



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization



Meeting #4 NOTES

MPO/GNRC Joint Steering Committee on Regional Coordination

Thursday, February 2, 2017

- Mayor McMillan called the meeting to order and welcomed members.
 - Mayor Reed recapped the third meeting of the Joint Committee. She recapped David Warm's remarks, reminding members that he stated that MARC had gone through a similar process as the Joint Committee is now and he encouraged the Committee that they have an opportunity to build strong capacity for the region.
 - Mayor McMillan asked Michelle Lacewell (MPO) to summarize the meetings staff held with stakeholders.
 - Lacewell provided the Committee with an overview of the meetings the staff had with non-profits and funders. She said that the participants had provided good feedback and that the overall response from stakeholders has been enthusiastic, with particular excitement about how MPO and GNRC integration could benefit their efforts.
 - Michael Skipper (GNRC) added that those attending the funder meeting included representatives from TDOT, TDHA, TDEC, ECD, TCAD, and FHWA. He said that he had also been in contact with staff at FTA and EDA.
 - Skipper said that he and Mayor Moore met with Senator Steve Dickerson and that the Senator agreed to be a champion for us in the Legislature, including helping us get meetings with members.
 - Mayor Moore agreed that it was a positive meeting.
 - Mayor McMillan asked Skipper to discuss the staff's recommendation.
 - Skipper stated that based on research, discussions, and other input the staff feels strongly the Committee should proceed with option #4 – full integration. Skipper reviewed the handout outlining the pros and cons of the four models.
 - Skipper reminded the Committee that this would be an initial recommendation and that staff would review how the recommendation would be implemented. He said that part of the staff's work would be to follow up with stakeholders and staff.
 - Skipper said staff would come back to the Committee with the information and at that time, the Committee will decide how to proceed – either with full integration or another option.
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- Skipper reviewed the process, stating that once the Committee has a final recommendation the recommendation will be presented to the GNRC and MPO boards. He predicted that if all goes well, implementation would take place between May and September.
- Revisiting the handout on the model, Skipper provided an overview of the questions and comments listed that staff have been hearing from stakeholders. He stated that staff needs to answer these concerns before moving forward. Continuing with the handout, Skipper reviewed the summary of staff's research on the different models.
- Skipper told the Committee that staff is working on the final report and that a draft will be available to them next week on the website.
- Concluding, he stated that staff would entertain questions and hoped for endorsement.
- Mayor Bradley asked how the financial contribution provided to the MPO from Metro would that be made up if the MPO integrated with GNRC.
- Skipper stated that is something staff would be looking into. He reviewed the history of Metro's in-kind contributions and stated that there is no long-term agreement with Metro, allowing Metro to cease their contribution at any time. Skipper also talked about how the MPO has installed member dues, which is how MPOs across the nation raise the funds to match Federal grants.
- Mayor Bradley asked if the GNRC would have to cover the salaries of MPO employees.
- Lacewell replied that the MPO employee salaries are paid by grants, but that office space, HR, and other overhead costs are covered by Metro's in-kind contribution.
- Mayor Bradley stated that the discussion to integrate the MPO and the GNRC is the first discussion he has been apart of that is focused on getting to more efficient government. He suggested county governments should be having these types of discussions as well.
- Mayor Holt put a motion forward to move forward with fully integrating the MPO and the GNRC and that staff work to address the concerns stated.
- Mayor Hunt seconded the motion.
- Mayor Wallace asked about the potential impact to the RPO.
- Skipper stated that staff definitely wants to look at that, adding that the motivation to align the MPO and the GNRC should also spur looking at Clarksville MPO and RPO.
- Mayor Wallace asked if staff would be addressing the RPO before or after board action on integrating the MPO and the GNRC.
- Skipper stated that the timeline for those discussions will be driven by the Clarksville MPO and RPO.
- Mayor McMillan added that the Clarksville MPO includes Kentucky counties so there is a bit more complexity, but stated that conversations with the CMPO and RPO should continue.
- Pam Kordenbrock (FHWA) asked about the geographical region of full integration.

