

MEETING DATE: August 17, 2011

LOCATION: NCTCOG Transportation Council Room

TIME: 3:15 pm

PARTICIPANTS: David Boski, Chair
Dave Carter, Vice Chair
Deb Humphreys, NCTCOG
Karla Weaver, NCTCOG
NCTCOG Staff, BPAC Members and BPAC Partners

MEETING PURPOSE:

TxDOT's Increased Emphasis on Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities; FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation and Safety; Developing a Regional Complete Streets Policy

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Approval of May 18, 2011 Minutes – Chair, David Boski

The minutes of the May 18 meeting were approved as written. Dave Carter (M); Lori Grinnan (S). There was no discussion and the motion was carried.

2. Events and Training – Dave Carter

Dave Carter reviewed the future events and training opportunities, including the following webinars:

- ADA Compliance: Self-evaluation and Transition Plans on September 12,
- Multimodal Level of Service webinar on October 19, and
- Creating Walkable Streets: An Overview of Legal Issues on September 22.

Conference opportunities included:

- Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) Conference on Performance Measures for Transportation, September 7-8 in Austin, TX,
- NHC's Solutions for Sustainable Communities, September 26-28 in Washington, DC,
- 5th Mid-America Trails and Greenways Conference, October 2-5, 2011 in Fort Wayne, IN,
- Walk21: The International Conference on Walking and Sustainability, October 3-5 in Vancouver, BC, Canada.
- Rail-Volution, October 16-19 in Washington, DC.
- New Partners for Smart Growth Conference, February 2-4, 2012, in San Diego, CA, and
- Pro Walk/Pro Bike® 2012, September 10-13, 2012 in Long Beach, CA.

Additional opportunities announced by BPAC members included:

- TextITE's Texas District meeting in Garland, September 14-16, 2011. Topics include Sustainable Communities and Bicycle Planning in North Dallas.
- The City of McKinney is sponsoring a Complete Streets seminar hosted by National Complete Streets Coalition the following week. A report will be provided to BPAC.
- The Texas Trails and Active Transportation Conference will be held February 1-6, 2012 in San Antonio, TX.

3. TxDOT's Increased Emphasis on Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities – Scot Smith

Scot Smith with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) - Fort Worth District presented TxDOT's Memorandum on Increased Emphasis for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities. Scot informed BPAC members of the impetus behind the memorandum – why TxDOT did it, and what the policy says about incorporating bike and pedestrian facilities during the project development process. The Memorandum differentiates

between urban and rural settings. There are three types of facilities within the urban context. Scot also provided the definition and understanding of what an outside widened lane means within the context of the Memorandum.

Scot gave the background and reasoning on why TxDOT developed the Memorandum. In March 2010, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued a Policy and Guidelines that emphasized an increased commitment to and investment in bike facilities and walking networks. The Policy also encourages the incorporation of safe and convenient walking and biking facilities into transportation projects, with the goals of reduced congestion, and safer, more sustainable developments in neighborhoods. TxDOT wanted to incorporate the USDOT Policy into its way of doing business

TxDOT's Memorandum state the time to address bike and pedestrian elements is early on in the development process. TxDOT should consider any proposed local, city and MPO plans that are in place and design guidance is in accordance with Texas Accessibility Standards and Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (TAS/ADAAG), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Bicycle Design Guide, and TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual (RDM). The place to address bike/pedestrian elements in the project development process is in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. The Needs and Purpose language includes proposed bike and pedestrian facilities and the linkage to transit stops or corridors; and, if no bike or pedestrian facilities are provided, then it should be documented and stated why no such facilities are planned in a particular project.

The urban settings addressed in the Memorandum outline three types of projects. First, the project is within the existing Right-of-Way (ROW) and the scope is within the existing typical section; for example, overlaying of roadways, spot repairs, and surface treatments. The Memorandum says to remove barriers (add curb ramps), and accommodate bicyclists by restriping when practical. Second, projects within existing ROW and scope and include pavement widening. Here the Memorandum says to accommodate bicyclists by widening pavement to provide a dedicated outside bike lane. Also, ensure existing ADA curb ramps comply with current standards and reconstructing or adding sidewalks to ensure a continuous ADA-compliant pedestrian route. Third, where ROW must be acquired, provide desired roadway, bike and sidewalk geometric values.

The TxDOT definition of the widened outside lane is a 14-foot shared use lane as a minimum. Width is measured from the gutter pan to the lane stripe or from the edge stripe to lane stripe when no gutter is included. A diagram was shown.

