

# MEETING MINUTES

## Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Policy Committee & Technical Coordinating Committee



Thursday, December 8, 2016 at 10:00am  
Great Southern Golf Club • 2000 Beach Blvd, Gulfport, MS



### I. Call to Order

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Mayor Skellie (TPC Chair)	Long Beach	Kris Riemann (TCC Chair)	Gulfport
Kevin Coggin	CTA	Win Ellington	Sen. Cochran's office
Jacquelyn Davis	Moss Point	Camille Peno	Sen. Wicker's office
Geneva Dummer	Heritage trails	TJ Moran	Cong. Pallazzo's office
Paula Fairconnetue	Bay St Louis	Todd Stennis	Amtrak
Brian Fulton	Jackson County	Ron Magee	NASA – Stennis
April Havens	Gautier	Stephanie Plancich	GRPC
CM Paula Yancey	Gautier	Elaine Wilkinson	GRPC
Mayor Moran	Ocean Springs	David Taylor	GRPC
Carolyn Martin	Ocean Springs	Kenneth Yarrow	GRPC
Jody Spires	Harrison County	Ken Holland	GRPC
Patrick Bonck	Harrison County	Jason Zimmer	GRPC
Danny Boudreaux	Harrison County	Steve Burton	GRPC
CM Joe Huffman	Pascagoula	Ashley Skellie	GRPC
Bill Cork	Hancock Port & Harbor	Kelly Castleberry	MDOT
Beau Gex	Hancock Port & Harbor	David Seyfarth	MDOT
Greg Holmes	Gulfport	Chuck Starita	MDOT
Jeremy Harrison	Gulfport	Jeff Altman	MDOT
Jeff Taylor	D'Iberville	Nicole Baker	MDOT
Ed Shambra	Biloxi	Perry Brown	MDOT
Jerry Creel	Biloxi	Sedrick Durr	MDOT
Amy Rishel	Pass Christian	Adam - BKI	Guest
Sue Wright	Moss Point	Doug – Garner/Russel	Guest
CM Clovis Reed	Diamondhead		

I. **Introductions** - All attendees spoke their name and affiliation during introductions

II. **Public Comment** - none

III. **Approval of Minutes:**

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016 TCC/TPC meeting

**MOTION by Joe Huffman. Second by Elaine Wilkinson. No Comments. Passed.**

IV. **MPO General Business** (Stephanie Plancich)

1. Stephanie provided everyone a copy of the FY2017 MPO Meeting Schedule and informed them that reminders would be sent out via email as well as through Facebook. She encouraged everyone to Like the GRPC Facebook page, @gulfcoastplanning.

## **2017 MPO Meeting Schedule**

### **Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)**

January 26th

April 27th

July 27<sup>th</sup>

### **Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)**

February 23rd

May 25th

August 31<sup>st</sup>

**2017 Annual Meeting:** December 7th

2. Rodney Quaves, the Air Quality Meteorologist for MDEQ, released end of season Ozone numbers for the Coast. Stephanie explained that these figures still will go through the EPA's vetting process, but we look good so far with all counties coming in below the newly reduced ozone standard of 70 parts per billion (PPB).
  - a. Hancock County – 3 year design value is 63ppb
  - b. Harrison County – 3 year design value is 67ppb
  - c. Jackson County – 3 year design value is 67ppb
3. Stephanie and Ken Holland informed the membership that the 2016 apartment survey has been completed and is posted at [www.grpc.com](http://www.grpc.com) for view and download. Ken explained that GRPC has coordinated this effort to develop the Mississippi Gulf Coast's market-rental report since the late 80's/early 90's. Electronic copies are posted on the agency website from 2000 to 2016.
4. Each year at the MPO annual meeting we open the election process for the Chair and Co-chair positions of each MPO committee. David announced that the only current vacancy is for the Vice-chair of the TPC, and made the group aware that Mayor Skellie will be retiring in June, so the May TPC meeting will be his last to preside over, if selected to continue to lead the committee in this fiscal year. Kris Riemann and Brian Fulton confirmed that they are both interested in continuing their service on the TCC and would like to keep their nominations open, respectively. David informed the group that nominations for all 4 positions will be open through January 20<sup>th</sup> and selections will be made at the TCC meeting January 26<sup>th</sup> and the TPC meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Email your nominations to him at [dtaylor@grpc.com](mailto:dtaylor@grpc.com).