- Skipper replied that it would include the 13 counties in the GNRC and the 7 MPO counties.
- Mayor Norman asked if Federal funding would be affected.
- Skipper replied that it should not be affected, but that staff would be exploring that question more fully.
- Mayor Norman asked if Metro supported full integration.
- Lacewell replied that staff's conversations with Metro have been good, adding that Vice Mayor Briley couldn't attend the Committee meeting.
- Mayor Norman asked if the Committee could get answers to the questions regarding implementation before the next meeting.
- Skipper assured the Committee that staff would have that information for them prior to the next meeting.
- Pam Kordenbrock (FHWA) contribute that FHWA is unsure how or if Federal funding would be affected, but that she and her colleagues are committed to working with the Committee and staff.
- Josh Suddath (TDOT) asked if enabling legislation would be required.
- Skipper replied that it depends. He added there are very few mentions of the MPO in state law. He stated that legislation would be required to change the GNRC boundaries, but added that that was not part of the discussion. Skipper concluded by saying that changing the structure of the GNRC might be explored and then legislation could be needed.
- Mayor McMillan told the Committee that staff would like the Committee to think about how the Committee members would be discussing integration with the MPO and GNRC boards.
- Mayor Holt stated that in his opinion staff should talk with board members, emphasizing that a final decision has yet to be made.
- Mayor McMillan clarified to the Committee that they would be voting on endorsing, not implementing full integration.
- Mayor McMillan called for vote.
- The vote to endorse full integration was unanimous.
- Skipper thanked the Committee for their time and commitment.
- Mayor McMillan asked if the Committee could have a designated a staff contact.
- Lacewell replied that those serving on behalf of the MPO should contact her and those serving on behalf of the GNRC contact Skipper.
- The meeting adjourned.

Join Committee Members in Attendance:

- Carroll Carman
- Jessie Wallace
- Charlie Norman
- Jim Hunt
- Jill Burgin
- Mary Esther Reed
- Ken Moore
- Howard Bradley
- Anthony Holt
- Kim McMillan
- Jerry Kirkman

Agenda Item 3. (attachment 1)

TDOT/MPO Correspondence



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

March 2, 2017

Larry McGoogin
Assistant Director, Long Range Planning
Tennessee Department of Transportation
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 900
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

RE: Nashville Area MPO and Greater Nashville Regional Council Integration

Dear Mr. McGoogin,

Thank you for your letter commending the effort of the Nashville Area MPO and the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) to improve regional coordination in Middle Tennessee. As you know, on February 15, the governing boards of the MPO and GNRC voted unanimously to endorse the recommendation of the MPO/GNRC Joint Committee to further explore full integration of the MPO program into the GNRC and address specific questions related to implementation. This recommendation comes at end of a six-month process led by members of the Joint Committee that included assessment of the MPO and GNRC, extensive peer research, and stakeholder outreach.

As funding partners of the MPO program, TDOT and Federal Highway Administration staff have participated throughout this process providing valuable feedback to MPO and GNRC staff. This input has informed our analysis of potential challenges to implementing integration.

In addition to expressing support for this effort, your letter outlined specific issues for consideration as we move forward with the possibility of integrating the MPO and GNRC. You expressed concern related to transparency and objectivity of the process, impact on rural areas within the region and financial oversight related to the use of federal funds. We agree that these issues are important.

Throughout our exploration of integration the MPO staff, along with the leadership at GNRC, the Joint Committee, and the Executive Boards of the MPO and GRNC, has strived to conduct an objective and transparent process. I believe we have done so and we intend to continue doing so as we move forward. Since the Joint Committee began its work, we have provided updates at our Executive Board and Technical Coordinating Committee meetings, both of which are open to the public and allow concerned citizens an opportunity to provide comment. In addition to these meetings, we have held specific meetings to openly discuss this process with staff, funders, and partners of both the MPO and GNRC. To further ensure transparency, we have maintained a webpage dedicated to providing easy access to the Memorandum of Agreement, Joint Committee meeting agenda and notes, research findings, and other materials developed throughout the process.

The MPO and GNRC Boards share your desire to ensure that rural and smaller communities are a priority. The Memorandum of Agreement adopted by the MPO and GNRC is built upon ten shared goals, one of which is to "Bridge the growing divide between rural and urban communities by responding to the unique nature of their respective challenges, and expanding opportunities for communities of all sizes to benefit from regional plans and investments." The make-up of the Joint Committee membership is one way in which we have engaged rural communities in this process. Not only do multiple members of the committee represent rural towns or counties, the current chair of the Middle Tennessee Rural Planning Organization is a member and has been active in these efforts along with other RPO members.

In your letter, you expressed concern about the fiscal aspects of the potential integration. We agree that addressing this issue is critical and we have taken steps to understand the implications for MPO and GNRC members as well as the MPO's current fiscal agent, the Metropolitan Planning Commission of Nashville-Davidson County. Regardless of the final outcome of this process, we share your interest in ensuring that federal transportation dollars are spent appropriately. The good news is that GNRC is set up very well to track MPO revenue and expenses. As you know, the GNRC manages several grant programs under contract to various state and federal agencies, including TDOT. The agency has a sophisticated payroll system that is built upon web-based timesheets, which ensures staff time is billed to the appropriate funding sources. GNRC is accustomed to generating detailed invoices and progress reports for its grant funders and is regularly audited according to State of Tennessee guidelines established by the Office of the Comptroller.

