flow characteristics of other roadway corridors in Madison. Billmeyer stated that on Sundays the peak period starts at 11 a.m. and continues until 6 p.m. Billmeyer said WisDOT completed the traffic forecasts last November. Schaefer clarified that the forecasted volumes were generated from the regional travel demand model, not past trends. The model was calibrated using data collected for the Beltline Study. Minihan questioned the basis for assuming the significant increases in traffic volumes given the drop in volumes between 2005 and 2013. Billmeyer said traffic growth needed to be evaluated from a long-term perspective and that variations within short time periods should be expected. The drop between 2005 and 2010 was due to the recession, but volumes are increasing again.

Matano asked if the historical traffic growth occurred because of population increases or because people spent more time in their vehicles. Schaefer said a number of factors contributed to the sharp increase in traffic volumes in the 1970s through the 1990s, including women entering the workforce and greater auto ownership per household. Those factors have played out and that is why the rate of growth is expected to be lower in the future. Stern noted that the population in Dane County increased substantially in the 1980s and 1990s. Minihan questioned the relevance of daily traffic volumes versus peak period. Schaefer noted the very different peaking characteristics on the interstate with the heavy weekend traffic in the summer months versus the usual weekday commute period peaking. That leads to the issue of what the appropriate design period should be since there are only a limited number of days that congestion is a problem.

Golden asked if the study will examine USH 51 traffic characteristics, since it is an alternative travel route to I-39/90/94 for local residents. If some traffic can be diverted to USH 51, then perhaps the interstate improvements might not need to be as extensive. Knorr said that USH 51 traffic conditions would be analyzed through modeling. Schaefer asked if Stoughton Road was included in the operations model. Billmeyer said no that diversion to alternate routes would be evaluated using the regional model while the Paramics traffic operations model would be used to analyze peak period conditions during an AM, PM, Friday, and Sunday period.

Clear asked how much of a factor different vehicle types and sizes have on roadways and if that is accounted for in the model. Billmeyer said that the vehicle mix is accounted for in the model. He said that every truck roughly counts for about one-and-a-half cars. He noted that truck traffic makes up more than 25% of all traffic in the corridor, which is a very high percentage compared to other interstate corridors. A large intermodal facility located near STH 38 and I-39 in Rochelle, Illinois sends 6,000 trucks a day north into the corridor. Billmeyer said the corridor was projected to be at Level of Service F by 2050 based on the forecast 30th highest hour of the year, reflecting the heavy traffic on Fridays and Sundays in the summer months.

Knorr noted that in 2050 the ADT volume on the interstate will match the highest hours we see on the interstate today. The Board discussed some of the safety issues relating to the Badger (I-39/90/94), USH 151,
and USH 51 interchanges, including weaving and deficient vertical/horizontal geometry. The cost of constructing a four or six-lane bridge was also discussed. Gust said that the total cost depends on the bridge type and design, and whether it has girders.

Schmidt asked when construction might start. Knorr said that construction would start in the mid-2020s if funding was available and if pre-construction activities were completed by then. Gust noted that real estate acquisition cannot occur until after the environmental study is completed. Matano asked if WisDOT has or will complete an inventory of billboards within the corridor. Gust said that WisDOT had already inventoried the billboards within the corridor.

6. **Update on the Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Strategic Plan**
   
   Moved by Stern, seconded by Ahrens, to defer item until next meeting. Motion carried.

7. **Continued Review and Discussion of Draft STP Urban Project Scoring Criteria and Program Policies**

   Schaefer provided an update on the status of proposed revisions to the STP Urban program policies and project scoring criteria. He said a workgroup, which includes members from the MPO’s technical committee, as well as board member Ken Golden, was assisting staff. He said he wanted to provide an update and discuss the final draft of the roadway project criteria and key policy issues because the board will be asked to approve the new policies and criteria at the May or June meeting.

   Schaefer described the recommended revisions to the roadway project criteria. The “timeliness of project implementation” criterion is proposed to be dropped as a scoring criterion and will be added as a screening criterion. Applicants will need to demonstrate the ability to deliver a project within the proposed schedule in order to be accepted and scored. The 15 points that were assigned to that criterion were redistributed to three other categories. The scoring for the “system preservation” category was simplified and the maximum points under that category and the “congestion mitigation” category would now be the same regardless of whether the project adds travel lanes. The scoring for the congestion category was modified to allow projects to earn more points for addressing congestion rather than the existing level of congestion. Within the “safety” category, points will be awarded based upon the crash rate, not crash history, and potential crash reduction. Within the “enhancement of multi-modal options” category, pedestrian and bicycle facilities were separated and the scoring criteria were quantified based upon how many types of facilities are being replaced, improved or provided. The final major change was in the “environmental justice” category. The provision providing for negative points if a project had significant adverse impacts on environmental justice groups was dropped and was added as a screening criterion. If a project had such impacts, it would not be eligible for funding.

   Ahrens asked why a project should receive points for a high crash rate if it doesn’t incorporate any measures to reduce the crash rate. Golden suggested having the workgroup take another look at how points are assigned within the “safety” category in order to address Ahrens’ concern. Schaefer said this could possibly be addressed similar to how the congestion category is handled, but he didn’t think it would result in a significant difference in the scoring for projects. Schaefer said that the staff intends to reference the Crash Mitigation Factors Clearinghouse website, which calculates how effective certain roadway infrastructure improvements are at reducing crashes.

