



Project Selection Subcommittee

Date: Wednesday, April 6, 2022
Time: 11:00 am
Location: DeKalb County Highway Department
1826 Barber Greene Road, DeKalb, IL 60115

Attendance:

Voting Members

City of DeKalb: Zac Gill (Chair)
City of Sycamore: Mark Bushnell
Town of Cortland: Brandy Williams
DeKalb County: Nathan Schwartz

Non-Voting Attendance

DSATS Staff: Nathan Schwartz

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: Chair Gill called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Approval of Agenda (Action)**
Motion to approve the April 6, 2022 meeting agenda made by Ms. Williams; seconded by Mr. Bushnell; Motion approved unanimously.
- 3. Approval of Minutes (Action)**
Motion to approve the September 22, 2021 meeting minutes made by Mr. Bushnell; seconded by Ms. Williams; Motion approved unanimously.
- 4. Public Comments**
No public comments.

5. New Business

a. Review Project Selection Criteria

Chair Gill stated the City of DeKalb is supportive of improving certain university routes that are not FAU routes. An example included in the MPO's illustrative project list in the TIP is Lucinda Avenue. That particular route has ADA compliance concerns. Currently, the City has the Coordinated Traffic Signal Project scheduled for FY2023. The City is reprioritizing its projects and is placing more importance on roadway and ADA projects. Chair Gill inquired of the Committee's support of these new priorities. Mr. Schwartz informed the Committee that the State now requires STU projects to be on collector or arterial highways instead of FAP or FAS (FAU) routes. Mr. Schwartz stated staff performed a field visit and simple survey of the project limits. Based on the estimated areas and assumed improvements, a cost of \$2 million was estimated for improvements without full reconstruction.

Mr. Schwartz then discussed the current STU projects scheduled for DSATS. Ms. Williams suggested Cortland's Somonauk Road estimate was based on North Avenue's improvements. As the Somonauk Road project replaces the North Avenue project, the cost could probably be lowered from \$925,000.

After discussion, there was support to replace the Coordinated Traffic Signal project with the Lucinda Avenue project and move it to 2024. The Somonauk Road project in Cortland could be moved to 2023 from 2024.

Mr. Schwartz stated the official submittal of DSATS projects has already been submitted to IDOT for inclusion in the Multi-Year Program. The District has already submitted those projects to Central Office. We can inform District 3 of our request but will need to wait until the Multi-Year Program is released before we formally request changes.

Mr. Gill asked the Committee if there is support to prioritize a reconstruction project every 2 or 3 years instead of focusing primarily on resurfacing projects. While the project scores may not support a reconstruction, maybe the MPO should provide more variety in the project types. Ms. Williams agreed it would be nice to have more variety of projects. She also stated there is value to maintaining roads in good condition rather than letting them fall apart and spending more to reconstruct them. Mr. Bushnell said he supports the selection project being not confined to certain categories of projects for any given year. He stated we tried separating the funding for small projects such as bike paths in the past. He followed up by stating Staff does a good job in recommending a variety of projects throughout the entire MPO for each local agency.

Mr. Schwartz stated in a previous year that a question arose from a non-voting member of the Subcommittee. The question was why are not the highest scoring projects selected all the time. The answer was that each agency prioritizes projects not just on the roadway improvements but related projects in the area. An example is the City of Sycamore changing their roadway priorities to coincide with watermain improvements. Furthermore, the Project Selection Criteria states the scoring is to be used as guidance in selecting the projects.

Mr. Schwartz stated on behalf of the County that he finds people are favorable in having many smooth roads rather than fixing one bad road. Even IDOT has updated their asset management plan to maintain existing roads in good condition instead of spending money using the "worst first" selection process. In addition to making a road during a County resurfacing project, the County adds a paved safety shoulder which improves safety, benefits alternate transportation, and reduces future maintenance costs. Therefore, to consider the project just maintenance because it is a resurfacing project is incorrect.

Mr. Schwartz stated the benefits of using the federal STU projects on a simpler, resurfacing project rather than a complex construction project. Due to more difficult approval process and overwhelming paperwork associated with federal funding, it is good practice to use federal funds for a simple project with very few pay items. Using local funds and state MFT dollars for a complicated project with many pay items reduces the paperwork and therefore saves time and money for engineering.

Ms. Williams stated she supports each agency prioritizing their own projects when submitting projects for STU funding.

Mr. Gill asked if there was pushback from residents about the funding getting spread around different communities. Ms. Williams stated her residents request bike paths to connect various neighborhoods. Also, her residents are ecstatic about getting federal funds to fix Somonauk Road as they would not be able to afford a project of that size with local funds only. Mr. Bushnell echoed the comments from Ms. Williams. As a community that rarely has seen any federal dollars from the MPO, the City is excited for the opportunity to partake in the available funding for needed projects.

Mr. Schwartz stated he has heard from County Board members who collectively cover the various areas of the DeKalb-Sycamore-Cortland area. They are appreciative in the MPO funds being spread to all areas of the community and not used on just a small handful of major projects in select locations. When we have multiple small projects spread out through the neighborhoods, residents are benefited where they specifically live, not just their general cities. It would be good to not discount the benefits of small projects.

Mr. Schwartz stated the scoring should not be the final determination in project selection as stated above. However, spreading projects evenly between local agencies is not the best solution either. Each local agency including the townships who have never used any funding could be compared by area, population, miles of eligible road, amount of traffic (vehicle miles traveled) on eligible roads, or other comparisons. Ensuring one agency does not use the lion's share of the money is important, taking turns for the funding may not be appropriate either. Some MPOs across the state have very complicated selection processes which try to address every conceivable issue. Those processes tend to be overly cumbersome.

To round off the discussion, it was agreed the current selection process is not getting complaints from the public. The spirit of the process should continue to be fair to all. It was agreed the Committee does a good job in reprioritizing projects when a high priority project arises. Mr. Schwartz stated staff will continue to work with each local

agency to best accommodate all projects.

Regarding the current STU projects and interest to include the Lucinda Avenue project, Mr. Schwartz will contact District 3 to find out the MPOs options.

6. Other Business

Mr. Schwartz reported he has interviewed a currently senior at NIU in the Geography Department who is a GIS student with experience with census blocks. DSATS has made an offer of employment to him.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Williams; seconded by Mr. Bushnell; meeting adjourned at 11:47 am.

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Project Selection Subcommittee at a subsequent meeting.