

Regional Planning Advisory Council

Minutes of Wednesday, August 24, 2016

RPAC Members Attending:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
1. Kay Kelley Arnold	City of Little Rock
2. Marcia Cook	City of Sherwood
3. Charles Cummings (Chair)	Freight/Goods Movement
4. Alex DePriest	City of Little Rock
5. Lawrence Finn	Pulaski County
6. Coreen Frasier	Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas (BACA)
7. Leesa Freasier	Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)
8. Robin Freeman	Saline County
9. Becca Green	Rock Region Metro
10. Mark Grimmett	City of Bryant
11. Sybil Hampton	City of Little Rock
12. Jeff Hathaway	Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRRCC)
13. Amy Heflin (Nonvoting)	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
14. Kathleen Lambert (Alt.)	Rock Region METRO
15. Eddie Long	City of Cabot
16. Bob Lyford	City of Little Rock
17. Buckley O'Mell (Alt.)	Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRRCC)
18. Esperanza Massana	Arkansas Economic Development Commission (EDC)
19. Corey Parks (Alt.)	City of Conway
20. Dan Roda	City of Little Rock
21. Paul Simms	AHTD
22. Patrick Stair	Sierra Club
23. Jack Stowe	City of Maumelle
24. Tom Sutton	Bill & Hillary Clinton National Airport
25. Regina Taylor	Youth Outreach
26. Brad Walker	City of Little Rock
27. Dan Weathersby	Pulaski County

Guests:

1. Ben Browning	AHTD
2. Marsha Guffey	Resident (Bryant)
3. Barry Haas	Resident (Little Rock)
4. John Hedrick	Resident (Little Rock)
5. Jessie Jones	AHTD
6. Robert Markman	Resident (North Little Rock)
7. Earl Mott	Garver
8. Noel Oman	<i>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</i>
9. Leslie Peacock	<i>Arkansas Times</i>
10. Brenjamin Perkins	KTHV (THV 11)
11. Karen Sykes	Private citizen
12. Jarod Varner	Executive Director, Rock Region METRO
13. Kathy Wells	President, Coalition of Little Rock Neighborhoods (CLRN)

- 14. Trey Willis Private citizen
- 15. Keli Wylie AHTD

Metroplan Staff:

- 1. Lynn Bell Graphics Specialist
- 2. Casey Covington CARTS Planning Director
- 3. Susan Dollar Transportation Planner/Title VI Coordinator
- 4. **Hans Haustein GIS**
- 5. Daniel Holland Planner
- 6. Jonathan Lupton Research Planner
- 7. Jim McKenzie Executive Director
- 8. **Jeff Runder GIS**

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.

Mr. Cummings announced that Tim Ragsdale passed away last week. Mr. Ragsdale was a long-time RPAC member who represented the disabilities community. A sympathy card was passed around the table for RPAC members to sign. The card will be sent to Mr. Ragsdale's family.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Council considered the Minutes of June 15 and July 20.

MOTION by Mr. Stowe, second by Ms. Fraiser

"To accept the Minutes of June 15, 2016, as prepared, and the Minutes of July 20, 2016, as corrected to include Federal Certification Review team members Ronisha Hodge (FTA) and Tameka Macon (FHWA) as attendees."

PASSED

3. Metroplan Staff Presentations

Mr. McKenzie and Mr. Covington led the Council through a recap of project issues related to the waiver request; a summary of public comments; and Metroplan staff recommendation.

Background and issues. (Mr. McKenzie)

The issue is the 30 Crossing project. The MPO has three primary responsibilities in this process.

The first is to consider and make recommendation to the Board regarding AHTD's request to waive the six-lane cap that is in our design standards. That of course, was discussed by the RPAC last month and has been out for a 30-day public comment period. You will consider that request at today's meeting.

