

NYSMPO Meeting Summary
Friday, April 1, 2005
Utica, NY

Present:

John McNeill

Hal Morse

Dick Beers

Joel Ettinger

Rich Perrin

Mary Rowlands

Jon Makler

Rob Griffith

Amy Jackson-Grove

Bill Tobin

Aaron Frankenfeld

Steve Gayle

Kealy Salomon

John Poorman

Fernando d' Aragon

Jay Schissell

Don Camp

Harry Miller

By Phone: Larry McAuliffe

NYSDOT Guests: Ron Hayes, Tim Gilchrist, Jack Guinan, Bob Zerrillo, Cliff Thomas, Tom Boehm, Joy Chiu

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Meeting Summaries (February 4 and March 3)

Minutes from both meetings were included as attachments to the agenda. There were no comments offered at this time.

3. AMPO/TEA-21 Update

The House has passed a bill around which the only notable drama included an attempt to add a toll amendment that was defeated. The Senate is now in committee with floor time expected in April. This leaves enough time for a conference committee before expiration of the current extension.

On the AMPO front, the major issue is related to the 2010 Census Advisory Committee. Because seats are being cut from 40 to 20 and direct representation of transportation being in jeopardy, AMPO is supporting a liaison from AASHTO.

Action: Sarah will draft a letter of support for directors to sign in time for the April 8 deadline. (This was subsequently done by Steve Gayle and John Poorman and sent in on time.)

4. NYSDOT Presentation

Tom Boehm, NYSDOT Chief of Staff, and several directors from the Statewide Transportation Policy & Strategy Division (STPSD), gave a presentation about how this division, which will have extensive interaction with MPOs, will be coming to life. Notably, there are three "Area Directors" (Southern Tier and Western; Central and Northeast; Downstate: Hayes, Thomas and

Gilchrist, respectively). There was also a brief report on the status of the statewide master plan and its approval process.

There was widespread pleasure at the new name for this division and brief discussion about the impact of the changes on the roles of Regional Directors and RPPMs. There was also extensive dialogue about the relationship of the statewide master plan and its development to MPOs and their activities. NYSDOT's objective is to receive feedback from MPOs about the plan. It was indicated that the master plan is a high-level policy document and would have no impact on existing plans and TIPs. Numerous directors explained the difficulty of having any formal action taken on the plan in the month long window provided. There was also a discussion of the best ways to achieve a continuous process and communication with MPOs and how the NYSDOT would be represented on MPO policy committees in the future. The NYSMPOs also encouraged the NYSDOT Directors to have NYSDOT work with the NYSMPOs on Shared Cost Initiatives.

Action: NYSDOT Area Directors agreed to work with the MPOs in their respective areas and to address the issues noted above and to determine the best way to get input on the State Master Plan once it is available.

5. Safety Forum Status

Preparations for the safety forum, which is June 9-10 in Poughkeepsie, are proceeding with very good response from invited speakers such as Michael Meyer (Georgia Tech) for the keynote spot. Most of the main speakers are now nailed down and registration materials should be going out soon.

Action: It would be helpful if each director would email Steve and Sarah with the approximate number of personnel that will be attending from their agency.

Action: Post invitation/announcement to website.

Action: Each MPO (those that did not provide lists to Sarah) to email out the final registration form to those persons in their regions who may be interested in attending (Note: Sarah's office will send out invitations to the 200+ list that was submitted by certain MPOs.)

6. Transportation Enhancements

The issue at hand is the fact that TEP funds have accumulated since September 2003. Each MPO has a queue of TEP projects and so there is interest in when and how funds will next be obligated. A question was raised as to why TEP funds are allocated through a statewide competition, with the answer being that if the funding were divided by region it would be difficult or impossible to fund a large project in any of the small regions.

Action: John McNeil will investigate what's happening with the TEP funds. John subsequently sent an email to the MPOs indicating that until TEA-21 reauthorization is finalized there will not be a new round of TEA applications.

7. FHWA Customer Survey Results

Rob Griffith (FHWA) presented the final results of the customer survey, noting areas in which the statewide average score was below 4 (out of 5). There was some good humor about people forgetting how they had answered the survey and one broad message was reiterated that many

comments reflect a frustration with the relationship between MPOs and NYSDOT and the MPOs' desire for FHWA to hold the MPOs and DOT to the same standards in terms of meeting federal requirements. There was also a desire expressed for FHWA to disseminate best practice information from other parts of the state and country. Other concerns expressed: UCTC would like to see FHWA's vacant/inactive seat filled; there is some concern about how much PL (federal) funds should be used to fulfill the state's energy plan requirement; there is an interest in "mini-certification reviews" for the smaller MPOs; there was also a call for more leadership from FHWA in the air quality ICG.

