



# SIERRA VISTA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS: WORK SESSION MEETING SUMMARY: JULY 6, 2022

**DRAFT**

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## MEETING LOCATION:

City of Sierra Vista: City Hall  
City Managers Conference  
1011 N. Coronado Drive.  
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

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Phone Conference ID: 407 585 379#

## MEETING DATE AND TIME:

July 6, 2022

2:30 p.m. to 3:25 p.m.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REQUEST ACCOMMODATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS:

Website: [www.svmpto.org](http://www.svmpto.org)

Email: [SVMPO@SierraVistaAZ.gov](mailto:SVMPO@SierraVistaAZ.gov)

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## SVMPO BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair: Rachel Gray, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Sierra Vista

Vice-Chair: Carolyn Umphrey, Councilmember, City of Sierra Vista

Member: Gregory Johnson, Councilmember, City of Sierra Vista

Member: Peggy Judd, Supervisor, Cochise County (*virtually*)

Member: Cynthia Butterworth, Councilmember, Huachuca City

## SVMPO BOARD MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Member: Richard Searle, State Transportation Board

## STAFF:

SVMPO Director: Karen L. Lamberton, AICP

SVMPO Intern: Catarina Porter, BYU-I

SVMPO Civil Engineer: Dennis Donovan, P.E.

## OTHERS PRESENT:

Ed Stillings, FHWA (*virtually*)

Mark Hoffman, Arizona Department of Transportation/ Multimodal Division (*virtually*)

Jim (Doc) Johnson, Ph.D, CBO, CCI : Building Official, Huachuca City

Suzanne Harvey, Huachuca City Town Manager (*virtually*)

Richard Stein, Transportation Services Administrator, Vista Transit

Victoria Yarbrough, Assistant City Manager of City of Sierra Vista

Brad Simmons, P.E., Cochise County Civil Engineer

Matt McLachlan, Dir. Community Development, City of Sierra Vista

Sharon Flissar, P.E., Dir. Public Works, City of Sierra Vista

Kevin Adam, RTAC (*virtually*)

## CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Gray called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m. Chair Gray, Vice-Chair Umphrey, Members Butterworth and Johnson were present. Member Judd present virtually. A quorum was present.

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*The Work Session Summary that follows reflects a summary, by discussion topic, of the general statements made by meeting attendees, and is not intended to provide a transcript of individual comments. Similar comments made by different attendees during different times during the Work Session discussion have been combined for clarity in this summary.*

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### 1. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) FRAMEWORK

The SVMPO Director opened the Work Session with introductory remarks stating that she really did wish she had \$20 million dollars a year for implementing the priority projects in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). She then reminded the Board, TAC members and attendees that when regional governments were first formed in the 1970's their intent then, as is now, was to be a regional planning agency. Their purpose is to coordinate together to address needs common to a shared area that had an interconnected transportation system. Regional construction funds are really only a very small "carrot" to encourage partnerships. The intent was never to take over local agency transportation project efforts but to facilitate a comprehensive and coordinated approach by convening the regional table in order to develop consensus driven solutions for regional transportation needs. MPO's also assist with data collection, pre-scoping, and planning level work to support successful grant applications that help to address priority needs.

To understand the programming of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), one of the MPO's mandated activities, Ed Stillings from FHWA and Mark Hoffman from ADOT Multi-Modal Planning Division were present (*virtually*) to brief the Board on the federal and state perspectives of the requirements of TIP programming.

#### ❖ Federal Requirements: Mandated Criteria

Ed Stillings, FHWA provided the perspective of the federal oversight agency of mandated information and requirements. He complemented the SVMPO Director preparation for this Work Session, noting that she had provided most of the information in the agenda packet on what he wanted to talk about regarding the requirements for MPO's. Both the 23 450c & 49 CFR's, in the Work Session Packet, address MPO requirements to develop a TIP. The intent of FHWA regulations was not to burden small MPO's on the processes so not a lot of specific direction is given. He pointed out that each MPO develops their own processes and they range from very complex to informal consensus driven approaches. Mr. Stilling stated that the TIP is a collaborative process which should be:

- focused on investment priorities of the MPO;
- address performance measures;
- must include all interested parties;
- be update at least every four years;
- provide a reasonable opportunity for interested parties to comment;
- must be fiscally constrained; but
- may included a "unfunded" set of future potential projects.