The second and the most substantive in terms of RPAC deliberations, is the amendment to the metropolitan long-range transportation plan to accommodate the 30 Crossing project. That will depend on the systems impact analysis report and a determination of financial constraint as we adjust the plan accordingly

The third, and relatively minor, responsibility to amend the Transportation Improvement Program to include details of the project.

We've had some timeline changes on the project, of which I want to apprise you. We were originally expecting a draft Environmental Assessment this fall, and targeting the end of the year for a Finding of No Significant Impact, which means we would have needed to move forward on the Plan amendment and the TIP amendment in the Fall 2016 timeframe. The Federal Highway Administration has received enough comments about the impact of the project on historical resources that it has called for a Section 106 Consultation and has identified multiple groups of interest to serve on this committee. The first meeting of that group is next Thursday evening. Because of that the timeline on this project has been pushed back. We are expecting the draft Environmental Assessment in late March, and are looking for a Finding of No Significant Impact in late spring or early summer 2017. While we were originally proposing to move the Plan amendment and the TIP amendment forward together to eliminate the redundancies of public comment, now it's possible - assuming that we can get the final modeling information from AHTD and its contractors sometime in late November of this year - to do the system impact analysis and potentially have a draft Plan amendment to you for consideration after the first of the year. The TIP amendment could move separately after that.

So, in consideration of the request for a waiver, as we mentioned in the last RPAC meeting, there are three conditions that the AHTD has to meet to qualify for a waiver. (1) The first is to seek concurrence from the Metroplan Board. That occurred when Director Bennett sent the letter to the Metroplan Board President requesting the waiver. (2) The second is to do an analysis of whether demand on the corridor can be met with arterial improvements or public transit. That was done in the PEL process. I know, based on the public comments, that there is a wide range of opinion on whether or not that was done adequately. Be that as it may, the analysis was performed and documented in a formal process. (3) The Department is expected to do a thorough analysis of the impact of induced traffic demand on local roadways as a result of widening beyond six through lanes.

Summary of public comment. (Mr. Covington)

The period for public comment on the requested waiver was from July 24th through close of business day on August 23rd. Official legal notice for public comment was placed in five area newspapers, including a Spanish newspaper; advertised on Metroplan social media (Twitter, FaceBook); and Metroplan's websites. Mr.

Covington pointed out that one of the benefits of using social media is that information gets shared and the number of people reached can grow exponentially.

Mr. Covington reported that 260 comments were received; 106 were in favor of the waiver, and 147 were opposed. Another seven comments expressed general concerns but did not specify support or opposition to the requested waiver. Four comments were received from organizations and neighborhoods associations.

Those who supported the waiver put forth the following arguments:

- The project will make the corridor safer to travel.
- The freeways should serve all Arkansans, not just the urban core of Little Rock-North Little Rock.
- An expanded freeway will shorten commute time.
- The project will better accommodate through traffic.
- Better connectivity between Little Rock and North Little will be provided through proposed auxiliary lanes.

Opposition to waiver was expressed through many long and articulate letters to Metroplan's Board. The arguments were also more nuanced, as follow:

- Adhere to the good plan set forth in *Imagine Central Arkansas*, which was developed with much public input and support, and which calls for a balanced transportation network including a six lane freeway build-out.
- Approving a waiver in advance of the NEPA process is premature. Better alternatives exist and should be explored.
- The cost of the project is prohibitive, especially when associated widening are factored in.
- Quality of life and economic development will be harmed if the project is built as currently proposed.
- Freeways represent outmoded technology that divide communities.
- The resultant noise will have negative impacts on historic preservation areas and surrounding neighborhoods.
- The AHTD has not proven the need for a waiver.

Mr. Covington summarized the comments by noting that although staff and those who work closely with the I-30 Crossing project understand that the request for waiver is not the same as approving the project or amending the plan, many people in the general population cannot separate the two action. Mr. Covington also noted that there is a demonstrated support for *Imagine Central Arkansas* and for a balanced transportation network. There is considerable concern that granting an exception to the six lane freeway policy is premature, given the many unknowns about the project.

