

# Regional Planning Advisory Council

Minutes of Wednesday, April 19, 2017

## RPAC Members Attending:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
1. Becky Adams	Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)
2. Sam Adams	Little Rock Air Force Base
3. Kay Kelley Arnold	City of Little Rock
4. Richard Brown	Pulaski County
5. Charles Cummings (Chair)	Freight/Goods Movement
6. Robin Freeman	Saline County
7. Becca Green	Rock Region Metro
8. Jeff Griffin (Alt.)	City of Bryant
9. Sybil Hampton	City of Little Rock
10. Paul Hastings	City of Little Rock
11. Jeff Hathaway	Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRRCC)
12. Susan Inman	Pulaski County
13. Todd Larson	City of North Little Rock
14. Bob Lyford	City of Little Rock
15. Sara McClain	City of Benton
16. Buckley O'Mell (Alt.)	LRRCC
17. Carolyn Shearman (Alt.)	Sierra Club
18. Patrick Stair	Sierra Club
19. Tom Sutton	Clinton National Airport
20. Jack Stowe	City of Maumelle
21. Regina Taylor	Youth Outreach
22. Amy Whitehead	City of Conway

## Guests:

1. Ben Browning	AHTD
2. Tom Fennell	Resident (Little Rock)
3. Barry Haas	Resident (Little Rock)
4. Noel Oman	<i>Arkansas Democrat-Gazette</i>
5. Pat Riley	Resident (Little Rock)
6. Carol Young	League of Women Voters, Pulaski County

## Metroplan Staff:

1. Lynn Bell	Graphics Specialist
2. Casey Covington	Deputy Director
3. Daniel Holland	Planner
4. Jonathan Lupton	Research Planner
5. Susan Markman	Transportation Planner
6. Jim McKenzie	Metroplan emeritus
7. Tab Townsell	Executive Director

## 1. Call to Order and Announcements

Chairman Charles Cummings called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM. The Council met at 501 W. Markham Street, Little Rock.

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Council considered the Minutes of March 15, 2017

**MOTION** by Ms. Inman, second by Dr. Hampton

"To accept the Minutes of March 15, 2017, as prepared."

**PASSED**

The approved Minutes will be posted to the RPAC webpage.

## 3. RPAC Introductions

A regular agenda item is to ask two members to take about five minutes to introduce themselves to their colleagues on the Council.

**Mr. Jeff Hathaway** represents the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce, and describes himself as a "lucky man." His family, which includes a blended total of six siblings, moved to Little Rock in 1965, and Mr. Hathaway has lived here continually since then. He and his wife are proud parents of three grown children. Professionally, Mr. Hathaway is owner of a commercial real estate business, The Hathaway Group, which was established by his father in 1974. Mr. Hathaway is active in real estate professional organizations and the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce. He emphasized that chambers of commerce represent and advocate for small businesses and for communities in general.

**Ms. Regina Taylor** is an at-large member, representing youth outreach. Ms. Taylor is also a lifelong resident of Little Rock. She and her husband have a 17-month-old son, Clay. Noting that she comes from a "scouting family" of troop leaders and members, Ms. Taylor is the Volunteer Experience Director at Girl Scouts, a career which she finds tremendously rewarding. Youth development is both a vocation and avocation for Ms. Taylor, who serves in a number of community and church-related programs targeted at connecting young people with resources, such as after-school care, food pantries, literacy and other programs that foster positive development. Ms. Taylor said that she always keeps young people and their future in central Arkansas at the forefront of her mind as she serves on RPAC.

## 4. Letter of Concern

Following the March meeting, a group of RPAC members sent a letter to Metroplan staff that expressed concern over the timeline. They were specifically concerned about taking a vote before the draft Environmental Assessment is completed in September.

Mr. Stair presented the concerns expressed in the letter and clarified that at this point the letter is intended to be informational.

