

Regional Planning Advisory Council

Minutes of Wednesday, April 20, 2016

RPAC Members Attending:

Name	Representing
Kay Kelley Arnold	City of Little Rock
Charles Cummings (Chair)	Freight/Goods Movement
Jill Dabbs (Alt.)	City of Bryant
Ward Davis	City of Conway
Alex DePriest	City of Little Rock
Shelby Fiegel (Alt.)	City of Conway
Lawrence Finn	Pulaski County
Coreen Frasier	BACA
Leesa Freasier	Arkansas Dept. of Health (ADH)
Robin Freeman	Saline County
Becca Green	Rock Region Metro
Mark Grimmett	City of Bryant
Sybil Hampton	City of Little Rock
Paul Hastings	City of Little Rock
Jeff Hathaway	Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRRCC)
Amy Heflin (nonvoting)	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Antonio Johnson (Alt.)	Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD)
Todd Larson	City of North Little Rock
Bob Lyford	City of Little Rock
Buckley O'Mell (Alt.)	LRRCC
Dan Roda	City of Little Rock
Barry Sellers (Alt.)	City of Sherwood
Carolyn Shearman (Alt.)	Sierra Club
Paul Simms	AHTD
Patrick Stair	Sierra Club
Jack Stowe	City of Maumelle
Tom Sutton	Clinton National Airport
Brad Walker	City of Little Rock
Dan Weathersby	Pulaski County

Guests:

Scott Bowles	FHWA
Ben Browning	AHTD (Design-Build Director for I-30 Project)
(Mayor) Gary Fletcher	City of Jacksonville
John Hedrick	Citizen
Howard Hoover	City of Bryant
Tim McKuin	Citizen
Earl Mott	Garver
Rohn Muse	Forest Hills Neighborhood Association

Noel Oman
Leslie Newell Peacock

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Arkansas Times

Metroplan Staff:

Lynn Bell	Graphics Specialist
Casey Covington	CARTS Planning Director
Susan Dollar	Transportation Planner/Title VI Coordinator
Hans Haustein	GIS/Research
Daniel Holland	Planner
Richard Magee	Deputy Director
Jim McKenzie	Executive Director
Jeff Runder	GIS/Policy Analyst

1. Call to Order and Announcements

Chairman Charles Cummings called the meeting to order at 11:32 AM. The Council met at 501 W. Markham Street, Little Rock.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Council considered the Minutes of February 16, 2016.

MOTION by Mayor Jill Dabbs, second by Ms. Leesa Freasier

"To accept the Minutes of February 16, 2016, as amended and submitted.

PASSED

3. Draft Public Participation Plan (PPP)

At the previous meeting, Ms. Susan Dollar presented the draft Public Participation Plan and took comments from the Council. Ms. Dollar presented a revised draft and showed the Council where and how those suggestions were incorporated into the document.

MOTION by Mr. Roda, second by Dr. Hampton

"To recommend the draft Public Participation Plan to the Metroplan Board for public comment."

Discussion: Mr. Stair asked what the procedure would be if a substantive comment was received during the 45-day comment period. Ms. Dollar responded that a substantive comment would trigger an additional public comment period. Minor and editorial corrections can be made needing additional action.

PASSED

4. Legislative Update

Mr. Jim McKenzie reported that the issue at the State Legislature revolves around funding Medicaid expansion, rebranded as "Arkansas Works". The policy was adopted in special session a couple of weeks ago, but the Arkansas General Assembly requires 75 percent majority to pass funding measures or tax increases,

except for sales tax. If Arkansas Works is not passed, that will blow a 100-110 million dollar hole in the Governor's general revenue budget. The Governor's proposed highway plan requires there to be a surplus of general revenue for any substantial amount of money to go to the Highway Department, which is necessary to increase state funding or to pull down the increased federal funding from the FAST Act. The main battleground on this issue has been in the State Senate, where ten Senators have voted no on the funding request. The vote was short of the three-quarters vote. The Governor has now come up with a plan to insert language in the bill to keep funding a special section also language to prevent spending the funds. If that version passes, the Governor could then line item veto the portion that prohibits spending the funds. Apparently, the Democrats are on board with that idea; it came out as recommended from the Senate joint budget committee yesterday and should go to a Senate vote this afternoon. If the bill passes, then it goes to the House for its consideration. A lawsuit is promised if the bill is passed in this manner, so we will just have to see how that plays out. If the fiscal session adjourns with Arkansas Works passed, the Governor has promised to call a special session later this spring to consider his proposed highway plan. All of that gets wrapped into the federal funds available from the FAST Act.

