



## MEETING NOTICE

### **The Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC)**

**February 6th, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.**

**Time Check Hall – City Services Center, First Floor, West Entrance  
500 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, Cedar Rapids**



**Chair: Seth Gunnerson – Cedar Rapids**

**Vice Chair: Brenna Fall – Cedar Rapids**

**TTAC Voting Members:** Brad Ketels - Linn County; Randy Burke – Linn County Conservation; Dick Ransom - Hiawatha; Shane Wicks – Fairfax; Kesha Billings & Mike Barkalow - Marion; Scott Pottorff - Ely; Jon Bogert – Palo; Kelli Scott - Robins; Ron Griffith, Nate Kampman, John Witt, Steve Krug, Doug Wilson, Matt Myers, Steve Hershner, & Jason Middlekauff - Cedar Rapids; Tom Pepper - Linn County Trails Association.

**TTAC Non-voting Members:** Cathy Cutler - Iowa DOT; Darla Hugaboom- FHWA; Eva Steinman - FTA

## AGENDA

### Roll Call

### Public Comment Period

### Action/Discussion Items

1. **Approve Minutes from December 12, 2019 – [ATTACHED - Pg 2](#)**
2. **Elect Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson – Bill Micheel**
3. **Travel Demand Model Overview – Guest Speaker Jeff Von Brown (Iowa DOT)**
  - *Discussion Item: Presentation by Jeff Von Brown followed by question and answer session*
4. **Discussion of Potential Solutions for High STBG/TAP Balances – Brandon Whyte – [ATTACHED - Pg 4](#)**
  - *Action/Discussion Item*

### Report Items/Member Updates

5. **2045 LRTP Update – Liz Darnall**

### Next Scheduled Meeting

- *Next TTAC meeting: 2:00pm March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at Time Check Hall*

*Anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a MPO program, service, or activity, should contact Hilary Hershner at (319) 286-5161 or email [h.hershner@corridormpo.com](mailto:h.hershner@corridormpo.com) as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours before the event. This public announcement satisfies Section 5307 program of projects requirements for transit project public review and comment.*



**TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TTAC)  
MEETING MINUTES  
Time Check Hall, First Floor – City Services Center  
500 15<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, Cedar Rapids  
Thursday, December 5, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.**

Member	Present	Absent	Alternate
Seth Gunnerson	X		
Brenna Fall	X		
John Witt	X		Casey Dix
Ron Griffith	X		
Steve Hershner	X		
Jason Middlekauff	X		
Matt Myers		X	
Nate Kampman	X		
Doug Wilson		X	
Scott Pottorff	X		
Shane Wicks		X	
Dick Ransom	X		Matt Johnson
Randy Burke	X		
Brad Ketels		X	
Kesha Billings	X		Jacob Hahn
Mike Barkalow	X		
Jon Bogert		X	
Kelli Scott		X	
Tom Peffer	X		
Steve Krug		X	
Cathy Cutler (NV)	X		
Darla Hugaboom (NV)		X	
Eva Steinman (NV)		X	

Staff Present: Bill Micheel, Brandon Whyte, Hilary Hershner, Liz Darnall & Amy Cannon

Chairperson Gunnerson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Action/Discussion Items**

**1. Approve Minutes from October 8, 2019**

Tom Peffer moved to approve the minutes from October 8, 2019. Seconded by Brenna Fall. The motion carried.



## **2. Analysis of Surface Transportation Block Grant/Transportation Alternatives Program Balances**

Brandon Whyte shared that the Iowa DOT is implementing a cap on Iowa's Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funding starting on October 1, 2020; as well as, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) made a recommendation to the Corridor MPO to reduce the Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) balance. There was discussion in regards to what would happen if these new rules were violated and what can the Corridor MPO do to make sure that these new rules do not get violated. There was also discussion as to when exactly the balance goes down for projects to ensure that Corridor MPO stays under the new balance caps.

## **3. Status Report Review**

Brandon Whyte shared information on MPO funded projects that are receiving Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG) or Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds and how the Corridor MPO has one of the highest STBG balances in the state. There was discussion regarding the average project length for current project and currently only one mode (transit) is in compliance of DOT guidelines. Additionally, project costs were discussed; cost overruns can cause delays if additional funding request are required, and cost underruns are a concerns as the unneeded funding may be tied up for years until the project closure process. The discussion also focused on some potential strategies/ideas that could assist with getting projects to stick to their time length and cost projects. Future discussions will be held on this topic.