In rural settings, the Memorandum states this is for off-system roadway projects with an average daily traffic (ADT) of 400 vehicles or greater. For ADT of less than 400, the Memorandum does not apply. For on-system roadway projects, it does not matter what ADT is; the Memorandum must be consulted. Where a bridge or bridge deck is being replaced or rehabilitated, a 5-foot shoulder should be provided on the structure and along the adjacent barrier. Also, shoulders outside of the bridges should remain the same as shown in the RDM.

Scot opened the discussion to questions.

Q. Where can we find the Memorandum? Is it available on TxDOT's website?

A. I do not know if they are published. The information I have came from the Memorandum sent from TxDOT administration to the Districts. If the PowerPoint presentation is available for the public, it will be posted on the NCTCOG Bike and Pedestrian web page. Deb said that the memo with the issues is available on TxDOT's website, and will be linked from NCTCOG's website.

Q. Does the Memorandum address where roads run underneath a TxDOT bridge?

A. At a minimum, it should incorporate that widened outside lane or an on-street bike lane of some sort, if work is being done to reconstruct that area. It is hard to retrofit unless you rebuild the entire structure because of those columns. It needs to be addressed in planning documents, but for retrofitting, it may be difficult.

Q. I understand the retrofit is difficult, but are you saying it should be reviewed or it will be done when you do over- and underpasses, new construction, or are you remaking them because these absolutely define where we can put in routes or facilities? Because it will absolutely cut in half or quarter your city and there is nothing the city can do about it. Are you saying that new bridges and such are going to accommodate this over and under?

A. If we are building a new structure, or rebuilding a structure from the ground up, then the way I read these guidelines is we need to consider it during the planning process.

Q. Being considered doesn't necessarily mean it will be done. What I have heard is, 'we considered it but there isn't currently a plan to take us there.' The city didn't currently have a bike lane or plans up this road, so it didn't need to be done. Is that the consideration? It wasn't planned there so we won't make it happen?

A. I haven't come across that yet with these guidelines, but what I think is that is a chance to weigh in and document why it should be done, that you do have plans to bring it to an on-system facility, and it should be addressed in the NEPA document.

Q. I have heard differing things from various municipalities who have projects working with TxDOT now, which are being designed or ready to go to construction. There is some concern as they hadn't acquired the necessary ROW that maybe their Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) projects would get held up. Are these guidelines for TxDOT roadways or any roadway where TxDOT funding is being implemented, or are they only for projects in the planning stage? How are you deciding which ones, at what point does this trigger?

A. The guidelines say that any project that is let after August 2011 should follow these guidelines. Any project already in the planning stages when these came out should follow the guidelines. Anything that involves TxDOT administering federal funding subject to these guidelines, Category 7 Surface Transportation Program – Metropolitan Mobility (STP-MM) or CMAQ – will fall under this. Whether or not it is practical to address these guidelines is another story.

Q. How does TxDOT determine which roadway projects are going to get sidewalks, and how do you determine when sidewalks are required when new businesses come in to permit on TxDOT ROW?

A. If we are going to overlay the roadway, the only requirement under the guidelines is to provide curb ramps; it doesn't mean we have to put sidewalks in. Maintaining the system is one of the priorities under existing funding. If the guidelines say we don't have to put in sidewalk for the full length if doing an overlay, we are just preserving the pavement section. If we can't afford to maintain the system because we have to incorporate sidewalks, if the project becomes unfeasible, the pavement could deteriorate and would be of no benefit to anybody.

Q. How does safety play into that factor? Are there safety studies that say there is a certain disabled population that would require sidewalks specifically for wheelchair or other disability?

A. In the past we were not compelled to put in sidewalks the full length of the project. Under these guidelines it is saying if we are going to widen the pavement, then it needs to be considered. Pretty much we have had to include sidewalks in all of our major projects. Perhaps with some of these overlays, we haven't been doing that, but any widening project we have been including sidewalks.

4. FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation and Safety – Stephen Ratke

Stephen Ratke presented on the topics of the bicycle and pedestrian accommodation policy and safety considerations, and available resources. In March 2010, under Ray LaHood, the USDOT put out a Policy on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations. The purpose was to support livability, active transportation, and modal choice. We want well-connected networks, and accommodations for people of all ages and abilities. The rationale is to foster safer, more livable family-friendly communities; promote physical activity and health; and reduce vehicle emissions and fuel use. These are not new in terms of law, we are just emphasizing the policy more.