Several comments included detailed critiques of technical issues and the adequacy of alternatives that were considered during the PEL and NEPA process. Those comments will be provided to the AHTD and Federal Highway Administration to become part of the official project record.

Staff recommendation. (Mr. Covington)

The recommendation from staff is as follows:

Metroplan staff is supportive of a waiver to the six-through lane cap for the 30 Crossing project as requested, between the north terminal and south terminal interchanges on I-30. The waiver is the required first step for achieving the goals of system efficiency, interchange improvements, and safety improvements as identified in the adopted Plan. It recognizes the corridor's uniqueness as a series of major interchanges that connect six freeways in six and a half miles and serves as the backbone of the Central Arkansas freeway network. The waiver allows for more creative solutions within the corridor to be fully considered. In this instance and at this time, a recommendation to grant a waiver of the Freeway Design policy is explicitly not an endorsement of any roadway design proposals being considered in the NEPA process for the 30 Crossing project. There remains significant concern about the system impacts of a significant widening in this corridor and those impacts' effect on the financially constrained long range transportation plan, which have yet to be determined.

4. Request for Waiver of CARTS Six Lane Freeway Policy

The Chairman called for discussion of the issue. Although not a verbatim transcription, the following summary closely reflects the ensuing discussion.

Mr. Roda: Frankly, I am a little disappointed in the staff's recommendation, given that we've heard the staff's own data - almost a year ago now - that there is significant induced demand and other ripple effects we should be considering.

We were told that there's a three-pronged test: that [the AHTD] needed to seek the concurrence of the Board, which it did in an arguably timely fashion. Two, that it needed to do a thorough analysis of induced demand. Metroplan has done some of this analysis, multiple others who were hired by different groups including a citizens'

group, have done analysis showing significant negative effects that needed to be considered; but now we're saying that the AHTD has passed that prong of the test. I can't agree to that. I also think the third prong, having to do a thorough analysis of alternatives, has clearly not been met. The public comments, at a rate of about one-and-a-half to one, would seem to echo that.

My comment on the staff's recommendation is that I do not agree with it. I think we should reject this request.

Mr. Cummings: And that's one reason why I wanted to bring the staff recommendation out before we vote and that has no bearing on what we as a Council decide to do. I felt that we all needed to know what that staff recommendation was before, not after, we voted.

Ms. Frasier: I feel like the staff recommendation is premature. I feel like we should have voted first, before we heard the recommendation from Metroplan staff, in order to be fair in this whole process. It sounds like we're being railroaded into this deciding.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I know this group well enough to know that's not going to happen. We've got a good group of free-thinkers, and I did not see that as a problem. I felt that the more knowledge you had up front, the better equipped you will be to make a good decision.

Ms. Frasier: Charles, I agree with you; it's fair for us to know where the Metroplan staff stands.

Casey, can you clarify as to how you came to this being the staff recommendation? And can you explain what you mean by saying that [Metroplan] is not agreeing to any of the project designs that are currently being shown to us; and what your thoughts about the project may be? Also, how are alternative transportation modes are being considered, possibly with Metroplan?

Mr. Covington: The recommendation was based upon our presentation last month. We examined the corridor to see what would have to happen in order to meet Goal 4, interchange improvements and system optimization. Our conclusion was that in order to meet the goals of *Imagine Central Arkansas* for this corridor - interchange improvements and system optimization - the road would need to exceed six lanes in several places along the corridor. We did not look at the individual alternatives the State brought forward in Public Meeting 6, because we know there are some concerns with that, but we do not think you can construct improvements within this corridor without exceeding the strict six-lane interpretation of the policy.

Mr. Stair: If the waiver is granted now, we are precluding the possibility of further study that might yield a better design - more in keeping with the six lane policy. It

seems that after we provide the waiver, it doesn't matter how optimistic you are about six, seven, or twenty or however many lanes, you've already ceded the question - so why bother with looking for a better design?

