

Rural Planning Organization Meeting
September 23, 2015 2:00 pm
Central Baldwin Annex, Robertsdale, AL

Members Present:

Mayor James Adams – Town of Mount Vernon
Mayor Patsy Parker – Town of Perdido Beach
Commissioner Charles Gruber – Baldwin County Commission
Edwin Perry III – ALDOT Southwest Region
Brian Aaron – ALDOT Southwest Region
Clint Colvin – City of Gulf Shores
Chad Christian – City of Foley
Bryan Kegley - Mobile County
Ricky Mitchell – Mobile County
Richard Spraggins – Mobile County
Taylor Rider – Baldwin County / Baldwin Regional Area Transit System
Chandra Middleton - Baldwin County / Baldwin Regional Area Transit System

SARPC Staff

Kevin Harrison
Monica Williamson
Tom Piper
Anthony Johnson
Chris Miller

The meeting was called to order by Mayor James Adams.

The next item on the agenda was to approve the minutes from September 11, 2014 meeting. Motion was by Commissioner Gruber with a second by Mr. Taylor Rider. Motion was approved.

The third item on the agenda was to review and adopt the Fiscal Year 2016 Work Program.

Mr. Piper said this was also sent to everyone. This is basically our budget for doing transportation planning in the rural areas outside of the MPO area. It pays our salaries. It is the same budget that we have had since 2007. It hasn't changed.

Mayor Adams asked if there was any other discussion.

Mr. Harrison said the Work Program is written kind of vague enough that if a program does come up, even though there is a budget, it is vague enough that we could do that task.

Mr. Piper said the State is actually doing the Highway Safety Plan and they have contacted the RPO's to contact the counties to work on that plan. They haven't gotten around to us yet but that will be

something that we will be doing in the future, helping update their Highway Safety Plan as part of the RPO process.

Motion was made by Motion was by Commissioner Gruber with a second by Mr. Taylor Rider. Motion was approved.

The fourth item on the agenda was to review and adopt the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

Mr. Piper said let me give you a little information about this. This is a plan that we have been doing since 2006. We update it every four years and it identifies transit projects for the elderly, disabled and low income population throughout the urban and rural areas of Mobile, Baldwin and Escambia counties. It is a required document in order to receive grant funding through the 5310 program which is elderly and disabled, the 5316 program which is Job Access Reverse Commute or the 5317 which is New Freedom , elderly and disabled projects that go above and beyond ADA. Basically, if there is a transit agency in the region that wants to apply for this money or a city or county like ECATS or BRATS, anyone like that wants to apply for any of this money, we have to have one of these plans in place and we have to identify the need in this plan that they are meeting. One thing, the JARC and New Freedom, 5316 and 5317, they are being phased out but the State still has a good bit of money, but we want to do this so that transit agencies in the area can apply for those funds until they are expended. Once they are expended, we probably won't have to do this anymore because there will just be the 5310. We had three public meetings. We had a meeting in each county where we invited transit operators, cities, counties. Basically, the same needs we have always had are still the needs that we have now: weekend service, extended hours of service, and things like that. We do have a few more transit operators, but they are just small projects that are serving their clientele.

Motion was by Commissioner Gruber with a second by Mr. Rider. Motion was approved.

Mr. Harrison said when anyone applies for these funds, we are the clearing house. Tom writes a letter to the state stating that the project fits the need of the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan. That is a requirement of the funds.

The fifth item on the agenda was to update the Transportation Plan and Safety Needs List of Projects.

Mr. Piper said this is the same thing we do every year. There is a list in the back of this document. It was sent out and has been on our website. It lists projects throughout the region that member governments want to get done. We compile the list and send to ALDOT in Montgomery. It is part of the consultation with local officials. If anybody has any projects that they want to add or anything that needs to be moved to completed list. Now is the time to bring it to our attention.

Mr. Mitchell said on page 14 on local roads there is a statement that says bus routes generally do not run on local roads. I assume you mean transit instead of bus because we have school buses.

Mr. Piper said that is taken from feds definition of local roads.

Mr. Mitchell said general, transit themselves probably do not, but I think BRATS probably does. On page 25, your recommendations, the second sentence, I am not exactly sure, should it just read all public entities are encouraged to take these recommendations under consideration. You are saying it is not just for the state, but counties and municipalities also. Why just all public entities are encouraged to take these recommendations. Next page, the fifth bullet down, when you say require on street bikeways adjacent to streets to be one-way to minimize conflict with other bicycles and to discourage riding against the flow of traffic.