## **Report Items/Member Updates**

Bill Micheel shared that Jeff Von Brown will be at the next meeting to discuss our model for the LRTP Update Process. If you have any specific questions about the model, email Bill so he can get the questions to Jeff so he can answer them at the January 2020 TTAC meeting.

Monday, December 16, 2019 that evening there will have a public meeting to discuss the Tower Terrace Project Meeting at St. Marks Church.

January 9, 2020 Meeting at Hiawatha to discuss Tower Terrace Public Meeting to discuss the Right of Way Design.

## **Adjournment**

Committee Member moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:59pm. Seconded by Randy Burke. The motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amy Cannon  
Administrative Assistant II



#### **4. Discussion of Potential Solutions for High STBG/TAP Balances**

##### **Background**

Currently, the Corridor MPO has one of the highest STBG balances in the state. In a previous Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Iowa DOT review, it was recommended that the MPO cut this balance and further that no project development process lasts longer than three years for STBG projects and two years for TAP projects. It was recommended that the Policy Board act to defund any project exceeding these time limits. The MPO Policy Board has opted to review these projects. MPO staff, with the cooperation of local jurisdictions, have acted to reprioritize projects where possible or defund projects that no longer seem viable. Prior to the MPO Policy Board review of projects a review of the current status of projects with the TTAC will be conducted with an aim to inform and develop possible solutions to expedite project development.

Finally, In April of 2018, the Iowa DOT established a new balance accrual rule putting a cap on TAP balances carried by MPO's. This rule is being implemented in conjunction with the shift from the more conventional federal management of TAP funding to the management of TAP funds by the state. The "TAP Balance Accrual Rule" is as follows:

**"TAP balance accrual, as tracked on the quarterly reports, will be limited to a maximum of 4 years of funding starting at end of FFY2020."**

In practice, this means if the Corridor MPO has a balance in excess of the sum of four years of TAP funding, this excess funding must be spent by a project prior to October 1, 2020, so that the TAP balance does not exceed \$1,454,000, which is the sum of 4 years of TAP funding for our region. If the Corridor MPO's balance were out of conformance with this rule, all new TAP funds may be frozen until the balance of TAP funds is in conformance with the rule or new or unused TAP funds may potentially be withdrawn from our Corridor MPO altogether.

Additionally, MPO staff has also applied the TAP Balance Accrual Rule to STBG projects to further motivate project completion, better comply with Iowa DOT and FHWA recommendations, and in the possible event that the Iowa DOT applies a similar rule to STBG balances, which is in their purview and has been discussed as a possibility.

##### **Solutions**

MPO staff requested input from TTAC members on how best to address these issues and advance project completion on time and within an acceptable range of the original cost estimate. We recognize that TTAC members have a different perspective than MPO or DOT staff. Issues and solutions that may be apparent to TTAC members may not be clear to those not directly completing the project development process. MPO staff also promised to bring solutions to the TTAC as well. Solutions generated by TTAC members at the previous meeting and by MPO staff are presented below:

1. MPO staff will receive training regarding the project development process in a more in-depth manner to better assist jurisdictions and the Iowa DOT.
- 2a. Require fully completed planning and engineering at the time of TIP application. In this way, nearly all variables in the cost estimate are addressed prior to funding being awarded.
- 2b. In lieu of complete design work prior to the TIP application, require 30 or 60 percent plans, depending on the nature of the project, including survey and/or environmental review at the time of TIP application.



3. Included at the time of TIP application is the community's locally approved Capital Improvement Program budget directly listing the project. This better assures the secured funding and the expected timeline.

These solutions are presented for TTAC's consideration, discussion, and recommendation to the Policy Board.

Finally, MPO staff will continue cooperating with jurisdictions and the Iowa DOT to push project completion timelines forward with project reviews, assistance with the DOT process, project funding reprioritization, project sub-phasing, and project defunding where appropriate. MPO staff is committed to keeping the Policy Board, Executive Committee, and TTAC up-to-date with status report updates on individual projects and STBG/TAP balance forecasting.

