

Regional Planning Advisory Council

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Minutes

RPAC Members Attending:

Name	Representing
Marcia Cook	City of Sherwood
Charles Cummings (Chair)	Freight/Goods Movement
Jill Dabbs	City of Bryant
Mason Ellis	Bicycle Advocacy of Central Arkansas (BACA)
Becca Green	Rock Region Metro
Sybil Hampton	City of Little Rock
Paul Hastings	City of Little Rock
Jeff Hathaway	Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce
Amy Heflin (nonvoting)	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Antonio Johnson (Alt.)	Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD)
Bob Lyford	City of Little Rock
Esperanza Massana	Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC)
Dan Roda	City of Little Rock
Carolyn Shearman (Alt.)	Sierra Club
Paul Simms	AHTD
Patrick Stair	Sierra Club
Jack Stowe	City of Maumelle
Tom Sutton	Clinton National Airport
Regina Taylor	Youth Development/Outreach
Dan Weathersby	Pulaski County
Amy Whitehead	City of Conway

Guests:

Marsha Guffey	Citizen
Jessie Jones	AHTD
Earl Mott	Garver
Shannon McCord	CAP - HNTB
Kelli Wylie	AHTD

Metroplan Staff:

Lynn Bell	Graphics Specialist
Casey Covington	CARTS Planning Director
Susan Dollar	Transportation Planner
Daniel Holland	Planner
Jonathan Lupton	Research Planner
Richard Magee	Deputy Director
Jim McKenzie	Executive Director

1. Call to Order and Announcements

Chairman Charles Cummings called the meeting to order at about 11: AM. The Council met at 501 W. Markham Street, Little Rock. The meeting was held in the Election Commission Training Room, 501 West Markham Street, Little Rock.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Council considered the Minutes of November 4, 2015, and January 20, 2016. Both sets were revised prior to the meeting, to correct minor typographical errors. There were no substantive changes to the text.

MOTION by Mr. Stair, second by Mr. Roda

"To accept the Minutes of November 4, 2015, and January 20, 2016, as corrected.

PASSED

3. Public Participation Plan (PPP)

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Metroplan is required to prepare and adopt a PPP. The first PPP was developed in 2008, and was updated in 2011; both received input and guidance from the RPAC (formerly the TAC). The PPP is due for a fairly significant update this year.

The council had been sent a working draft of the updated PPP. Ms. Dollar reviewed the requirements for the PPP, key documents, and changes since the 2011 update.

The presentation is posted to the RPAC website. Following is a summary of the presentation and discussion.

Two objectives are at the core of the PPP:

- (1) ensuring that groups with interest in transportation planning have a reasonable opportunity to sit at the table and have their interests represented; and
- (2) keeping the general public informed of the planning efforts in a timely and readily understood manner.

The RPAC fulfills the first objective. The second objective is met through eight policies that guide the provision of information and engagement with the general public.

Federal PPP requirements focus on "key documents", which MPOs are mandated to develop. Those documents include the following:

- Long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (LRMTP), which is the linchpin element of Imagine Central Arkansas;

- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which pulls projects from the LRMTTP for implementation;
- Annual List of Obligated Projects (ALOP), which lists projects and dollar amounts that have been obligated during the previous fiscal year;
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which itemizes and budgets the tasks to be undertaken by Metroplan and its partners during the State fiscal year;
- Title VI Program; and Self Evaluation and Transition Plan, is an inventory of Metroplan's facilities and meeting procedures, and if necessary, specifies remedies for shortcomings; and
- this Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Since 2011, changes in central Arkansas' demographics, new transportation legislation (FAST Act), and increased specificity in Title VI guidance, have led to expanded sections of the narrative. Ms. Dollar emphasized that more than changes in regulations for public engagements, there have been many changes in technology and techniques for eliciting public participation. The discussion of technology is kept general, because of its rapidly changing character; however, a compilation of technologies and techniques - low-tech to current high-tech - is included in the appendix.

Following is a summary of the comments and questions from the Council.

Mr. Roda: How often do we develop a Public Participation Plan? When was the update? Any significant changes?

Ms. Dollar: We update every few years, typically prior to beginning a plan update. The last update was in 2011, which is the version under which the long-range plan and ITP were developed.. Other than the relatively minor changes mentioned - Title VI/LEP, FAST Act - there are no significant changes. LEP - "Limited English Proficiency" must be addressed in the PPP as well as in the Title VI program.

Mr. Cummings: Can you highlight the changes from the previous plan?

Ms. Dollar: We can look at ways to do that - perhaps in the introduction.

Mr. Roda: Does it account for social media, technology changes?

