

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

Jim Rearden, Chairman, called the Great Falls Technical advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. in the Rainbow Room of the Great Falls Civic Center.

ROLL CALL OF TAC MEMBERS & ATTENDANCE

TAC Members Present/Represented:

Susan Conell	Planning Director, Cascade County
Dave Dobbs	City Engineer, City of Great Falls
Andrew Finch	Sr. Trans. Planner, City of Great Falls
Jason Handl	Transportation/SID Engineer, City of Great Falls
Mike Haynes	Director, Planning & Community Development, City of Great Falls
Nadine Hanning (for Jim Helgeson)	Great Falls Transit District
Zia Kazimi	Statewide & Urban Planning – MDT (via phone)
Jerry McKinley	Traffic Supervisor, City of Great Falls
Jim Rearden	Director, Great Falls Public Works Department
Bruce Treis	Environmental Health Specialist, City-County Health Dept
Doug Wilmot (for Robert Vosen)	Construction Operations Engineer GF District – MDT
Christie McOmber (for Jerilee Weibel)	Right-of-Way Supervisor, GF District – MDT

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented:

Brian Clifton	Public Works Director, Cascade County
John Faulkner	Director Great Falls International Airport Authority
John Hale	Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom Air Force Base
Rina Fontana-Moore	County Surveyor, Cascade County
Dave Sutton	Superintendent, Cascade County Road Dept
Jim Turnbow	Street Supervisor, Great Falls Street Division

Recognition of Others Present:

Phyllis Tryon	Administrative Assistant, City of Great Falls
Janet Kinney	Statewide & Urban Planning – MDT (via phone)
Tom Kahle	Statewide & Urban Planning – MDT (via phone)
Diane Burbank	Statewide & Urban Planning – MDT (via phone)

No members of the public were present.

MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided a copy of the June 15, 2011 TAC meeting minutes.

MOTION: That the minutes of June 15, 2011 be approved.

Made by: Mr. Finch

Second: Mr. Dobbs

Vote: the motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Prior to the meeting, TAC members were provided with copies of the TAC meeting agenda. Copies of the agenda and handout materials are attached and incorporated by reference.

Transportation Improvement Program 2011-2015 - Agenda Item 5.A

Mr. Finch stated that Diane Burbank in Helena gave the document a thorough review and noted there were some corrections. He noted a handout of technical edits of the document. He asked that any motion on the document include the technical changes. He stated the document represented an update due to changes in funding sources and also due to projects moving in and out of the priority list.

Major changes between the current TIP and the update are included on the agenda under "Items of Note". Mr. Finch stated a lot of time has been spent over the past few years tweaking projects and adding to dollar amounts for pavement preservation projects that MDT performs on their routes. Both Helena and the Federal Highway Administration agreed those could be grouped under one project. Those projects are included as an appendix.

Mr. Finch stated that an important addition to the TIP is the South Central Urban Area Arterials project. He said concurrence was received from the Federal Highway Administration to identify a location to extend the South Central Arterials earmark. The project was approved by TAC and PCC last year, but there was a need to communicate with State and Federal partners as to how the project would be implemented. The project completes some of the intent of the South Arterial, as well as being in the same general location. Therefore, the partners were satisfied the project could be completed using the current earmark and without having to go back to Congress for redirection.

The MACI projects approved by TAC at the June 2011 meeting have been added. Mr. Finch said the first project and the easiest one to implement is the bus purchase. The monies probably will not be obligated and spent in 2011, but that should be accomplished by early 2012. As two long-range urban projects are completed on Smelter Avenue, the next project in line is the Fox Farm Road project. Mr. Finch has identified the preliminary engineering phase to begin in 2012. Representatives from Cascade County, MDT, and the City need to hammer out a scope on this project within the next 12 months or so. Due to funding, the project has been scaled back to Dick Road.

The MACI Set Aside program has been eliminated, as it was not being utilized as intended. MACI eligible projects will continue to be nominated and moved forward by TAC.