Mr. Piper said I meant to take that out.

Mr. Mitchell said three down from there, 'as part of new subdivision developments, require construction of bikeways and sidewalks along arterials and collectors. Either recommend or whatever, but does that meet ADA because you have a bunch of breaks in service. I am not exactly sure exactly if a subdivision street ties into an arterial, how can you require that developer to go in front of someone else's property and start sidewalks and bike paths. If you just mean while they are building like a big mall or something along a arterial, now recommend that they put in sidewalks and pathways, at that point, does that meet ADA because a sidewalk has to go somewhere.

Mr. Rider said I was in a meeting recently; Fairhope recently had to do it on Fairhope Avenue for the improvements they made. They had to go back and adjust all the sidewalks and everything with the new ADA laws.

Mr. Mitchell said but it doesn't require you to have the sidewalk. If you got it, it has to meet certain regulations. If you do that, it has to go somewhere. If it doesn't then you have to have a ramp going down to the road and where are they going to go.

Mr. Piper said we do that all the time though. We do it in baby steps because you don't have enough money. Eventually, a sidewalk has to end somewhere.

Mr. Mitchell said but if we require that in places and then the county, state or city does a resurface, they may be required to connect those sidewalks so we may have just put the city.

Mr. Harrison said I think they are saying if you a subdivision that fronts that arterial, then they are saying put the sidewalks on that arterial, but this isn't like the MPO. It is recommendations. ALDOT doesn't actually have to adhere by this. This plan is saying we've come together and these are recommendations. It is not like the MPO where the Federal Highway will look at it and make you put a sidewalk in.

Mr. Mitchell said you see the concern if you have something there.

Mr. Rider said at the meeting the other day they were talking about that they were going to add so much additional costs to all levels even when you are trying to make repairs.

Mr. Miller said it's been in place in 1991.

Mr. Mitchell said but it doesn't require you to have a sidewalk though.

Mr. Miller said it requires you to have an accessible route. It is a law that you have to have reasonable accommodation.

Mr. Mitchell said but they can use part of the lane.

Mr. Miller said correct.

Mr. Mitchell said but what we are doing here, it says require, not recommend.

Mr. Rider said there was something new passed where there is going to be some teeth because Fairhope wasn't even allowed to do the project. All of the cities on the Eastern Shore are going to be sending people to special classes on.

Mr. Miller said what happened is, it is the 25th anniversary and a lot of disability groups went to the Department of Justice and say hey, we've had this law in place with these cities and counties were supposed to be up to speed. What we are finding with the MPO is that it was probably done in the early 90s but no one can find the documents. So now you have these people saying what's the recourse, this law should have been taken care of.

Mr. Rider said on page 27, a couple of things concerning us. We are no longer Baldwin Rural. We are now Baldwin Regional Area Transit and also the Baldwin County Public Transit Coalition has been dissolved. They gave remaining funds to BRATS to use for advertising and marketing.

Tom asked if there had been any more interest on transit down on the beach.

Mr. Rider said we used funds from the Alabama-Florida TPO, 5307 funds. We voted with the commission's approval to move forward with a Orange Beach and surrounding areas transit feasibility study. They wanted to get an outside opinion on it rather than go back and fail like we did in the 90s to see what their recommendations are. Then maybe try something on a small scale next summer like running a trolley on the beach.

Mr. Perry said also on this page, you have ALDOT Southeast instead of Southwest.

Mr. Piper asked if there were any projects anyone wanted to address.

Mr. Mitchell said on page 46, resurface west and East Coy Smith Highway has been completed. Pave Lott Road is in design and right of way acquisition. Highway 96 improvements from Citronelle to Mt. Vernon is complete. Resurface Beverly Jefferies is complete.

Mr. Kegley said resurface Prince Road is complete and resurface Tanner Williams is under construction. Delete resurface Dawes Road because that is in the MPO urban area.

Mayor Adams asked about the traffic signal studies on 43 in Mt. Vernon, the service road near McDonalds. Are those complete? I don't have a status on that. It is important because we had a fatality there. The second one 43 at Unruh near the Dollar Store, that is Family Dollar. They open up tomorrow.

Mr. Piper said that is a question for the state. Edwin do you have any insight.

Mr. Perry said I think that is in our maintenance department. I would have to check.

Mayor Adams said we are having near misses there and one fatality already. We really need that done.

Mr. Perry said I want to say they may have done it. I never heard of the results.

Someone said if you want to add a project, what about doing a new alignment of Moffett Road all the way to the Mississippi line.

