



NASHVILLE AREA

**Metropolitan Planning Organization**



## Meeting #3 NOTES

MPO/GNRC Joint Steering Committee on Regional Coordination

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

- Mayor Reed called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Michael Skipper (GNRC) introduced David Warm, executive director of the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), stating his hope that Warm's comments would be beneficial to the Committee.
  - Skipper drew the Committee's attention to the notes from the group's second meeting that were included in the packet of information. The notes were accepted by the Committee.
  - Skipper also acknowledged Michelle Lacewell (Nashville Area MPO) and the GNRC and MPO staff in attendance.
  - David Warm revisited his MPO annual luncheon keynote address, highlighting the similarities between the regions of Kansas City and Nashville and discussing MARC's roles and programs. He mentioned how MARC was the product of a 1972 merger similar to the one being discussed by the Committee.
    - SEE HANDOUT FOR SLIDES
  - Mayor Bradley asked about the impetus for the merger that created MARC.
  - Warm discussed how in the 1970s there was a national push for regionalism. In Kansas City's case he said that the mayor of Kansas City at the time was a dynamic leader who developed good relationships with the leadership of the fast growing, affluent county on the Kansas side of the region. They realized their mutual dependence and formal collaboration came out of that.
  - Skipper asked Warm to discuss how communities – regardless of size – can benefit from regional collaboration.
  - Warm discussed a specific example of when the urban – rural divide became an issue for MARC. The 1991 passage of ISTEA raised concerns among rural leaders in MARC that they would lose funding to the cities. To address these concerns MARC drew the MPO boundary to include the more rural areas. Now 8 of the 9 counties in MARC are in the MPO. Warm also mentioned public engagement as a particular challenge when dealing with a range of community sizes and how it is important to pay attention to smaller communities. He discussed how MARC has specific programs directed at assisting small cities, such as
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helping them write grant applications and administer grants that are won. He concluded by saying that MARC's urbanized areas are very complex and that bringing benefits to the urban area benefits the rural places too.

- Michelle Lacewell (MPO) asked how MARC manages the fact that the MPO has a smaller footprint than MARC as a whole.
- Warm stated that not everything MARC does affects all members all the time. Different programs serve different members and the MPO is an example of that. There are other programs too that MARC has launched or taken on to address specific needs of some of its local governments. He said that regional transportation planning is done across the entire area, but that the programming of federal transportation dollars is done in a way that respects the geographies within MARC that are intended to receive various pots of funding.
- Greer Broemel (GNRC) asked how many people are on staff at MARC.
- Warm said that there are approximately 130 people currently on MARC's staff.
- Mayor Holt asked if MARC prioritizes some issues under the broad umbrella of issues they address (transportation, homeland security, etc) and how MARC has the capacity to focus on so much.
- Warm stated that MARC has a \$55M annual budget with 120 different pots of money. He said that all activities performed by MARC have their own budget and dedicated capacity.
- Warm discussed how MARC's structure has allowed for growth into new activities. MARC has become a way for the region to solve problems and with each ask of the region MARC as an organization has to determine if it is something the organization should take on. He said MARC is responsive to leaders in the region, adding that a great deal of MARC's work comes from people seeing a problem and looking to MARC for solutions. He stated there are examples where MARC has successfully addressed a need, as well as examples of where it has been unable to do so.
- Warm discussed the 911 system and traffic management as examples where leaders brought an issue to MARC and MARC successfully addresses the need. After seeing a traffic management on a trip to Las Vegas, regional leaders asked MARC to implement a similar system in the Kansas City region, which it did. Likewise, in the 1970s MARC began managing payment of phone services for the 911 system at the request of the regional leaders. As time progressed the system became more complicated and MARC's role has grown. MARC now has around 10 people who work on emergency communications programs. He stressed that it is not MARC's 911 system, they manage it for the region's communities. On the other hand, there have been examples of where MARC has not taken on a project. Warm mentioned that MARC has studied a regional jail three times and it has never gone anywhere.
- Mayor Burgess asked about the makeup of the MARC board.

- Warm stated that MARC board members are picked by their local jurisdictions. The board includes the chief elected officials from the 9 counties and 6 largest cities, with others are appointed in different ways that roughly represents population.
- Mayor Norman asked about transportation in the Kansas City region.
- Warm stated that 90% of trips are people driving individually. He added that the region's public transit is anemic, with no rail service and only good bus service in Kansas City, MO. He said there is no regional funding mechanism and there is a separate regional transit authority.
- Skipper asked about MARC's relationship with its state legislatures.
- Warm replied that MARC has really good relationships with Federal agencies and their staffs. He continued saying that while MARC also has good relationships with the state legislatures, MARC could do a better job tending those relationships. He offered that the state legislatures turn to MARC on issues related to transportation, aging, etc.
- Warm stated that MARC's public communications strategy does not focus on branding MARC, instead it is much more focused on the region and the programs offered by MARC.
- Mayor Holt commented that it must be a challenge to work in two states.
- Warm confirmed, stating that everything is more complicated thanks to the state line.
- Skipper, drawing the meeting to close, summarized Warm's remarks, stating that regional collaboration is not so much about the specific issues addressed, but about creating a forum and the capacity for communities to address the region's challenges as they arise.
- Warm shared concluding remarks, stating that capacity and positioning can allow regional organizations to address their region's ever-changing issues. He emphasized the importance of the conversation currently underway between the GNRC and the MPO, stating that such conversations do not happen often in regions so it is really important for the Joint Committee to make the most of this opportunity.
- Skipper stated that the next meeting will be held in late January. He added that before that meeting staff will be talking to federal partners and community stakeholders to get their input on the potential integration of the GNRC and the MPO.
- Skipper passed out copies of the Chicago 2040 plan to the Committee. He stated that the 2040 plan is highly regarded regional plan that was conducted by an organization that has gone through a merger similar to that being discussed.
- Skipper congratulated MPO on a great annual meeting and thanked the GNRC and MPO staff for attending the Committee meeting.
- Mayor Reed adjourned the meeting.

**Committee Members in attendance:**

Howard Bradley, Jessie Wallace, Randall Hutto, Jill Burgin, ME Reed, Ernest Burgess, David Briley, Anthony Holt, Charlie Norman, Jim Hunt