## **V. JLUS Project Updates (Elaine Wilkinson)**

Elaine informed the MPO of progress toward completing the 2 Joint Land Use Studies being coordinated on the Coast. Using a PowerPoint presentation (in file) she explained that the development process has 6 stages. Project initiation started in April 2016, public engagement will continue to run through May 2017, data collection was completed in September 2016 and development of the JLUS is currently underway. The final plan, which will include action steps, is set to be published in June 2017.

For specific information on the two separate projects visit: [www.seabeesjlus.com](http://www.seabeesjlus.com) and [www.keeslerjlus.com](http://www.keeslerjlus.com).

## **VI. Gulf Coast Railway Updates**

1. Southern Rail Commission (SRC): Elaine provided an update on the planning for passenger rail service restoration across our region. The SRC has been meeting for over a year now to develop an implementation plan for bringing services back to the Gulf Coast. Mississippi has been noticed as a key factor in the significant progress made so far. Every local jurisdiction has participated in support of the effort and our congressional team is working wonders in Washington DC. She, on behalf of the SRC, recognized the efforts of the congressional delegation for leading the way and continuing to encourage our neighboring states to be as supportive. Currently, the planning team has asked Congress for a few month's to finalize planning with CSX, the Coast Guard and others needed for a well-coordinated plan. Then they will submit for feedback.
2. The SRC has regular quarterly meetings that rotate across all states in the planning region. This month they will be in Mississippi. If available, please plan to attend on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> 9-12 at the Bay St Louis Community Center on Blaize Ave to talk with rail leadership and learn more specifics about the project and process.

3. Amtrak has hired a new CEO, Whit Norman. He is originally from Hattiesburg and is expected to visit the Gulf Coast later this year. That opportunity to meet him and discuss this project will be announced to the MPO.
4. **Special Guest Presentation:** Port Bienville Rail Extension Project  
Bill Cork, CEO-Hancock County Port & Harbor  
Email: bcork@hcphc.ms Office: 228-467-9231

Bill Cork is the new CEO of the Hancock County Port & Harbor Commission. He's held the position just under a year, but is leading some major efforts already. He provided a presentation showing the proposed/planned location of a new 26 mile rail spur in Hancock County. This new rail segment, curving around the east side of Stennis buffer zone, will greatly expand the capacity and efficiency of the harbor and is expected to be a new economic driver for not only the County but for the entire region. It's about a \$120 million project.

This project was proposed to address significant bottleneck issues occurring at the Port. These delay cost time and money and make the Port less attractive to new companies. A new concern is also the very likely reinstatement of passenger rail service that will also be using that same rail line. Something has to be done to improve efficiency. The project will support economic resiliency efforts for current tenants and is expected to attract new commercial growth along the new track segment of about 9000 acres.

The Port is working closely with MDOT and FRA. Step one in the process was a feasibility study and Step two is the environmental study. The closest residence to the proposed line is ¼ mile away, so that is not an issue, but there are an estimated 300 acres of wetlands that need to be assessed. Also due to the remoteness of the line, there are only a few commercial land owners that will be approached for easements along the edges of their property. Hancock County currently has no North-South rail option. This spur will make them much more competitive which will support the entire Coast's growth goals.

As they are awaiting MDOT and FRA approval on the study documents, Bill and the Port team are exploring additional funding resources and working to cultivate public-private partnerships with potential end users of the new commercial acreage.

Question 1: How are you identifying potential investors/end users? Reaching out to companies with rail freight and maritime interests to start conversations.

Question 2: Why did you not use more of the Stennis Right of Way? There is a lot of regulation for what can occur in the buffer zone. For example, there is a fragmentation distance requirement that we needed to be beyond.