**Mr. Stair:** Before voting to allow something of this magnitude - both in terms of scale and money - we need to assemble as much information as possible. While the

letter specifically mentions the Environmental Assessment (EA), the issue is bigger than that one item. We want to make certain that we have evaluated all the options - and that we have seen all the modeling of those options - so that we can feel confident we are getting the best return on this huge investment. This will be a structure that we will be stuck with for the next 40, 50 or more years, and one that will affect future generations. Let's make sure we get it done right.

Luckily, today the only vote we are taking is on recommending the plan amendment language that will go out for public comment; we are not voting on the amendment itself, and we are not voting on the TIP amendment. So, we still have a little breathing room for evaluating the project. However, we are looking at the preliminary modeling results. Many of us got a nice tour of heat maps presented and explained on foam-core boards, and we will hear more about the modeling later in this meeting. Those are good first steps. More is needed.

**Mr. Cummings:** Thank you, Patrick and all who took the time to share your concerns.

##### **5. *Imagine Central Arkansas Plan Amendment***

Mr. Browning began the presentation by thanking Metroplan staff for its outstanding work in assembling and presenting the modeling information on the poster boards and video.

**Mr. Browning:** Traffic modeling is a complicated matter and Metroplan staff and AHTD have been closely communicating. Even those of us with engineering backgrounds have difficulty dealing with the complexities of traffic modeling, especially when there are as many alternatives as we have with 30 Crossing.

One thing that is immediately clear from looking at the boards is that none of the alternatives will eliminate congestion, which is something we understood very early on in project development. In a corridor as complicated as I-30, with six major interchanges in a seven-mile segment, the question became, *how do you manage congestion in an urban corridor?* Keep in mind that congestion relief was only one of the objectives in the stated Purpose and Need. Infrastructure is another issue: the roadway pavement and bridge are old and need to be replaced. There are safety deficiencies: the inability to move wrecks off the travel lanes and to get emergency vehicles where they need to be; inadequate ramps, a whole host of other safety issues that have to be addressed. What we learned is that in order to make those improvements work, capacity improvements must also be incorporated in the design.

I think you all have a copy of a letter from AHTD's Director Scott Bennett. We were asked by Metroplan staff to write a letter that states the Department's views, what we think should happen going forward, with improvements outside of this project. You can see from the boards that, especially on I-630 and at the south terminal, congestion starts to appear. That congestion is not by the corridor, but as Casey has

explained previously, as you eliminate bottlenecks that currently exist in one area, that means you're getting traffic quicker to these other interstates that are feeding into and out of the 30 Crossing corridor. So, we're seeing bottlenecks at I-630 and I-30 in the future as the traffic is able to move safer and with more mobility. So, what do we do about those adjacent interstates as traffic begins to move more efficiently through the corridor? We are acknowledging the fact that there are issues, and we have a process in place where we look at those issues. On I-30, we have had a study underway for about 18 months. Consultants are just now bringing us their preliminary results, and what we are seeing is that I-30 from Benton all the way to south terminal does have some issues. There's a lot of traffic, a lot of development in communities to the west of Little Rock, which contribute to unique circumstances, especially west to east. As improvements are made west to east, we are starting to solve the traffic problems on that section of the corridor. You should see results within the next few months. We could never conduct a study of the entire system; we could never store up enough funds, and the study would be too complex. We study the system piece by piece instead, and I-30 is a central component to the whole system. We want to make sure we are creating that central component that will work with any future projects that are proposed on some of these outlying roadways. We believe that the alternatives we have been looking at go a long way to doing that, staging us to be able to address the mobility needs of the whole system.

Understand, that while we will continue to evaluate and address problems in the system, we will never be able to eliminate congestion in this urban core. We need to maximize safety and efficiency, and do the best we can to improve mobility, and keep in mind the local communities as well. Again, this is a partnership between the AHTD and Metroplan, and with you, the RPAC. We need to determine what is best for the region, together.