The USDOT policy statement includes:

- *Incorporate* safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects.
- Transportation agencies have the *responsibility* to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems.
- Transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standard to *provide safe and convenient facilities* for these modes.

TxDOT's policy is committed to proactively plan, design, and construct facilities to safely accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. A major tool to achieve this is through the NEPA documentation. When the Policy mentions 14-foot outside lanes, that is a minimum. It is important to note that the 14-foot outside lane is clear of gutter width. The FHWA's implementation includes reviewing all environmental documents for bike and pedestrian accommodations. They look for justification of everything being done to accommodate bikes and pedestrians. If some level of accommodation is not going to be met, FHWA must have a good explanation as to why. FHWA also looks at design schematics, reviewing if the minimum is provided, and is there justification for enhanced facilities.

FHWA has four focus safety focus areas:

1) intersection fatalities; 2) run off the road fatalities; 3) speeding related fatalities; and 4) pedestrian fatalities. In the pedestrian safety area, newsletters and webinars are available. Technical assistance and training are also available. FHWA defines a focus state as one where FHWA feels they can focus efforts in the four above-named areas to try to achieve results that move numbers on a national level. Pedestrian focus states are those with over 150 pedestrian deaths or fatality rate above 2.5 per 100,000 population. These states include California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Washington DC, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. FHWA is currently revising the focus state areas, and will continue to have the pedestrian focus area. More direct technical assistance will be available. There will be increased emphasis on accommodation of pedestrians in work zones. As a minimum, during construction/re-construction of a roadway, the existing level of ADA accommodation should be maintained throughout the project.

In 2009, Texas averaged 347 pedestrian deaths per year. That is a 21 percent decrease from 443 in 2008. The statewide fatality rate is 1.64 per 100,000 population which is close to the national average.

Transportation for America issued the "Dangerous by Design 2011" document which ranked the largest 52 metro areas for what is called the danger index. By this index, number nine is Houston-Sugar Lane-Baytown, and Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington is Number 10. The analysis was based on 10 years of fatalities, population, and percent walking to work data. Specific statistics for Dallas County are 522 pedestrian fatalities between 2000 and 2009, accounting for 21.8 percent of all traffic deaths. Tarrant County statistics were 258 pedestrian fatalities between 2000 and 2009, for 17.8 percent of all traffic deaths. These numbers include all facility types, including public highways. Looking specifically at the top 20 cities in the country with the highest number of fatalities, Dallas was number 6 with 33 pedestrian fatalities in 2009; Fort Worth was number 14 with 17 fatalities in 2009. By rate per population, Dallas was number 14 at 2.57 per 100,000 population; and Fort Worth was number 16 at 2.46 per 100,000 population.

FHWA has developed nine proven safety countermeasures that if widely implemented can achieve reductions in fatalities and serious injuries; three are applicable to pedestrian safety. They are: median and pedestrian refuge area; walkways; and road safety audits. In conclusion, when talking about providing for bicycle and pedestrian, it is now expected by Policy to increase options for the general public, enhance livability, improve safety, and use basic reliable tools. Stephen provided several links for resources.

5. Developing a Regional Complete Streets Policy – Deb Humphreys

Deb provided a recap of the Regional Complete Streets Policy from the May BPAC meeting.

What are Complete Streets? Complete Streets are safe, comfortable, and convenient for travel for everyone, regardless of age or ability – motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation riders.

How are the needs of all users being addressed? What Complete Streets are not – they are not prescriptive; a bike lane on every roadway; or something that happens overnight.

How can a roadway benefit our community? A Complete Streets Policy ensures that the entire ROW is planned, designed and operated to provide safe access for all users. Complete streets can benefit communities by increasing capacity, improving safety, better health, economic growth, lower emissions, reduce costs, smarter growth, and provide choices.

There is tremendous potential in the US to switch modal uses. Fifty percent of all US trips are under three miles. Twenty-eight percent are one mile or less; seventy-two percent of trips one mile or less are driven. Walking is the second most common form of travel representing 10.9 percent of all trips.

At the May 18 BPAC meeting, the Complete Streets Policy idea was presented, followed by discussion. Main items discussed were that the policy should allow flexibility at the local level; and should be consistent with NCTCOG working documents such as Mobility 2035, etc. The policy was drafted during June and July 2011. The draft document was available online, and was provided as a handout.

