**Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, January 12, 2022**

**Attending:** Steve Walensky (Barry), Brent Young (Christian), Todd Wiesehan (Christian), Hollie Elliott (Dallas), J. Howard Fisk (Greene), Joel Keller (Greene), Gail Noggle (Polk), Hank Smythe (Stone), Jerry Harman (Stone), Buddy Roberts (Taney), Randy Owens (Webster), Stan Whitehurst (Webster)

Andy Thomason (OTO), Zeke Hall (MoDOT), Britni O’Connor (MoDOT), Jason Ray (SMCOG), Aishwarya Shrestha (SMCOG), Courtney Pinkham (SMCOG), Lexi Mason (SMCOG), Avery Knese (SMCOG), Dan Wadlington (Senator Blunt), Erin Engelmeyer (Senator Hawley), Jeremy Pruett (Representative Long), Representative John Black, Neil Brady (Bartlett & West)

The meeting was called to order by Chair Todd Wiesehan.

1. **Introductions and Pledge:**

Self-introductions were made.

1. **Approval of the agenda:**

Motion to approve the agenda made by Buddy Roberts, motion seconded by Howard Fisk. All ayes. Motion carried.

1. **Approval of minutes:**

Motion to approve August 11, 2021, meeting minutes made by Hank Smythe, motion seconded by Buddy Roberts. All ayes. Motion carried.

1. **SMCOG Staff Update:**
   1. 2021 SW District Transportation Needs Prioritization Recap

Aishwarya Shrestha highlighted that SMCOG got several of the regional top needs in the SW District needs list. Some of the needs that scored high were Rte. 37 & 60, Rte. 65 (Christian and Taney), Rt. 60 (Greene and Webster), Rt. EE, Rt. 76 (Kirbyville), Rt. 83 (Polk). She also mentioned that MoDOT and the SW District planning partners are currently meeting to develop the 2023-2027 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

* 1. 2022 Transportation Needs Prioritization

Aishwarya Shrestha mentioned that SMCOG will be starting its prioritization process for 2022. SMCOG will mail surveys and county needs lists to all the region’s cities and counties. The survey can be completed both on paper and online.

* 1. MoDOT 2022 Legislative Agenda

Aishwarya Shrestha highlighted that MoDOT’s legislative agenda for this year focuses on prohibiting hand-held cell phones and other electronic wireless communication device use while driving. Currently, the law prohibits drivers 21 and younger from using a hand-held electronic device for texting while driving. MoDOT is aiming to expand the law to prohibit all users from using a hand-held device for almost any purpose.

* 1. Pre-filed legislation

Aishwarya Shrestha highlighted pre-filed legislation that pertains to transportation: prohibiting hand-held wireless communication while driving, also while in school and construction zone, changes to the law regarding special road districts, repeal the increase on tax on motor fuel, repeal a portion of the tax on motor fuel.

* 1. Other items of interest

Aishwarya Shrestha highlighted an article from MoDOT that shows a significant increase in a fatality in 15 years. Fatalities in 2021 traffic crashes passed 1000, which was a 2% increase over 2020 and marks the second straight year of increase in fatalities after nearly a decade of steady decline. Around 2/3rd of the people killed were not wearing seat belts.

Aishwarya Shrestha also highlighted an article that announced Emery Sapp & Sons and Parsons Transportation Group were selected for the rebuild/improve 25 bridges along the I-44 corridor project. It is a $38.5 million construction project. The project will begin in late spring/early summer of this year and be completed in fall 2024.

Aishwarya Shrestha also asked the TAC to contact her if any of the communities are interested in applying for MO Department Health and Senior Services’ $15,000 active transportation planning grant.

1. **MoDOT Update**

Zeke Hall mentioned that MoDOT awarded the corridor bridge bundle project. It is a continuation of the previous I-44 design-build project that involved several bridges in Lawrence County.

Zeke also mentioned that the legislature has taken up repealing the fuel tax increase that was passed last session. The STIP timeline has been accelerated by six weeks to ensure the draft version is ready for the legislators to show the projects that will be at risk of losing funding if the fuel tax is repealed.

1. **MPO Update**

Andy Thomason mentioned that due to the change in the STIP timeline, OTO also has moved up its process.

Andy Thomason mentioned that they are in the early stages of preparing a RAISE grant for I-44 which would include expansion to 6 lanes, auxiliary lanes, and improvements at Highway 13. They are working on a budget for the grant application. They are hoping previous guidance would help them compete well for the grant.

Andy Thomas highlighted the Highway 13 corridor study that included Kansas Expressway and I-44. Since September’s update, OTO has brought in CMT as the consultant for the study, met with Ozark Empire Fairgrounds and other businesses to gather input on impacts to their business, met with elected officials, and held a public meeting in November. The team is working on designs and refining them. Another public meeting is scheduled for early February to present the designs and gather feedback.

1. **Legislative Reports**

Dan Wadlington mentioned that Senator Blunt is working on a bill to change the filibuster. Senator Blunt opposes any change. He also highlighted the directive from the Treasury on ARPA spending that was released.

Erin Engelmeyer highlighted the Freedom to Vote Act. Senator Hawley opposes amending the filibuster and Freedom to Vote Act. She also highlighted that Senator Hawley’s 2021 achievements summary is presented on hawley.senate.gov.

Jeremy Pruett mentioned the bills mentioned by Erin Engelmeyer and Dan Wadlington were passed by the House. He highlighted that it is the first week after the Christmas break so there are a lot of hearings and committee meetings.

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1. **Other Member Updates & Guest Reports**

Gail Noggle had a question regarding the James River Freeway extension. Andy Thomas mentioned that the extension is beyond the scope of their study and boundaries. The study might help feed into the James River Freeway extension discussion. Jason Ray mentioned that SMCOG submitted a proposal to the Greene County Commission estimating three different scenarios for further studies on what the James River extension might look like.

Howard Fisk requested SMCOG for an acronym list.

1. **Adjourn by Chair**

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Todd Wiesehan.

The next meeting will be on March 9, 2022, in person.

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