

**NYS Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
Meeting Summary
February 7, 2003**

Attendees:

John Poorman, Capital District Transportation Committee
Steve Gleason, Genesee Transportation Council
Steve Gayle, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Council
Jay Schissell, Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council
Harry Miller, Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study
Mary Rowlands, Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
Carl Daiker, Newburgh-Orange County Transportation Council
Fernando de Aragon, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council
Hal Morse, Greater Buffalo-Niagara Frontier Transportation Council
Larry McAuliffe, New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
Marty Neveu, NYSDOT
Mike Shauer, FHWA
Alicia Nolan, FHWA
Carolyn Bourdeaux, Sarah J. Siwek & Associates
Sarah J. Siwek, Sarah J. Siwek & Associates
Don Camph, Sarah J. Siwek & Associates

1) Welcome and Introductions

2) December 6, 2002 Meeting Summary

Meeting summary was approved without comment.

3) Update on the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) Activities

Steve Gayle reported on AMPO activities. AMPO staff and committee members had now met with several Capitol Hill staff involved in the federal surface transportation bill reauthorization ("T-3"). The AMPO literature stating the MPO positions on the reauthorization were printed now and included one-pagers for legislative visits, as well as a more detailed document further elaborating on their policy positions. AMPO was still trying to work out their position on some of the policy changes relating to the new ozone standards. Senator Bond wants to give relief to new non-attainment areas. Currently, the AMPO strategy is to try to get information to member congressional delegations.

Gayle asked whether it would be possible to get the elected officials on the MPO Steering Committees to talk to the Congressional delegation. John Poorman thought that the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process had crystallized some of the problems of lack of resources for the elected officials on the CDTC board. Some of his elected officials had then gone to talk with national officials.

Gayle continued that the AMPO policy conference would be March 25-27, those who wanted to attend could register on-line. Larry McAuliffe asked about elected official visits to Congressional offices? Steve Gayle thought that this was an issue that the MPOs had discussed before. Previously, they had concluded that the elected officials on their Steering Committees would be more likely to meet with the elected officials in their district offices, and the MPO Directors would be more likely to meet with them in D.C.

Don Camph thought that this might be a good segue into the long term funding needs communications strategy.

Steve Gleason reported that the Cambridge Systematics-Wilbur Smith report was about 40-50% there. He was working with the consultants on making it more readable.

Jay Schissell asked if Cambridge Systematics and Peter Plummeau had followed up with all the MPOs on the numbers for the report and the assumptions underlying the estimates. Both he and Fernando de Aragon asked that the consultants check in with them about the report. John Poorman recalled that in the meeting in Binghamton last year, the consultants had agreed to speak with all the MPOs. Steve Gleason said that he would make sure that each MPO received the numbers faxed out to them and asked who else might need to actually talk with Peter or Arlee Reno about the report.

Sarah Siwek said that she would ensure that this was completed, would send out the numbers and hold a conference call to make sure that everyone had signed off on the numbers.

Mary Rowlands asked whether the MPOs should start adding the cost of administering the Shared Cost Initiative contracts since clearly Steve Gleason had expended a good deal of staff time on this project. It was agreed that in the future, some provision would be made for MPO staff time used on these projects though it was too late to reimburse GTC staff.

Action: Sarah Siwek will follow up with Steve Gleason, Peter Plummeau and Arlee Reno to make sure that all the MPO Directors are satisfied with the numbers in the final report.

Don Camph then discussed the communications strategy based on a handout that he distributed. He discussed the underlying objectives of the communications strategy. John Poorman cautioned that the MPOs needed to remember the prohibition on lobbying, and Don Camph agreed that his intent was “to educate not advocate.” Among the important issues for the MPOs were the donor-donee issues; the preservation of the minimum allocation, the need for an increase in transportation funding overall and need for an increased subvention for the MPOs.

There was some discussion about framing the donor-donee issue in terms of all federal funds – as Senator Moynihan had done in the past. Carolyn Bourdeaux agreed to send Don the website of the Taubman report on federal dollar allocations broken down by State.

Hal Morse wondered if the transportation-funding shortfall couldn't be communicated, in part, by

pointing out the opportunity costs of not making a sufficient investment in infrastructure. John Poorman agreed that some of the information on congestion costs, cost of maintenance deferred, business impacts, etc. would be useful to making the case, though he added that it could be hard to string together reliable numbers and thought that using examples about relative investments might be most accurate. Steve Gayle thought that AASHTO would have some studies on deferred maintenance and job creation. Don Camph said that he would look around for some information these costs.

