

**Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area
Metropolitan Planning Organization
755 Roanoke Street
Christiansburg, VA 24073**

Minutes

December 1, 2011

PRESENT:	Craig Meadows	-Montgomery County
	Anne McClung	-Town of Blacksburg
	Krishna Chachra	-Town of Blacksburg
	Richard Ballengee	-Town of Christiansburg
	Adam Carpenetti	-Town of Christiansburg
	Doug Marrs	-Montgomery County
	Richard Caywood	-VDoT (Salem)
	Kevin Byrd	-NRV Planning District Commission
	Steve Mouras	-Virginia Tech
	Becky Martin	-Blacksburg Transit
	Michael St. Jean	-VA Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport Authority
	Dan Brugh	-BCMA MPO
	Randal Gwinn	-Recording Secretary
ABSENT:	Tony Cho	-Federal Transit Administration-Region 111
	Jeff Sizemore	-VA Department of Rail and Public Transportation
	Tammye Davis	-FhWA

DECLARATION OF QUORUM AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Craig Meadows declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 2 P.M.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Craig asked for comments on the proposed agenda. Hearing none he called for a motion to approve the agenda.

On a motion by Doug Marrs, seconded by Anne McClung and carried unanimously, the agenda dated December 1, 2011 was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 4, 2011

Craig asked for comments on the meeting minutes from the August 4th Policy Board meeting. Hearing none he called for a motion to approve the minutes.

On a motion by Richard Ballengee, seconded by Anne McClung and carried unanimously, the minutes dated August 4, 2011 were approved.

PUBLIC ADDRESS

There were no public speakers seeking to address the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

There were no items of old business needing action.

NEW BUSINESS

Acceptance of the Final Report for the Regional Transit Organization Analysis (RTO) –

Dan summarized the joint RTO study. This was a joint study done by the MPO and the New River Valley Planning District Commission, funded 50% by each, to evaluate long term organizational models for public transit within the MPO and PDC. The PDC set up a regional stakeholder committee to provide input and facilitate conducting this study. The study is complete and reveals that further actions are limited for our area due to laws concerning who can participate in regional entities. We have two large universities heavily involved in our transit service which imposes limits on what we can do. It is recommended that we keep the regional stakeholder group together to continue monitoring transit expansion in the area as we may someday need to establish a regional entity. Meanwhile transit service coordination is underway and room for improvement exists. Both VDoT and DRPT returned positive feedback on the study and have accepted the findings. The TAC has also reviewed and recommends acceptance of the Study.

Discussion followed, specifically concerning formation of a regional transit coordinating council as recommended in the Study's conclusion. Initial plans are to form a council group larger than the initial seventeen member study group and task them with conducting a coordinated effort to create a better regional transit plan. This council would be advisory only, not empowered to take actions, and would meet quarterly in conjunction with the Rural TAC meetings.

Following the discussion Richard Ballengee recommended changing the wording on page 31 of the final report from "determine" to "recommend". Craig asked for a motion to approve acceptance of the final report with the requested change.

On a motion by Richard Ballengee, seconded by Doug Marrs and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, The BCM MPO participated in a joint study with the New River Valley Planning District Commission (NRVPDC) to conduct a study and analyze different types of regional transit organization structures; and

WHEREAS, VDoT and VDRPT concurred in this study, and

WHEREAS, the NRVPDC conducted this study and has developed a final report, and

WHEREAS, this study was done with the input of a regional stakeholders committee and

WHEREAS, both VDOT and VDRPT have reviewed the Final Report and concur, and

WHEREAS, the TAC has reviewed the Final Report and recommends approval.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

The Policy Board accepts the Final Report of a Regional Transit Organization Study; and

FURTHER, that it authorizes the Executive Director to send this completed study to VDOT and VDRPT.