What we are asking today is not to add the project to the plan, because it is already there; and we are not adding funding, because it is already there - the CAP. What we need to do is add one more component to the improvement column. Currently, it's listed as rehabilitation (pavement and bridge) and operational improvements (referring to the six interchanges). As I said before, in order to improve the flow between those interchanges, we must add capacity. We could make the argument that the whole corridor is operational improvements, but when we start to add capacity to the extent that we are considering then we need to the words "major widening" to the description to ensure transparency. We want to be fully transparent in the process, by adding the words "major widening" to the current description.

I think we are holding questions until later in the presentation. At this point I'll turn it back to Casey.

**Mr. Covington:** I have a short presentation today. I want to make certain that you have staff's recommendation and that you have time to discuss this among

yourselves. We also wanted to make sure that you had the opportunity before the meeting to look at the modeling; I hope you all had the chance to do that. I want to emphasize that we are not asking you to critique the modeling at this point. We felt it was important that you and the public see this initial modeling, although it is only preliminary, because it details how the corridor impacts adjacent roadways. Our systems analysis supports the general conclusions of this modeling and we feel it is sufficient for now. Again, it is preliminary and will certainly be revised as other data become available.

As Ben said, this project is part of *Imagine Central Arkansas*. In Amendment 1, the description was changed to add the words "operational improvements and reconstruction" and we also added a footnote explaining the relationship of the project to NEPA and Metroplan's process. The cost was also updated.

The State has now asked us to add the words "major widening" to the project description, so that the description will specify "operational improvements, major widening, and reconstruction." They have also asked us to remove the footnote; as staff, we are recommending that portions of the footnote be retained, specifically the portion that deals with the TIP amendment.

There are two questions, the first of which is our focus today. What language is in the amendment that will go out for public comment? As Patrick mentioned earlier, we are not dealing with whether the amendment should be approved. Staff does not have a recommendation regarding approval of the amendment, but we have drafted an amendment that is consistent with federal regulations and that if ultimately approved, will meet our federal requirements.

There was a disclaimer that was included in the maps that were on display in the lobby and also in staff's write-up. The disclaimer was added at the request of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). FHWA has not had a chance to review the modeling. My understanding is that FHWA now has that material and is in the process of reviewing it. Also, the AHTD has emphasized that this modeling is not in its final form and has therefore requested that the disclaimer be added to the maps and to staff write-up. From staff's standpoint, it is clear that the modeling all points to the same conclusions regarding impacts on other projects, and that's why we are comfortable moving forward with showing you the initial results. However, if additional modeling were to show significantly different results, we would come back to you and begin the process again. Again, since we are three years into this process, I think the level of detail we have now is sufficient to gauge the impacts outside of the 30 Crossing corridor.

In addition to the wording, a minor change has been made to the cost, for consistency with other documents. Also included is a section on illustrative projects. An illustrative project is one that is not funded but has been identified as needed. These three projects would be listed as illustrative until such time as they receive a

full commitment from the AHTD: (1) Interstate 30, from South Terminal to 65<sup>th</sup> Street; (2) I-30, from 65<sup>th</sup> Street to I-430, after widening to 65<sup>th</sup>; (3) I-630, from I-30 to University, working depending on the alternative chosen for 30 Crossing.

**The proposed amendment is attached to and hereby incorporated into these Minutes.**

The AHTD's request to add the words "major widening" to the descriptive language of the project and remove the footnote. Metroplan staff advises retaining portions of the footnote that pertain to the TIP process and the Metroplan Board's final approval as part of it. As part of the write-up, Metroplan staff asked the RPAC to consider the following options:

- Option 1 - Approve the AHTD's requested language and add the widening of I-30 between the south terminal interchange and 65<sup>th</sup> Street. The project would be shown as illustrative until it received funding commitment from the AHTD, at which time it would be moved to the financially constrained plan. (Note that Federal Highway Administration staff is of the opinion that this project should be part of the financially constrained plan, because it is included in the micro-simulation modeling.)
- Option 2 - Approve the AHTD's requested language and add the widening of I-30 between the south terminal interchange and 65<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, include selected improvement projects to I-30 between 65<sup>th</sup> and I-430, based on findings of the I-30 Corridor Study, currently in progress. Projects would be shown as illustrative.
- Option 3 - Approve Option 2 and add widening and operational improvements to I-630 from I-30 to University Avenue to eight lanes. Projects would be shown as illustrative until funding commitment was forthcoming from the AHTD. The impact to I-630 is greater in the six plus CD lane alternative due to traffic being metered elsewhere in the 8 lane alternative.

