

Brazos County Regional Mobility Authority

Board Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2020

- **Certification of Quorum**

Voting members present were Tedi Ellison, Chair, Presiding; Dennis Christiansen, Vice Chair; Jason Bienski, Board Member; Veronica Morgan, Board Member; and Alan Munger, Board Member. The minutes were taken by Lisa Lyon, RMA Administrative Assistant. Additional participants included Steve Aldrich, Prarthana Banerji, Bart Benthul, Nancy Berry, Doug Bramwell, Michael Copeland, Elizabeth Cunha, Paul Kaspar, Matt Dawson-Mathur, Russ Ford, Brent Hairston, Taslima Kahndaker, Doug Marino, Rob Maxwell, Terry Paholek, Duane Peters, John Polster, Troy Rother, Dan Rudge, and Lance Simmons.

- **Welcome and Open Meeting**

Ms. Ellison called to order the regular meeting of the Brazos County Regional Mobility Authority Board at 9:00 a.m. on December 16, 2020. Due to continued COVID-19 constraints, the meeting was held via Zoom. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States and Texas flags followed by an invocation given by Ms. Ellison.

- **Public Comments Regarding Items Not on the Agenda**

There were no public comments.

- **Adoption of Minutes from October 28, 2020, RMA Board Meeting**

Minutes from the October 28, 2020, Regional Mobility Board Meeting were considered for adoption. **A motion to approve the minutes was made by Dr. Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Mr. Munger. There was no discussion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.**

- **Approval of RMA Annual Project Report**

Each year the RMA is required to submit a report to the Texas Transportation Commission by December 31st and has specific items that need to be included. The RMA Board must approve the report before it can be submitted to the Commission. The Board members have already received a copy of the report. Ms. Ellison opened the floor for comments regarding the report. The following changes were requested:

- Page three, paragraph two, change enhances life to enhances quality of life.
- Page four, paragraph one, remove the comma after include.

- Page eight, paragraph one, change diverted to derived.
- Add a map to the potential projects section showing the potential projects on the map.

Dr. Christiansen made the motion to approve the 2020 Annual Project report with the discussed changes and that it be submitted to the Texas Transportation Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Munger. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

- **Appointment of Committee to Determine Project Selection Process**

While the University Drive project was selected to form the RMA, other transportation projects can be pursued. To ensure transparency for Brazos County residents, the RMA will develop a fair and transparent process for selecting additional projects for the RMA. A special committee to develop the process will be created. Mr. Rudge volunteered to provide technical assistance. **Ms. Ellison made the motion to appoint Jason Bienski and Veronica Morgan to co-lead this committee. Mr. Munger seconded the motion. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.**

- **Legislation – Significance and Status Update**

While there are a number of ways to develop a dedicated funding stream to finance the RMA, most of these require some form of tax increase. The legislation that the RMA is pursuing does not automatically raise the vehicle registration fee by \$10. Instead, it's asking the legislature to allow the citizens of Brazos County to have a vote on whether or not to add \$10 to the vehicle registration fee.

Dr. Christiansen spoke to the background and significance of the legislation. The process of creating a viable RMA took years of work and this legislation is a critical juncture in the process. There have been multiple surveys that show that congestion and mobility are key issues with Brazos County residents. To help address those concerns, an RMA has been created in Brazos County with very broad local support. This legislation and the RMA are not silver bullets, but do allow expedited delivery of key transportation projects and the ability to bring more state and federal funds to Brazos County. Since RMA discussions began, for the RMA to be meaningful it would need a consistent source of revenue sufficient to allow it to expedite project delivery in a meaningful manner. The options for making this happen are limited by state law. With required approval and support, an RMA is allowed to increase vehicle registration fees in a county. While this may not be the perfect funding option, it is essentially the only one allowed by state law. The RMA would like to allow the voters of Brazos County to decide whether vehicle registration fees should be increased. It is required that the legislature give the county the authorization to conduct such an election and that is what is being pursued. The RMA is not asking the legislature to increase vehicle registration fees, but simply asking the legislature to give permission to hold an election in Brazos County on such an increase. It will be incumbent on the RMA to present to the voters a compelling list of exactly what will be done with these funds if approved. The voters will then decide if such a fee is imposed. It is an attempt by the RMA to give the county one more viable tool for addressing congestion issues. The RMA expressed sincere appreciation to Representative

Raney, Representative Kacal and Senator Schwertner who have agreed to file this bill in the upcoming session. The RMA Board will do all they can to help them navigate the legislation through the upcoming session. Dr. Christiansen thanked the Brazos County Commissioners and the College Station City Council, who have unanimously passed resolutions supporting the legislation, and the Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System for signing a letter of support from the System. For the RMA to be successful, it needs to have a consistent funding source of a magnitude to make a difference. Brazos County has approximately 160,000 registered vehicles which means if the RMA is successful in gaining approval from both the legislature and an election, it will have annual revenues in the range of \$1.6 million per year. That revenue is sufficient, working closely with TxDOT, the MPO, the cities, and the county, to expedite the development of numerous transportation projects, and in turn bring additional state and federal funds to the county. President Elect Biden is talking about an infrastructure bill which is something that may actually be passed by Congress and the RMA wants to be positioned for that. It is the responsibility of the RMA to lay out a program of planned investments sufficiently attractive to gain voter support. The voters of the county have the final say. It will be important for the RMA to be successful in this endeavor. In the years that the RMA has been discussed locally, a Plan B for developing a meaningful source of consistent revenues has not been identified. If the RMA is unsuccessful in this effort, the potential advantages an RMA can offer to the county may be lost. Moving forward in the spirit of one community, the RMA welcomes further discussion and opportunity to further broaden local support for the issue. Mr. Bienski reported that the City of Bryan has been having an on-going discussion regarding this issue; however, he has not received any updates recently.

- **Board Member Reports**

There were no board member reports.

- **Chairman's Report**

At the last MPO Policy Board meeting on December 2nd, the MPO Board voted to include an RMA Board member as an ex-officio member on the Policy Board and on the MPO Technical Advisory Committee. Ms. Ellison has asked Dr. Christiansen to be the ex-officio Board Member on the Policy Board and Mr. Munger to be the ex-officio member on the MPO Technical Advisory Committee and both have agreed to represent the RMA in this manner. They will be able to comment and participate in all discussion, but as ex-officio members will not be able to vote. This action satisfies Goal 4, Strategy 1, of the the RMA Strategic Plan which states "Request appointment as a member to both the MPO Policy Board and the MPO Technical Advisory Committee."

The next Board meeting will be on January 27, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.

- **Adjourn**

The RMA Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Jedi Ellison

RMA Board Chair or Vice-Chair
Brazos County Regional Mobility Authority

ATTEST:

Lisa G. Lyon

RMA Board Secretary

2-11-2021

Date