Transportation Advocacy Coalition Meeting

January 23, 2012
6:30pm-8:30pm
UNO CPACS Room 132D

Notes

Attending: Curtis Bryan, Mike Helgerson, Nancy Flearl, Sarah Sinovic, Greg Stachon, Lance Brisbois, Chris Rolling, Eric Williams, Patrick, McAtee, Kurt Goetzinger, Ryan McClure, Carlos Morales, Mark Siepker, Julie Harris, Angie Eikenberry, Sloan Dawson, Jacob, D'Shawn Cunningham.

Presentation on Transportation Policy Process

Typical process: Tax revenues from Federal Highway Trust Fund go into pot of money from gas taxes to pay for transportation. Any funds from FHTF must go to streets classified as "major collector" or higher in the Federal Functional Classification System. Streets that meet this standard are called "Federal-aid streets." Our cities focus use of Federal funds on arterial streets (e.g. Dodge, Maple, Center Sts).

Federal funding and some state funding go to cities and counties through federally-mandated metro planning org (MPO—our MPO is MAPA, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency), which prepares long range transportation master plan. MPOs make sure local govts work together. In practice, MPOs vary a lot across the country. In our region, very decentralized approach. MPO not a taxing authority; fulfills technical role to ensure funds are spent according to some larger vision. Transportation usually done in large, multi-year increments. Pressure from fed govt recently to develop objective criteria to score projects going through MPO. Fed funds that go through MPO are for capital projects on Federal-aid streets, not maintenance (resurfacing could count as capital project, new road construction).

In Nebraska, we have Dept of Roads (NDOR), not Dept of Transportation. Only highway and roads funding go through NDOR. Discretionary programs such as TIGER, Transportation Enhancement Program (work through state govt). Pattern is generally the same, need to work through the federal system.

Project formation process—local govt scope project out (determine a purpose and need); submitted to MPO to go after federal funding. These projects are listed in the regional transportation improvement program—TIP). Local funding for projects done through local capital improvement program (CIP)—roster of local projects. These are two important documents to monitor. CIP covers anything the city will spend money on (transportation, parks, etc.). Some CIP projects do not go through MPO, depending on whether the street is recognized as a Federal-aid street.

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will influence CIPs for coming years. CIPs can go

through MPO or try to fund elsewhere. State comes in at project delivery side—project manager at NDOR. NDOR could have more say at beginning of process but generally MPOs work with jurisdictions to determine project purpose and need, scope, etc.

Transit is not regulated by NDOR but by the Nebraska Public Service Commission (NPSC). The NPSC has oversight over transit, pipelines, and other major infrastructure areas. NPSC does not actively regulate. Metro can get funding directly from Fed govt; in other states would go through Dept of Transportation. Metro does not go through CIP or TIP process. Metro a corporate entity of the City of Omaha. Does not seem to publish a budget or annual report for the public to view. Board of Metro appointed by Mayor; ED reports to board. Main oversight is Mayor of Omaha. Seemingly not much chain of public oversight. Transit agencies have to have fare rule recovery of 20%--federal guidelines. Metro can get more money for capital expenses but not lot of money for maintenance of running the buses. Metro has authority to levy taxes within the boundaries of the City of Omaha.

Opportunities to influence—when jurisdiction is forming a project (project feasibility phase); written comment opps on the regional TIP; every 5 years public meetings around transportation plan; projects already getting built possible to stop things but lot of resistance. How can we have influence on local projects? Look at the project CIP list as soon as published. Monitor newspaper. Also participate in planning processes. After, make sure planning and CIP align. Also can contact city council members about projects. Elected officials key to getting involved. Another strategy for influence is to get people into key positions such as Metro board, Planning board, etc.

Plans, Policies and Organizations to Monitor/Engage

Plans:

- City of Omaha transportation master plan
- Sustainable communities (MAPA)
- Regional transit and multi-modal corridor plan (MAPA)
- Alternative analysis [see recent not fully on target story in OWH: http://www.omaha.com/article/20120127/NEWS01/701279876]
- Pottawattamie County trails master plan (http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Pottawattamie-County-County-wide-Trail-Planning-Committee/154805487962052)

Key documents:

- TIP published by MAPA in March
- CIP published by City in August

Current Issues/Policies

- City pedicab ban (more info here: http://modeshiftomaha.org/2012/01/05/cws-pedicab-negotiations-continue/).
- LB 747: Revokes Nebraska's signature to Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact. Public hearing is Jan. 31 at 1:30pm.

- LB 1030: Introduces 3-ft passing law. Public hearing Feb. 6.

Organizations to Engage/Monitor:

- Metro board (need someone to attend monthly board meetings); [also, new opening on Metro board just announced: http://www.cityofomaha.org/mayor/mayors-office-home/archives/2143?tw_p=twt)
- Natural Resource Districts: http://www.nrdnet.org/
- Omaha city council (need someone to review agendas weekly)
- Planning board (need someone to monitor)
- Nebraska unicameral (need someone to monitor key bills)
- National Park Service
- Federal Transportation policy

Updates on current work being done by our respective groups

Mode Shift Omaha:

- Presentation/information about transportation and urban design
- Mobilization around transportation policies/issues
- Engagement in transportation master plan
- Coalition building
- Planned: coffee chat

Omaha Bikes:

- Bike education and cyclist support
- Bike to ballpark
- Bike advocacy

YP Transportation:

- Mobilization around transportation policies/issues
- B(us) stop project (http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Bus-stop/218681608208970)
- YP Summit
- Invite to POs?
- YP election debate
- Curbside chat

City/MAPA:

- Advocacy advance (Oct)
- Heartland Active Transportation Summit (Sep)

Other Activities/Ideas

- Engage business/corporate community
- Engage citizens/public
- Work towards dedicated funding for active transportation--% campaign (research other cities)

- Meetings with policymakers
- Representation on key boards
- Monitor key documents/policymaking bodies
- Participate in planning processes
- Mobilize around shared issues
- Build communication channels