The amendment as presented does three things. First, it addresses AHTD's request. Second, it is consistent with the Metroplan Board's approval of the six-lane policy waiver, although I recognize that this Council recommended against the exception. Third, it meets the federal requirement that MPOs must look at the system as a whole, integrated network.

**Mr. Townsell:** Before you begin the discussion I have an announcement about the public comment period. In addition to the 30-day period, Metroplan has scheduled a public hearing to give people an opportunity to speak directly to the Board of Directors - their elected officials. The hearing is set for 6:00 or 6:30 pm, on

Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, at the Ron Robinson auditorium in the River Market District. RPAC members are encouraged to attend. Staff will send out additional information.

**Mr. Sutton:** By including the three additional projects in the recommendation, are we giving approval for more waiver of the six-lane policy?

**Mr. Covington:** No. That would require a request for waiver. At this point we are not requesting a specific waiver, because corridor studies have not been completed and we don't know what work would be needed. However, in all likelihood there will be a request. I will say that in the case of I-30, I was pleased to see that the State is considering a managed lane option between South Terminal and Bryant. Still, that is adding a lane.

**Mr. Sutton:** Does RPAC's responsibility include looking at local streets?

**Mr. Covington:** To an extent, yes. We are supposed to look at the entire system as part of an integrated, multimodal network; however, local streets are the responsibility of the local jurisdiction. The NEPA process considers the surrounding area of streets and neighborhoods. We will have that information later, when the TIP amendment is considered.

**Mr. Sutton:** It's difficult to make a decision when the impacts on Little Rock streets are unknown. We are still looking at this project in isolation from the potential impacts on city streets.

**Mr. Covington:** I don't disagree with that at all. This is just a general plan amendment, and is consistent with all of the alternatives under consideration. You would not be approving a specific alternative, just the general amendment. Certainly, depending on the alternative selected, the impacts will be different on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets. It's my understanding that those considerations are part of the NEPA process and the final selection process. Potential impacts include not only traffic, but also community disruptions, noise and air quality impacts.

**Mr. Sutton:** Are those issues being addressed through agreements between the City of Little Rock and the AHTD?

**Mr. Browning:** As you are probably aware, the City of Little Rock brought Nelson Nygaard on as a consultant to the city on this project and to help with the decision making on the various pieces that impact the city. We've left that up to the city as to who it wants to bring into those discussions. Right now, it's mostly the city planning and engineering departments, Nelson Nygaard, and the AHTD. The decisions will need to be made at the city elected officials level, because the agreements are asking for commitments from the city. We've had an initial meeting and are looking toward a second meeting later this month to continue working on the language for

the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU will become part of the decision making process that goes into the Environmental Assessment.

**Mr. Cummings:** Casey, can you please go back to the slide that shows the amendment language?

**Mr. Covington:** Certainly. As you can see, the only actual change is the addition of the words "major widening." Staff has included the additional information for clarity and transparency, and for consistency with federal regulations pertaining to MPOs.

**Mr. Cummings:** Out of all the modeling data we've looked at, none of it solves congestion. We are going to spend all this money - hundreds of millions - knowing that it won't solve the problem. And then, three different bottlenecks are identified, which will also likely require widening or other improvement. And here is language that states the AHTD has made no commitment to funding those projects. To me, this makes no sense at all. If we are willing to amend the plan, knowing that we have looming bottlenecks in three different places, knowing that this \$600 Million-plus will not solve congestion, and the State is not willing to commit funds to those three additional projects, I am at a loss. It make no sense to me.

**Ms. Green:** I think that we do need to accept this proposed amendment today. Today's vote is on what we would be taking to the public, and the public needs to know these potential impacts and bottlenecks. It's about communicating what else is in the ether here. I understand that this is a complex project, and that there's not enough money to look at it holistically - which is surprising, because you should look at a system holistically - but still, this is a way to communicate some of the issues to the public.