#### ❖ ADOT Guidance: Performance Measures (Targets)

Mark Hoffman, ADOT Multi-Modal Division, provided the Board and attendees with the State perspective on the TIP. He noted that the TIP should cover the entire MPO planning area. Programming should be consistent in types of projects and address the performance targets that apply in the SVMPO

area. Projects should also be consistent with the MPO's adopted Long-Range Transportation Plan. The TIP must be updated at the very least every four years. The SVMPO currently updates their TIP annually thus ensuring that a 4-year horizon is continually met. MPOs may choose to update their TIP every two years. Projects that are federal-aid projects must also be included in the regional and state TIP's. An example of this type of project is the FTA funding for Vista Transit.

The TIP must provide a sufficient description that provides information about each project such as the location, the year planned, type of project and the funding. The TIP informs the public about federally funded projects and must meet or exceed air quality conformity requirements. The SVMPO is an attainment area and doesn't have the air quality analysis that might be required if any area of our region should become a non-attainment area. The TIP is due to ADOT by the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of every year and those MPO/COG adopted TIPs are then fed into the State TIP and forwarded for approval to FHWA. Both the MPO and State TIPs must consider:

- funding source and eligibility;
- fiscal constraints;
- Title VI;
- performance targets;
- any mandates in federal or state regulations; and,
- consider inflation factors in cost estimates for future projects.

#### ❖ Definition of "Regionally Significant"

Mark Hoffman provided ADOT's perspective that they considered a "regionally significant" roadway as one that had been modeled in the LRTP. It must be a Federally Functionally Classified (FFC) roadway at the level of a Rural Major Collector or higher. (*Rural Minor Collectors are the only FCC designated roadway not eligible for STBG funds*). Regionally significant roadway projects can also be locally funded or use other funds not programmed through the SVMPO. TAC Member Sharon Flissar asked if a road classification is decided by the traffic studies done each year. Mark Hoffman confirmed that traffic counts and studies are one of the factors that result in a designation for a FFC and that road classifications are approved by ADOT prior to being transmitted to FHWA for consideration. Any jurisdiction can submit and request changes to their road classifications. Director Lamberton also noted that the LRTP models (*in the transportation model*) the roadway network as designated by FCC roadways.

Any project that is on a designated FCC roadway, has been included in the LRTP Traffic Modeling, and is described in the LRTP is deemed to have met the criteria of "regionally significant". TAC Member Matt McLachlan commented that that "significant" is a relative term and may be defined differently by each of the three jurisdictions.

## **2. SVMPO TIP PROCESS & BOARD ADOPTED POLICIES RELATED TO PROJECT SELECTION**

The SVMPO Director described the different approaches other MPO and COG's in Arizona use for their TIP selection process. She noted that there is not a template for TIP's that are used and each of the Arizona MPO/COGs use different processes to select their funded projects. These range from focusing on the projects that were voter approved in sales tax initiatives, to requiring extensive project applications, imposing funding rotations, not funding local projects in favor of supporting state highway projects to not having any process in place at all. She noted the items from the memo on this item listing the common features in other MPO/COG process and several ideas that she thought were best practices worth considering as part of the SVMPO process.

Director Lamberton then shared with the Board, TAC members and attendees what the SVMPO currently does as an informal TIP Selection Process. She reviewed the TIP flow chart showing the start to finish process for project selection, went over the TIP Call for Projects Form, the Status Report format and the Project Close-Out Forms. None of these forms are mandated to have and the Board has not yet formally adopted a TIP Selection Process.