Ms. Dollar: Yes, definitely. However, the discussion of technology is kept general, because of its rapidly changing character; however, a compilation of technologies and techniques - low-tech to current high-tech - is included in the appendix.

Mr. Stair: Maybe we could use sidebars to describe change from previous plans instead of in document highlights.

Ms. Dollar: That is a very good idea. We actually did that in the 2008 update - we bracketed the new language. We could do that, or include a subsection as part of the introduction. We should certainly explain changes in the previous PPP to the reader.

Mr. Cummings: This document is important, and is foundational to the work of the Council. I encourage you to read it and email questions and comments to Susan.

Ms. Whitehead: What is RPAC's role in executing the PPP?

Ms. Dollar: Portions of the PPP apply directly to the RPAC's role in eliciting public engagement in matters relating to *Imagine Central Arkansas*. For the overall PPP, your role as stakeholders in the regional planning process is to provide feedback and guidance. Also, as people who not involved in the day-to-day world of professional planning, you will be more sensitive to jargon that would be confusing or off-putting to the average reader.

Mr. Cummings: That is a good point. We want to make it easy to read for outsiders and those not involved in the process.

Ms. Green: What have been your biggest challenges for communicating the plan? Public Education of the Plan?

Ms. Dollar: We constantly seek that balance between providing information and educating the public on issues - without "preaching" or directing. One way we have dealt with that is to ask the public, "What bothers you the most?" and "What do you like about [fill in the blank]?" Another challenge for us is reaching underserved communities, those who have historically been ignored or ill-served. Over the years, we have learned to go directly to the people we want to engage. For example Latinos are not responsive to typical venues, so we went to St. Edward's on a Sunday and talked to people after Mass. We have had good results and I am proud of the efforts that RPAC has made in engaging all of the region's population.

Mr. Lyford: How do those deadlines (discussed on a slide in the presentation) fit into the I-30 time frame?

Ms. Dollar: They will not impact the ongoing I-30 project discussion.

Dr. Hampton: What about Asian Americans? Perhaps we should expand the meaning of LEPs.

Ms. Dollar: Yes. Central Arkansas is becoming a mosaic of ethnicities. For federal purposes, the Latino population - because of its numbers - is the only group that we

are required to address. Some MPOs, such as those in California and New York, must accommodate many more languages spoken by residents! However, Metroplan would absolutely provide assistance to any person of any ethnicity or language who requested information or had a question about our work.

Mr. Magee: I agree. This past weekend, my wife and I attended a party hosted by Bengalis. There are many more internationals in central Arkansas than we think. Bengalis, for example, are forming a community here; it's small for now, but in the coming years, who knows?

Mr. Cummings: Thank you. Again, this is an important document and is part of the work we do. Get your comments to Susan by the end of the month.

4. How Did the Six-lane Roadway Policy Originate?

At the request of the Council at its previous meeting, Mr. Richard Magee prepared a report on the origin and evolution of Metroplan's policy to cap freeway widening at six lanes.

The following summary is not a verbatim transcription, but does closely adhere to the presentation and ensuing discussion.

Mr. Magee's presentation:

How do you talk about such a broad subject as "How did the six-lane roadway policy originate?" First, I'll have to go through a lot of history, but it is important for your understanding of how our policies evolved.

It begins with METRO 2020, adopted in 1995. This was significant, because it was the first transportation plan developed by Metroplan after passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). As Susan mentioned in her presentation, a key provision of ISTEA was the requirement for "early and meaningful" public involvement. It wasn't the Metroplan didn't already do public involvement, but ISTEA put public involvement at the front end of the process, and at key decision points in the development of plans. At Metroplan, our challenge was how to involve people in long-range planning? Unlike short-term development issues that get everybody excited, long-range planning takes the long view, and that is something most people don't have time for, and often don't see the relevance of in their daily lives. Key regional policies were born out of those early discussions to address this broad based public involvement: (1) New, internal processes created the TAC, now RPAC. The objective was to involve at a sustaining level both stakeholders and citizens. You are a result of that process. (2) Metroplan commissioned a video describing ISTEA and the new process. Jim was featured in the video; local celebrity Steve Barnes narrated it. (3) TV and radio spots were also used in getting the message out.

With much accompanying publicity, Metroplan initiated the Visual Preference Survey, or VPS. This was a new idea in 1992! In fact, Metroplan got blasted because the VPS was not a scientific process. *It was never intended to be scientific survey.* It was a way to engage people who had theretofore been uninterested or did not understand the planning process. And it was very successful in doing that. The VPS asked, "How do you want your community to look, in terms of transportation?" We showed a series of 250 slides that depicted elements of different communities - urban, suburban, rural - and asked people to rank each individual image from a minus one to minus ten ("We really hate this!"), or a positive one to positive ten ("We really like this!"). We asked them to score the image according to (1) how well they like the image, and (2) how well that element might fit into their own community - *is it appropriate for our community?* There was an accompanying written questionnaire form that we asked people to complete, and which provided additional data.