At the national level, Speaker Paul Ryan has been unsuccessful in getting a budget through the House, because of the Tea Party caucus. Individual appropriation subcommittees are still working on their individual bills. The Senate subcommittee on transportation passed out increased funding appropriations per the FAST Act. It will go to the full Senate and work its way through Congress. There is still some work being done, although congress is adjourned.

5. Imagine Central Arkansas Plan Amendment

Mr. Casey Covington presented detailed information on the proposed amendment ("Amendment 1") to the *Imagine Central Arkansas* Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (LRMTP). The PowerPoint presentation is posted on the RPAC website. The public comment period is from April 3rd through close of business day (5:00 PM) on Friday, May 6th. As of today's meeting, 36 comments have been received.

The plan amendment consists of two parts: (1) financial resources (2016-2020) and (2) a project list, contained in the FFY 2016-2020 CARTS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As CARTS Study Director, Mr. Covington must certify financial constraint of the LRMTP. Projects must be listed in the LRMTP before they can be listed on the TIP. Mr. Covington reported that together with the AHTD's revised fund marks, and the additional funds forthcoming from the FAST Act, the revised revenue forecast indicates financial constraint. The draft TIP includes many projects in addition to the proposed I-30 Crossing. This draft includes updated project cost estimates. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure financial constraint.

Regarding the I-30 Crossing project, it is currently listed in Imagine Central Arkansas (December 2014) as:

- \$300 million for operational improvements
- \$22.7 million in Interstate Rehab (I-40)
- \$1.1 million in Earmark funds (I-530 merge)

Mr. Covington showed the Council the three options that the Board considered as explanatory language for the amendment. A revised version of Option Three was adopted by the Board:

Job	County	Termini	Type of Work	Lgth	Estimated Cost Funding Breakdown (x1000)	Providng Matching Funds	Carrying out the project	Let Year
CA0 602	Pulaski	I-530 Hwy 67 (widening & reconstr.). I-30 & I-40 (F)	Operational Improvements & Reconstruction ¹	7.37	631,700 - Total ² 10,000 - NHPP 93,600 - NHPP (BR) 22,700 - NHPP (IRP) 404,300 - CAP 1,100 - Earmark 100,000 - Gap Financing ³	State	State	2017
<p>¹ Specific type of work will be determined through the NEPA process. Following the selection of a single alternative from NEPA and at the request of AHTD, the Metroplan Board will consider a LRMTTP and TIP amendment to reflect the final project. Approval of the amendment by the Metroplan Board will be required.</p> <p>² Total cost includes all phases to allow the project to be delivered by the Design-Build-Finance method.</p> <p>³ Design-Build-Finance - Includes \$100 million in Gap Financing (\$40 million of gap financing repayment included as NHPP, \$20 million in 2019 and \$20 million in 2020).</p>								

As mentioned previously, thus far a total of 36 public comments have been received, 35 against the proposed amendment/I-30 project, and one in favor of the project. All of the comments related to the I-30 project; no other aspect of either the proposed amendment or the draft TIP is referenced.

The public will have another opportunity to comment at a public meeting on the I-3-Crossing design, held by the AHTD on April 26.

Mr. Covington concluded his presentation and the chairman asked for questions and comments.

Mr. Roda: Are we convening between the end of the public comment period and the Board meeting?

Mr. Covington: Yes. The next RPAC meeting is scheduled for May 18th.

Mr. Sutton: What does this amendment, if adopted, mean? Does it endorse the I-30 project?

Mr. Covington: Approval of this amendment in no way endorses the project or a specific design.

Ms. Green: What are some specific way to engage the public? Where have the comments come from?

Ms. Dollar: Legal notice was printed in area newspapers, per PPP policy. The notice and proposed amendment and draft TIP are posted to the Metroplan website. Neighborhood groups have posted the information on their websites and social media.

Mr. Covington: Thus far, almost all comments have come to us via email. One letter was hand delivered.

6. Update on Proposed I-30 Crossing Project

Mr. Ben Browning, of the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department, presented an update on the proposed I-30 project. The PowerPoint presentation is posted to the RPAC website.