**Mr. Covington:** To clarify, Metroplan does not include projects in the financially constrained long-range plan until funds have been identified, until the State has committed to funding the project. Until we have a written commitment, we will list the projects as illustrative.

**Mr. Browning:** Federal guidelines require MPOs to develop a much more rigorous 20-year long-range plan, that is project-specific and financially constrained. The financial constraint is really best-guesses based on current funding conditions. States do not have that 20-year requirement; we are constrained by a four-year plan. Beyond that, there are so many variables to consider, including national funding trends. For the AHTD, it doesn't make sense to commit to projects far into the future when we will have a different Commission, and different State and federal administrations, and different legislation. It's not practical to make commitments that far into the future. The purpose of illustrative projects is to acknowledge the probable future need; they act as a kind of place-holder for future funding. Also, traffic modeling is not a definitive predictor of traffic; it is one tool, our best guess of future conditions, which is another reason to wait and see what will happen. As we

continue to develop our rolling four-year plan, we determine how those funds should be allocated. That's why we can't make a concrete commitment at this time. It is a unique funding situation that is allowing us to handle the entire I-30 corridor at once. That has never been possible before, and may not be again. We typically have to address a section at a time. Instead of \$631 Million, we might take \$100 Million and take care of one section, and as funds become available, we'd take care of another section, and we would have known that with each section there would be cascading problems to address. We can take care of many of those problems now, with this 30 Crossing project. The letter from Scott Bennett indicates the level of commitment we can make on those future projects.

**Mr. Cummings:** I understand what you are saying about funding, but I think that the language could be softened; there should be some language stating how the AHTD is willing to work with the system on solving these additional projects - instead of just saying a flat "no, we're not going to do it".

**Mr. Browning:** I don't believe Scott Bennett is saying a flat no. He is saying that on I-30, the needs are being evaluated with a study that is underway now. The Commission has authorized a future study on I-630, and as you know, there is a lot of complexity associated with that corridor. So we're not saying no, we are saying that we will conduct studies to determine the needs, and then provide funding for addressing those needs, as appropriate.

**Mr. Cummings:** The word "no" is stated in the letter: "There has been no financial commitment." All I am saying is that it could be softened and explained better to make it clear that the State will work with the system to solve these problems.

**Mr. Browning:** That's not my language. That is Metroplan staff's language. It comes down to, what is the level of commitment. When we consider commitment, it has to be in our statewide, financially constrained four-year plan. We're saying we can't promise that at this time, because it is too far out of the four-year time frame.

**Mr. Sutton:** I apologize for leaving early. I have a commission meeting I must attend. Before I leave I want to say that in good conscience, I cannot recommend that this project go forward to the Board or for public comment, knowing what we know from traffic modeling indicating that by 2026 we will begin to have backups in this area; by 2040 it will be dysfunctional without these additional widenings. We talk about \$630 Million, but really we are asking the public to commit to \$4.5 Billion or more over the next 20-30 years, if we move in this direction. In good conscience, I cannot make a recommendation to the Board that we are saying to the public that we think this is something we ought to do. I'm not there.

**Ms. Whitehead:** So we are really looking at two things: First, adding major widening. But if we don't want to add the words major widening, then this is not necessary.

**Mr. Covington:** Good point, Amy.

**Mr. Griffin:** The pavement and bridge structure have reached the end of their useful life and need to be replaced. These amendments are to add lanes. The project must go forward to replace the deteriorating infrastructure. The question is whether we are going to increase capacity through the corridor and then evaluate the effect that will have on the rest of the system. To say that we are going to spend \$650 million and not fix the problem is painting with a broad brush and doesn't really look at the situation.