Director Lamberton then went through the adopted Long-Range Transportation Plan Adopted Regional Priorities and Funding Choices. A graphic illustrated the priority ranking of each of the seven adopted priorities. These were used to then create a detailed, potential project ranking form based on those Long-Range adopted priorities. She summarized her perspective of what the TIP is as follows:

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*The TIP process is essentially a grant application seeking an award of funds to address a regionally significant need as identified in the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan.*

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### **3. TIP PROJECT RANKING AND SELECTION CRITERIA BOARD DISCUSSION**

- ❖ TAC Considerations for Potential Selection Criteria
- ❖ Potential TIP Policies/Procedures for TIP Project Selection & Ranking Criteria

The SVMPO Chair Rachel Grey began the Board, TAC member and attendee discussion by stating that the SVMPO Board wanted to consider developing a policy for selecting future TIP projects. She felt an agreement on a process might help to eliminate some of the contention and issues with having a competitive TIP with too many competing, but important, projects that could not be funded with the limited MPO resources.

Attendees referenced the examples provided from other MPOs and COGS as well as reviewed a few of the comments that the TAC had provided of their individual perspectives of what they thought the Board should consider (*It was noted that this list had been provided to the Board members both at their June 22<sup>nd</sup> Board meeting and was included in the Work Session packet*). TAC Member Sharon Flissar noted that Chuck Putuck, Sierra Vista's City Manager, has stated at the last TAC meeting that there is very limited regional money, and it is not realistic to expect it can completely fund any one project. Overmatch is very important, and applications should reflect the amount a jurisdiction is willing to contribute. The SVMPO is a funding partner so consideration should also be given to what will benefit the most amount of people in the MPO.

Attendees then discussed how funding is split out to each MPO for the STBG funding source. STBG is based on population and SEAGO sets thresholds and amounts are awarded with a population range that match needs and eligibility. However, the SVMPO Director noted that there is not a requirement or mandate that the MPO's then split their money further to each jurisdiction by population, there could be a minimum amount for each jurisdiction, but that there should be a collective agreement on how to split up regional funds. Regional projects, by definition, support regional needs and priorities, which may not be one single jurisdiction's highest priorities. The MPO must consider numerous factors, among them are meeting needs for multi-modal transportation facilities and addressing needs of areas that have been underserved.

It was noted that even though the biggest jurisdiction as far as population, size and roads is the City of Sierra Vista, people traveling to and from Sierra Vista do use both Huachuca City and Cochise County roads and that should be recognized. TAC member Matt McLachlan voiced his opinion that not all

jurisdictions were equal in terms of their needs: that there should be an equitable funding formula that takes into account factors such as if the project is in the LRTP, proposed timeframe, the geographic distribution, what might be fiscally realistic. He also stated that it might be easier to plan for a set funding amount so that each jurisdiction could plan what they needed for match and when funds might be available from the region for their projects.

It was pointed out that all three jurisdictions are very much connected and that having a formula based on population alone may not make sense as the region also has to address Title VI, employment hubs and road conditions. Both Board Members Butterworth and Judd expressed their perspective that all the jurisdictions are tangled together in different ways and are interdependent on the transportation network. Smaller roads in Huachuca City or in the County that are in the Federally Functionally Classified system are there because they are part of the regional network that feeds to and from Fort Huachuca or Sierra Vista or to other destinations outside the region like Bisbee and Tucson. Although Huachuca City is just a small jurisdiction, it does have an employment cluster of over 300 employees, which makes it 6<sup>th</sup> in size of any of the large employer locations in Sierra Vista (larger than Home Depot, Target for example). The traffic model recognizes that, and it was data like that which made several road segments appropriate for a FHWA designation of a Major Collector and to be modeled for the LRTP.