Question 3: How long will this new capacity meet the needs of the Port without additional growth and upgrades? 20-30 years.

Question 4: Is the route being planned to accommodate a double track? No, unfortunately, the initial planning for the project only considered a 75' ROW to accommodate a single track. The amount of wetlands and needed bridge infrastructure crossing the area make even this step a challenge. Future growth plans will have to be determined at a later date.

**VII. MPO Project and Program Updates (David Taylor)** Each attendee was provided the agenda information in a printed program. Maps as well as lists of all MPO projects were published in the program. Copies are in the meeting folder and electronic copies can be emailed. Request a copy from Stephanie at splancich@grpc.com.


1. **FY2016 Funded Projects/Completed & Ongoing Activities** – The MPO obligated 7 projects in FY2016, the combined total is just over \$15 million. David recognized the efforts of several MDOT staff and departments for their direct support in helping us reach the September deadline to get the projects off of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Obligating these projects was a huge MPO accomplishment.
2. **FY2017-2020 TIP Project Update** – This year we also completed a full TIP update as we developed the FY17-20 program. During this process we added 8 new projects to the TIP.

**The list of projects that received a funding allocation in FY16:** Total = \$6,952,304

1. Diamondhead, I-10 interchange lighting - \$400,000
2. Diamondhead, Golf Club Drive Roundabout - \$200,000
3. Long Beach, Pineville Road New Sidewalks - \$1,000,000
4. Waveland, Nicholson Ave Overlay & Widening - \$800,000
5. Jackson County, Signal at Lemoyne and McCann - \$360,000

6. Jackson County, St Martin N. Elementary Sidewalks - \$160,000
  7. Gulfport, Seaway Road Multiuse Pathway - \$788,304
  8. Bay-Waveland School District, Pine Street Sidewalks - \$244,000
3. **Activation Status/Project Tracking:** David then talked with the group again about how much more involved the MPO staff are going to be in project development moving forward. This has been discussed throughout the year and first milestones were set in August. All TIP project holders were asked to develop an initial project schedule and submit it to Stephanie by October 25<sup>th</sup>. And all projects were required to be activated through MDOT/or activation packets submitted to MDOT before this meeting date. Only about half of the Tip project holders followed through. David listed those that has not made the deadline and asked them to work with David Seyfarth, to get them in ASAP. He did recognize that a few projects were on hold for reasons out of their control, and we recognize that, but not everyone was in that position. Stephanie will start collecting, with MDOT, the monthly reports and will continue to coordinate TIP progress meetings to ensure no projects fall through the cracks or hold up money that could be used by ready projects waiting in the wings.
  4. **Next TIP Progress Meeting:** afternoon of 1/25 **\*UPDATE: Progress meeting is set for January 25<sup>th</sup>, from 2pm to 4:30pm at the MSU Extension Center, Popp's Ferry Road (From I-10 head south on Cedar Lake, turn Right on Popp's Ferry (not left to our office) it is less than 1 mile on the left hand side across from Walmart.)**
  5. **TIP amendment process and schedule:** Every 6 months the MPO reviews the TIP to ensure progress is being made, that priorities have not changed, to correct information etc. The next Amendment process starts Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> and runs through Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>. Full schedule is in the screen shot below from the MPO presentation (In file).

### TIP Amendment Schedule (Page 4)

<b>Submission &amp; Review Period</b>	<b>12/8-1/20</b>	
<b>Letter from MPO—Emailed</b>	<b>12/20</b>	
<b>Reminder Email sent to all</b>	<b>1/5</b>	
<b>Submission Deadline</b>	<b>1/20</b>	
<b>★ TIP Progress Meeting</b>	<b>1/25</b>	
<b>TCC Meeting/Review</b>	<b>1/26</b>	
<b>Public Review Period</b>	<b>2/10-2/20</b>	
<b>TPC Review and Adoption</b>	<b>2/23</b>	

**Email or call David Taylor to discuss your possible changes, to answer questions and to help with your project submissions. [dtaylor@grpc.com](mailto:dtaylor@grpc.com), 228-864-1167.**