Over a three-month period, from November 1992 to January 1993, and 35 public meetings, over 900 people showed up to take the VPS. Results of the VPS and the questionnaire were summarized and grouped into three categories: small town/rural; suburban; large city/urban. Metroplan paid for 225,000 newspaper inserts that described the previous three-month VPS, presented the scores, and showed how those preferences might be applied in our metropolitan area. Based on the VPS and questionnaire, the consulting team prepared a vision of the area. Based on the VPS and questionnaire, the consulting team prepared a vision of the area.

Mr. Magee then played a short video clip, in which planning consultant Tony Nelessen explained how the VPS worked and in the case of North Little Rock, described that city's downtown as "pathetic". Mr. Magee continued: When Tony uttered the word "pathetic" there was an audible gasp in the room, the air was sucked out of the room - that someone had dared call one of our metropolitan jurisdictions "pathetic". But it was true, and hearing it from an outsider and seeing statement backed up by the VPS score, proved to be one of the galvanizing factors that has turned North Little Rock around.

The collective vision of the people surveyed in those VPS meetings nailed it. Every plan update since then has reinforced and confirmed the vision - whether from urban areas, suburban or rural. [Mr. Magee played a short audio clip in which Mr. Nelessen explained that good plans start with a vision, and the planning follows. Plan with the vision in mind. While we deal with complex issues, the public wants to participate because it is their community. The VPS is a way to elicit meaningful involvement. Mr. Nelessen stated, "We believe communities have a right to determine its physical character. These should not be left to engineering standards."] All of the pieces of information collected in the VPS helped create a vision and direction. What is the vision you want to see fulfilled for our region? It wasn't, "What transportation do you want for our region?" It was, how do you want

our region to look and function? If you look at the region over the past 20 years, you will see that many aspects of that vision has come to pass.

The TAC took the information from the VPS and over a period of many weeks - I'm looking at Charles here, because he was on that first TAC - and much debate hammered out the vision statement that we are still operating under today. This committee literally beat every word of this vision statement, knowing its importance. "The Metropolitan Transportation Plan will contribute to a more livable and efficient environment in central Arkansas. This Plan should significantly change how we are presently allowing our transportation systems and our communities to develop by defining an intermodal transportation system that: Maximizes the mobility of people and goods; Minimizes transportation related fuel consumption and air pollution; and, Establishes a strong link between the provision of transportation facilities and how we use our land." That last part - "Establishes a strong link between the provision of transportation facilities and how we use our land" is especially critical to implementing the vision. This is not a transportation-versus-land-use, it's connecting the two. But how do you make that happen?

One of the first things we did was adopt standards for roadway cross sections. A cross section is a way of showing what the road will look like. You cut the road [d like a piece of cake to show, "this is what it's going to look like and it will have these elements." We developed cross section standards for each type of road in central Arkansas. They were tied to plan (1) to link land use and transportation; and (2) to address the issue of plan implementation between Metroplan and cities. Metroplan's long-range plans have a time horizon of 20-25 years; cities adopt a Master Street Plan, with no time frame. Typical cross-sections in a city Master Street Plan show a maximum build-out of three lanes for principal arterial roads. Using that and the generous right-of-way typically available as a base, we included accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles in the cross-sections. So, sidewalks were included as a critical feature in the design and construction of roadways, not retro-fitted at a later date. There were other components that were adopted, as well: access management, the policy relating to continuous center turn lanes. But the build-out design of three travel lanes in each direction became the norm. That was the first time land use and transportation were linked in a central Arkansas plan.

Metroplan developed specific land use recommendations to further tie the two together, transportation and land. Now, Metroplan does not have land use authority, nor does AHTD. Cities do. But Metroplan developed the recommendations and encouraged cities to adopt them. Staff has assisted cities in adapting the land use recommendations to their own policies.