Mr. Finch said he separated out NH maintenance projects to help TAC members and the general public track the progress of those projects. In the past, TAC members have shown an interest in those specific projects, such as the 2nd Avenue North improvement project, which is of interest to the County, and the signalization project at 3rd Street Northwest and the Northwest Bypass, which is of interest to the City.

Mr. Finch reported that the Smelter Avenue project in Black Eagle came in at approximately \$1 million less than was previously expected. He stated that will make the Fox Farm Road project more viable at an earlier date.

Mr. Rearden asked if STP funds in the Bootlegger Trail project amounted to \$104,000. Mr. Finch said that was correct, based on how much of the project is within the urban area. He stated that the majority of the project is outside the urban area. Mr. Rearden asked for clarification on the anticipated date of the project and whether it had been put off indefinitely. Ms. McOmber said it was active again. She said the project will be the same length but the width has changed from 40 feet to 28-32 feet, and that past Rattlesnake Hill, a lower level of rehabilitation work will be done reusing materials in the road.

MOTION: That the TAC committee approve the 2011-2015 TIP with the Technical Amendments, and recommend approval by PCC.

Made by: Mr. Haynes
Second: Mr. Dobbs

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

TIGER Discretionary Grant Program – Agenda Item 5B

Mr. Finch said the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program appears to be the wave of the future for nontraditional areas of funding through the Department of Transportation for surface transportation funds. Mr. Finch noted that earmarks are dead, and instead of politically-based project selection, which was the norm through the earmark process, a highly competitive Tiger Grant process has been developed by the current Administration. Mr. Finch stated that according to the handout provided, we are not ready to compete for these funds nationally. The minimum project size is \$10 million, with a minimum 20 percent match. However, it was noted by Mr. Finch that those applications meeting only minimum requirements will not be funded. He said the suggestion is that funding sources should go beyond the traditional and that applications with a large percentage of non-Federal funding will be favored. Tiger I Projects averaged a three-to-one non-Federal to Federal funds ratio.

Mr. Finch also pointed out that projects which are “nearly ready” will be favored, as well as those of high local priority with multiple-agency support. Approximately 10 percent of applications received have been funded under this program. Mr. Finch stated that we do have higher dollar projects that could be eligible for these funds with an increase in local and non-traditional funding support. Factors that affect being accepted for TIGER funding include current conditions of a project and innovative ideas. Safety and economic benefit are also factors. It has been suggested that the cost-benefit ratio report be prepared by a graduate level economist. Projects with multi-modal and livability components will be favored.

A link to a webcast regarding this program was made available at:
<http://www.dot.gov/tiger/index.html>

Mr. Finch asked for discussion regarding TIGER grants. Ms. McOmber said MDT had eight or nine grants submitted for the first go-round, which were not approved. Mr. Wilmot said the Two Medicine Bridge project had multi-agency support with the Blackfeet Tribe, the Park Service, and the local county governments, but they pursued other funding.

Ms. Kinney said she worked on TIGER 1 and TIGER 2 grants and participated in the webinar on Discretionary Funding. She said it was made clear that each entity could submit no more than three applications. She said final applications were due October 31 with pre-applications due the first part of October. She noted that being listed as a partner on applications will not affect an entity's own applications.

Mr. Finch said he had considered large projects for TIGER grant application, such as the roundabouts proposed for Highway 87 and also River Drive reconstruction/relocation, in light of partnerships, livability components, and quantifiable economic components. He said in light of the grant requirements TIGER, he would be happy to visit with MDT, the County, and the City. He asked if anyone had interest in TIGER 2 application. Mr. Haynes stated it was a high risk, high reward effort and appears to be the wave of the future. Mr. Dobbs said the 20 percent match from local agencies would be difficult to achieve. Discussion followed that actual matches need to be well over 20 percent to receive a TIGER grant.

Mr. Finch inquired of MDT-Helena if contracting a grant application was an eligible PL expense. The answer was it is not. The general consensus of TAC was to not pursue a TIGER grant at this time.

OTHER BUSINESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Dobbs made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Handl. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.