Craig Meadows, Chairman

Acceptance of the 2011-2012 Transit Development Plan (TDP) for Blacksburg Transit –

Dan presented an overview of the TDP. The plan was developed for Blacksburg Transit by a consultant hired by VDRPT. VDRPT now requires all transit agencies to have a fiscally constrained transit development plan. This plan outlines the facility and transit service needs in the area and provides a constrained plan for capital and operational needs for the next six years. Nothing in the plan is required, its purpose is to state what is desired going forward and serve as a reference to work from. Meetings were held with all localities during plan development and Blacksburg Town Council has approved the TDP. The TAC has also reviewed and recommends acceptance of the plan.

Becky spoke briefly about the efforts expended by the regional working group involved in development of the plan and stated that she viewed it as a really good report to work from. Steve also stated that it is a quality study.

There being no further discussion, Craig called for a motion to accept the 2011-2012 Transit Development Plan for Blacksburg Transit.

On a motion by Anne McClung, seconded by Krisha Chachra and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, VDRPT, through a consultant has developed a 2011-2017 Transit Development Plan (TDP) for Blacksburg Transit which outlines operational and capital needs for the next six years for this area; and

WHEREAS, local governments provided input in the development of the TDP, and

WHEREAS, the TAC has reviewed the Final Report and recommends acceptance.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

The Policy Board accepts the 2011-2017 Transit Development Plan (TDP); and

FURTHER, that it authorizes the Executive Director to send this completed study to VDRPT.

Craig Meadows, Chairman

Approval of On Call Consultant Contract –

Dan advised that as of November our contract with Parsons Transportation for On Call consultant service has expired. Due to the continued need for this service, Montgomery County advertised for proposals to provide consultant services to the MPO. A committee consisting of TAC members Steve Sandy, Adele Schirmer and Randy Wingfield reviewed the six proposals that were submitted and selected four firms to interview. The committee then recommended the firm of Whitman Requardt & Associates to be the On Call consultant for the MPO. The TAC has reviewed and recommends concurrence. Acceptance by the MPO Policy Board is now needed along with authorization and a request for Montgomery County to execute the On Call Contracts on behalf of the MPO.

Anne commented that she liked the selection, the firm is local and their reputation is good. Steve asked if Whitman, Requardt & Associates had significant experience working with VDoT and Dan responded that they did.

Craig called for a motion to accept the recommended firm and authorize Montgomery County to execute the contracts.

On a motion by Richard Ballengee, seconded by Doug Marrs and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, the MPO requested Montgomery County to prepare a Request for Proposal on behalf of the MPO for on call planning services, and

WHEREAS, Six proposals were received, and

WHEREAS, a review committee of the TAC has reviewed the proposals and recommends executing a contract with Whitman Requardt & Associates, and

WHEREAS, the TAC concurs with this recommendation and recommends this to the Policy Board.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the BCM-MPO authorizes and requests Montgomery County to execute this contract on behalf of the MPO.

Dan Brugh, Executive Director

Request for Consideration of an additional stop for the SmartWay Bus –

Dan presented a request received by the SmartWay Advisory Committee for the consideration of an additional stop to be added at VCOM in the CRC. The TAC discussed this request at length then decided that additional information was needed before concurrence in the stop is made, and that is their recommendation to the Policy Board.

There was discussion of the requested stop. Initially a request for more information was considered, however the potential for the additional stop to interfere with current services already in place as well as future expansion plans at the CRC resulted in consensus to decline the request. Dan and Steve will report back to the SmartWay Advisory Committee with this information.

Support of the town of Blacksburg's request for HSIP funding from VDOT –

Dan presented a request for MPO support for a funding request the Town of Blacksburg will be submitting to VDOT for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Funds to address safety concerns at two locations within the corporate limits. A copy of the Blacksburg Town Council resolution pertinent to their request to VDOT is included in our meeting packets. The TAC has not reviewed Blacksburg's request for MPO support however Dan feels that the two locations certainly warrant improvements if funding is made available.