Mr. McKenzie: Let me try to address that question. There are a couple of ways to look at this. One is broad view in context to the 30 Crossing proposals. The other way is to take a narrow view of just the improvements in this corridor. The adopted plan specifically calls for interchange improvements in this corridor; specifically calls for optimization in this corridor. I don't think there's a magic way you can make a strict interpretation of the six-lane policy to work on this road. If we're going to do the improvements on the corridor, keeping it as narrow as possible, but still doing the interchange improvements, then it will look a lot like an eight-lane freeway. Some sections would have more than eight lanes. It's just a weird bird, and it's not going to change its feathers. I understand the hypothesis of your question, but it's not realistic to think that the plan goals can be met with a strict six-lane adherence.

Mr. Cummings: I sat down with staff a few days ago, in order to educate myself on the options that are before us. We identified five directions the RPAC could go, and I've asked Casey to go over them before we proceed.

Mr. Covington reviewed the options for dealing with the request. The Council was also advised that an opportunity exists for a minority report to the Board if the vote is not unanimous.

1. Recommend against the waiver.

Sample Motion: *Motion to recommend against granting a waiver of the regions' six through lane policy for the I-30 Crossing Project. The need for major widening of the scale proposed in the 30 Crossing project has not yet been proven.*

2. Recommend against the waiver. The request is premature and additional information on the project is needed before a waiver is considered.

Sample Motion: *Motion to recommend against the waiver of the region's six through-lane policy for the I-30 Crossing Project. AHTD's request is premature given remaining questions about the project design and ongoing NEPA analysis. The request should be reconsidered at a later date, once additional information on the project is available.*

3. Recommend approval of the waiver on narrow grounds

Sample Motion: *Motion to recommend to the Metroplan Board approval of a waiver of the region's six through lane policy for the I-30 Crossing Project. The unique complexity of the I-30 corridor from the north terminal to the south terminal interchange requires additional flexibility and creativity to solve interchange merging and safety issues beyond that allowed with the six lane cap. The recommendation is not an endorsement of any design that is*

currently being considered in NEPA. Significant issues of systems impact and financial constraint remain to be dealt with.

4. Recommend approval of the waiver and in support of major widening in the corridor

Sample Motion: *Motion to recommend to the Metroplan Board approval of a waiver of the region's six through lane policy for the I-30 Crossing Project as well as support for all alternatives that are currently under consideration during the NEPA phase.*

5. No Recommendation

The RPAC is not required to make a recommendation to the Board on this issue. Collecting and presenting the public comment can be deemed sufficient.

Sample Motion: *Motion to make no recommendation at this time.*

Mr. Cummings: I want to emphasize that this is just a guideline; it is not intended to limit your discussion or decision. While the handout showing these options is being distributed, let's take a ten-minute break and resume at 12:10.

[Following a brief recess, the Council then resumed its deliberations.]

Dr. Hampton: How did we get here? I've given this much thought. Many of us are strongly opposed to granting the waiver, and I would like to speak to that. Metroplan has developed an incredible process in response to the federal desire to have a more inclusive process in making decisions of this magnitude. I recognize that there was an opportunity in the time that we've been meeting for us to have some sense that this kind of request would be coming, and what it would mean. That opportunity was not taken. The feeling that I've had about this is all along is that I am insulted when people don't have a process that allows me to have voice (even when I cannot have vote). For future reference, I want the Department [AHTD] to really understand that people are not unreasonable; it was the lack of process, in creating a sense of urgency and the message that if we didn't act as the Highway Department wanted in spending federal dollars, we would be penalizing our communities. We don't like to make decisions with the "Sword of Damocles" over our heads. I think that for me, I will be able to make a good decision today, and a fair decision, because it is clear to me that my concern is that the process was violated. All that Metroplan has done to create something where so many people in the community have been brought in and engaged, has been ignored. My desire is that after we take this vote, the Department will seriously come to terms with its lack of inclusive planning and resolve to do something about that.

