

BINGHAMTON METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 2009
MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Carol Sweeney, at 11:00 AM

Roll call and quorum determination:

Members present

- ♦ Supervisor Carol Sweeney, Chair, Town of Owego
- ♦ Mayor Harry Lewis, Vice Chair, Village of Johnson City, represented by Daria Golazeski
- ♦ County Executive Barbara Fiala, Broome County, represented by Leonard Raychel
- ♦ Dale Weston, Tioga County, represented by Ken DelBianco
- ♦ Mayor Matthew Ryan, City of Binghamton
- ♦ Supervisor Margaret Turna, Town of Chenango, represented by Ed Gent
- ♦ Supervisor Michael Marinaccio, Town of Dickinson
- ♦ Supervisor John Bernardo, Town of Union, represented by Councilman Tom Augustini
- ♦ Supervisor Peter Andreasen, Town of Vestal
- ♦ Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee, NYSDOT, represented by Regional Director Jack Williams
- ♦ Elaine Jardine, Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board, represented by Robert Augenstern

- Approval of minutes of February 11, 2009. Moved Marinaccio, second Andreasen.
Approved by consensus.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Chair opened the floor for comment. None was offered.

ACTION ITEM: 2008-2012 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Steven Gayle advised the Committee that the reason the meeting had been called prior to normal schedule was the need to for prompt action on a number of TIP amendments. He reviewed the projects subject to the proposed amendment, noting that the Planning Committee had reviewed and approved all of the actions.

- ♦ STP Transportation Enhancement Program. NYSDOT had announced the projects selected for award from last year's round of applications. There are two in the BMTS area: City of Binghamton's Chenango River Trail Connection (Cheri Lindsey Park to Bevier Street), and Town of Vestal Rail Trail Section 4 (African Rd to Sycamore Rd). These now need to be amended into the TIP.
- ♦ STP-Flex. NYSDOT proposed two projects which were previously programmed with State Dedicated Fund money. Because of fiscal problems with the Fund, only projects for which there is an immediate safety-based need are being funded. These projects do not meet that definition, but are important to basic infrastructure maintenance: Sign Replacement block contract for 2009-2010; and Concrete Crack Sealing block contract for 2009-2010.
- ♦ Highway Bridge Program. NYSDOT proposed two projects. The General Bridge Repair block contract for 2010-2011 should have been on the program; its absence may have been an oversight. The General Bridge Inspection consultant contract is let by the NYSDOT Main Office, but needs to appear on the TIP.

- ♦ SAFETEA-LU §1702. This was the original Congressional earmark for the Owego Riverwalk, which was also omitted from the TIP by oversight. Gayle noted that this is not additional funding; and that the Village of Owego is still working on how to address the fact that the construction bid came in significantly higher than estimated, exceeding the available funding.
- ♦ FTA §5307 – ARRA. Broome County has received additional ARRA funding through the FTA Rural Transit program. This money is apportioned to NYSDOT, and then suballocated to rural transit providers. Broome County's allocation is \$400,000, and will be used to purchase 4 replacement minibuses for BC Country service. The amendment transfers the money to the §5307 FTA urban formula program, which allows Broome County to directly administer the procurement.

Gayle further informed the Committee that the Governor's office needed to have an explicit statement from each MPO that it is following the criteria in the ARRA law to establish project selection priority. The criteria, which BMTS did use in selecting projects, include being able to be obligated promptly, maximize job creation, and give priority to federally defined economically distressed areas. These are stated in the first Whereas.

Gayle asked for questions on the amendment. There were none.

- Resolution 2009-08 Amending the 2008-2012 Transportation Improvement Program and Stating ARRA Priorities. Moved Marinaccio, second Ryan. Approved by consensus.

ACTION ITEM: HIGH SPEED RAIL INITIATIVE

Gayle briefed the Committee on the NYSDOT response to the High Speed Passenger Rail program that Congress included in ARRA. Funded at \$8 billion, and with an ongoing commitment of more than \$1 billion annually in the President's budget proposal. The ARRA money is a discretionary grant program, and can be spent only in previously designated corridors, of which the Empire Corridor in New York is one. This route stretches from New York City to Albany and west to Buffalo/ Niagara Falls. The Albany-Buffalo route is one of the least reliable in the Amtrak system, primarily because of heavy usage by CSX freight trains.

NYSDOT has been working with Amtrak and CSX to identify projects for submission for ARRA funding. They have developed a package of 18 projects with a cost of about \$3 billion. Much of the work will construct major pieces of a third track in the CSX right-of-way, to allow speeds up to 115 mph and good schedule reliability.

The Syracuse Metropolitan Development Association is coordinating support from across New York State for this effort. While there may not be a direct benefit to Greater Binghamton, there are broad benefits for Upstate.

Mayor Ryan asked for an update on the status of Amtrak's Binghamton Passenger Rail Feasibility Study. Gayle responded that it is underway, but that our main contact, NYSDOT Deputy Commissioner Karen Rae has left to accept the position of Deputy Administrator of the Federal Railway Administration. Amtrak had previously expressed concern that NJ Transit would not construct the full project to restore service to Scranton, which is why they are also evaluating the Binghamton to Syracuse link. Such service could provide a connection to Amtrak high speed service if the NYSDOT initiative is realized; and can also provide improved freight service, since the current track has some segments that limit train speed to 10 mph.

- Resolution 2009-10, Adopting a Statement in Support of New York State's High Speed Rail Initiative. Moved Augenstern, second Marinaccio. Approved by consensus.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Gayle briefed the Committee on the 2010-2014 TIP update. NYSDOT had asked that the update be postponed for one year, as a consequence of the effort being made to produce the ARRA program; and the fact that the federal transportation program expires on Sept 30, 2009. Since Congress may make significant changes in the program structure, doing a TIP based on forecasts of federal aid will be difficult. The Committee should be aware that the delay in the update means the TIP will be 'managed by amendment' to a great extent this year.

Gayle reported that he had been invited to join two other MPO directors as representatives of AMPO in meetings with senior staff of both the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Discussions centered on the overall structure of the upcoming transportation authorization and how metropolitan planning requirements may change.

Jennifer Yonkoski briefed the Committee on the Broome County Transit – Off Campus College Transport Consolidation Study. Meetings have been held with Binghamton University administrators and OCC-T managers. There seems to be support for moving ahead, depending on the financial and operational analysis. A consolidation could result in a higher level of service for all users.

There being no other business brought before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 AM.