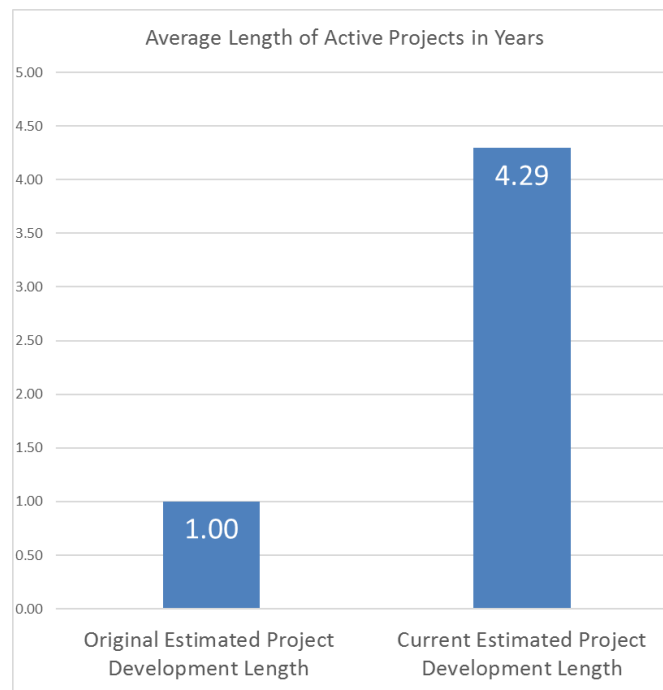
For more details regarding our MPO's project development statistics please see the following pages as presented at the previous TTAC meeting.



### Current Project Length

The Iowa DOT has indicated that STBG funded projects should reach letting in less than three years from the time that their last federal funding is available; TAP projects should reach letting within two years. This means that if a STBG project is awarded funding in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2020 (October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019) it needs to reach letting before FFY 2023 (October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022). When jurisdictions apply for funding with the MPO they provide an estimated time of project development, this timeline is reviewed by TTAC and is used by MPO staff as the original timeline for project development completion. On each annual status report, the jurisdictions are asked to update this time. This information is then used to estimate the current timeline for project development completion (the letting date).

The current average for on-going projects is 4.29 years. The original estimate is 1.0 years (see the below figure) For road projects the current average is 8.25 years; for trail projects 3.08 years. Currently many of our MPO projects would violate the DOT guidelines of three years and two years respectively.