Steve and Anne spoke on behalf of VA Tech and Blacksburg; both support the effort to obtain HSIP funds.

Hearing no further discussion, Craig called for a motion to support Blacksburg's request for HSIP Funding from VDOT.

On a motion by Richard Caywood, seconded by Krisha Chachra and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, Blacksburg Town Council is requesting funds from VDOT through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to improve safety at two locations within the corporate limits of Blacksburg, and

WHEREAS, these locations are within the BCM MPO and are on primary routes, and

WHEREAS, improvements to these locations will enhance safety and reduce accidents, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the BCM MPO strongly supports the application by the Town of Blacksburg for HSIP funding for these two locations.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MPO requests VDOT to fund these projects in the next Six Year Plan.

Dan Brugh, Executive Director

Authorization for Executive Director to execute electronically the annual Certifications and Assurances required by FTA –

Dan explained that each year the MPO is required to certify that it is complying with all federal requirements. In the past this has been done on paper along with the approval of the annual work plan, the UPWP. This year the Certifications and Assurances must be executed electronically by the Executive Director in conjunction with Blacksburg Transit submitting their funding request in February. In order to facilitate this change in the process the Policy Board needs to authorize the Executive Director to execute the necessary Certifications and Assurances electronically.

Anne expressed approval of this change then Craig asked for a motion to authorize Dan to execute the documents electronically.

On a motion by Doug Marrs, seconded by Adam Carpenetti and carried unanimously,

WHEREAS, the Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization anticipates receipt of Fiscal Year 2012 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5303 Planning and Technical Studies Grant and operational and capital allocations for Blacksburg Transit.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization authorizes the Blacksburg/Christiansburg/Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Executive Director to execute the Certifications and Assurances for federal fiscal year 2012 required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Craig Meadows, Chairman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

SmartWay Bus update

Dan reported that the number of passengers served in 2010-11 set an all-time record and the current 2011-12 year will exceed it if it continues at the current level. Our tracking information provides a relationship between gas prices and the number of riders. When gas prices rise, the number of riders follows; when the gas prices drop we lose some of the new riders but not all, proving that once new riders discover the service they tend to adopt it.

SmartWay Connector update

Dan reported that the ridership numbers for the Roanoke Valley are much higher than originally expected however the New River Valley ridership is not meeting expectations. We have only seen a draft budget; we haven't received a revised budget for the service yet but are hoping to see one at next week's SmartWay meeting.

After Dan's remarks Steve commented that the numbers aren't what he expected and from a business prospective, the NRV may not be getting their money's worth. The NRV is paying 40% of the cost and only represents 4% of the ridership so discussions need to happen concerning this. Richard Caywood agreed and offered the theory that the NRV riders may be reluctant to travel on this service due to its early morning schedule. Dan added that the Megabus service is probably having an effect on the ridership of the Connector service. Megabus recently started using double-decker buses to handle their volume. Steve then closed the discussion by suggesting that there may still be justification for the NRV partners to support the effort to bring Amtrak service to Roanoke.

Rideshare update

Dan reported that the Rideshare program continues to be a success. Updates have been emailed previously for your viewing.

Warm Hearth Transit Service update

Becky summarized the efforts thus far for the new service route. So far the service is getting good reviews, however adjustments will be made if needed. An official ribbon cutting event is planned for next week and a news release has been posted with the details.

Also, Christiansburg Town Council has agreed to extend the Go Anywhere route to the Montgomery Regional Hospital on Tuesdays in order to enhance the mobility of the Warm Hearth and Christiansburg citizens on that day.

