

WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Minutes

May 16, 2013

Members Present:

Lin Barnett – Wichita Falls MPO, MPO Director
Ben J. “Chip” Filer – Hotter’N Hell Hundred, Executive Director
Davis Powell – City of Wichita Falls, City Engineer
Karen Montgomery-Gagné – City of Wichita Falls, Planning Administrator
Mark Beauchamp – City of Wichita Falls, Traffic Superintendent
Michael Smith - City of Wichita Falls, Councilor
Roby Christie - Wichita Falls Streams and Valleys, Hotter’N Hell Hundred
Sandi Monson – Wichita Falls Streams and Valleys, Hotter’N Hell Hundred

MPO Staff:

Donnie Arbeau – Wichita Falls MPO, Transportation Planner II
Jaimie Lee – Wichita Falls MPO, Transportation Planner I

Visitors:

Dennis Burket – City of Wichita Falls, Transit Administrator

A G E N D A

I. Welcome & Introduction

The meeting began at 2:00 p.m. Mr. Barnett welcomed everyone in attendance followed by introductions from the attendees.

II. Update on Transit Center

Mr. Burket provided a brief overview of the downtown transit center. He stated construction was about four weeks behind schedule due to delays in steel delivery. Mr. Burket said the transit center would have lockers installed to store bicycles and allow riders easy access to the Hike & Bike trail system from the transit center. Mr. Burkett stated the grand opening of the transit center should take place in September.

III. Safe Routes to School – Mark Beauchamp, City of Wichita Falls

Mr. Beauchamp, City Traffic Superintendent, informed the attendees that one of the greatest complaints his division receives about the city concerns lighting in the downtown area. He stated that his crews would install 450 new LED light fixtures in the downtown area thus allowing brighter light for pedestrians at night. Mr. Beauchamp stated the new lights are the same Kelvin temperature as the sun, allowing the light to appear much brighter than the old lights. The new lights would highlight the pedestrian sidewalks and streets for added safety. The new lights cost \$400 per unit but have a life span of 10 to 12 years and offer an electricity cost savings of 42% over the old style sodium lights.

Mr. Beauchamp provided an overview of the Safe Routes to School activities carried out by the Traffic Division and the City of Wichita Falls. He commented that the program is all encompassing for three school zones located in Wichita Falls. He stated construction of the elements for the Safe Routes to School program would begin in three weeks. The construction will include City View Elementary, Southern Hills Elementary, and John Tower Elementary. The elements in the construction will consist of sidewalks, in pavement lights at crossings, new pavement markings and much more. Mr. Beauchamp stated those three particular school zones are the most problematic in terms of safety but there are plans to bring all elementary schools up to a higher safety standard for the Safe Routes to School program. In an effort to protect children from head injuries, the Wichita County Medical Alliance and the city's Safe Routes to School Program have been able to put over 300 bicycle helmets on children so far this year. The helmets are provided free of charge and the city should receive more helmets next year.

The City of Wichita Falls' Traffic Division, in conjunction with Transforming Texas, developed a safety course for elementary children. The safety course includes working models to show children and teachers how pedestrian signals work. He presented a brief slideshow to the attendees regarding school crosswalk and pedestrian safety, and a sample bag of items that the children receive including a T-shirt, LED flashers for bicycles, and brochures of safety information. Due to the success of the course, hopes are to expand it into Junior High schools by next year and develop a driver's education course for High School students.

Mr. Beauchamp informed the attendees of other projects, aside from Safe Routes to School, which are currently in process. Projects include school flashers installed at City View High School making it the first High School in the area to have school flashers. Second, the City will install Rapid Flash Beacons or RFB's at Kemp and Avenue O. The federal government approved RFB's as a qualified safety standard to alert drivers when they are entering a crossing zone. The lights will be push button activated by a crossing guard during school crossing times. He stated two rectangular flash beacons would flash using an irregular flash pattern that is similar to emergency flashers on police vehicles. Studies show that RFB's increase driver-yielding behavior at crosswalks. The committee was very impressed with the level of outreach the program has achieved to this point.

The next issue of importance was in regards to helmet laws. Currently, the City of Wichita Falls has no bicycle helmet laws in place for minors or adults. Mr. Beauchamp indicated a desire to have City Council implement some type of bicycle helmet law to protect minors at the very least. The BPAC was supportive of this initiative. Mr. Barnett stated he would add this issue as an agenda item to the July TAC/TPC meetings for discussion and possible MPO support. He encouraged the committee members to develop letters of support for Mr. Beauchamp.

Mr. Barnett informed the committee of the nearing completion of the Long-Range Project Readiness Plan. He stated the plan's process would aid in revealing bicycle and pedestrian projects with the highest return on investment for the limited funding that TxDOT and the MPO receives for projects of this type. He also informed the committee that by end of 2013 going into 2014 the WFMPO will begin updating the Metropolitan Transportation Plan according to its five-year update cycle. WFMPO must have the MTP updated and ready for approval by the Policy Board in January 2015. Mr. Barnett stated he would call upon the committee to help in the update to the Bicycle Master Plan portion of the MTP.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 3:25 p.m.