So while steps were taken toward the six-lane policy, the term "six lane policy" was never actually used in that first plan. Metro 2025, five years later, did use the term Six Lane Policy. Metro 2025 built on the foundation of Metro 2020. Metro 2025 reaffirms the vision and goals, and objectives were added to actually implement

those goals. It took us five years to drill down and figure out how we could implement these. Also for the first time, a bicycle element was added. We had wanted to include bikes in 2020, but simply ran out of time. As part of Metro 2025, and to clarify and tie the issues of transportation, land use and funding together, a 682-mile Regional Arterial Network (RAN) was delineated. If you look at Metro 2020, it clearly states that we don't have enough money to maintain what's already on the ground. The purpose of the Regional Arterial Network was to target resources more efficiently into a limited system and to move traffic onto a more usable arterial system. It was at that point that the term Six Lane Policy was put into writing, in the Metro 2025. The concept was included and expanded. This was critical to tying, land use, transportation and financial resources together.

Metro 2025 looked at different modes, as well. In Metro 2020, literally every community asked us for one thing, and that was to use the rail lines for commuter rails. We were stunned, just blew us away, that even small towns wanted that element. Metro 2020 included that information, and Metro 2025 actually addressed it with rail studies- which corridors would be more appropriate for rail, or BRT. We completed the bus transfer center, and assisted communities with their local bike plans, because until then none of the cities had bike plans, none. We did a pedestrian inventory, as well. Adoption of a sidewalk policy meant that Metroplan would not fund, would not use federal money to fund, a roadway that did not include those elements. Tying these things together, because local cities had abandoned the policy of building sidewalks in subdivisions, of requiring dedicated sidewalks in new developments, which is why the subdivisions in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s don't have sidewalks. This Metro 2025 policy triggered cities to reinstitute the sidewalk requirement in their subdivision regulations. We wouldn't fund sidewalks if cities were not going to build them also. Again, tying transportation and land use. Why are sidewalks important? Because if you don't have sidewalks, you can't build a transit system, because you can't walk to the transit stops. It's not about roadways, it's not about transit, it's about a balance.

The other thing that came out of Metro 2025, other than the issue of commuter rail, concerned rail traffic - NAFTA had just passed, and so many communities are bisected by rail lines, and the number of trains going through had increased dramatically - and people were concerned, one, about delays in crossing tracks, and two, about the safety of the at-grade rails. As a result of public comment, staff evaluated more than 300 rail-grade crossings, narrowed the list to twelve critical at-grade crossings and the Metroplan Board committed to actually building separations, overpasses at those twelve crossings. Today, we have two left to complete, and should be in the next TIP list. This came about as a result of early and meaningful public participation. [Mr. Magee showed a map depicting the rail grade crossings.](#)

Funding. Metroplan updated its funding, and because of the RAN, tried to target funds to that important network. So we split our funds, keeping 70 percent for

regionally significant projects, and allocating the other 30 percent to our member jurisdictions, based on a population formula. That helped them build some of their needed projects. The citizen comment period was extended to 60 days, staff outreach was extensive, going to cafes and libraries and stores to drop off flyers and posters, and speaking to a wide range of organizations and groups, trying to hit minority areas. We paid for newspaper inserts, as we had in Metro 2020, to reach even more people. the number who attended a meeting? Only 190. It's hard to engage people on long-range planning, but as we continue to reach out to people, those numbers increased and are increasing today, because people's expectations are nourished. Still, we did get some engaged people. Here is one response I'd like to read: "*I definitely like the idea of developing of quality transportation corridors*".

Next five years: Metro 2030, adopted in 2005. Again, an evolving process from the previous two plans, it retained the previous policies and implementation strategies while setting forth some new directions. Metro 2030 went beyond the required 20 year plan horizon. Because of this committee, which is responsible for public participation in the long-range planning process, the public involvement process expanded. Major forums were included, we saw numbers increase. The questions we asked were more detailed, how we asked was varied, and where the forums occurred was varied. Like Susan said, we are much more engaged in going to where the people are, instead of asking them to come to us.

So, back to the six lane policy. Did we ever specifically ask the public what they thought of the policy? Well, we asked this: *To what degree to accept the plan's strategies? Build the freeway system to six through lanes region-wide and meet demand above that with a robust regional arterial network and with public transit.* We specifically asked those questions. It was never a case of people not understanding, or of something being hidden. Again, we did not receive many negative comment on this; in fact, most were very supportive. Metro 203 explicitly stated this.

I want to highlight that the plan states, "region-wide". Because of issues of freight, and of safety, this Committee recommended the policy of widening to six through lanes be extend throughout the region. That is why the widenings that took place to Conway, to Benton, and now to Jacksonville and Cabot, were built when they were, within the Plan's vision because of capacity, safety and freight, Everybody was fully on board with widening the freeways. The issue was never about whether to widen freeways; the issue was tying the elements together and when it was appropriate to widen.