Mr. Cummings: Let's take a short straw poll to get a feel for where we are as a body. We will go down the list of five options and indicate by show of hands which of these you favor.

The straw poll eliminated options 3 ("Recommend approval of the waiver on narrow grounds") and 5 (" No Recommendation"). The options that remained before the Council were: 1 ("Recommend against the waiver"); 2 ("Recommend against the waiver. The request is premature and additional information on the project is needed before a waiver is considered."); and 4 ("Recommend approval of the waiver and in support of major widening in the corridor.")

Mr. Roda: This is why I prefer 1 to 2 or 3. I'm an attorney and so I've got to look at the question before us on purely technical grounds. We are governed by a policy statement, and the planning process as a whole is governed by this policy statement, which provides, in relevant part, that there is a three-pronged test that we need to apply to this request that is before us. The waiver, as we all recognize, is a prerequisite to the Highway Department obtaining a Finding of No Significant Impact. This is necessary for them to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act; failure to comply with its terms could welcome a lawsuit, and likely would - that's what is happening with a similar project in Birmingham, Alabama right now. But to return to the three-pronged test that we need to apply, we've gone through this at the last meeting and we discussed it again in this meeting. Did the Department consult Metroplan Board for its concurrence? Yes, it did; we all saw the letter, although some people thought it came late. But the other two prongs - the Department needs to do a thorough analysis of alternative methods for meeting travel demand in the corridor, and that it needs to do a thorough analysis of induced demand - both of those clearly have not been met. Again, one of the Department representatives even said that induced demand was not "a thing". So, the Department is relying on a few basic assumptions that it has not deviated from. One is that all these different interstates, chief among them I-30, need to run right through town as opposed to around the city (the 440 beltway, for example); and two, that this lofty Level of Service goal to which they aspire is a must - cars must be able to travel through the interstate at a certain level of service, regardless of other considerations.

So, while I like options 2 and 3, sending the Department back to come up with something that might be a little more consistent with *Imagine Central Arkansas*, as Sybil pointed out, we've been kicking this around for a year. A few meeting ago, we gave them increased spending, even though they told us that the design-build process worked so as to make sure that however much money they had, that's how much highway would be built. We still gave them the increase. Well, maybe there are other ways they can spend it, but I really don't want to see them spend it paving more of downtown Little Rock, where I live, where I own property, and where I work. For all those reasons, I strongly support option 1, denying the waiver as inappropriate.

Mr. Hathaway: I know this is a sensitive issue, but I've got to be honest. I'm not really understanding or in favor of all the various options and the explanatory

language in the suggested Motions, nor am I in favor of the straw poll vote before a Motion is even made. To me, next week Metroplan's Board need to vote either to grant the request for waiver, or to deny it. Today, RPAC should be taking action that will tell the Metroplan Board whether we think it should grant that waiver, yes or no. We can be here all day if you all want but I will make this Motion now.

MOTION by Mr. Hathaway, second by Mr. Stowe

"To recommend that the Metroplan Board of Directors approve the AHTD's request for a waiver of the six lane freeway policy for the I-30 Crossing project."

Discussion:

Mr. Roda: Mr. Hathaway and I are on opposite sides of this issue; however, I do agree with him that we should be framing this as a simple up or down vote. We do not need the additional commentary.

Mr. Cummings: I do think the Board is interested in understanding the reasoning behind our vote. I talked with Mayor Fletcher and he indicated that it's important for the Board to know the thought process behind our vote, because we are guided by public input. Again, the options were intended for discussion purposes only.