6. **Grouped Funding Program Updates** (Kenneth Yarrow)
 

Kenneth reviewed the three groups that the MPO allocated funding to within the TIP program. A portion of our annual allocation is set-aside to be available for planning studies requested from the LPAs for various project ideas. Another set-aside is for projects that support bike/pedestrian/transit connectivity, accessibility and other system improvements. The third group is the “Get To B” safety group. The funds utilized in this group are often available without local match requirements, whereas the other two groups are predominantly 80/20. A question was asked about how the unused funds are used. Kenneth, in response, gave the example that we very rarely use all of the apportioned study money, so it gets allocated as needed to new or existing TIP projects to ensure they move forward.

He then gave a presentation (in file) showing the infrastructure portion of the Get To B program has been progressing across the coast. He showed before and after pictures of completed Phase 1, land departure reduction projects at several sites and then, on the map included in the meeting program, pointed out where second phase project locations have been identified and will move forward in FY2017.

7. **Get To B Education Programs** (Stephanie Plancich) Stephanie provided a brief overview of the education programs being offered in FY2017 as part of the Get To B safety program.
- a. **School Zone Safety Improvement Program (SZIP):** This is a new program being developed by the MPO to assist the LPAs in focusing efforts to improve overall safety in and around their school zones. In short, it is an assessment program that will evaluate current infrastructure to identify challenges, gaps, and needs for safe travel for all modes and will result in a , per school zone, list of recommendations to improve safety. We'll focus on low-cost measures like signs, striping, vegetation control, as well as accessibility and connectivity solutions, but will also include larger-scale improvement suggestions when appropriate. Moss Point will be the pilot city for this program, then it will expand to other jurisdictions. If interested in getting on the list email splancich@grpc.com.
  - b. **On-site safety simulator training program:** The simulator training program is a proven tool in reducing crash occurrence among employees. This is also a new program being offer to LPAs through GRPC/the MPO. Set to start in January/February of 2017, this fully interactive driving simulation system will provide driver within your agency a refresher course in safe driving habits. When initiated by UPS for their drivers, they reported a 38% decrease in crash occurrence for their drivers. At this time we anticipate the simulator will be "checked out" by one jurisdiction at a time for a period of 6-8 weeks. Stephanie will set it up at your location and will work closely with your on-site staff coordinator to get your staff, police, utility workers, fire staff and others who regularly drive through the 10 level program. In total their participation to complete the training takes about 1hour and 15 minutes and it can be done in one sitting or several if need be. Diamondhead will be piloting this program, then it will open to others for registration. If interested in getting on the list email splancich@grpc.com.
  - c. **Professional Development Workshops:** For the past 2 years, we have coordinated the Get To B safety series, a no or low cost professional development series focused on a wide variety of safety improvement techniques and strategies. We will host at least 1 event in FY17 and would like member feedback on topics to cover. Do you have a study coming up? Is there a safety challenge on a roadway that you'd like to have evaluated? Do you want us to coordinate a visit from a safety expert (like we did with Mark Lenters to evaluate feasibility of roundabouts at various locations) to come to your community and look at potential project areas? What about a bicycle plan expert or a mixed land use planning expert? Please email Stephanie and let her know your needs, thoughts and ideas.

VIII. **Coast Transit Updates** (Kevin Coggin)

CTA measures its success by tracking ridership. In 2014-15 there was a slight dip. In response CTA was able to adjust a few routes, continue system wide improvements and in 2016 ridership went up about 11%. They are on track to continue growth in 2017. They are grateful for the support of the local community and elected leadership. Kevin listed several improvement projects happening across the Coast.