The policy statement was broken out into seven sections.

1. Background

The background focuses on how the complete streets idea came about. Mobility 2035 supports bike/pedestrian programs and identified goals, and the planning elements that also support this.

2. Consistency with Federal and State Guidance and Regulation

This started with Congress ISTEA, TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU; the USDOT Policy Statement on Bike and Pedestrian Accommodation; and the TxDOT Guidelines Emphasizing Bike and Pedestrian Accommodations memorandum. These are detailed out to show how they support a complete streets policy statement.

3. Policy Statement

At the May BPAC meeting, it was decided that the statement was to be used as guidance, and not perceived as a requirement. Local entities could choose to use all or parts of the Policy. Its intent was that local governments would consider all modes of transportation during the planning, design, construction, and operation phases. The Policy strongly encourages local governments to adopt their own complete streets policy.

There are two main policy statement components. The Regional Transportation Council (RTC) seeks to (1) Plan for and program projects that fully integrate and balance the needs of all street users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, motor vehicles, commercial vehicles and emergency responders. Users of all ages and abilities will be considered. (2) The complete streets implementation strategies will apply to street projects including construction, reconstruction, and maintenance.

4. Implementation Strategies

A. NCTCOG will integrate complete streets criteria into the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); products of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. NCTCOG will also promote the use of Context Sensitive Solutions planning.

B. NCTCOG will support the development of a complete system of bikeways and pedestrian facilities, including the continued development of the Regional Veloweb, and planning of context-appropriate facilities.

5. Local Implementation Guidance

NCTCOG would like local governments to use this section as a planning tool. NCTCOG encourages project sponsors to consider bicyclists and pedestrians in the planning and design of all proposed projects, regardless of funding source. This section also encourages all jurisdictions to utilize key strategies for all transportation projects. These include planning, design, construction, and operations.

6. Exceptions

Exceptions should be rare. The policy encourages local governments to adopt an official Complete Streets exception process that involves enhanced public input and to officially document exceptions when they occur.

7. Evaluation

Evaluate and update the Policy at least annually, and allow for future amendments to the Policy.

The Resolution Supporting Complete Streets in North Central Texas, included in the handout, is the actual resolution BPAC will be presenting to the RTC for adoption. Once BPAC is ready to move forward with it, the Resolution, which includes seven sections, will be taken to RTC for adoption. The RTC will be asked to adopt the Policy Statement; commit to its implementation; and encourage local governments to utilize the 'NCTCOG Complete Streets Policy Statement Overview' (also provided as a handout).

Deb continued with why it is necessary to have a policy. It is important to change practice, integrating the needs of all road users into everyday transportation planning and design practices; to gradually create a complete network of roads that serve all users; to save money in the long run by getting the project right the first time; and to provide innovative transportation planners and engineers with the political and community support for doing things differently.

After presenting the draft policy to BPAC, the following next steps were listed. A comment period would be open until September 16, 2011. The draft policy will go to the Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC) for information in October, and to RTC as information in November. It will be brought back to BPAC for approval at the November 16 meeting, and presented again to STTC and RTC respectively for approval as the schedule allows in the immediately following months.

Deb opened up the meeting for further discussion and comments from the members.

Comment was received that the Policy looked a great deal like the legislation that was presented in Austin for consideration as a State Complete Streets Policy, and it was great that the region was moving forward with it. Another benefit that can be pointed out is that, as a region, we are also looking at more alternative and mass or public transportation that this provides a means for people to get to transit hubs. In Scot Smith's presentation, it was talked about complete streets and comfortable rural roads with shoulders for users, but comfortable should not include chip seal.

Scot explained that TxDOT is aware of the issues dealing with chip seals and bicyclists, and the preference for non-chip seal when possible. TxDOT is trying to provide a better grade or smaller aggregate on the shoulders than on the main lanes to accommodate bicyclists. It is more expensive but it is a way to meet the problem half-way.

Support was voiced for the regional Policy and also asked what was expected as a result of having this Policy? From a practical point of view, does supporting complete streets at the regional level mean a different or new funding stream?

Deb answered that NCTCOG is still in the development phase of the regional Policy. Ideally, in the future what we would like to see is ensuring that bicyclists and pedestrians are included when projects are programmed through the TIP. Exact criteria hasn't been worked out or allocated and specific funding sources haven't been identified yet, but this is something that could be looked at as a next step.