Mr. Walker: I would like to speak to the Motion. The failure to comply with the requirement to ask for the waiver disarms me to deal with the substance of the waiver. The absence of true comparison of an imagined solution that is restrained by the six lane cap - which could mean a Chester-Pike Ave bridge, or arterials, or whatever possible solutions there may be that are viable, comparative alternatives that should be presented - then rather than your gut or emotions, you are able to look at it empirically. The vote here precludes any enlightenment as to whether other alternatives might work. The Highway Department so summarily dismissed the idea of dispersing the concentration of traffic, that we do not have the tools to determine whether eight or ten lanes is the right solution. I think the *Imagine Central Arkansas* concept was that it [thorough analysis of alternatives and induced demand impacts] would be available so that the answer would be self-evident. I'm new to this Council, but it's my impression that *Imagine Central Arkansas*, its goals and outcomes, was arrived at through working in a collaborative manner, with staff creative support. We don't have that consensus here, because I don't believe we've been provided with adequate background information to reach that consensus. We do not have the empirical data we need. Option 2 may be more explanatory, but is it premature because of the timing or because we do not have the information we need to make a judgment? Maybe we should clarify that to say "We are against the waiver because you have not supplied the supporting documentation that we need." Therefore, I am speaking against the Motion before us and am in favor of a more informative statement from this Council.

Ms. Frasier: We've been working for two years and doing community outreach for *Imagine Central Arkansas*. We've heard from thousands of

people throughout this area. In order to support *Imagine Central Arkansas*, which I have been a part of for two years, and its Financially Constrained Plan, nothing has been mentioned about maintenance on this six mile stretch of roadway. I think we can spend our money in a better way, plus the maintenance costs are going to be 30 percent each year thereafter. We can't afford this project; this does not fit with anything we've talked about for the last two years, and does not fit with anything that the community has had input in.

Mr. Stair [read the following statement]: At the RPAC meeting July 20, many substantive arguments were given highlighting the weakness of the Highway Department's analysis of the I-30 project. These discussions, along with comments given to the AHTD, the Federal Highway Administration, Metroplan, and other venues, have itemized problems with the Highway Department's methodology, analysis, and even their arithmetic. In multiple examples, it should be patently obvious that this project needs more study. Even the Metroplan staff, in their recommendation presented today, accepts that more study is needed, when they say that "There remains significant concern about the system impacts of a significant widening in this corridor and those impacts' effect on the financially constrained long range transportation plan, which have yet to be determined." We need more study, so why should we grant the Highway Department approval to go ahead with their expansionist plans at this time?

The staff recommendation says that "a recommendation to grant a waiver of the Freeway Design policy is explicitly not an endorsement of any roadway design proposals being considered in the NEPA process." But the Highway Department has thoroughly and obviously ignored the desire to restrict interstate expansion stated very clearly in *Imagine Central Arkansas* and the CARTS Roadway Design Policy. It has been clear to me from the very first public meeting I attended on this project that the Highway Department really wants to lay down more concrete, per their usual design philosophy. And according to commentary provided by Dale Pekar to the Federal Highway Administration based on documentation obtained from the Highway Department, they have been planning on adding lanes to I-30 since at least December, 2013. If we grant the Highway Department an exemption from this waiver, the last roadblock to an expansion to 10 lanes will be removed, and there will be no more need for the Department to consider any solution other than their 10-lane plan.

I have respect for the engineers at the Highway Department, who design and oversee the construction of safe bridges and roadways. But I completely disagree with the attitude of this Department, which has ignored the stated philosophy for transportation design within the Central Arkansas region, and which insists on continuing with an outdated and unsustainable transportation paradigm.

I hope this advisory council will recognize the weaknesses in the Highway Department's analyses, the need for additional study, and the understanding

that if we remove the cap, we will get whatever the Highway Department cares to build. I sincerely, earnestly hope the RPAC and the Metroplan Board vote to retain the six-lane cap.

Ms. Freasier: I have difficulty taking just a "yes" or "no" vote, because I don't feel I have enough information. But I do trust a lot of the people who have presented on this. My question is, if the Board votes to grant the waiver, even if Metroplan says that it's not supporting the project as it's currently being shown, have we really given the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department the go-ahead to lay down whatever it wants to build?