- Biloxi – Ped bridge study @ Rue Magnolia. "Gateway to the City" New crossing option over Hwy 90
- D'Iberville – CTA is asked to expand routes to include the French Market Development District, a transit oriented development area/mixed land-use area near the Scarlett Pearl Casino
- Gulfport – Downtown development program/Aquarium support. This program involves several projects.
  1. CTA parking garage will be made available for aquarium guests to use.
  2. Renovate the historic downtown library to become the new multimodal transit center and new office space. Will cost about \$9 million to complete. City has already completed a 40 year lease with CTA.
  3. Build a tram/bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Hwy 90 connecting the aquarium/transit center to Jones Park.
- Will make a TIP amendment request to include needed improvements to the 20<sup>th</sup> Ave and Hwy 90 intersection. This project will include ADA improvements to sidewalks throughout the immediate area. Will work with a consultant to create a traffic and pedestrian plan that will support all users.

Kevin is available to talk/meet with any LPA about improved or new transit services in your community. Email him directly at Kcoggin@coasttransit.com.

- IX. **MDOT Updates** (David Seyfarth) MDOT has a few major projects on-going and planned that will affect Gulf Coast residents. They will start a construction project to improve the Diamondhead Interchange in the next couple of years. The O'Neal Road/Hwy 49 project is underway. ROW acquisition is almost complete, utilities are moving and they expect to be in full construction by 2020. Hwy 90 widening through Ocean Springs continues to move forward toward construction. The Lamey Bridge and Hwy 15 roundabout installation is set to start in March

2017, and the I-10 widening between exit 50 and 57 continues to move forward on schedule. Set to be completed by December 2017.

X. **Old/New Business**

1. Ken Holland— FHWA and the Volpe Center initiated a scenario Modeling peer exchange program and invited GRPC to participate as a Peer. We hosted a 2 day workshop in FY2016 that proved successful and raised local awareness of the benefits of scenario modeling, provided MPO staff with some new ideas and tools for our planning process and resulted in greater national awareness about how scenario modeling is currently being used and goals for future enhancements. The Volpe Center published the description and results of the meeting and it is available for review on the FHWA/scenario modeling webpage.
2. Kris Riemann shared with the membership a situation he ran into with a Gulfport project that was older than 10 years. He informed the MPO that there is a 10 year limitation for CE&I advertisements/selections. Stephanie informed Biloxi and Gautier that they are the only other jurisdictions who have projects that old, where they could possibly be affected by this rule. They can contact MDOT directly to see if they will have any need to re-advertise so they don't experience project holdups.
3. Stephanie informed the group that a large scale multistate freight planning effort is underway. Our state plan will begin getting updated in January 2017 to align with FAST Act and other new freight policies and regulations. In spring/summer, we will be asked to review the updated statewide plan before adoption and we, as a region, will be tasked with designating an additional 22 miles of truck routes in the 3 Coastal counties. Trung, the State Freight Coordinator, is actively working to update the Mississippi plan and will meet with us to explain the recommendations in the revised plan and share recommendations to consider for expanding our current freight network. Notice of review periods and meetings will be emailed.
4. Stephanie then discussed with the group that the MPO serves two separate areas, although we treat them the same in the planning process. The areas are the Pascagoula Urbanized Area with a population of just over 50,000 and the Gulfport/Biloxi Transportation Management Area with a population over 200,000. TMA's require much more stringent compliance with non-discrimination regulations and incur additional reporting and planning activities. As a TMA we self-certify that we are in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations directing our planning process and we do that at the annual meeting. It is signed by the TPC chairman, Mayor Skellie and the MDOT Planning Director, Jeff Ely. (A copy of the self-certification was printed in the meeting program.) Mayor Skellie asked if there were any comments then asked for a motion to sign the certification. **MOTION made by Jeff Taylor. Second by Clovis Reed. No Comments. Passed.**
5. David explained to the MPO that we have worked for the last year with MDOT to determine the feasibility of developing a local road safety program. Last week we had the first meeting to define consultant scope to get the document underway. This document will help guide future safety funds investment to mitigate high crash risks identified through the development process. It will offer a measurable tool to report program efforts and progress demonstrating effective and efficient distribution of resources. It is expected that the program will be completed toward the end of this fiscal year.
6. **Adjournment MOTION made by Jeff Taylor, Second by Joe Huffman. No Comments. Passed.**