Along the same lines, Don also thought that the need for increased planning funds might be framed in terms of savings from good planning – “a \$1 upfront saves \$20 downstream.” Steve Gayle added that this might be presented in light of the MPOs’ increased responsibilities for security planning, operations planning and ITS. John Poorman noted ISTEA and TEA-21 had increased the expectations of MPOs in general.

The group then discussed the target audience – members that sat on key committees as well as the State’s Senators would be most critical. John Poorman noted that Jim Walsh had recently pointed out with redistricting, all Congressional districts are regional now and not just confined to one locality – Members of Congress would have to think more in terms of statewide policy rather than parochial policy.

Don Camph discussed the timeframe for this effort and thought that the current Congressional timeline to have the bill done by September 30th was a bit ambitious though the Administration bill would probably be out in March. John Poorman thought that the critical issue in the debate would be the resource levels. He mentioned that a good argument for higher spending on transportation came out of a recent Department of Labor report on consumer expenditures that showed that individuals are putting much more money into transportation – the amount put into infrastructure investments is only 4% of total individual transportation spending.. The STPP has a copy of this report.

Carolyn Bourdeaux asked how this might fit into the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) strategy for dealing with the state share of funding levels. Sarah Siwek said that she would talk to Nancy Ross about the State strategy and how this might dovetail with the MPO concerns and efforts.

Don Camph thought that the MPOs might target interest groups at the local level as well as local elected officials and said that he would also be working on press strategy. Sarah Siwek thought that they would want some statewide press conferences.

Don asked whether it was too soon to talk about going to D.C. and Sarah Siwek said that she thought the MPOs might want to meet with their Representatives during the AMPO meeting. Steve Gayle thought that this would be a good idea. Don Camph asked about bringing board members and Sarah thought that in the spring elected officials would probably make their annual trips to Washington for conferences with other national organizations. John Poorman said that he was probably most comfortable with educating his board and then checking to see who might be going to D.C. and

might be willing to discuss MPO issues with Members of Congress or Congressional staff. Steve Gayle was concerned that elected officials might not actually give out MPO materials when they met with Members of Congress.

The MPO Directors discussed the State lobbying effort and noted that their views generally coincided with NYSDOT. John Poorman thought it would be important that the MPOs contribute to a strong effort in New York State. Don Camph suggested that the MPOs really make an effort energize the grassroots and might be useful to have some elected officials testify at hearings if possible.

John Poorman asked Sarah Siwek to convey to NYSDOT that the MPOs would want a seat at the table in terms of developing and advancing their national agenda for the T-3 reauthorization.

Marty Neveu said it may be worth having the group write a letter to NYSDOT about this and that she would check in with John and Jim Harris about this.

Action: Staff will 1) develop materials to educate board members; 2) develop materials for outreach at the local level; and 3) talk to the State to see how to coordinate with their strategy. Per, Don Camph's memo, staff will also develop fact sheets and news releases that would be easy to produce and get out. Marty Neveu will check with NYSDOT about MPO involvement in advancing the state-wide transportation agenda in the T-3 process.

4. Update on the MPO TIP Development/UPWP

Sarah Siwek noted that at the last meeting Jim Harris had asked the MPOs to adopt only a limited TIP so that they might more easily incorporate changing State priorities in the out-years. She had heard that the MPOs had received further instruction from their Regional Programming and Planning Managers (RPPMs), and some of the MPOs Directors had wanted to discuss what was going on about this across the state. John Poorman said he thought that it was likely there were different messages and different approaches in each region.

Steve Gleason said he had put the last two years in the TIP but had made clear in the test that the program may need to be amended if programs change or priorities change. Steve Gayle thought that Region 9 was willing to cooperate with the State but was still waiting to hear what to do. John Poorman said that CDTC had just approved a 5-year bridge program on Wednesday and was going through the process of adding projects. He too had emphasized that the TIP was speculative but continued with the 5-year program. To him, the trump card was that the main office couldn't change the TIP for its 3-year program, but the 5-year program is more like the Long Range Plan anyway. The NYSDOT wants a "maintenance TIP" only but the State does not seem aware of MPO and regional issues and that these are likely to mirror the State's own proposed priorities. There is probably not as much risk as the main office thinks.

Mary Rowlands said that SMTTC is doing a maintenance TIP and that her RPPM had told her that everyone is doing a maintenance TIP. Jay Schissell said that the problem was that MPOs had to

satisfy cities that wanted 7-year projects and a State that only wanted a maintenance TIP. Hal Morse said that Buffalo had thought that a 3-year TIP was an acceptable risk. They had locked down the first three years and in the fall would more formally take up planning for out-year projects.