Mr. Browning's presentation focused on three points: Where we are now in project development; providing information that the RPAC had requested in November; project schedule.

The name of the project has changed from "Ten-Lane with Downtown Collector-Distributor (CD)Lanes" to "Six-Lane with Collector-Distributor Lanes". AHTD made this change to clarify the scope of the alternative and reduce misconception. Mr. Browning denied that the purpose of the renaming was to misdirect the public as to the ultimate design.

Two alternatives were presented for access to downtown Little Rock: (1) Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) and (2) a Split Diamond interchange. Both alternatives keep the same number of east-west crossings; do not impact the River Rail streetcar system; and appear to work from a geometric and mobility standpoint. A third alternative required under NEPA regulations is that of "no build", which means that the project would be canceled and funds released for other uses. In order to replace the bridge, a new project would have to be put forward and funds identified for that project.

Before getting into detail on the access alternatives, Mr. Browning first discussed the corridor alternatives. Corridor alternatives consist of (1) a six-lane cross-section with CD lanes, or (2) eight general purposed lanes. The six lane alternative would have three through lanes in each direction, with two additional lanes serving as "decision lanes" that feed into CD lanes across the River Bridge in the downtown area. the North Little Rock side has five lanes: three through lanes and two that are restricted at the River Bridge, separated by a barrier. The eight lane alternative would consist of four through lanes in each direction. The exact number of total lanes on both corridor alternatives has not been determined, because the access design has not yet been determined. Also, throughout the corridor a number of auxiliary lanes are planned, although the exact number has not been determined. The purpose of an auxiliary lane is to smooth the transition from an off ramp that is followed closely by an on ramp. They are not reflected in the number of lanes depicted, because the AHTD does not consider auxiliary lanes to be true travel lanes.

Regarding access to Little Rock, Mr. Browning explained the two access alternatives. He first presented the SPUI and stated that it makes great sense from an engineering perspective, because the design improves existing Hwy 10 interchange and maintains direct access to Hwy 10. the design allow I-30 traffic to exit the interstate at two location - Hwy 10 and 6th Street - and would keep traffic patterns in downtown Little Rock similar to what they are today. Access points remain as they are today. If the driver wishes to access 6th Street from Hwy 10 interchange, he may fly over the Hwy 10 interchange without having to go through traffic signals.

The Split Diamond design is more of a compromise between the engineer-preferred SPUI and input received from the public and stakeholders. The "split" occurs at 4th Street and at 9th Street. This design could reduce the number of lanes required. According to Mr. Browning, the Split Diamond design "puts the human element" into the design. By removing the Hwy 10 interchange, Mr. Browning said that park space could be developed by the city. Mr. Browning noted that Studio Main will be presenting at the upcoming public meeting. Studio Main is developing some options for developing the open space that will be available after demolition of existing infrastructure. The design further provides one location in each direction for I-30 traffic to exit the interstate - 4th Street for southbound traffic and 9th Street for northbound and I-630 traffic. It is anticipated that traffic will increase on 4th Street, Capitol, and 6th Street. The AHTD will not widen city streets although some sort of restriping will probably be necessary.

More detail will be shown on the Split Diamond alternative at the upcoming April 26 public meeting. At the meeting, the AHTD and its consultants will present the latest schematics for all four alternatives, and corridor diagrams showing traffic flow will be available. The AHTD will report on the status of the NEPA process. Also, the AHTD has developed VISSIM videos to depict traffic flow, along with 3D renderings and 3D animations for the alternatives

Mr. Browning then addressed the RPAC's request for additional information, which was communicated via letter to the AHTD in November 2015:

- Regarding **cost estimates**, Mr. Browning reiterated that an enhanced six-lane cross-section was eliminated from consideration very early in the qualitative screening process of the PEL; therefore, schematics were not developed to a point where a NEPA level cost estimate can be determined. Cost estimate for the latest eight-lane alternative is still being refined. The cost estimate for the latest six-lane with CD lanes is also still being refined, but is suggested to cost about \$50 million more than the eight-lane cross-section.
- Regarding **associated roadway widenings**, Mr. Browning explained that an associated widening is a widening not included in the project's scope but was shown in the project's traffic modeling for the purpose of understanding how the corridor would operate if choke points immediately outside of the project scope are corrected. It is true that initially, associated widenings on I-630 west past Louisiana Street and on I-30 west to 65th Street were included in the project's traffic modeling, but traffic modeling at the upcoming April 26 public meeting will no longer include the I-630 associated widening.
- Regarding **funding for the proposed I-30 Crossing project**, Mr. Browning showed a slide image that depicted the percentages of funding sources, based on an estimated budget of \$630.7 million. Most of the funding - 64 percent - comes from the Connect Arkansas Program (CAP); 15 percent from Federal Bridge; 3.5 percent from the Interstate Rehabilitation Program (IRP); 16 percent from Design-Build Finance (borrowing against future projects). He noted that the AHTD's constitutional authority is primarily limited to construction and maintenance of highways. Authority relating to transit and other modes of transportation is restricted to the planning phase, with no authority to provide funding for implementation or operations.