Mr. Kegley said where are we with that Edwin. The first section of 98 after 158 that ties into Schillingers.

Mr. Harrison said this would be specifically from Big Creek Lake to the State line.

Mr. Perry said we have those projects. We don't have the first project being able to be budgeted until 2019. The first project from Lott Road to Schillinger, design and right of way is complete but there is no funding available until 2019.

Mr. Kegley said I thought you had \$20 million secured on that.

Mr. Perry said you know we revise these plans several times to adjust for the funding situation that we are in and every time we get adjusted, funding goes away so it is less and less. Currently it is budgeted to be let in 2019.

Mr. Harrison said and it is two lanes. Is that two lanes open from Schillinger all the way to the State line.

Mr. Perry said we hope to get the two lanes all the way to the State line. We have it broken up into about 7 or 8 projects to get to the State line with just the two lanes.

There was some discussion on the traffic counts concerning from Schillingers east on 158.

Commissioner Gruber said the light is now installed at the intersection of County Road 32 and the Baldwin Beach Express. I noticed a couple of others in here, the Beach Express, from 32 to I-10 is complete also. Then the traffic signals at the intersection of Keller Road and State Highway 59 in Gulf Shores that signalized there. That is on page 39. The traffic signal and improvements at 55 and 59, those have been complete for quite a while. Intersection improvement at 225 County Road 39, Taylor that is Bromley Road isn't it.

Mr. Rider said 39 is the road that connects 59 into Highway 40 in White House and then goes to Crossroads.

There was some discussion on exactly where the project is in regards to County Road 39 and the connections.

Mr. Piper said so take the 40 and put it in the complete list.

Commissioner Gruber said the one at 225 and Bromley is finished.

There was some additional discussion on work being done on 225 and 40. It was decided that the one on 225 and 39 should not be on the list at this time.

Mr. Christian said on page 38, the extend Pride Drive eastward should be changed to across Juniper Street to County Road 20 and it is underway now. It was originally going to stop on Juniper.

Mayor Parker asked Commissioner Gruber is there were plans to resurface roads in Baldwin County next year and if County Road 97 is on the list. We have constructed the west bound turn lanes; we have three items that have to do with the intersection of 97 and 98. It won't be included here.

Commissioner Gruber said all we are doing is resurfacing; we won't be doing any widening or anything. That is coordinated with the State.

Mayor Parker said I had a meeting with ALDOT several months ago. I don't know if everyone else had a chance and give them their projects, but I gave them this one.

Commissioner said the Access Management Plan on Baldwin Beach Express is completed.

Motion was by Mr. Ricky Mitchell with a second by Mr. Bryan Kegley to approve the update of the Transportation Plan and List of Safety Needs pending changes. Motion was approved.

The next item on the agenda was an ALDOT update on Current and Future Transportation Projects.

Mr. Perry said there is a handout. Starting off we have bridge replacements projects in Escambia County, Conecuh River bridge replacement. It will be letting at the end of this month. It will replace the main river crossing.

Mr. Perry continued as far as capacity projects, Project 1, is widening 181 from State Route 104 to County Road 64. WE are acquiring right of way right now. Plans are about 70% percent. It is supposed to let in FY 2021. Number 2, State Route 180 widening. Plans are 80% complete. We have all right of way. Right now it is budgeted for 2021. To go along with this project, we have let an additional turn lane project on State Route 180 and 161. That project is complete and we are about to start construction on a free flow Florida T intersection at State Route 180 at the Wharf intersection. Number 3, we are currently working on a design for a roundabout at US 90 and County Road 87. Right now we are 40% complete with the design. We do not have a construction letting date for that project at the moment. As we get further along with the design, we are using safety funds; we will set up a construction project. Kind of the same story with Project 4, the Gulf State Park Roundabout. We are about 30% complete with design now. There is not a letting date as those plans go further along; we can set a letting date.

There was some discussion as to the location of the roundabout in the State Park. The location is in the park itself.

Mr. Rider asked about capacity issues on Highway 31 in Spanish Fort.

Mr. Perry said it's just not budgeted in the current plan right now. Plans are complete and right of way is acquired. We just don't have the capacity funds. The priority has been given more to State Route 181 and State Route 180 as two projects that were higher priority.

There was some discussion on Highway 31 and issues with traffic backing up especially when there is a problem on the interstate.