**Mr. Stair:** Three points: (1) We have to "paint with a broad brush," because the Highway Department as far as I know has never given us as part of the no-build option, a *minimal* option. We don't know the cost of simply replacing the current structure with a new bridge and six lanes. The only option we are given is "no build". (2) I understand the need for making this amendment that will go out to the public include information about widening for the I-30 project, but I hesitate to commit that the I-630 to 65th and I-430 improvements would necessarily include widening. While I like the idea of bringing it to the public's attention that the I-30 project includes these other components - the other needed improvements have been swept under the rug, and this will make it obvious - I don't like the implication that those improvements will automatically include widening. I think we should say, we need to study the impacts and there will be work but I think we are jumping the gun to flatly state that I-30 from 65th to I-430 will definitely include widening. (3) Lastly, regarding the cost estimate, if we find that there are additional costs will the amount be changed to reflect that? Those are my three comments. Thank you.

**Ms. Green:** I want to clarify with Casey what we are voting on today. Today, we're voting on what language we want to take to the public, and at our next meeting, we will be voting on what that amendment language would be in its final form. Is that correct?

**Mr. Covington:** No, that is not correct. At this point we are asking for the amendment language in its form that will go out to the public. We are not voting on the amendment itself, but the language should be in its final form.

**Ms. Green:** But is it possible that if this goes out to public comment, that at a future meeting - after reading the public comments and hearing what the people have to say - that we could amend this language in the final form?

**Mr. Covington:** That is possible; it is not uncommon, and if we received a lot of public comment that pointed to a different version of the amendment, that could be done. However, a newly-worded amendment would be subject to a second public comment period. Certainly, though, it is within this Council's purview to modify the language based on feedback from the public, and submit the recommended revised language to the Board.

**Ms. Green:** Then let me ask you a follow-up question. If this isn't included in the amendment language, and these three projects aren't part of the amendment, is there any way an average person, someone who has not been educated on this project - as the people in this room are - would know that these projects are potentially going to need to make an informed decision?

**Mr. Covington:** Yes and no. In the sense that all of our information is open to the public, yes. If somebody was able to pick up on that, then it would be made available. I think it would be *more clear* if the language was included in the amendment because it would be more specifically written.

**Dr. Hampton:** One of the things I think we have all learned is that there is no body in the State that takes responsibility for comprehensive transportation planning that does not have specific financial impact. I'm stunned by that. It means that this is being piecemealed together. We are backing into things of which we don't fully understand the long range implications. I think that's something we need to understand, it's really a flaw in this process. We need visioning to guide transportation development. We do not need a reactive plan. That is one of my concerns. The other is that I am not sure the public has a realistic understanding of the concept of congestion, and that this project will not resolve the public perception of congestion. We need to look at what contributes to livability. We spent a lot of time talking about what we want to see. I'm struck by how everything is being driven by the availability of funds, and the livability concepts are being tossed out the window.

**Mr. Lyford:** Casey, what narrative is going to accompany this amendment? I don't think it will be meaningful to just put it out for

**Mr. Covington:** That's still under consideration. At least a single-page invitation for the public to comment. We would be more than willing to provide presentations to any public groups who request that.

**Ms. Markman:** What we are aiming for is something concise that is in "plain English." I think that is what you were getting at. We will look to you for guidance, as well, so that the average resident will be able to grasp the complexities of this process.

**Dr. Hampton:** Can we actually say in the plan amendment, that although lots of planning has gone into the 30 Crossing project, and lots of proposals have been made, there will be impacts for which no planning has been done at his time? I really think that that's what I would like to see go out, so that people will not get lost in the amendment language, and that John Q. Public will understand what the dilemma is.

**Mr. Covington:** I'm going to pass this off to Tab, because I think while this will go out under both our signatures, as executive director of Metroplan and someone who has had a lot of experience talking with the public as part of his former job as mayor, Tab will have some ideas on this.

**Mr. Townsell:** I think it's fair to say Commissioners have not said definitively that it has the money to pay for all of the anticipated work on these other freeways. We have an obligation to look beyond the scope of this project. We are going to have impacts, here, here and here. To your point, Patrick, they may not be widening; they may be operational improvements. We can't say when, but we can say at some point in the next 20 years. We'll try to say it as clearly as possible in our narrative. And we will continue to take suggestions.