Mr. Browning concluded his presentation by discussing the schedule overview, which shows construction starting in late 2017 and ending in 2022.

Mr. Covington thanked Mr. Browning for his presentation. Mr. Covington encouraged the RPAC members to participate and comment on the design elements of the project, but pointed out that at this time the Council's responsibility is to consider the plan amendment before them.

A number of questions and comments were forthcoming from the Council.

Mr. Lyford: What is deadline for funding this project? Is there a set date for expenditure?

Mr. Browning: As far as the NEPA process is concerned, the funds would evaporate if the six-lane alternative would be the preferred alternative. The majority of funds are from the CAP, and there is not a legal requirement to spend those funds within a specific time frame; however, the AHTD made a commitment to expend the money within a 10-year period. If this project is delayed a little, there is probably no danger in losing the money, but if it is delayed considerably, the funds would likely be reallocated to another area.

Mr. Larson: What exactly does "no-build" mean? Why weren't we shown an alternative with three through lanes in each direction - reconstructed?

Mr. Browning: No-build means nothing at all - no reconstruction, no replacing the bridge. The project entails not just the bridge, but the entire corridor. The six-lane alternative was eliminated early in this process and is not being considered. If that is the chosen course, the entire project would be canceled, the money set aside for it would be redistributed elsewhere. Eventually, a project would be required because the bridge is structurally deficient, but that would be an entirely new project.

Ms. Shearman: Ben and Casey, you've encouraged people to attend the public meeting. Will this meeting be open to receiving public comments or only submitted questions?

Mr. Browning: This meeting will be a little bit different from our usual meeting. Beginning at 5:15, we'll have a presentation. Scott Bennett will be there and the presentation will highlight what has been done since the last couple of meetings. There will not be an opportunity for open comments. We are trying to keep the meeting streamlined and in an open-house format. We will have a lot of information for people to see and they will be able to ask questions of the experts who will be at the information exhibit stations. We also have comment forms for them to fill out and submit.

Mr. Covington: I want to emphasize the Metroplan wants your comments, as well. For people in the audience, and for participants, Susan has made some comment forms, and you are welcome to take them. Any comment received today will be recorded as comments on the *Imagine Central Arkansas* amendment. Comments to the AHTD are on the I-30 project design. Metroplan will also provide the comments we receive to the AHTD.

Ms. Frasier: Is there urgency in replacing the bridge? Is there a safety issue?

Mr. Browning: The bridge is structurally deficient and will have to be replaced at some point. However, it can continue to serve for several more years. It is being maintained, and will not fall down. We inspect bridges every six months and make new determinations as to its structure. So, if this project falls apart, we know that the bridge will still have to be replaced at some point in the future.

Ms. Frasier: My second question is on this split diamond design that will be presented on the 26th. Was the AHTD's urban planner involved in this design? Were other planners involved?

Mr. Browning: Yes. There is no one person responsible for this. It is a culmination of input from the public, ideas from stakeholder meetings, the boulevard design that was proposed, many other sources. We looked at the boulevard and saw that it wouldn't hold traffic, but we thought about how we could incorporate some of the design elements of the boulevard into a workable design. That's why the frontage lanes function in a way similar to a boulevard. We met with planners in Dallas, too. This is truly a culmination of many sources and ideas.

Mr. Walker: One of the concerns I've had is that there doesn't appear to be a good critical analysis of alternatives. The NEPA process is coming at the end of your process, and several alternatives were already eliminated from consideration. The only conclusion you've left us with is the ones that have been carefully provided to the NEPA. The process has "pre-limited" us to only certain alternatives. Any hope we can get that information?