   Golden thanked Schaefer for his efforts thus far and said he was pleased with the workgroup’s progress. He noted that the workgroup recommended setting aside 10% for smaller-scale projects, which will make the funding process more competitive. Schaefer emphasized that the set-aside would not be a requirement, since the board may decide that none or only one of the small project applications have enough merit for funding. The larger projects may also use up the funding allocation for a particular program cycle. Schaefer provided some details on what constitutes a “small project”, and explained that one of the purposes of the set aside is to achieve more geographic equity in funding over a period of time. Matano said that it will be nice to have smaller projects to help fill gaps in the schedule of projects. Schaefer said that the set-aside will help to smooth out funding from year-to-year as we go forward.
Schaefer provided additional details about policy recommendations made by the workgroup at their previous meetings. The workgroup has recommended increasing the cost share from 50% Federal-50% Local to 60% Federal-40% Local. This will help mitigate the risk for project sponsors should construction costs increase from the time a project is awarded funding to the time a project is let and constructed. It will also reduce the financial burden of local project sponsors. In addition, keeping the federal funding over 50% will meet the guidelines set forth by the FHWA and WisDOT.

Stern asked how much of an impact the proposed change in cost share would have on total number of projects that are funded, and how much money the 10% change equates to. Schaefer said that the MPO has a projected average annual allocation of $6.8 million a year, or $13.6 million over two years. Ten percent equates to $1.36 million dollars over a period of two years. The Board discussed the cost-share proposal and the merits of increasing the federal share from 50% to 60%. Gust said that local communities often have to pay more than 50% of the share due to unexpected increases in construction costs. He reiterated that starting at a 60% federal share will help reduce the financial burden on local project sponsors.

Schaefer said that local communities may wish to apply for STP-Urban funding for bicycle projects in the future due to the decrease in TAP funding and proposed elimination of the state funding for such projects. He described the changes that were made to the draft STP-Urban application for bicycle projects. Schaefer explained that he transferred the criteria developed for the TAP application to the draft STP-Urban application for bicycle projects and assigned the criteria to the various categories. The weighting of the various categories is quite different for bike projects compared to the other project types. Because the criteria and in some cases the weighting of the criteria are different for the different project types, scores for the different project types shouldn’t be compared directly for the purpose of determining merit. The scores will still be helpful for measuring the merits of a project, but the decision on the mix of types of projects to fund will be more of a policy decision. Golden concurred. He emphasized that the scoring is advisory and provided some examples of when it may or may not make sense to fund a transit project.

8. Letter of Response to WisDOT Regarding Invitation to Participate in the Environmental Review Process for the Interstate 39/90 and Beltline Interchange Study

Moved by R. Schmidt, seconded by Stern to approve the letter as drafted. Motion carried.

9. Letter to County Executive Regarding the MPO’s Support of Integrated Land Use and Transportation Planning by the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC) and MPO

Schmidt read the edits that she and Golden had discussed and agreed on to the revised letter that was included in the packet, including to whom the letter should be sent. The Board discussed that the election results could change some of the letter recipient names. Golden added that it would be beneficial to have Kamran Mesbah, acting director of CARPC, provide an overview of the agency’s tasks and responsibilities at a future meeting since much of that work is not visible to the public. Stern said that he was uncomfortable sending the letter given the uncertainty regarding the future of CARPC. Minihan expressed his support for the letter. Golden noted that the MPO function used to be with the former regional planning commission, recounting some of the history. He noted that both bodies are appointed by the same entities. R. Schmidt said that she rephrased the opening section of the letter so that it reflects the importance to conducting integrated planning with CARPC.

Moved by R. Schmidt, seconded by Golden, to approve the letter supporting integrated planning by the MPO and CARPC. Motion carried.

10. Appointments of MPO Board Representatives to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Intergovernmental Oversight Committee

Matano said that the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Intergovernmental Oversight Committee is a successor to the Transport 2020 Implementation Task Force. Schaefer said the makeup of the committee was set by the
intergovernmental agreement between the City of Madison, Dane County, and WisDOT. It was decided not to try to renegotiate that agreement to modify the committee structure, but there would be an effort to engage other communities such as Fitchburg and Middleton even though they don’t have a representative on the committee. Under the agreement, Dave Trowbridge from City of Madison Planning, serves as the project administrator, but the MPO will be very involved at both a staff level in terms of technical assistance and at a policy level with the two appointments to the committee.

Matano said that he was interested in serving on the committee, and indicated that Golden and Opitz were also interested. R. Schmidt stated that she was interested in serving on the Committee. Schaefer said that the board might wish to wait until the Madison Mayor and County Executive make appointments before making its own appointments, since it is possible they may appoint MPO board members. He clarified that Matano as the MPO Board Chair makes the appointments pursuant to the agreement. He said the first meeting would not take place until two or three months from now. It was decided to defer any action and put the item on the next meeting agenda.

11. Citizen Participation Effort and Schedule for Preparing the 2016-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Madison Metropolitan Area & Dane County

Schaefer said he revised the schedule to delay release of the request for projects and STP Urban applications so that the new application forms reflecting the new project criteria could be completed. The deadline for projects and applications has been delayed from early June to late June to provide a little extra time to prepare applications in light of the new policies and criteria. This will only allow one review of the draft STP Urban project recommendations prior to release of the draft TIP but would otherwise not affect the schedule.

Moved by Golden, seconded by Mandli, to approve the TIP schedule. Motion carried.

12. Status Report by Madison Area TPB Members on Studies and Plans Involving the TPB

Deferred

13. Discussion of Future Work Items

Deferred

14. Announcements and Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, May 6, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. at the Madison Water Utility Building, 119 E. Olin Ave., Room A-B.

15. Adjournment

Moved by Stern, seconded by Golden, to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.