Mr. Perry said some of other capacity projects we have is Project 2 at I-65 and US 43. Plans are 80% complete, that will widen a little north on 43 and improve the interchange right there at I-65. The other one is I-65 and Celeste Road interchange. That is an ATRIP project and plans are 80% complete. We will let that project at the beginning of the year. It is widening along Celeste Road around the interchange. Also ALDOT IM projects that we have currently going is I-10 from I-65 to Wallace Tunnel, I-10 from the Bayway to SR-59 and we just let I-10 from the Mississippi Line to CR-39. Other IM projects that we have, that should be getting some design authorization at the first of the year is I-65 from SR 225 to Dyas Creek. That is scheduled to let in November 2016. And also I-65 from Dyas Creek to Escambia County line which is also schedule to be let November of 2016. Those are interstate resurfacing. Also we are starting back design for the converging diamond on I-10 and 181. We hope to let that project towards the end of 2016. We did have a loop ramp project that was designed but we went back and looked at and if we were able to put in a diverging diamond, we can improve the function of the entire interchange instead of just one turning movement for traffic turning left heading to Mobile. A diverging diamond basically is you are driving on the right side of the road and it moves you over to the left side of the road to make your left and right movements, free flow. You will let one lane of traffic move at a time so you will let north bound go, the right turns that head east will be free flow, you move the traffic over to the left side, it makes your traffic free flow and whoever wants to drive on through they swap to the right side and continue north. It is just the reverse if you are heading south. It makes it more efficient if you are around intersections that make a lot of left hand movements and right hand movements. They work well at interchanges.

Mr. Mitchell asked how it works with people coming off of interstate and turning left.

Mr. Perry said you have more traffic lights. You would still stop them like normal and they would just merge in as some of the other traffic movements. Depending on number of lanes, ramp traffic would go first and then the mainline traffic.

Commissioner Gruber asked if there was enough space.

Mr. Perry said yes, no right of way would be needed. Basically what you would do is bulge out 181 and come back in to do the cross and then bulge it right back out on the northside as well. The current bridges would still be used.

There was some discussion on the amount of room in that area.

Mr. Perry said we looked at it. There have been other interchanges with similar modifications that had tight interchanges and ramps close to the bridges with developments on each side of the roadway.

Going on to our maintenance program, project 1 we are resurfacing US 98 from Stimpson Lane to US 90. That is scheduled to let in November of this year. Project 2 is SR 225 resurfacing from CR-138 to SR -59 in Stockton. That is scheduled to let in September of next year.

There was some discussion and clarification of which project numbers and which counties the projects were in.

Mr. Perry said on US 31 we are going to resurface south of Conecuh County line. WE are schedule to let that first of the year, January 2016. Number 4, US 43, that is going to be just south of US 90 to SR-158 to be let February 2016. Number 5, US 31 as well, that will be just south of Escambia line on down to the interstate and SR 12 and is scheduled for March 2016. Project 6, US 90 from SR 59 to the Florida State Line. That one is scheduled to let March 2016. Also over here, #7, US 90 from the AL-MS State Line to Ramsey Road and is scheduled for May of 2016. That is it for the resurfacing program. AS we talked about before US 98 has been broken into several projects and segments. Project 1 is from Schillinger Road heading west to Lott Road. That project we plan to fully design the Schillinger Road, 98, 158 interchange and then go down to two lanes from Lott. From there, we would build Lott to McCrary continue that two lanes on down and then taking it on further to McCrary on down to a ½ mile east of Glenwood. From there, that would connect to the currently built, grade and drain project for US 98 completing the base and pave for two lanes all the way to the Mississippi Line. Within that corridor, we have some bridge projects, building a bridge for Glenwood Road over 98, building a jug handle and Wilmer Georgetown and also extending the bridges that are built from Big Creek Watershed. There is a total of 8 projects to do two lanes on that corridor and then we would come back and build the other two lanes starting where we left off near Schillingers and head west to the Mississippi Line that would give us a complete 4 or 5 lane highway. We were trying to make it in usable projects and make it \$20-25 million so that is why there is 13 projects. We are hoping to make it more attractable project funding wise and with the last STP that just came out, we were hoping to get some started this coming fiscal year but the first project got moved.

Mr. Perry said back in July we selected a consultant for Mobile River Bridge, we are currently working out scope items for that projects and here soon we will be working out contracts with the consultants. Hopefully in the near future, we will have all of that finalized and maybe at this meeting next year, we will have an update on some environmental items that we have completed.

Mr. Piper said they have been doing some geotechnical work.

Mr. Perry said there is some drilling that is being done around Austal. Austal is doing some remodeling and our access would go away for some of the drilling so we were able to get approval to go ahead with the investigation so we would not have to access more expensive means.