You also indicate that no other MPO and development district have merged in Tennessee. While this is true, there are varying examples of MPO sponsorship across our state. Some are situated wholly within a single local government, others are housed at city-county regional planning commissions. In addition, there are numerous examples of MPOs operating within a council of government across the United States, particularly in regions as complex as the Nashville area. As staff, we have worked in earnest alongside the leadership of the Joint Committee to conduct extensive outreach to regional councils in peer regions to identify best practices as it relates to the administration of grant programs and operations.

Should the MPO and GNRC integrate, we are committed to ensuring that all federal planning requirements are not only met, but that this MPO builds upon its history of implementing national best practices, which has been commended in the last two federal certification reviews. As the MPO, the GNRC will continue to produce a Unified Planning Work Program to detail how it proposes to use federal transportation dollars to develop and manage the Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan. The policies and procedures that exist today to ensure the effective administration of the MPO managed funds will continue throughout the implementation phase of integration.

Again, thank you for your support of and participation in this endeavor. We look forward to working with you as we move through the next phase of this process.

Sincerely,



Michelle Lacewell
Interim Director

CC: Toks Omishakin, Deputy Commissioner, Environmental and Planning Bureau, TDOT
Tanisha Hall, Director, Long Range Planning Division, TDOT
Mayor Hutto, MPO Chairman
Mayor Reed, MPO Vice-Chair and Joint Committee Co-Chair
Mr. Michael Skipper, Executive Director, GNRC
Members of the MPO/GNRC Joint Committee



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2/13/2017

Michelle Lacewell
Interim Director
Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization
800 Second Avenue South
P.O. Box 196300
Nashville, TN 37219

Dear Michelle,

In the summer of 2016, it came to our attention that the Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Greater Nashville Regional Council established a joint committee, the purpose of which was to determine possibilities for increased collaboration among the two entities. We commend you for this effort. Increased intraregional collaboration across the rural and metropolitan areas of Middle Tennessee will be vital to the successful coordination of growth in the years to come.

It is our current understanding that the initial study and recommendation phase of this process has been completed, and that the Nashville MPO and the GNRC are tentatively moving forward with the process of a merger that will fully integrate the MPO program and leadership structure into the Greater Nashville Regional Council. The next steps as we understand them will include more detailed analysis of the potential challenges that lie ahead, followed by formal recommendations from the joint committee, then formal adoption and implementation.

We commend you for this approach on such a complex undertaking. As you move forward in this process, please take note of the following requests that the Tennessee Department of Transportation has at this time:

- 1) Please continue to ensure that the merger process is conducted as transparently and objectively as possible. This is a new undertaking in the State of Tennessee, and there are questions and concerns that will likely arise from time to time given its complexity. To that end, please continue to work toward a goal of ensuring

maximum public engagement. We would request that news releases be generated and community meetings be held to inform and educate the public on the proposed changes. Gaining sufficient public engagement in the process will assist us in clearly articulating our goals, and helping create a better final result for all communities involved.

- 2) Please spend time discussing and analyzing the impact this change will have on the smaller and more rural communities within the impacted area. As you know, investment in and development of our State's rural areas is a top priority for the State of Tennessee. Please ensure that steps are taken to ensure that these areas have a voice as this process unfolds, and that policies and procedures of the organization that emerges from this process are structured in a way to ensure these communities' concerns are heard and addressed.
- 3) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, please ensure that this process devotes sufficient time and thought to the fiscal aspects of this merger. We agree that the absorption of the Nashville MPO into the Greater Nashville Regional Council presents many opportunities for fostering a more holistic regional planning approach. However, as you know, TDOT and FHWA recommend that the federal funds utilized by the MPO and GNRC continue to be allocated and spent properly following the merger. The importance of this component of the undertaking simply cannot be emphasized enough. As was mentioned earlier, this is a new endeavor in the State of Tennessee—it has never been done before. As such, there is a reasonable concern that mistakes and misunderstandings can happen with the fiscal aspects of this merger. This point is obvious, but it bears emphasis—*the fiscal aspects of the GNRC/Nashville MPO merger should be handled seamlessly—there shouldn't be a "learn as we go" approach to the use of the Federal funds involved.* Accordingly, we request that you work with TDOT and FHWA during the transition process to ensure that the proposed fiscal policies and procedures of the merged organization meet all established expectations and requirements.

Again, we congratulate you on this noteworthy undertaking. We here at TDOT look forward to working with you as continue to move forward in this process. If I can be of assistance in any way, please don't hesitate to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



Larry McGoogin
Assistant Director, Long Range Planning Division, TDOT

cc: Toks Omishakin, Deputy Commissioner, Environmental and Planning Bureau, TDOT
Tanisha Hall, Director, Long Range Planning Division, TDOT