Attendees from the County and Town expressed some concern about a set formula and/or rotation if it didn't allow for flexibility for an emergency or a roadway or bridge in danger of failure. TAC Member Brad Simmons noted that a formula might not be able to address all the regional priorities or performance measures since there are so many factors involved in selecting a top priority project. It was observed it might be hard to reduce all of those factors into a formula but also that it might be challenging to have a simple application that wasn't overwhelming to develop but yet also address all of the potential factors. Director Lamberton noted that one example would be that the current Call for Projects just asks the jurisdiction to identify with a checkmark that the project addresses safety, but a detailed Project Application would ask for at least three years of crash data by type.

Board Member Johnson voiced his opinion that it is the task and purpose of the MPO Board to have robust discussion on projects. He observed that there might not be one way that would work for all projects every time but a candid discussion considering each one could help to decide what is best for the region. There was agreement among attendees that consensus was a desired outcome but also concern was expressed by several attendees that contention between the three jurisdictions might worsen if there was a lack of clarity of how to select projects or split the available funding.

Attendees stated they did want the selection process to be fair for all jurisdictions and several attendees again mentioned their concern that a formula could not reflect that. Some attendees felt that the current project selection, developed from a consensus approach, using projects already identified as a high near-term priority, based on the LRTP, could best address the use of regional funds. Comments were made that the TIP isn't the best funding source for emergency or critically needed projects because the length of time to use federal funds. Also, a real emergency like a broken bridge likely would obtain emergency federal or state funds to address. *(An example might be the emergency funds received to repair roads after the Monument Fire).*

Board Member Judd and Huachuca City Town Manager Harvey commented that given the interconnection of the regional transportation system, and how meeting those needs did address regional priorities, it did not feel to them that a population-based formula was the way to go. The discussion circled back to the multiple factors that are part of the LRTP priorities, which do include things

like considering the locations of low-income housing and critical government services/employment clusters.

The discussion moved to considering the adopted LRTP and it was brought up that all the projects in the LRTP had gone through a rigorous evaluation to be identified as regionally significant and it was proposed that it made sense for TIP projects to be pulled from there. Attendees questioned why another criteria-based review for another Call for Projects would be needed if they have already gone through extensive constraints to be included in the Board adopted LRTP. It was questioned if the SVMPO needed any other proposals to be submitted from member jurisdictions, other than those from the near-term projects out of the LRTP, and wondered if those projects could just be put into a rotation for completion. One issue brought up is that there is not enough money to fund all the near-term projects, even if spread out over five-years, so jurisdictions would still have to leverage with pre-scoping or advance engineering studies, provide overmatch or find other funding sources. The process should be that a project is ranked through the LRTP, and if it is included in the LRTP, then the project is qualified to be in the TIP. It made sense to several attendees that projects be further limited to those identified as near-term priorities. *(Projects noted as "programmed" but actually then did not go forward to completion may be considered to be near-term projects, should the jurisdiction bump their top ranked near-term projects downward to bring that project into the potential funding mix e.g the North Garden segment).*

Chair Gray restated the concept that LRTP projects were eligible for the TIP process and queried each Board member, and attending TAC members, if they had any questions about that assumption or if they concurred with the observation that LRTP projects met the threshold to be eligible for the TIP. There was agreement among the Board members that projects in the LRTP had already been through the ranking and prioritization process and there would not be a reason to go through that effort again.

**Attendees concurred with the perspective that projects within the LRTP would be deemed "regionally significant".**

Discussion moved to the benefits of a rotational TIP between jurisdictions. The observation was made that projects should be shovel ready if put into a rotation. If jurisdictions are not ready, they could potentially trade years with another jurisdiction and also collect more money together merging multiple years. Although this would lengthen the timeframe to construct a project, it would increase certainty when it could occur. While pending a project coming up on the current funding year in the TIP, member jurisdictions could help each other look for additional funding sources to punt that project out of the TIP and into a funding source, such as another type of grant, to complete the project sooner. Several attendees reflected that it would be helpful to have certainty but yet the end result has to be fiscally realistic. **Predictability was mentioned multiple times as a desired element of any adopted policy.**