Mary Rowlands asked whether it was worth sending a letter to the main office that they would like some consistent instructions about the TIPs. John Poorman thought that this might eventually be addressed during the “transformational review” by the DOT. This process was currently underway though the NYSDOT priority would likely be how to deal with budget cuts and retirements in the Department. Steve Gleason thought that this might be an area of focus that the MPOs would want NYSDOT to consider when looking at how they would reorganize – specifically, the timely notification of new requirements.

Along the same lines, Mary Rowlands asked Marty Neveu whether John Zaymurs was ready to distribute the guidelines from the State Energy Plan. Marty said that he had a packet developed and was trying to get a memo to send to the regions. The draft packet would be reviewed and used during this TIP round.

John Poorman said that it may be time to let NYSDOT know that NYSDOT needs to rethink its relationship with the MPOs.

Sarah Siwek asked whether they wanted to send a letter that hits the big issues. Steve Gayle said that he thought there was a March due date for the process. Marty Neveu said that she thought that March was pretty optimistic since there were going to be a number of retirements at the end of March.

It was agreed that a letter should be drafted. Marty Neveu said that the Commissioner and others had wanted to talk with the MPOs for some time (at the last meeting this was discussed) and asked when good dates might be.

John Poorman said that the key issue was that the MPOs share long range planning with NYSDOT – it is not just a State responsibility. The MPOs need a dialogue to make sure that the State makes these changes. The law says that these are shared responsibilities and not NYSDOT’s in isolation. In particular, it would be helpful if the NYSDOT did not come up with new philosophies without a shared discussion. Marty Neveu thought it might be worth emphasizing “involve” not just “inform.”

John Poorman said that he knew the problem was in part institutional. The internal dialogue within the DOT was so consuming that the regions and the MPOs were often not intentionally excluded but that after the DOT had reached internal consensus there was simply no room left to include the MPOs.

Action: Sarah Siwek will draft a letter to NYSDOT regarding the need to involve MPOs in decision-making that affects MPO processes. Marty Neveu will check with NYSDOT officials about setting up a meeting with the MPOs.

5) SCI Projects

Final SCI Data Report: Steve Gayle said that Peter Plummeau promised that the MPOs would soon have this report.

Travel Behavior Update: Sarah Siwek reported that the Federal Highways Administration was interested in this and ready to go on March 1st. However the Eno person that she and John Poorman had been working with left his job. Now they needed to go back to Eno on this project and had to wait to see who Eno might hire.

Integrated Community Design Study: Carolyn Bourdeaux reported that the Steering Committee had met with Plummeau on the study and had agreed on key criteria for the selection of case studies. These included criteria related to project performance (results, innovation, and process) and criteria related to project characteristics (geography, project type, setting, environment and aesthetics). Also, case studies from outside New York could be used to meet the case study goals and one of the case studies needed to be a freight project.

GIS Training: Sarah Siwek reported that the proposals had been submitted for this project. They would be reviewed on February 18th and the contract would be awarded soon after.

6) ITS Training Needs of MPOs – FHWA

Mike Schauer reported on FHWA training on ITS. The USDOT was offering ITS training to MPOs, had already done one workshop, and wanted to hear comments on that and possibly future MPO needs.

Jay Schissell said that while reviews were generally good, he heard that the workshop could have been one day and covered the same material. Mike Schauer asked whether MPOs really needed that much education about ITS, and Jay said that he thought that MPOs and the NYSDOT staff were probably well educated about it but there was much need for education outside the transportation community.

Mary Rowlands thought that it would be helpful to have a presentation that showed New York examples of ITS uses, particularly examples that were viable for smaller metropolitan regions – i.e. not just New York City and Houston.

Steve Gayle thought it would be useful to show how to link planning and operations and to start looking at how ITS can be used across public sector agencies.

John Poorman noted that the MPOs had set aside some funds for ITS education that they might use in conjunction with a State ITS planning effort.

Sarah Siwek asked whether there were examples in New York State where the MPOs had used the ITS for collecting information for planning activities. Mike Schauer said that he didn't know about

this. John Poorman said that he had intended to do this at CDTC for many years – he had seen University of California at Berkeley and other Universities using information in this way.

Mike Schauer summarized the comments: looking for case studies of best practices in New York State that are more appropriate for smaller regions; look for examples of ITS being used in a broader operational and multi-agency context. He added that the FHWA was looking for nominations for cases of good uses of technology to improve safety, and he handed out a letter to nominate candidate projects.

7) Training Proposal on Strategic Decision-Making

John Poorman said that this issue was mostly resolved. The financing had been arranged, though it remained to be resolved whether the money could be spent given current budget constraints.

8) Final SCI Table

Sarah Siwek told the MPOs that they now had the final SCI Table, which had been sent as an attachment to the minutes.

9) Next Meeting Date/Place

The next meeting was set for April 4th in Binghamton.