Mr. McKenzie: I can answer that. The project cannot move forward unless it is on the Transportation Improvement Program with federal Transportation Department money, period. And it can't be on the Transportation Improvement Program unless it's on the long-range metropolitan transportation plan. It is not on the plan now in a way that would allow it to move forward. So, there are two more steps after the waiver, that are "go/no go" steps.

Ms. Freasier: What you are saying to me, Mr. McKenzie, is that the monstrosities presented by the Highway Department - that Metroplan's stance is not to approve those plans as they have been presented?

Mr. McKenzie: That's not exactly what I said. The staff recommendation looks at the corridor and waiver request very, very narrowly, exclusive of the I-30 projects that are being currently considered in the NEPA. What we said is that the complexity of the corridor justifies a waiver. At the same time, we have from the very beginning, expressed to the Department and other parties, serious concerns about the system impacts of an expansion of the size that is being proposed on this key segment, and the impact that that will have on any required associated widenings, or any reasonably anticipated associated widenings, on the financially constrained plan. We've done a preliminary system impact analysis; we received some critique on that, and are awaiting modeling results to perform a final system impacts analysis. I am sure we will have an energetic discussion about what is reasonable to expect in terms of associated widenings and the impact on the financially constrained plan. Until we get all of the information in, then we're not prepared to make a recommendation one way or the other - to you or to the Metroplan Board - about steps 2 and 3 (Plan amendment and TIP amendment).

Mr. Stowe: Remember, we are not granting a waiver; we are only recommending to the Metroplan Board whether or not we want the waiver. It comes down to this: when we look at all the information we have, you can say "we stand by our plan, not willing to deviate at all", or "yes, I think in this case we should allow an exception". It's really very simple. I think we've beaten this thing to death for so long, we are starting to embarrass ourselves. The Metroplan Board will make a decision next week, regardless of what we do.

Mr. Finn: We have a certain degree of consensus, as indicated by the straw poll. I think we should vote, clear the slate, and move on to the likely next Motion.

Mr. Simms: At the July 20th meeting I attended, the two people who probably know more about this project than anyone else - Ben and Casey - made a very strong case for a waiver to eliminate bottlenecks. Everyone knows we need to improve this corridor.

Ms. Taylor: Are we voting on this Motion only, or are we voting on the larger question of the waiver? Will we have an opportunity to vote on the other options?

Mr. Cummings: Right now, we are voting on this Motion, which is a recommendation to grant a waiver on the I-30 project. If there is a need, we will vote on possible other Motions.

MOTION FAILED with three votes in favor, 20 votes opposed

MOTION by Mr. Stair

"To recommend against the waiver of the region's six through-lane policy for the I-30 Crossing Project. AHTD's request is premature given remaining questions about the project design and ongoing NEPA analysis. The request should be reconsidered at a later date, once additional information on the project is available, including an enhanced six-lane option developed by Metroplan staff in collaboration with the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, and other parties."

MOTION FAILED for lack of second

MOTION by Mr. Roda, second by Ms. Fraiser

"To recommend that the Metroplan Board of Directors deny the AHTD's request for waiver for the I-30 Crossing project."

Mr. Roda: This Motion is being put forth in order to clarify the first and indicate that the RPAC is opposed to the waiver.

Ms. Green asked that the following statement be entered into the record:

Anyone representing public transit cannot vote in support of an exemption to or repeal of the Metroplan policy on freeways and expressways, for several reasons:

Such a change creates even more disparity among transportation choices in the future than we currently have, tipping our region to invest even more heavily in cars and highways rather than in alternative modes of transportation, including transit. The 30 Crossing project would use a huge amount of limited resources, which means that if it moves forward as proposed, our region would miss out on other opportunities, like the investments outlined in the Imagine Central Arkansas plan, which has extensive public support.