Mr. Browning: All information relating to the project is available in the study. When doing this type of project, you start with what is called a universe of alternatives, which includes every conceivable alternative. Through a series of screening processes, starting with qualitative evaluation, we eliminate several alternatives immediately. An example of this is the Chester Street Bridge alternative. The Purpose and Need includes not just mobility, but also addressing the bridge deficiencies, paving - it's the entire corridor. Money that is spent off-corridor takes away from the work on the corridor, and would be a separate project. Now, at the public meeting, citizens can write in another option and we will look at it, but not with the same level of detail. There is a level at which alternatives have to be dropped, and that must be done by the experts.

Mr. Covington: You [the Council] asked us to look at the boulevard option. We are doing so now and at the next meeting I will offer some observations on this option. Let me explain the "Purpose and Need" aspect of this. The purpose and needs statement was developed at the beginning of the process. It comes down to the issue of congestion. If you want to manage congestion, then your Purpose and Need will be different and you will have more options available. If your goal is to make it possible for four lanes of traffic to drive 60 miles per hour at all time of day, then you will have fewer options. The boulevard option does show differences in traffic patterns, and in some places increases congestion. Again, it comes down to you Purpose and Need. Is it to reduce congestion? Or to manage congestion?

Mr. Browning: Let me piggyback onto Casey's statement. The Purpose and Need is fivefold: (1) Reduce congestion. Yes, it's part of the Purpose and Needs, but only one

of five. (2) Navigation safety. (3) Structural and functional roadway safety - Safety is considered, including pedestrian safety. The boulevard option is unsafe for pedestrians, whereas the interstate will keep them away. (4) Pavement rehabilitation. (5) Structural and functional bridge safety. So, if Casey comes to you and says that we're driven by mobility, that's just not true. We understand that we have to manage congestion; we can't continue to build our way out of congestion.

Mr. Walker: Thank you. Casey has already answered the question. If the public supports another alternative than the ones you've provided, will that go through the NEPA process as well?

Mr. Browning: We will look at clusters of comments. There is always a chance that something else, some new idea could find its way to the top. The alternatives being considered by NEPA have been fully vetted.

Mr. Cummings: Casey, please explain to the Council what our responsibilities are in this process.

Mr. Covington: The bylaws of this Council, and what the Metroplan Board charged you with, is the long-range transportation plan. You are responsible for drafting that plan, reviewing it, and recommending it to the Board. As part of that charge, you are also responsible for looking at amendments to the plan. We have an amendment before. It is fairly time critical at this point that action be taken; however, we are going to let the public comment period end, and report back to this Council, so that will not be at least until the 25th (Board meeting). At this point, I think you have four options: (1) recommend this to the Board; (2) reject this amendment; (3) choose to remain silent, if you feel there is not a consensus; or (4) recommend it with modifications. The Metroplan Board is the final authority, but as an advisory body, you have the responsibility to advise the Board.

Mr. McKenzie: Let me add a little bit to what Casey has said. Casey referencing the amendment - Amendment #1 to *Imagine Central Arkansas*. That is mainly to do with the TIP and to ensuring financial constraint. We anticipate an amendment #2, as referenced in the footnote, that would be for final approval to the final design concept. That will not happen until later in the process, and as we get further into the NEPA process. The amendment will come back to the Council for its deliberations. There have always been two sets of issues regarding this proposal. One is that of access to the two downtowns, as Ben has gone over today. The other issue is one that Metroplan is more closely responsible for is the impact of this project on the metropolitan transportation entire system over the 25 year plan period. We're not going to be able to fully assess that until we get some of the details from the modeling that is coming out of the NEPA process - probably not until we get the draft Environmental Assessment - and then we can begin to assess the system impacts on the financially constrained plan. So there's stuff that is happening now and stuff that will be happening later that you will be involved with,

and to your question about public input process, it's that later amendment that we would anticipate a more robust public engagement, and which you will have a hand in drafting.

Ms. Freasier: We are still looking at ten lanes, regardless how you break it out and rename them. I don't understand why we are not seeing more options that fall within our policy, which is six lanes. If that policy was followed, and needed improvements made, that would have left money for other projects to help with traffic, such as building a Chester Street bridge or on other arterials. I am confused as to why we instead went directly to this alternative. Also, since I-630 is not going to be modified, we are just pushing congestion to another area, so this corridor will enable 60 mile per hour driving - for all of 6 miles. It doesn't make sense.