Also, the transit vision was to double its service in the short term, and expand to fixed guideway in the future - BRT, rail, or whatever was determined most effective. The plan was to make sure that the existing bus system was operating at its best capacity, that we were squeezing as much capacity as possible out of our regional arterials, get much as we can out of intersection improvements, signal

improvements, and access management before we start widening. It wasn't because we didn't need to widen - it was because we didn't have the money to widen. Every one of these plans explicitly states that we don't have enough money to maintain what is already on the ground. So, we chose to take some resources to widen, but also to invest in maintenance and lower-cost, efficient projects. Intermodal connections, freight mobility - the rail grade separations were also tied to freight mobility - provide non-freeway alternatives to local traffic, and making bike travel a viable option, by integrating bikeways into the transportation system.

Metro 2030.2 was the next five-year iteration of the plan. Why point-two? If you remember, federal legislation was delayed - Congress kept kicking the can down the road. Since there were not a lot of major revisions to 2030, we made minor revisions, updated the demographic data, and added a few new elements: transportation and public health, and safety. Metro 2030.2 was financially constrained in a more rigorous way than previous plans. The language pertaining to the six lane policy - *Build the freeway system to six through lanes region-wide and meet demand above that with a robust regional arterial network and with public transit* - was included verbatim in the Point-Two plan. But what if unique circumstances indicate a need to go beyond six lanes? To address that question, the Board adopted Metro 2030.2 with this added proviso: If there's a need to construct more than six through lanes, studies should be done - and reserving the right for the Board to conduct its own independent study - and if everyone agrees that additional lanes are called for, then at the Board's discretion the six-lane policy may be waived for a specific project. This basically set the framework that we are operating under now for the I-30 Crossing project.

And now we come to *Imagine Central Arkansas*. Adopted in 2014, an entirely new plan, emphasizing sustainability. It wasn't that earlier plans ignored these other issues that are related to transportation, but this plan allowed us to address these issues and tie them together (with land use) into the broader context of metropolitan transportation planning. *Imagine Central Arkansas* is based on the same vision and principles as in previous plans, but had a much more expansive public involvement process. You guys asked us to do so many more things! *Imagine Central Arkansas* was the most vetted plan in our history. Because you, the RPAC, said, we're building this system for the future generations, we went to young people - to E-Stem, to Boys & Girls Clubs, to many venues, events and spoke to many organizations and groups. This was the first time we involved the youth, and also the first time we seriously involved the Latino community. We reached more minority groups than ever before. As Susan said, we used everything from white boards, which everybody loved, to every kind of social media. Remember the 190 that attended the Metro 2020 meetings? Now, we were looking at numbers in the thousands, using all of the different outreach tools. [\[Mr. Magee reviewed the various techniques that were used.\]](#) Part of this public turnout was because of the new technologies that were used, but I think another part was that people were starting to see changes in their region and were becoming invested in their region.

I want to end on this note. As I thought about this process that evolved over the years, I thought: Imagine if Metro 2020 had never been adopted. In my opinion, this would be the result:

- No rail-grade separations (no new separations) in this metropolitan area
- No Big Dam Bridge
- No Two Rivers Bridge
- No Arkansas River Trail system
- No White Oak Bayou Bridge
- No River Rail Trolley
- No Jimmerson Creek Bridge
- Reduced River Market District
- Greatly reduced sidewalk coverage
- No pedestrian bridges downtown
- No bike trails, no bike lanes, no bike routes, no bike racks on buses
- A less-than-new Rock Region bus fleet
- No short- or long-term transit plan for Rock Region
- No median divided roadways in our metropolitan area. Prior to Metro 2020, there was only one, Maumelle Boulevard. Since then, we have Dave Ward Drive, Military, Alcoa . . .
- No roundabouts
- Reduced residential development downtown
- No revitalized Argenta district
- No access managed roadways

All of those things came about as a result of Metro 2020 and its successor plans. I can honestly say that Metroplan either directly funded or was directly involved in making those things happen. Not that Metroplan was the sole player in this - everybody worked together to achieve that common vision. When Tony Nelessen said that word, "pathetic" about downtown North Little Rock, it galvanized people to say, we don't have to accept this anymore. So, I'm retiring this year. One thing I will go to my grave with is the pride I take in knowing that without Metro 2020, this area would look dramatically different. I'm not saying this because of what I did; it's because of what you did. This committee had the vision to keep pushing when nobody else was willing to push. I am glad for my grandkids that the RPAC did push.