8. SCI Projects

a. Travel Behavior Factors (CDTC)

John reported that there has been a very good response rate from the select group of experts invited to the colloquy.

b. Statewide Data (BMTS)

Jon reported that a Cornell graduate student (Isaac David Kremer) has been hired to perform the first task of Phase 2, which will involve surveying websites and producing a memo on what features should and shouldn't be included in a NYSMPO data directory. There were five applicants for the position, one of whom is interested in a summer job (resume distributed). Through this search, it was learned that Cornell has a program for subsidizing summer interns in urban planning. Contact Jon for more information.

Action: Directors will presently be receiving an email from Isaac seeking information such as common data sources for each MPO.

c. Congestion Management Systems (SMTC)

Jon reported that the firm ICF Consulting was hired to perform this work and that a kickoff meeting was held earlier that morning (April 1). Mary, Rich and Mark Debald of PDCTC as well as Sarah and Jon comprise a Study Advisory Committee (SAC). Jon mentioned that the directors will be receiving a brief email request for information about their CMS programs, as applicable. Jon also asked who would attend the planned forum and the consensus seemed to be that staff would be delegated and some directors may attend.

Action: Please note on your calendars that the tentative date for the forum is Thursday, August 4 in Binghamton, in advance of the directors meeting there the next day.

Action: CMS-afflicted MPOs will presently be receiving an email from the consultant with several basic queries about CMS practices.

d. Community Design (CDTC)

Sarah reported that this project is nearing completion!

e. Training

Sarah distributed a memo summarizing the priorities for training based on MPO responses to her recent email survey. Already several trainings are scheduled (Introduction to Transportation Conformity in NYC in May; The Safety Forum in

Poughkeepsie in June; Safe Routes to School training in Rochester in June and in Orange County in October-November). The air quality group has requested a course on Estimating Regional Emissions Analysis, which Sarah is in the process of arranging. The results of the email survey (pending CDTC, NYMTC responses) suggest a significant interest in travel demand modeling.

Action: Sarah will collect responses from the remaining MPOs and suggest a training program for the year based on final responses.

9. ITE/NYSMPO Conference

Rich is working with organizers of this year's ITE conference, which will be held in October in Rochester. There was discussion about the appropriate role for the association to play, based on mixed feelings about last year's conference. Action: Jon/Rich will solicit session topic ideas from the group; During the 5/6 conference call, the group can consider these nominations, select several and delegate responsibility for developing each session concept.

10. Operations & Staffing Survey

During the two weeks preceding the meeting, every MPO except for NYMTC was interviewed by phone by Jon Makler and Don Camph. Jon distributed a list of ten "initial impressions" from these conversations. Several directors asked about next steps in this activity. One suggestion was to develop a document of the "interesting practices" identified through the interviews.

Actions: Jon will collect "data" elements from some remaining MPOs. Don and Jon will set up an interview with Joel Ettinger of NYMTC and a draft findings report will be distributed prior to the May 6 conference call.

11. Air Quality Working Group Update

Jon reported that, as usual, the air quality working group had a conference call in advance of the directors meeting. There was significant discussion of the June 15th deadline and concerns about the ICG process. There was agreement that once the proverbial dust has settled, there should be an effort to evaluate the ICG process. Among other topics discussed, there was considerable interest in the process used at each MPO for selecting CMAQ projects. The next air quality conference call is scheduled for May 23rd at 1pm.

12. NYPTA Conference

The New York Public Transportation Association (NYPTA) conference is currently scheduled for November 16-18 in Albany. Sarah will be meeting with organizers on April 29th in Albany to discuss co-sponsorship (John agreed to participate). There was some discussion about whether and how the association should participate in the conference, with some relating mixed experiences from the past. It was agreed that if planning-related sessions are developed they should be concentrated on a single day. Some felt that the best way to link with planning is to be more active about engaging appropriate transit agency personnel in MPO association activities. There was also mention of a recent report, entitled, "Transit at the Table" that several recommended highly.

Action: Sarah and John will meet with the NYPTA group on 4/29 and report to the directors about that meeting during the 5/6 conference call meeting.

10. Upcoming Meetings

- a. May 6 @ 1pm: NYSMPO Directors Teleconference
- b. May 23 @ 1pm: NY Air Quality Working Group Teleconference
- c. June 9-10: Safety Forum (Poughkeepsie)
- d. June 10 @ noon: NYSMPO Directors Meeting (Lunch and Afternoon)
- e. June 20-21: Safe Routes to School Training (Rochester, site TBD)
- f. July 8 @ 1pm: NYSMPO Directors Teleconference
- g. August 4: CMS Forum (Binghamton)
- h. August 5: NYSMPO Directors Meeting (Binghamton)