Mr. Browning: Yes, a six lane alternative was looked at in the beginning, and it was quickly realized that it did not meet the Purpose and Need, any of them. But even replacing what you have here now is not cheap - \$300-\$400 million range. The bridge cannot be partially demolished, so all the work would have to be done at once. Without additional lanes to keep the bridge open during construction, traffic would have to be re-routed and that would cause extreme traffic and environmental problems. As far as bottlenecks, yes, there will be some bottlenecks, as the VISSIM videos will show at the public meeting. An example of that is on I-630. But, as we hear all the time, that is congestion that must be managed. We cannot build our way out of congestion. This corridor, however, is very unique with many interchanges. That's why this alternative is appropriate for this corridor. We are taking a balanced approach.

Mr. Covington: Leesa, it goes back to the Purpose and Need developed and evaluated by AHTD. AHTD felt that it did not meet the Purpose and Need.

Dr. Hampton: Two things. One, it is striking that all of the discussion on mobility is still based on highway traffic. But we are looking at a framework that is very much larger than that. My concern is there's not been a larger strategic visioning to think in ways that are different from the past. We are still focused on automobile traffic, past and present. Also, do we know how much traffic from I-30 is coming to downtown? What about traffic that currently uses I-440 - will it instead use I-30? How much traffic could be efficiently diverted to local roads [arterials]? Are there other strategies that could be implemented to move people along the existing system?

Mr. Browning: We did look at making improvements to arterials as part of the PEL, but decided they would be ineffective in moving traffic. There's not a lot of opportunity, and - something to think about - you'd have to add capacity to those arterials, which would be very impactful on downtowns. On the corridor, we have plenty of existing right-of-way, so the impacts are much less.

Mr. Covington: There is some information available in terms of where people are going on the corridor. I don't have the exact numbers in front of me, but I think about 20 percent of the traffic goes all the way through the corridor. Our model does reflect additional traffic diverting from I-440 to downtown, so the AHTD projection and ours do reflect that when you build this corridor, traffic will divert from I-440. The Smart Mobility report tries to quantify that. We will present that in more detail next time.

Ms. Green: I have a comment and a question. I think it is important to note that no one has said that I-630 wouldn't be widened in the future and I appreciate the response in the memo that you put together for this Council but I still don't understand why it was included in the original modeling and is now being dropped and won't be mentioned at the meeting on the 26th. Widening I-630 is a possibility and I'd think people would want to know that. That is my comment. My question is about the Design-Build-Finance plan, where the financing costs are rolled into \$100 million so any interest paid would be rolled into that \$100 million, as I understand it. Does that mean that you've done a cost estimate of what the interest will be and will you be able to pay that interest with federal funds? State or local funding? How will that work?

Mr. Browning: I'll start with your question on I-630. The Highway Commission has approved a study to be done on I-630. It hasn't been done yet. That study will determine what improvements may be needed in the future. I-630 is whole different animal than I-30 and will require a different approach. The reason we decided to take it out was because we realized that it really wasn't needed. We thought it is more realistic to show traffic backup so people can evaluate the alternatives based on what our models indicate without additional widening. As for the \$100 million and DBF, the Department will not be procuring this. Instead, we will ask the design-builder - we will say, "We've got X number of dollars up-front and as soon as you do the work we will pay you. There will come a point when that money will run out and we will not have access to this \$100 million until 2019, and then at \$20 million per year after that. And so if their work goes past the available funds, they will have to do the work without receiving payment. So they have some financing options. Some bigger companies can absorb that because they have enough cash on hand. Other companies may have to go out and get the additional money. So we are putting all the burden on the design-builder.

Ms. Green: Would there be projects that are listed in the Constrained Plan now that wouldn't get funded because of this arrangement?

Mr. Browning: No. As Casey said before, the Department has changed the fund marks based on availability of additional funds.

Ms. Green: One more question. At the April 26th meeting, will there also be information presented on the no-build alternative? And, will the 3D animations

developed by the AHTD to present to the public show the effects of the designs on sun and shadows?

Mr. Browning: There will be some information on the no-build, but not a lot - no schematics. On the animations, I don't know the answer to that. I think they have worked with under-bridge lighting.

The Chairman asked if anyone from the audience would like to ask a question or make a comment. There was no response.