**Mr. Covington:** Two things you can help us with, and I thank you Dr. Hampton, for your comments on making that a clarification. The second thing, is this specifically what you want to put out, or do you want to revise this language? So I see two benefits from this Council. One, provide clarifications to staff, so that we can better express this to the public. Two, do we need to make changes to this before it goes to the public?

**Mr. Browning:** This will be quick. I know it's getting late but I want to address the issue of planning. There's a big difference in saying "no committed funding" and "no planning." There is a lot of planning at the State level. We're always planning decades into the future. Unfortunately, because we are not Texas, we do not have the amount of funds to do all the work we'd like to do.

**Dr. Adams:** Even if we had commitment for funding these additional projects, they are still not consistent with our plan, because they would still involve widening beyond six lanes. I'm a little confused, because right now "reconstruction and operational improvements" are shown in the plan. We are adding "major widening" but I don't see an alternative that includes operational improvements without widening. Several times over this process I've heard that this main project is in our plan, so if we put this in the plan, it's almost as if we have given tacit waivers to these additional widening projects. I understand that the narrative is very important, if this amendment is approved, can we make it clear that other alternatives besides just widening will be explored?

**Mr. Cummings:** Thank you. So the question before us is do we want to recommend that this be put out for public comment. After the public comment period is over and summarized, we will still have an opportunity for input.

**Ms. Whitehead:** You know, we've already had a lot of public input on this, and most of it has said, we don't want major widening. I feel like we already have the public's comments on this issue. I don't feel the need to even put this out again for public comment.

**Mr. Green:** I think it would help us all to remember that this amendment is in response to the request from the AHTD; we have to respond to that request. Two, this is consistent with what the Board has previously voted to approve a waiver the six lane policy. I know that is contrary to what many of us wished and advised, but we are an advisory body to the Board, and the Board is the policy making and voting body. So this amendment is consistent. Third, this amendment is in compliance with federal regulations of looking at an integrated transportation network. I think the most important thing for us to do as the advisory council is to put this amendment and the accompanying language out to the public, because it signals to the public that these are other areas that will be impacted. I understand that people have issues with the funding - perfectly reasonable to ask if money will be available, considering that our current legislative session just failed to pass a bill on highway funding; however, I think that all of this information needs to go out to the public so that everybody can know what we are dealing with as an advisory council. If we don't, this may be the only opportunity we have to get this out to the public. The public hearing that Metroplan is hosting is a very good thing. It would show the community that we really do talk about on a regular basis a truly integrated regional transportation network. That's what we do here.

**MOTION** by Ms. Green, second by Mr. Stowe

"To recommend to the Metroplan Board that the amendment be released for public comment with the language as presented; further, to include the additional text to Section 7.5.1 Freeways, also as presented."

**Discussion:** Mr. Larson clarified that the Board has only waived the six-lane policy for this 30 Crossing project. Mr. Covington confirmed that the Board confined its exception to the I-30 corridor. Mr. Stair stated that this will be an opportunity to inform not only the public but also the Metroplan Board of the potential consequences of the I-30 widening. Ms. McClain commented that the narrative should include mention of an ongoing 18-month study that will determine what future I-30 improvements to Benton could look like. Ms. Whitehead expressed concern that by putting this out for public comment, the public might think it is being recommended, which it is not. Ms. Whitehead and others asked that the narrative be clear on that point.

**PASSED with 17 in favor and 1 abstention, two members having left the meeting before the vote**

## **6. Other Business**

No other business was brought forward.

## **7. Next Meeting**

There will not be a meeting in May. The next meeting will be at 11:30 AM, on Wednesday, June 21<sup>st</sup>. Confirmation and meeting material will be sent at least one week prior to the date.

**9. Adjourn**

With no further business brought forward, the Chairman called for a Motion to adjourn.

**MOTION** by Mr. Lyford, second by Ms. Freeman

"To adjourn."

**PASSED: Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM**