

MVP for Transportation MPO Special Policy Board Meeting and STIP Project Work Session

Representatives:

Bob Charles – Knik Tribe
Edna DeVries, Mayor - MSB
Glenda Ledford, Mayor – City of Wasilla
Brian Winnestaffer - Chickaloon Native Village
Mike Brown - MSB
Sean Holland - DOT&PF
Steve Carrington – Mayor - City of Palmer



Microsoft Teams

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Meeting ID: 277 878 282 042

Passcode: JSKEVU

Meeting Location

Mat-Su Health Foundation Office
777 N Crusey Street, Wasilla AK 99654
Prevention Room

Minutes

Wednesday, May 22nd, 2024
1:00-2:30pm

A. Meeting called to order at 1:10pm

B. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Policy Board Members Present

Edna DeVries, MSB
Glenda Ledford, City of Wasilla
Brian Winnestaffer, Chickaloon Native Village
Mike Brown, MSB
Sean Holland, DOT&PF
Steve Carrington, City of Palmer

Technical Committee Members Present

Stuart Leidner, Mobility Advocate
Tom Adams, MSB
Ben White, DOT&PF
Brian Winnestaffer, Chickaloon Native Village
Lawrence Smith, Trucking Advocate
Brian Lindamood, ARRC
Crystal Smith, MSBSD
Yemi Alimi, ADEC
Dan Tucker, RSA Representative
Erich Schaal, City of Wasilla
Jude Bilafer, City of Palmer
Clint Adler, DOT&PF

Members Absent

Bob Charles, Knik Tribe (Policy Board and Technical Committee)
Alex Strawn, MSB (Technical Committee)
Randy Durham, MSB TAB (Technical Committee)

Guests Present

Kim Sollien, MVP Coordinator
Chris Bentz, DOT&PF
Katherine Keith, DOT&PF

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Adam Bradway, DOT&PF
John Linnell, DOT&PF
Elise Blocker, RESPEC
Donna Gardino, Gardino Consulting Services
Natalie Lyon, RESPEC

C. Approval of the May 22nd, 2024, Agenda – (Action Item)

Moved by Devries, none opposed.

D. Voices of the Visitors (Non-Action Items)

None

E. New Business

1. Work Session Presentation

- I. Policy and Procedure: Local Match for Capital Improvement Projects
- II. Memorandum of Agreement for Local Match Contribution

2. Program of Projects (Action Item)

Donna Gardino presented “MVP for Transportation FFY 24 and 25 Sub-Allocation Proposal: Special Meeting,” located in the meeting packet. Because MVP is a new MPO, it does not yet have a TIP that can be included by reference in the STIP. The STIP contains a ledger with information about the MVP sub-allocations (Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, Transportation Alternative Program, Carbon Reduction Program for FFY24-FFY27).

Member Questions

Adam Bradway clarified that the information presented in this meeting regarding sub-allocation funding is not what the TIP will look like when it is developed. The TIP will include all funding sources for all planned funding years.

Brian Lindamood stated ARRC submitted information in April regarding the railroad projects for the MVP TIP, which is not shown in the meeting packet. Kim Sollien stated the information was not received and requested it be resent. Adam Bradway reiterated that MVP does not have a TIP, so the sub-allocation information will not include every project. Lindamood confirmed understanding.

Tom Adams requested confirmation that since MVP does not have a TIP, the MPO cannot directly receive the funding being discussed, but MVP is collaborating with DOT&PF to direct programming of the equivalent funds that the organization would receive if it had a TIP. Donna Gardino and Adam Bradway confirmed.

Brian Winnestaffer asked if MVP would be taking funds from other MPOs or if additional funds were coming into the state for the new MPO. Katherine Keith answered that funding was shifted based on the 2020 Census data, so no group is losing funding.

Donna Gardino explained that the draft Program of Projects spreadsheet was updated, and the most recent version was not included in the packet. The

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updated draft Program of Projects was shared on the meeting screen. Gardino explained the proposed programming.

Brian Lindamood and Adam Bradway clarified that since MVP does not have a TIP yet, MVP's projects are included in the STIP to be programmed by DOT&PF.

Stuart Leidner asked about the project for a roundabout at Bogard and what plans were in place to address that area and the increased congestion, and how those plans could tie into the draft Program of Projects. There is increased traffic near Finger Lake and Leidner anticipates increased crashes. Adam Bradway stated that this is a complicated project and that the Program includes a project for a "piecemeal" solution in that area, which does have a history of crashes. Multiple funding sources are being used to address concerns in the Bogard Road area. Leidner reiterated that line of sight issues needs to be addressed and thanked Bradway for the clarification.

Crystal Smith stated that the school board is supportive of most of the proposed projects, especially the pedestrian-focused ones, and suggested adding something for winter maintenance. Donna Gardino explained that federal funding can only be used for capital improvements and all projects need to establish a maintenance agreement with the state. An example agreement is included in the meeting packet.

Steve Carrington asked if paving gravel roads would count as a capital improvement project for the Improvement Program. Donna Gardino answered yes, if the road is just going from gravel to paved. A local sponsor would have to pay a 9.03% match with a 15% contingency. Gardino requested City of Palmer send any projects they want included in the improvement project.

Tom Adams stated concern that the projects proposed by MSB were taking MVP funding when they would have been funded by the state otherwise and that the borough may be taking too large a share of the MVP funding. MSB submitted an initial list of projects and then provided more when the Policy Board was informed that there was still funding left to be allocated. Adams asked for clarification about funding sources and allocations, given that the STPG funds are serving as MVP funds and the MSB already pursued TAP and CTP grants separately from MVP. Donna Gardino stated that it is correct that the state was planning on funding some of the projects, such as the Bogard Road project, from statewide funding rather than MPO funding. Gardino explained that because of the deadline to add projects to the STIP, it is not clear if any new projects will be approved in the amendment, so including projects that are already in the STIP provides greater assurance that the projects will receive the funding. Gardino stated that MVP cannot create projects for FFY24 given the timeline to submit projects, so the Policy Board stakeholders were asked to submit projects that were ready to receive funding in FFY24 and the following three years.

Tom Adams suggested that MVP funds should go to projects proposed by MVP stakeholders, and that the Fishhook project proposed by DOT&PF should be funded with by a different source available to DOT&PF. Adams also asked for clarification as to why the Fishhook project was programmed

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for FFY25 and not FFY24 if it is shovel ready. Adams proposed moving the Fishhook project to FFY24 and shifting the projects currently programmed for FFY24 to FFY25 to avoid possible expiration of funds before the projects are ready. Donna Gardino stated that MVP was told the Fishhook project would not be ready for obligation by August and could not be programmed for FFY24. Adams reiterated that the projects currently programmed for FFY24 have been described as heavy lifts and difficult to get started by the end of the fiscal year. Gardino agreed. Clint Adler clarified that DOT&PF suggested that project because they were not sure DOT&PF would be able to fund it otherwise. Adams reiterated that MVP is going to waste a year of funding if the FFY24 projects cannot be started within the next few months. Adler said yes, but that MVP should also not leave money on the table. Adams asked if the Fishhook project could be programmed for FFY24 if it is shovel ready. Adler stated it could not be done. Adam Bradway clarified that money cannot be requested for obligation before the project is ready for those funds.

Tom Adams requested clarification regarding whether the funds currently programmed for FFY24 could be obligated in time. Another member stated that design funds for projects could be obligated for FFY24. Adams reiterated that MVP needs to clarify whether funds programmed for FFY24 can be obligated by October or transfer those dollars to FFY25. Donna Gardino said MVP needs clarification on what happens to funds if the STIP amendment does not get approved. Gardino explained MVP originally proposed moving FFY24 funds to FFY25 to allow for a more thoughtful process.

Someone asked for clarification regarding whether the \$2.5 million programmed for the Bogard Road Reconstruction project needed to be spent by October. Donna Gardino clarified it only needed to be obligated, meaning MVP would request authority to proceed. Tom Adams said that the borough needs to complete maintenance and match agreements prior to obligating funds, which are already being discussed. MSB will also need to provide the matching funds for the Seldon project. Gardino asked whether the match agreement would need to go through assembly again. Adams said yes it would. Gardino asked if that would take two months. Adam Bradway stated that the timeline should work, and it will be challenging to get everything out in FFY24, but MVP should fill up the FFY24 bucket so the organization has the ability to go after the projects if they can. MVP may need to go through this process again to move funds around, but DOT&PF is requesting a proposal for what the organization wants to spend money on for the next few years.

Dan Tucker asked for clarification about RSA contracts in relation to pedestrian improvements and maintenance and whether there is example language for RSA contracts to include for contractors to meet the requirements of the grant to ensure there is maintenance to the specification required. Tucker also stated RSAs will need to figure out how to budget for these requirements. Donna Gardino referred to the maintenance agreement in the packet and stated that if DOT&PF Central Region uses a different maintenance or match agreement, MVP will need to get it. Tucker said the current maintenance agreement with the borough does not include anything that would specifically address the requirements imposed by the acceptance of STIP funds. Tom Adams responded that the current agreement between the borough and DOT&PF states that the borough is responsible for

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maintenance and DOT&PF is not obligated to provide maintenance. Adams stated that the improvement projects should reduce maintenance costs in the long run. Tucker clarified that recent contracts had specific details that would impact thousands of dollars in annual contracts.

Kim Sollien announced that the room was only reserved until 3pm and the group would need to vacate as there was another reservation following the meeting. Sollien asked whether anyone on the Policy Board would like to hear more information about the proposed projects from Adam Bradway or Tom Adams.

Erich Schaal requested that the MVP Improvement Program budget be increased if possible and the cities would submit projects they did not realize would be eligible. Schaal asked for clarification on how detailed the project descriptions need to be. Sean Holland stated that project selection for the Improvement Program should be data driven. Donna Gardino stated that MVP would need a facility name, termini, description, anticipated work to be done, and ideally a map. There was discussion about the need for identifying termini. Gardino explained that MVP staff would be presenting a policy for the Improvement Program and that the projects are not required to go through a scoring process. Gardino stated that the Fairbanks MPO has used the process of discussing priorities as a group and then submitting those priorities to DOT&PF once the Policy Board has made a decision and that that has worked well for that MPO. Tom Adams asked why the Improvement Program does not have funds programmed for FFY25. Gardino explained that DOT&PF will need to review all of the proposed projects to determine which ones are eligible, and then the Policy Board will review the eligible projects to prioritize them. The second and third tier priority projects would be programmed for FFY25 and FFY26, respectively. Adams reiterated that no funds are programmed after FFY24 and Gardino responded that the \$1 million for design in FFY24 is sufficient at this time. Adams stated that the borough has half a dozen projects that would absorb all of that funding and other stakeholders will be submitting projects, as well. Adams said at least \$1 million should be programmed every year for the Improvement Program. Gardino stated there is \$1.4 million left in FFY25 that can be programmed for design.

Gardino explained that FFY25 was not the priority because DOT&PF has stated they will do a STIP amendment every quarter, so FFY25 funds can be programmed in a later amendment. Steve Carrington suggested another meeting should be scheduled to continue this conversation. Gardino recommended the current meeting should not be adjourned so it can be continued later. Holland agreed with Gardino that FFY24 should be sorted out and there will be another opportunity for programming later years, but the Program of Projects should be sent to the STIP team as soon as possible. Holland suggested voting on the Program of Projects today. Jude Bilafer asked for clarification because it had been stated that the stakeholders had until June 1 to nominate projects and that the cities had projects, they did not realize were eligible because they had received guidance that said otherwise because the allocation of funding was not there yet. Neither city submitted their shovel ready projects because of this guidance. Bilafer said the Policy Board should not vote today because the cities have projects they can submit. Gardino clarified that for projects that have already been designed, if the

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design was not done in accordance with Title 23 then DOT&PF will need to do a NEPA document and follow Title 23 to utilize STIP funds. Clint Adler confirmed that yes, if the projects are becoming federal, they need to follow federal rules.

Jude Bilafer said that eliminated most of the projects from the cities. Adler said the Improvement Program concept was developed in the Northern Region and that Central Region does not have experience with it and would need to put things in place for the program to work. Bilafer said the city would put the projects back in for design allocation. Adams stated the cities might need to only submit names of projects at this time and that the details for the Improvement Program projects could possibly come later. Adams clarified that the MSB projects have not been designed. Sean Holland stated that would be too optimistic for 2025 but if we did, we would need to obligate the funds by the end of September to start in October.

Stuart Leidner asked if it was possible to state “including but not limited to” within the Improvement Program description to allow for future addition of projects. A DOT&PF representative said that was likely possible and advised that MVP should not rush into a planning process and should develop a process to select projects. Sollien asked if all of the details need to be included for each project in the Improvement Project or if projects could just include a street name and details would be established later. Gardino explained that some of the Tier 2 findings from FHWA/FTA on the previously submitted STIP were flagged as being too generic and requested clarification from DOT&PF on Sollien’s question. Gardino also asked whether the Improvement Program could be couched under the DOT&PF pavement preservation and bridge program that is already included in the STIP or if MVP needs its own program. Adam Bradway stated that it was a question for FHWA more than DOT&PF, but that it would be better to include names and termini. Bradway reiterated that eligible projects need to be very basic, fully within existing right-of-way, not include utilities, and not include curb or drainage components. Bradway reiterated there will likely be another STIP amendment in FFY25 and projects could be added then. Gardino requested that DOT&PF clarify requirements for the representatives from the cities. Adler said that Northern Region has these things defined but it is not a mature program from the perspective of Central Region. Gardino suggested cross-regional training and explained that Northern Region has been doing this since 2014 and has dedicated project managers to oversee projects. Gardino expressed appreciation for Adam Bradway and stated that equivalents are needed at the pre-construction and construction levels.

Stuart Leidner suggested a motion to approve the Program of Projects with amendments:

The MVP Improvement Program will be revised to include projects from the City of Palmer and the City of Wasilla.

The Palmer-Fishhook Separated Pathway terminus must be adjusted to the Government Peak Recreation Area because the Mother Lode Area and Hatcher Pass are outside the MVP boundary.

Someone clarified that the Palmer-Fishhook Separated Pathway TAP award is from Trunk Road to Edgerton Park Road. Adam Bradway stated that it

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would be corrected in the STIP amendment. Donna Gardino stated the descriptions were taken out of the previous STIP.

Mike Brown asked when DOT&PF needs this information for the STIP amendment. Adam Bradway responded they were originally planning on June 1, but more time is being given because each MPO wants DOT&PF to be present at meetings. Information as soon as possible would be ideal, as DOT&PF is trying to submit the draft amendment by mid-June at the latest. Brown stated it is important for CTP/TAP projects to move forward as fast as possible because they benefit the whole area. Brown stated that MVP does not need to be perfect in its first year and MVP should not complicate the STIP process any further. Brown said the Technical Committee and Policy Board should meet separately to focus on the near-term projects that need to be included in the upcoming STIP amendment.

Motion to adjourn and hold a Technical Committee meeting to make recommendations and a subsequent Policy Board meeting to make a decision (Brown / Carrington). Passed unanimously.

F. Member Comments

None

G. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:52pm