

## ***Brazos County Regional Mobility Authority***

### ***Board Meeting Minutes***

April 28, 2021

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- **Certification of Quorum**

Voting members present were Barry Moore, 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, Jayson Barfknecht, Bart Benthul, Nancy Berry, Doug Bramwell, Carol Cotter, Elizabeth Cunha, Tedi Ellison, Venessa Garza, Paul Kaspar, Taslima Khandaker, Doug Marino, Jo Marlow, Karl Mooney, Curtis Morgan, Andrew Nelson, John Nichols, Terry Paholek, Duane Peters, Juan Quiroz, Troy Rother, Dan Rudge, and Lance Simmons.

- **Welcome and Open Meeting**

Mr. Moore called to order the regular meeting of the Brazos County Regional Mobility Authority Board at 9:02 a.m. on April 28, 2021. 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 Mr. Moore.

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

There were no public comments.

- **Presentation to Tedi Ellison for her contributions to the RMA**

The Board presented Ms. Ellison with a resolution for her outstanding contribution to the RMA. Various Board members and others praised Ms. Ellison for her efforts.

- **Adoption of Minutes from January 27, 2021, RMA Board Meeting**

Minutes from the January 27, 2020, Regional Mobility Board Meeting were considered for adoption. **A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Munger. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bienski. There was no discussion. The motion passed by a unanimous vote.**

- **Status Update on the University Drive Project**

Dr. Christiansen gave an update on the status of the University Drive Project. University Drive adjacent to the A&M Campus is a very dangerous location for pedestrians and bicycles. About 15% of total bike-ped fatalities in College Station occur on that stretch of University Drive. There are 40,000-45,000 vehicles per day using that street. In 2017, before there was any local discussion of a Regional Mobility Authority, the MPO responded to the problem by initiating a small study to try and identify possible ways to increase safety and mobility in the corridor. At that same time, the City of College Station was working with TxDOT and the A&M system to pursue approximately \$10 million in at-grade pedestrian improvements along University Drive such as wider sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, improved signal location and timing, etc. All who worked to develop those plans felt more was needed because of the further development in Northgate and Century Square.

The MPO consultant hired for the modestly funded study was asked to think “out of the box” when developing possible solutions. One of the solutions put forth by the consultants involved depressing University Drive from College Avenue to Wellborn Road and building a deck over that. With this scenario, through traffic could be below grade, with local traffic and open space on the deck. Most everyone who saw the alternative was intrigued and it appeared to solve traffic and safety problems and was aesthetically pleasing. Due to the small size of the MPO study and the resulting scope of services, details such as how to build the project, traffic impacts, costs, etc., were not explored at any level of detail. Because of the interest the concept generated, TxDOT was willing to engage a consultant to further view alternatives for the corridor. That work has been on-going and at the Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee today at 1:30, TxDOT will discuss the status of that project. Dr. Christiansen encouraged everyone to attend if possible.

Because the project addressed badly needed safety and mobility issues that was well defined in the MPO study, the project was chosen for the petition to create the RMA. The TxDOT consultant who is still currently under contract, began to take a closer look at some of the key issues associated with this project which were beyond the scope of the initial MPO study. A detailed traffic analysis found the proposed solution did not solve the through traffic issues and the signals at both College and Wellborn would fail by the design year. It was also found that being able to maintain necessary pedestrian, bicycle, and auto movements during construction would be problematic, as well as keeping businesses fronting on University Drive viable during the long construction time frame. A refined cost estimate was not developed for the project; however, the cost is identified as being at least \$350 million and maybe more. Because of these things, a decision had to be made on what was the best use of the consultant moving forward.

In February of this year a high-level staff meeting was convened, and parties who would have been responsible for funding the project including the RMA, the City of College Station, Texas A&M University System, TxDOT, and MPO staff participated in the meeting. After considerable discussion, it was a consensus agreement at the meeting that particularly in a post-COVID budget world, the cost numbers and other concerns identified with the depressed through-lane alternative, indicated that this particular alternative does not

warrant further consideration. The consultant has been asked by TxDOT to redirect the scope of the study to assess alternatives for enhancing bike-ped safety that do not involve depressing the University through lanes but do address issues at both Northgate and Century Square. The bike-ped safety problems remain and are meaningful which was a major reason for the RMA to be involved in the project initially and continues to justify RMA involvement in the project.

- **Board Member Reports**

There were no board member reports.

- **Chairman's Report**

Mr. Moore took a moment to state his enthusiasm about being selected as the new Board Chair. He again thanked Ms. Ellison for her work and expressed his gratitude to have such a knowledgeable board and supporters of the RMA.

There has been some progress on the bills put forward in the House by Representatives Raney and Kacal and in the Senate by Senator Schwertner. The House bill has been voted out of the Transportation Committee and is currently in Calendar Committee. The Senate bill is awaiting the House bill to pass onto the floor of the House to be heard before they move it on. The original bill that was drafted by Representative Raney and co-sponsored by Representative Kacal, was amended to combine it with another similar bill put forward by Hidalgo and Cameron counties. The Senate would like to wait for the language of the bill to come through before moving it through their Transportation Committee where it is currently. Texas SB 624 which was written by Senator Schwertner will be amended in the even Texas HB 1698 is passed out of the House. Mr. Moore encouraged anyone to contact Senator Schwertner's office for updates and to give opinions on the bill. Mr. Moore also encouraged anyone to thank Representatives Raney and Kacal for the work they've done.

### **New Business**

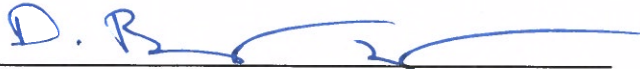
It was suggested that the RMA begin a petition to show local support the bills currently circulating in the House and Senate. There was a concern expressed by some Board members about the timing not being sufficient for a petition to be finished or to have any type of impact because there are only four weeks left in the legislative session. A few of the Board members felt as if this would be something better handled by a different organization other than the RMA.

There was some discussion of the RMA going back to in-person Board meetings.

- **Adjourn**

The RMA Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:12 a.m.

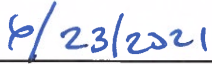
ATTEST:



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



RMA Board Secretary



Date