Maintaining a balanced approach to transportation investment - investing in multiple modes of transportation to create and maintain choices - is a fundamental aspect of Metroplan's federally mandated responsibilities. Mr. Bennett's letter to Mayor Fletcher states that AHTD prefers that Metroplan repeal the entire freeway and expressway policy, paving the way not only for this one project but any and all freeway widening projects. This action will dictate how our cities develop for decades to come. The letter alludes to Metroplan's long-term plan investment strategy goals of equality of access and transportation choice being contrary to the policy of limiting freeway and expressways to six lane widths, but these goals (equality of access and transportation choice) are consistent with the current policy. Limited freeway expansion should provide more resources for alternate modes of transportation, which are used to ensure

that the young, the old, the poor and people with disabilities can have equality of access to transportation and that our citizens have true transportation choices.

Mr. Bennett's letter asserts that public transit and the factors that influence it, factors such as land use and development plans that would be heavily influenced by the 30 Crossing project, are of local concern only and not state concern. AHTD strategic plan objectives include "supporting and promoting intermodal transportation activities," and so we disagree that factors that influence the quality of public transit are not a state concern.

The AHTD letter also alludes to the lack of support for public transit investment from the voting public. I don't think coming up a little short during the first ballot initiative to fund public transit in 12 years means there is no support in our community for public transit investment. We are carrying almost 3 million rides per year - rides that are taking people to their jobs, education, health care appointments and daily activities. We enjoyed a tremendous amount of support for our public transit funding ballot initiative from several groups, including this committee, the Metroplan board of directors, area chambers of commerce and various associations - these groups and others understand the value of public transit to our local economy and understand the increasing value it has as the Boomer generation seeks communities where they can age in place and as younger generations seek communities with robust investment in alternate modes of transportation.

We need AHTD to join this group of transit champions and actively support more investment in our system. You can't sell tomorrow's dreams on today's limitations; you have to have vision. You can't presume cars will be the preferred choice of transportation 20 years from now, you can't presume no one wants to invest in public transit just because we central Arkansans are essentially forced to drive cars today in our unbalanced car culture infrastructure, and you can't presume Rock Region METRO won't be successful in gaining more funding, and therefore, greatly increase its appeal through the improvements in service that more investment brings. With the proper investment in public transit, we'll garner even more support for our plans to improve transit service. And, here's something we can predict: We know we will get more support, because we hear from riders, from school administrators, from elected officials, from major employers and from nonprofits every day regarding the need for more investment in our public transit system.

Finally, I would like to like to remind everyone that our community has a regional transportation vision, as set forth in the *Imagine Central Arkansas* plan, which was put together by and for our community and backed by this committee. An exemption to or repeal of Metroplan's policies on freeways and expressways does not support the *Imagine Central Arkansas* plan. I appreciate AHTD has completed a tremendous amount of work to vet their vision for 30 Crossing, and at the same time, it's clear a significant portion of the public has legitimate concerns with the existing 30 Crossing proposals. I'm confident we can work together to reach a solution that works best for all concerned.

MOTION PASSED with 20 votes in favor, three votes opposed and one abstention

Mr. Cummings: If those who voted to recommend the waiver wish to prepare a minority report to submit to the Metroplan Board, please coordinate with Mr. Covington.

5. Other Business

Mr. Cummings noted that copies of a letter from the AHTD to Little Rock Director Kathy Webb were being distributed to the RPAC. This is per request of the Coalition of Little Rock Neighborhoods and is provided in the interest of transparency.

No other business was brought forward.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 11:30 AM, on Wednesday, September 21st. Confirmation and meeting material will be sent at least one week prior to the date.

7. Adjourn

With no further business brought forward, the Chairman asked for motion to adjourn.

MOTION by Dr. Hampton, second by Ms. Green
"To adjourn."

Council adjourned at 1:22 PM.