People ask me, how do you now that the plan will be implemented? My answer is always this: Unless you keep the politicians - our elected officials - keep their feet to the fire, our vision will never go anywhere. There's a Biblical verse, "Without a vision, the people perish". Thank goodness, this RPAC set forth a vision that the public really demanded. It wasn't that the committee just thought of those things - the six lane policy, bike lanes, arterials rail grade separations - it was the result of early and meaningful public involvement.

the six lane policy was never intended as a be-all do-all policy. It was the opposite: recognizing the limited resources and seeking a balance of choices. What came through the public outreach, crystal clear, was the demand to preserve our open spaces, parks and greenways. Just the other day, one of the international students I know said, "It's like living in a park here. I've never seen so many trees." Central Arkansans value that, love of the outdoors. Tying land use and transportation was key to maintaining those values.

I hope I've answered most of your questions about how the policy came about.

[Conclusion of Mr. Magee's presentation.]

Following is a summary of remarks from the Council. Although not a verbatim transcription, it does closely follow the discussion.

Mr. Stowe: Richard, you made a couple of statements that I question. You said that everybody was fully on board with the process. Now I didn't come here until 2002, but since I've been here, it was brought up again, and it was pretty contentious. We voted on it and it didn't win by a large margin. We didn't vote on actually doing away with the policy. The part that you showed, where if you need more than six lanes you can go through this process, well that actually came up while I've been here, too. So there was a little contention. You've also said there were no negative comments on that. But there were some people who were adamant about doing away with it. Since I've been here the only thing that has changed [gone beyond the six-lanes] is the Big Rock Interchange. And I think that's what we're coming up to with the I-30 section. It's not that six lanes are bad or good, it's that that section of roadway is unique. I-40 by Maumelle, will never go beyond six lanes, but downtown is a different kind of travel pattern

Mr. Magee: Discussion among the RPAC (and the previous TAC) has always been animated, and at times it has been intense, with many perspectives debated. But that is how you all have reached consensus. But, yes, I would never state that there has been no debate.

Ms. Whitehead: So I've heard several times that we can't afford to maintain what we already have. How can we justify continued expansion beyond the six lanes policy that we have now. That's what I'm trying to understand. For me, it's a financial consideration - it's a major disconnect.

Mr. Magee: Every plan identifies resources and costs for projects, including maintenance. What's the cost of maintaining existing system. The Highway Department says this, too - we have more miles than we can maintain. There's only two ways we can deal with this: either decrease the system - take the miles off - or in fact get new revenue - or I guess you can let it turn to dirt. When adopting the financially constrained plan, the Board said in effect, we recognize that fact, but are still willing to build some additional capacity. It's a trade-off, whether consciously or not.

Ms. Whitehead: So we're saying that we recognize we are going to let some parts of the system go - turn them back to city, or ignore or whatever?

Mr. McKenzie: A couple of old sayings. One is, you can't take politics out of politics. and brokering a finite amount of resources against an infinite list of needs, is a political decision. The other saying is, you don't have ribbon cuttings when you fill a pothole. And so maintenance is always easy to cut when the political opportunity to add capacity presents itself. An example of this is in the proposed STIP the AHTD has just put out. For the first time in years, the STIP shows a significant increase in system preservation and maintenance. But it's a year late. This is speculation, but I think it's because there's been a wrestling match with the Highway Commissioners - with commissioners who like to do ribbon cuttings, and who have legitimate capacity needs in their areas.

Mr. Magee: I have friends who ask me why roads are fixed, why there are potholes. There's no free lunch, guys. You either have to raise taxes, or say no, we don't want that. We're not politicians, and neither is the RPAC. We have consistently recommended that more money be put into maintenance.

Mr. Cummings: Let's take it one step further. If the ten lanes goes in as proposed, what are the financial repercussions on the current financially constrained long-range plan?

Mr. Magee: We are wrestling with that now. When we start a plan, the AHTD gives us a fund mark, of how much money they anticipate spending within the region over the next twenty years. We use that figure as a base. So with regard to I-3, either you say there's not enough money to do the other projects we have specified in the constrained plan, and reallocate those funds to the I-30 project; or, ultimately, unless you can identify new moneys wherever they are coming from, you're in fact trading future years for now.

Mr. Covington: The change in the plan, the challenge is what it means outside of I-30 corridor. What do you do on I-630? What do you do on the ancillary corridors. Are we going to let those corridors get completely congested or will there be enough political pressure to say you've got widen those as well - which takes more resources from the constrained plan and means fewer of the projects that are in the constrained plan now.

Ms. Taylor: When were the 2020 and 2025 adopted? And when is the next update due?

Mr. Magee: METRO 2020 was adopted in 1995, and METRO 2025 was adopted in 2000. The update to *Imagine Central Arkansas* will be due in 2019; however, staff and RPAC will begin to work on the update next year. It takes about two and a half years.