Ms. Shearman: We are talking about amending the plan twice, right? We have this amendment and there will be another amendment later.

Mr. Covington: The amendment that is before will go the Metroplan in May, and it will be acted upon then. We anticipate a second amendment at the end of the year.

Ms. Shearman: By the time we get to the second amendment, how much of all this funding will already be spent? My concern is that by the time we reach that point there will be a feeling of financial inevitability. The feeling might be that a no-build vote would mean that all of the work and planning that has been spent on this would be lost. I think there is a psychological aspect to this. People may feel they almost have to go forward with this.

Mr. Browning: The reality is that on a project of this size the money that is spent on developing the project to this point may sound big, but it's actually only a small portion of the overall budget. The money spent today is just the cost of doing business. It wouldn't be the first time a project has been canceled. To answer your question, if the answer is a no-build, then we lose all of the money that has been spent and the remaining money would be reallocated to other projects.

Mr. Sutton: I've heard a lot of talk about Purpose and Need. It appears that any option that might be already in compliance with the current Central Arkansas plan, which indicates a six-lane build-out, is thrown out because it doesn't meet the Purpose and Need. My question is, who defines Purpose and Need and to what degree was the community involved in defining Purpose and Need?

Mr. Browning: I'm not a NEPA expert. Amy, can you speak to this?

Ms. Heflin: The Purpose and Need is defined by the owner, the project sponsor, in this case the Highway Department. It is not done without a lot of public involvement. That was part of the PEL, which included substantial public involvement.

Mr. Sutton: So to follow up, it's my understanding that there was a great deal of public involvement in the development of *Imagine Central Arkansas*. How was that

substantial public input discounted in the Highway Department's definition of Purpose and Need?

Mr. Browning: It hasn't been discounted. It has been present in every decision we've made. We try to stay with the spirit of the plan. We did consider the six lane policy with this project. Remember, that your own policy allows an exception for unique situations. You've already made one exception with the I-630/I-430 interchange in west Little Rock. With that in mind, we try to work within the spirit of the policy. That is one reason that drove the collector-distributor lanes. We're still addressing the needs - safety, mobility - and still have the policies in mind. This corridor is unique, very unique.

Ms. Freasier: Well, then I disagree with what you're saying with regard to pedestrian safety and boulevards. If it's designed correctly, then it does not negatively impact pedestrian safety. So, your thought process in applying our policies was inaccurate. By coming up with this scope, you've used inaccurate information. You threw it out based on an easy assumption.

Mr. Browning: I have to respectfully disagree with you. Any time you have a pedestrian and a vehicle at the same grade, versus a grade separation, you are going to have safety impacts. You are exactly right, however, that there are all kinds of tools you can use to mitigate that, but as traffic increases, the effectiveness of those tools decreases.

Mr. Cummings: We are about five or six minutes past our adjournment time and I want to be respectful of everybody's time. We all have questions and I am pleased that they are being addressed. Before the next Board meeting, I encourage all of you to email Casey with any further questions and comments.

My concern is that everything we, this Council, has done has been based on public input. The Highway Department has also done public outreach and I am having trouble reconciling these two things.

Mr. Lyford: Will the Metroplan Board make a decision on this at the next meeting?

Mr. Covington: No. The Board will not take action until the public comment period is concluded, in May.

I envision the May 18th meeting as a discussion among the members, with only a brief presentation from staff. We may have a few visitors, but I do not anticipate many. This should be a discussion of the amendment among all of you. I encourage all of you to be present, make your voice heard.

Mr. Stair: Where can we submit additional questions we may have?

Mr. Covington: If you have questions on the amendment, we will consider those as public comments. Questions are certainly appropriate.

7. Other Business and Next Meeting

- (1) Along with the mold and pollen, we are entering the ozone season, where ground-level ozone can pose health threats. Metroplan partners with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality and the AHTD to promote public awareness of the harmful effects of ground-level ozone, and to suggest small changes in behavior that can reduce ozone. To that end, Ditch the Keys is week-long campaign filled with activities and freebies or discounts from area businesses. Go to www.ditchthekeys.com to register and get a coupon for freebies and deals.
- (2) The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18th, at which time the Council will be presented with the results of the public comment and discuss the amendment. Confirmation and additional information will be sent a week prior to the date.

8. Adjourn

With no further business brought forward, the Chairman declared the Council adjourned at 1:36 PM.