Karla Weaver (NCTCOG) added that, at this point, the policy is an evolving document, such as is the Mobility 2035 document. NCTCOG took the opportunity to have stronger conversations about land use and transportation and how they are connected in Mobility 2035. NCTCOG is not at the extreme of some sister MPOs who say that if you don't have complete streets then you don't get any funding. We are moving to having the broader conversation, involving people in the discussion. Our main goal this time around in starting with this kind of approach is we think this will open up discussion for local governments to possibly adopt their own, and consider bringing in all the players into projects as they are being developed and designed.

Q. How are you going to push it out to local governments, municipalities and such? It can be an information source and training tool for those. If it is a matter of them coming and looking for it, it is not the same as you pushing it out and making them aware of it.

A. Karla replied that there are several ways to accomplish this. BPAC is a large one. We have representation from STTC. NCTCOG also hosts a variety of trainings throughout the year. It might be discussed at RTC with other stakeholders.

Deb asked the members if there was anything in the overview that should be omitted or removed. There were no comments.

Deb asked if the Policy Statement was too specific, or not specific enough. Do the members feel that needs voiced at the last meeting were addressed enough or not enough? There were no comments.

Deb reminded everyone of the September 16th comment deadline. Comments could be e-mailed or mailed to her. The deadline was determined so that comments could be incorporated before the Policy was taken to STTC and RTC as an information item in as final draft as possible.

A comment was received that the City of Dallas is not only creating a Policy at the local level, but developing a design manual. Is there some thought of creating a template for bicycle planning?

Deb responded that this was referenced in the Policy Overview. A draft version of the Regional Bicycle Design Guidelines will be brought to the November BPAC meeting. It was developed in coordination with the 2011 Dallas Bike Plan. It is a guide, not a requirement, but it goes into detail of bike lanes, shared lane markings, sidewalks, etc. It can be a tool local governments can use when implementing these facilities. It gives local governments flexibility to decide, and provides minimums/maximums so each individual community can decide what is appropriate for their own communities.

Chair, David Boski encouraged members to review the Policy and send comments to Deb. He reminded members that this document would be shaping the metroplex and how roadways are going to look in the future and should be considered a very important document.

Deb asked that anyone attending future meetings RSVP as a courtesy. With a better count of how many are attending, the appropriate amount of handouts would be prepared, instead of staff guessing how many will attend and preparing too many copies, therefore creating a waste of paper.

6. Other Business/Open Discussion

A comment was received that in light of the fact that there is a policy that could go into place August 31, in regards to TxDOT possibly having influence over whether future construction or reconstruction of certain types of roadways may end up with a 14-foot wide outside lane, is there a role that NCTCOG can play in a safe passing policy?

Deb replied that NCTCOG has addressed this item but hasn't moved forward due to the Complete Streets and Regional Design Guideline initiatives. She also stated that if this is something BPAC members would like to see move forward, it could be addressed at a future meeting.

Scot offered to stay and answer questions. He wanted to further address the questions about sidewalks. Within TxDOT there are programs that do fund primarily sidewalks such as the Safe Routes to Schools program, and the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program which is primarily for pedestrian and bicycle-type facilities. If TxDOT is looking at rebuilding or widening a roadway, doing something other than preventive maintenance, and it is indicative that there is a need for a sidewalk such as a trail or worn route people are using in the public ROW, then TxDOT should consider putting in a sidewalk.

Chair, David Boski asked for any future agenda items.

A comment was received that dispersing the complete streets document to the cities and municipalities will be important. It appears to be a terrific move from saying we just need trails. This is a move towards showing cities that NCTCOG is an information bank. It's been put together really well, but I don't believe that small and medium-size cities really understand to come to this source for help. A lot of community members in the region are asking for bicycle and pedestrian access. At some of these smaller municipalities, there is not staff on hand that understands how to bring forward what they are being asked to do, which means either that it is not done, or brought forward badly, or it doesn't connect to adjacent jurisdictions. I think NCTCOG is the venue for those municipalities to contact for support, and I'm not sure they reach out to it enough because I am not sure they recognize it is here for them.

Deb replied that reaching out to communities could be a topic for a future BPAC meeting. She also stated that if there were any other topics members wanted to be informed of to let her know; this gives us a better idea of what speakers to bring in, and where interest lies.

The next BPAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at 3:15. The webinar prior to the meeting will be "Parking: Buffers, Bikes and Cars."