Mr. Roda: By my count, this is the third consecutive RPAC meeting in which where we have discussed this request to widen the roadway. To my knowledge we haven't receive a request, have we? Do we have any further information on when that will

happen? We were told at the last meeting that it would be forthcoming. Where do we stand on that?

Ms. Wylie: We actually have that letter drafted, but Scott Bennett wanted to be able to present something to the RPAC that on which could approve. So right now we have different alternatives out there - eight lanes or ten lanes - so we hopefully will get that on to a draft EA that timeframe then we will be able to come to you.

Mr. Sutton: First a comment: That was a terrific presentation. I wish a broader portion of the community could see that. I think we've learned that the vision has not changed significantly. And I want to commend the Council - those who were on the Council for a long time - on their courage years ago. Tremendous process. Many, many communities would envy this process, and also the product that came out of it.

I want to ask Casey about the Parkway/Boulevard option. Have you make any progress on looking at that option?

Mr. Covington: I have, and I'd be happy to discuss it with you or anyone. I don't want to muddy the water today with that option, but we can discuss it at the next meeting or individually.

Mr. Sutton: The most troubling thing about the ten/twelve lane over the river option is, as Casey has outlined, the financial implications. I really don't think it's responsible to look at that narrow corridor and realize that the implications of that are another \$4.5 billion dollars of additional roadway widening throughout the region. We need to seriously consider that before we vote on a ten lane option. I don't see that being considered much beyond this room.

The vision that has been presented is a more balanced transportation system. How can we set a course for spending \$4.5 billion dollars on a transportation system that's intended to move people between communities and which is a direction which we hopefully learned from the 1970s is not helpful to the urban core, and will suck the life out of the urban core, creating the hole in the doughnut that has occurred in so many other cities in America. When are we really going to get serious about considering the long range implications of this proposed project?

Mr. Magee: That is your charged as the Advisory Council. It's your job to look at those long range implications, not just on this project but any project that comes before you.

Mr. Sutton: So we have no option from the Arkansas State Highway Commission for a six lane option, which is more in line with the vision that this community has set forth for this community?

Mr. Magee: I think they are looking at some other options.

Ms. Wylie: With 30 Crossing itself, six lane reconstruction of the bridge is not part of this project.

Mr. Lyford: So the project will be either eight-lane or 10-lane?

Ms. Wylie: Correct.

Mr. Daniel Holland: Just for clarification, is the Highway Department saying that it has eliminated all consideration of the six-lane option?

Ms. Wylie: Correct.

Dr. Hampton: Thank you for your presentation. How do we have a decision from the Highway Department that comes to Metroplan at the end with a project with such implications for the future? I am really struck by the fact that an early and meaningful public involvement and discussion from the beginning is missing from this process. The assumption that the Highway Department makes about centrality in decision making that I find unsettling. You present us with either eight or ten lanes. Children do this to parents: they set them up. When you do all the work to develop a plan that what you [AHTD] are saying is that Metroplan is something that we are engaged in because it is a federal requirement - wink, wink - and so the time and energy of citizens like myself is farcical and are being here and all the things we did to engage the community in a process that supposedly informs the process and decision making is irrelevant. This has kept me awake at night. The question I have as a citizen is, why would I volunteer to be in a process in which a major department treats the people involved in the process as if they really are pimple on the rear end of progress.

Mr. Cummings: Good comment, Sybil.

Mr. Sutton: I understand your frustration, Dr. Hampton. I am encouraged by Richard's presentation. I've seen the product of this process, and I remain optimistic that it works. Specifically, as I understand the facts - and please correct me if I'm wrong, transportation guys - we are committing to a \$4.5 billion dollar expenditure on freeways that will produce four-tenths of a mile increase in the in speed of traffic this corridor at peak times. Am I wrong about that?

Mr. Covington: The state will debate me on the \$4.5 billion figure; they will say it's more closer to three or three-and-a half billion, but it's definitely a multi-billion dollar proposition. And if we build to AHTD standard, we will easily spend at least that much. The four-tenths mile applies to widening only the I-30 project. Region-wide

Mr. Sutton: Okay, so unless you spend the additional 3.5 or 4.5 billion on the entire system you'll only achieve a four-tenths of a mile increase in the speed of traffic on that corridor at peak times. Is that correct?

Mr. Covington: That's average over a day.

Mr. Sutton: Then, I'm sorry. This is a no-brainer for me.

Ms. Whitehead: I represent the City of Conway. As the I-30 project has progressed, there has been talk about what it means to the region and to the Conway. We shouldn't be building our thoroughfares just to serve people who don't live in the core area. I understand that, and I also represent people, many of whom do commute to the Little Rock-North Little Rock core. But we also have a vision that was expressed in the plan, and which people in Conway embraced, that we would also have a form of rapid transit. If the ten lane option is adopted, that will be the nail in the coffin for rapid transit, and it will never happen within my lifetime. We will never have any meaningful transit system that serves Conway in my lifetime.