Mr. Harrison said can you go back to capacity projects. We are missing Schillingers.

Mr. Perry said I was just going over ALDOT sponsored projects.

Mr. Harrison said at one point you said you were going to do I-10 from Carol Plantation to McDonald Road.

Mr. Perry said several years ago, all interstate widening projects, the PE was authorized and then they were closed because they were capacity project.

Mr. Harrison said what I got from Don Arkle was that the only additional capacity projects was going to be I-10 from McDonald to Carol Plantation and US 98.

Mr. Perry said right now, we don't have any design funds authorized for those projects. PE funds are not set to be approved for several years. In talking about these construction projects, these are where they are budgeted, but they are assuming that they are going to be getting the same budget every year, but if that changes, they can be pushed out even further.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there had been any discussion with consultant on Mobile River Bridge as to where they are going to stop the additional lanes on the Bayway.

Mr. Perry said the logical termini is just passed the Daphne interchange but if it gets decided through the traffic modeling that that needs to extend or there needs to be other projects to accommodate that, it will be handled in the environmental document.

Mr. Mitchell said just seems it would be logical to drop off two at 35 and two at 38 because if you drop 4 lanes off at 35 and it is going to be a nightmare at that interchange.

Mr. Perry said no real design has been done. We basically have from Virginia to the Daphne side has been the project so finalizing the environmental document will finalize the logical termini. They may still say you need to go to 59 in the job, but it would be either set up for other projects toward the end of the bridge project or additional project.

Commissioner Gruber said back on 181, you were saying 2021 for construction.

Mr. Perry said yes.

Commissioner Gruber said what is the big hold up. That project got started in 1999.

Mr. Perry said right now it is the comment with most projects, funding.

Commissioner Gruber said but the Baldwin County Commission gave \$13 million back then to get this thing done. I know, I have heard the whole story, but if they had done what they told us they would do, we would be finished right now. It is just disheartening that this has taken so long. It took forever to just get to 64 and now you are talking about it is going to take to 2021 to just get let. WE are not even talking about construction there. I am going to be long gone before this even gets down to where it was supposed to go. It is just disheartening. You are going to spend a bunch of money on the diverging interchange and for the Bayway if that comes in and it will be obsolete when that happens. It just doesn't make sense. I am not an engineer. I look at it with common sense.

Mr. Perry said having federal projects and being able to use federal money, there is a process.

Commissioner Gruber said the right of way is all purchased for that, is it not.

Mr. Perry said we are getting close to having the right of way all acquired from 104 to 64 but it is still only scheduled to be budgeted and let in 2021. You can always use the argument that once design and right of way is complete you can go to building it, but then you have the same story on US 31 where design and right of way is complete but a higher priority has been set for 180 and 181. Still there is not capacity funds to let both.

Mr. Harrison said and it is a problem system wide. 158 in Saraland has design and right of way, but it isn't even in the scope.

Commissioner Gruber said the only problem with projects running 10 to 12 years is that project could have been completed sooner with half of the money. In 2021, the cost is going to triple. It is not going to go down, it is just going to continue to escalate and be a money problem.

Mr. Piper said these decisions get made in Montgomery.

Mr. Perry said without changes being made in the funding for transportation, we are stuck in trying to balance the funds that we do have.

Mr. Mitchell asked if anything was because there is not a long term plan or authorization.

Mr. Perry said we are assuming on getting the same funds we got last year so we take those numbers and budget them on down the line. If that changes, if it is less, then projects move out further. If we get more, then we let projects that are complete.

Mr. Harrison said the only place funds are flexible is additional capacity. There is now only \$150 million for the whole state in additional capacity.

The next item on the agenda was old business.

There was no old business.

The next item on the agenda was new business.

Mr. Rider said you might already now this, but Sharon Coates at ALDOT Multimodal is moving on to the FTA. She is going to Ft. Worth.

Mr. Harrison said we don't anything about the rural areas and ADA, but the FHWA has given ALDOT to provide all of the local governments in urban areas one year to do a ADA Transition Plan for the public rights of way. There will be a timeline for the non-urbanized areas for local governments outside of urban areas, but we don't know what that is yet, but it will be coming. What that basically means if you have sidewalks, you will have to see whether they comply with ADA and if they don't you will have to come up with a timeline and prioritize the projects.

There was no other discussion and the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman: Patsy W. Parker, Vice Chair

Attest: Jayla Rider BCC - BRATS

Date: September 21, 2016