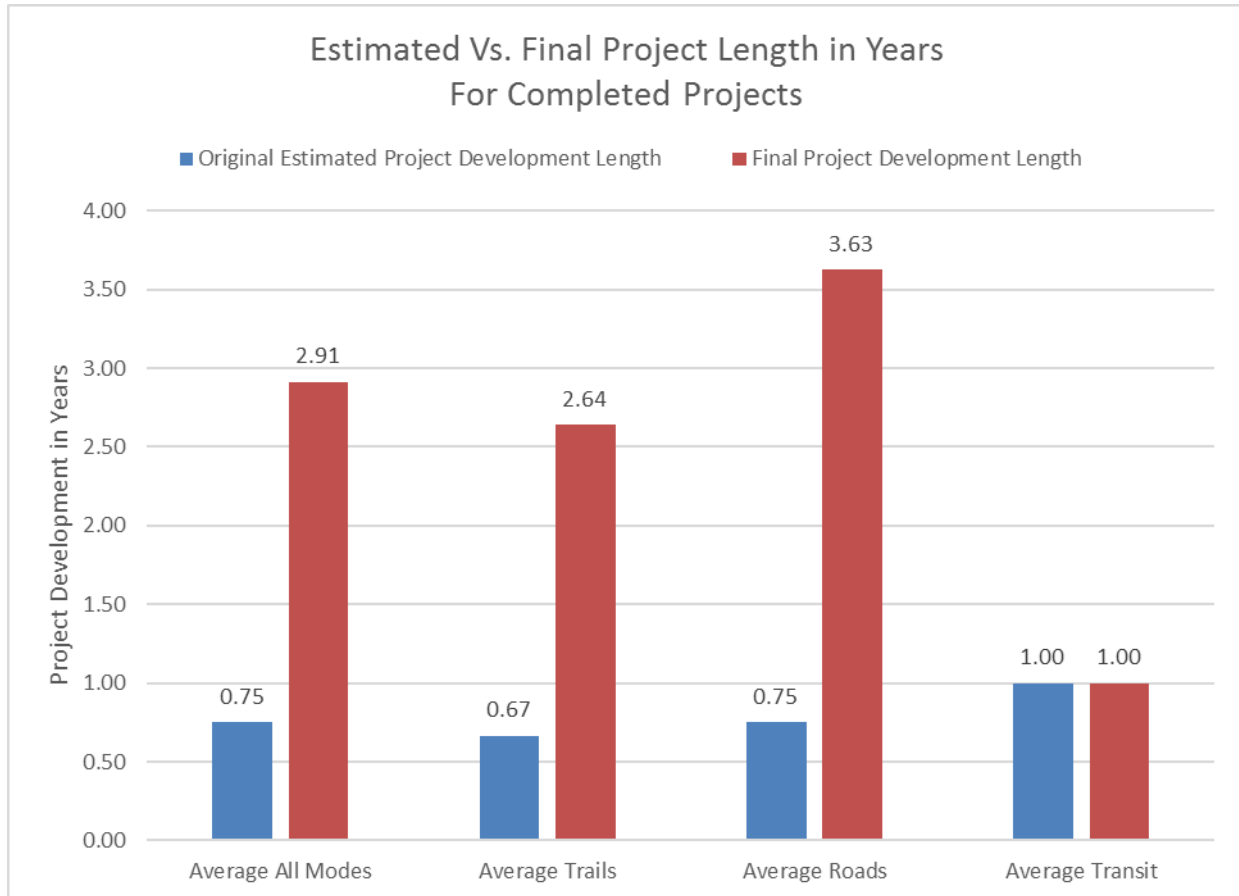


Finally, too many of our newer projects are listing very short project development timelines often less than one year. Data show that project development timelines less than one year only occur for transit rolling stock projects. Given data trends, the original project development estimates likely need to be lengthened, while efforts made to advance development faster.



### Completed Project Length

Regarding completed projects for the last four years (2016 to 2019), the data is slightly better but still not within compliance of DOT guidelines. The all project average for completed projects in years (development only) is 2.91, trails are 2.64, roads are 3.63, and transit is 1.0 years. While the average in the original estimates were .75, .67, .75 and 1.0 respectively. This data is shown in the below illustration.



### Project cost over and underruns

Another issue of concern are project cost over and underruns. Cost overruns are a concern for the MPO because they can cause significant project delays if additional funding requests are required. Project underruns while possessing clear advantages are a concern because they tieup unneeded MPO funding for many years during project development and during the project closure process. An example is a recently completed project that was under budget by an approximate \$268,000 in federal aid. The project development only took a year but the project closure process was 2.5 years. The average project closure process takes 3.5 years. However, MPO staff is working with the DOT to expedite this process. Finally, once this closure process is complete it generally takes six months to a year to return the money to the competitive TIP process. After that the money may be awarded to a project in any year of the TIP, meaning it could wait another one to four years before it can be spent again. During this entire time inflation is eroding at value of this funding. And finally, this underrun money is being counted against the STBG/TAP balance thresholds the entire time.





The MPO Policy Board has approved a plus or minus of 10 percent from the original cost estimate to the final cost of a project. It is understood that accurate cost estimates can be difficult so early in the design process. Current project cost over/underruns are represented in the below table and are acceptable. Note, an outlier project has been removed; with the outlier included the all mode and road averages are much higher.

Current Projects	Percent over/under
<b>Average All Modes</b>	<b>6.49%</b>
<b>Average Trails</b>	<b>5.96%</b>
<b>Average Roads</b>	<b>8.50%</b>
<b>Average Transit</b>	<b>0.00%</b>

All completed projects are significantly lower than expected resulting in cost underruns and the issues discussed on the previous page. These averages are illustrated in the below chart.

Completed Projects	Percent over/under
<b>Average All Modes</b>	<b>-23.12%</b>
<b>Average Trails</b>	<b>-26.05%</b>
<b>Average Roads</b>	<b>-20.66%</b>
<b>Average Transit</b>	<b>-5.00%</b>

Looking at completed projects, in the below chart, there is a high variance that is lost when looking at the averages. These variances reflect a comment from the DOT indicating issues with cost estimates at our MPO.