And here is an interesting side note. I was watching 60 Minutes last week, and the aerial shot of Los Angeles ten-lane freeway was shown. Los Angeles has a population of something like 17 million. My husband pressed the pause and said, "This is what they want to build in Little Rock?" That's what ten lanes look like. Mammoth.

Mr. Roda: We are getting a tiny bit ahead of ourselves in that we do not have a request before us and that is actionable. I do think that's something we need to keep in mind. We've discussed this for three meetings in a row now, and there are people who are obviously very passionate about this, myself included. Things I want to bring back to everybody's attention. Casey, you presented your more detailed analysis of the ripple effects of the project, and, when we have an actionable request before us, we need to have that analysis to put alongside it and compare. I've forgotten most of the data you presented except for the larger conclusions I've drawn from it.

Mr. McKenzie: Let me try to address something that Tom and Kelly have alluded to. The original project had a target date of mid-summer for a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI). Because of all the extra study the Department has had to go through and because of all of the additional outreach to the local stakeholders to arrive at a win-win alternative - that schedule has been pushed back by about six months. The FONSI date is now expected around the end of the year; so, we have more time than we thought we had. Once we get the draft Environmental Assessment at the end of the NEPA process, then we'll have more information, we will have a formal letter of request and will be able to better analyze exactly what is being proposed. Things will be compressed at the end of the year. We would like to bring these issues to you a little at a time, instead fire-hosing you with it all at once. We can deal with things in a more deliberative fashion that way.

Mr. Lyford: When you set out those dates, is there any kind of ultimate drop-dead date that must be considered?

Mr. McKenzie: I'm not aware of anything. Most of the funds do not have the time-out that federal funds do. At some point in time the Highway Commission might say, well, we've been fiddling with this project for five years and we need to move on. But hopefully, the objective that everybody has is for a beneficial project that will serve the needs of everybody. We're going to do our best to make sure the process moves along apace, but we want adequate time for public input, and we want to answer your questions. In order to do that, we are feeding you information as we get it, and if you have additional questions, we will answer those for you, too.

Mr. Cummings: Thank you, Jim. Let's wind this up with one last comment.

Ms. Shearman: One of the slides that Richard showed us was about the process for determining the need for additional lanes. It said that prior to widening beyond six lanes, an analysis would be done of the regional arterial network and other alternatives. Has that done or will it be done?

Mr. McKenzie: I think a lot of those issues were dealt with in the PEL process. You could argue that it wasn't adequate, but the other side of the argument is that, yes, we looked at those alternatives and they were rejected. As part of the NEPA process, additional studies are going on regarding impact on local street grid, and a lot of negotiation - and I mean, a lot of negotiation - with the cities of Little Rock and North Little Rock. That is a moving target right now, and we should expect that, because this is a very large project in a complicated corridor.

Ms. Green: Just one more comment, to piggyback on what has been said. The critical thing is a thorough analysis for meeting demand. Any analysis done is probably on the demand for today, and not with consideration for future alternatives, including technology and a more expansive transit system, changes in policy. You really have to consider where the analysis is coming from. Clear to me, from Richard's presentation - which was excellent - you have to have vision to get to this place. And vision has to take possibilities into account, not just the here and now.

Mr. Cummings: We do appreciate staff's work on this. We've had a large turnover on this Council since those early days. It was my privilege to be a part of that Visual Preference Survey. The most exciting thing - and Sybil touched on this - is how that vision has held up over the years. That speaks to our credibility. In those early years, we wondered, will this really be implemented? And we see that has, and I'm real proud of that, and I am also proud of our public participation process. The public as driven where we are, and it is our responsibility to get this implemented for our kids and our grandkids. We do thank each of you for your time and effort in this. We appreciate all the staff, and Richard for hours of research that went into his presentation to us today. Over the next several meetings as we look at more information, as Jim indicated, we will get deeper into this issue. We can make a good decision that is in keeping with the public will and with the plan.

Mr. Covington: We'll send out information on the next meeting. At our next meeting, we will get into a discussion of the boulevard option.

5. Other Business and Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is set for Wednesday, March 16, 2016. Confirmation, preliminary agenda and related material will be emailed to the Council prior to the meeting.

No other business was brought forward.

6. Adjourn

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

MOTION by Ms. Whitehead, second by Mr. Roda

"To adjourn."

PASSED

The Council adjourned at 1:28 PM.