There is apparently no formula for a fixed distribution on regional TIPs that any of the MPO's and COGs use, beyond a threshold funding amount and County level rotation in place by SEAGO. Assistant City of Sierra Vista Manager, Victoria Yarbrough, asked FHWA if they were aware of any other formula driven policies from other MPO's. Ed Stillings, FHWA, was not aware of any MPO/COG outside of Arizona in his district that used a formula for selecting projects. That did not mean that one could not be adopted by the SVMPO if the member jurisdictions agree. He also stated that Arizona was unique in having the HURF Exchange option which potentially reduces costs for TIP projects.

The overall consensus was that the Board felt it was worth considering some type of formula and/or rotation in order to increase certainty of funding amounts, and timeframes for possible regional funding. Developing shovel-ready projects was also a desired factor that could help to leverage future funding from different sources. The challenge, everyone agreed, was to figure out how to benefit all member

jurisdictions but yet ensure equity with the larger jurisdiction who had the most population, provided more regional services and employment, had larger traffic volumes and more crashes with the smaller jurisdictions that have critical needs but had limited resources to complete large projects or provide significant levels of overmatch making it was impossible to undertake significant transportation related improvements. That challenge, Chair Gray noted, is the elephant in the room: two fairly large jurisdictions in our region and one very small jurisdiction, also in our region, but a disparity in the resources between the three jurisdictions.

Director Lamberton noted that the Board did not need to come to a decision at this meeting given that the SVMPO does have a TIP programed out for the next 3 years. She stated that there is sufficient time to develop a consensus driven process. She then noted, given the limitations of the time set for the Work Session, it was not likely that this discussion could be completed in this July Work Session. In addition, a number of research items had been identified during the discussion on this item that will take some time to compile for continuing this discussion. She concluded her remarks with an observation that many of the potential considerations presented at this Work Session were reflected in the current selection of projects for the regional TIP in that it does have a mix of projects between jurisdictions and projects selected do provide design support to the top three near-term roadway projects in the LRTP with the intention, along with planning studies underway at this time, of staging each of them to be shovel-ready.

#### **DIRECTION TO THE SVMPO DIRECTOR**

The Board then indicated their consensus that the SVMPO Director take the following next action steps on this item:

- Additional research on potential formula options that could share the TIP funding among all three member jurisdictions.
- Engage in discussion and seek input from the SVMPO Technical Advisory Committee on potential formulas and TIP processes.
- Consider holding a Joint SVMPO Board/Member Jurisdiction Managers Work Session to discuss possible option developed with the SVMPO TIP, potentially early 2023.
- Bring forward two or three options to the SVMPO Board for consideration, consensus and potential action.

Chair Gray indicated that the desire of the Board is to adopt consensus driven policies/procedures for TIP project selection in advance of the next TIP adoption. The SVMPO Director indicated that this should be possible to complete as the TIP, at this time, is programmed out for the next three fiscal years. This item could be reasonably researched and brought back to the Board, in a potential Work Session, in early Spring of 2023.

#### **CLOSING- SVMPO CHAIR RACHEL GRAY**

The SVMPO Chair thanked the Board, TAC members and attendees for their feedback on the topic of TIP project selection. She stated that it appears that there is an agreement on a good starting point to move forward developing a policy that will work for this region.

She then indicated that a short break would be taken of about five minutes and the Board would reconvene for a Regular SVMPO Board meeting at about 4 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT** by general consent at 3:52 p.m.

SVMPO Work Sessions are informal meetings where Board members may prepare for upcoming regular Board meetings, have staff and/or agency briefings on issues, and provide an opportunity for detailed discussions on topics of regional concern among themselves. These meetings are open to the public, but time is not reserved for public comment. Members of the public may attend in person, or by phone, and may share written comments through the SVMPO website.

**No formal action was taken by the SVMPO Board at this scheduled Work Session.** This Work Session provided information and an opportunity for Board members to discuss the scheduled topic.