Federal Reauthorization update

Dan gave an overview of what we've heard concerning MAP-21. A two year Federal Transportation Bill has been introduced in the Senate with provisions that will affect MPO if it passes next spring. Under this bill, MPO's representing populations of fewer than 200,000 will no longer be created. MPO's over 200,000 will automatically be classified as "Tier I" and an avenue exists to move MPO's under 200,000 to attain a "Tier II" status if conditions are met. These requirements have not yet been specified, and the Secretary of Transportation has one year to establish those regulations. Then there will be a three year window for prospective "Tier II" MPO's to qualify. If an MPO fails to qualify for "Tier II" status there will be an addition fourth year to close the MPO and hand over their responsibilities to the State. Dan doesn't expect much to come of a two year bill for a five year plan except revisiting the topic in two years.

Steve asked if this was being proposed primarily to save on planning expenses. Dan replied that he saw it more as a move to place the burden on the States rather than the Federal Government. Cuts on the Federal level are expected as 80 – 90 programs are consolidated down to 30. No official list of what will be eliminated has been published yet; however enhancement funds have been mentioned as one of the items that will go away. This means there would be no more federally designated enhancement funds; instead they would be deemed an allowable expenditure for the state. The feds will still require planning in smaller urban areas but that will be the state's responsibility to do it. The state will have to decide on having Tier II MPO's or find another solution. Odds are the smaller MPO's will remain.

NRV Livability Initiative update

Kevin gave a brief overview of the efforts expended thus far and covered the high points from a draft of a report that will soon be finalized and sent to the Chief Administrative Official for distribution to the elected Officials. Stakeholder committees have been meeting and compiling data for the report. Basically in the next fifteen years the region's employment balance, population age, population balance, available work force, energy costs and housing costs will all be changing from what they are now. Housing stock has also been identified as a potential issue; therefore, plans are to make this information available to area banks and lending institutions in an effort to encourage them to make funds for new homes and refurbishing of existing home more readily accessible. The next meeting is a commission meeting for the Mayors, Chairs and Chief Administrative officials. The topic of discussion will be legislative issues and the meeting will be December 8th at the Radford City Hall.

Other items

2035 Long Range Plan

Copies of the 2035 LRP were distributed to the group and also available on the MPO web site. The Plan will probably be amended again next year as one \$23 million dollar project, the Pepper's Ferry Road expansion in the Town of Christiansburg, has moved from the constrained plan to the VDOT Six Year Plan and should be obligated by amendment next year.

Radford Transit

Dan reported that the ridership numbers for the Radford Transit service reveal a surprising success. We will be emailing out the entire update document for the Radford Transit service ridership shortly.

Exit 118 Park & Ride

Dan reported on a joint effort by the Montgomery County Economic Development Department, Blacksburg Transit, Valley Metro, Montgomery County General Services Department and the MPO TAC to develop and install additional signage at the Exit 118 Park & Ride shelter in an effort to further educate those riding the buses as to their service options.

Blacksburg Transit FTA Funds

Dan reported that Blacksburg Transit recently received Federal funds in the amount of \$1.9 million dollars to study methods of assigning buses in a manner that better serves the public while reducing operating costs and environmental impact. An amendment to the TIP may be necessary to accommodate this; we are attempting to ascertain if this can be done by an administrative amendment.

Becky commented that VTTI and Blacksburg hopes to move to more proactive, on-demand services by tracking traffic at stops and anticipating when to increase buses dispatched to alleviate wait states. This will eliminate the use of "Tripper" buses and optimize passenger service. One of the busier routes will be selected to serve as a test bed for existing technologies in an effort to develop a working system to expand to the other routes if all goes well. The bulk of the funds will be utilized to build the supporting infrastructure necessary.

OTHER BUSINESS

Richard Caywood commented that the construction on the I-81 truck lanes is progressing as well as can be expected and Anne added that the VDoT signage is doing a good job of helping to keep traffic out of the area during blasting.

NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is January 5, 2012 at 2:00 PM in the Montgomery County Government Center.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further agenda items to discuss, Craig called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion by Richard Caywood, seconded by Richard Ballengee and carried unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM.

Attest: _____

Craig Meadows, Chairman