

MINUTES

PUEBLO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

AUGUST 27, 2020

A meeting of the Pueblo Area Council of Governments was held on Thursday, August 27, 2020, at the Pueblo County Department of Emergency Management, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Chris Wiseman, PACOG Chairman, at 12:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Those members present were:

Ray Aguilera
Mark Aliff
Larry Atencio
Tom Autobee (for Michael Cafasso)
Ed Brown

Barbara Clementi
Greg Collins
Dennis Flores
Chris Wiseman

Those members absent were:

Staphanie Cordova-Catalano
Terry Hart
Ted Lopez
Garrison Ortiz

Doug Proal
Bob Schilling
Lori Winner

Also present were:

John Adams
Nick Gradisar
Sabina Genesio

Carmen Howard
Dan Kogovsek
Louella Salazar

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Citizen Comments)

Mr. Aguilera welcomed the new CDOT Region 2 Director. He stated we need somebody to advocate for the City of Pueblo and wished him good luck.

CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Carmen Howard, PACOG Manager, reported there were three items listed on the agenda under the Consent Items. She summarized the Consent Items for PACOG.

Chairman Wiseman asked if there were any other additions or amendments to the Consent Items or if any of the members or audience would like an item removed or discussed that was on the Consent agenda. There were no other additions or amendments.

It was moved by Dennis Flores, seconded by Ray Aguilera, and passed unanimously to approve the three Consent Items listed below:

- Minutes of February 27, 2020 Meeting;
- Treasurer's Report (Receive and file December 2019, January 2020, February 2020, March 2020, April 2020, May 2020, June 2020, and July 2020 Financial Reports); and

- A Resolution Approving the 2021 Delegation Agreement Between the Pueblo Area Council of Governments (PACOG) and the City of Pueblo, a Colorado Municipal Corporation for Transportation Planning Services, Authorizing the Chair of the Council to Execute the Same, and Authorizing and Directing the Urban Transportation Planning Division to Administer the Agreement in Compliance with All Applicable Federal, State, and Local Laws and Regulations.

REGULAR ITEMS:

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

(A) Lunch Appreciation

Chairman Wiseman thanked the Pueblo County Commissioners for providing lunch for today's meeting.

(B) PACOG Meetings Back to Monthly Schedule

Chairman Wiseman thanked everyone for being patient during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting the PACOG meetings would be back to a monthly schedule. He stated Zoom offers us an opportunity for people who want to attend to be able to attend.

MANAGER'S REPORT

(A) ADA Advisory Committee Minutes

Ms. Howard reported the minutes from the February 6, March 5, June 2, and June 4, 2020 ADA Advisory Committee meetings were mailed in the members' packets.

This being an information item, no formal action was required.

(B) Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Howard reported a grant has been received from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) in the amount of \$200,000 (50% of the total amount). The RFQ was published and the selection committee has chosen a consultant for the Comprehensive Plan update. We will be meeting within the next two weeks with the consultant to develop a scope of work and proceed to a contract with them.

UPDATE ON CITY OF PUEBLO RECLAMATION FACILITY 2020 UTILITY PLAN

Ms. Nancy Keller, City Wastewater Director, Pueblo Water Reclamation Facility, presented a PowerPoint presentation. She stated updates have been done to the City's utility plan. There are a few minor updates such as updating the demographics, the general wastewater characteristics, and permit information. The Colorado discharge permit which was included in the packet will expire next year. She noted 180 days prior to the expiration (November), a new permit application will be submitted, which the State will either give an extension or make public a new, revised permit.

Ms. Keller stated she would like to update the members on some of the projects completed. The first one completed was the electrical upgrade. The Phase 3 electrical improvements included renovating the existing, primary switchgear. There are two power sources coming into

the plant. If there is a power failure on one, the switchgear will switch the power to the other one as an emergency backup. There were also quick disconnects done on a few of the buildings so if one building loses power they can go ahead and hook up a generator. The other project is a process improvement project where two digester covers were replaced from when the plant was originally built. Two of the centrifuges which are used to dewater the sludge, as well as replacement of a third of the Archimedes screw pumps, which are more energy efficient, were also completed.

Ms. Keller stated the major changes were due to the regulatory changes that the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment adopted for nutrient regulations. The City's permit included meeting the Regulation 85 limits with a compliance-based schedule wherein they would be in compliance by 2021. Those limits were a mid-range that allowed to phase-in because of the monetary constraints. She stated the numbers provided by the City to the State on 2027 numbers were considered by the State not to be low enough and are going to be revised. There will be an exponential cost increase to meet the lower standards.

Ms. Keller stated the City incorporated two different processes. The first was a hydrocyclone-based wasting, which takes the heavier solids from the centrifuge and carries them to the top and the lighter solids get carried from the bottom. The heavy solids contain most of the phosphorus removing organisms. The lighter solids were the types of filaments that causes instability and can cause bulking to happen where you can get growth on top of your basins and cause issues with treatment. Those are taken out and wasted to the digester. The City also included advanced aeration controls. Typically, in the past, only dissolved oxygen was measured. Probes were added to measure ammonia. This has allowed us to keep the dissolved oxygen at a lower level. By taking the ammonia lower, the City has the ability to oxygen off the nitrate, nitrite, and reduce the total nitrogen compounds within the system. She stated they have been lucky to meet the standards several months before the compliance schedule and do extra testing and optimize the process. The settling improved within the process by 50%. She stated that they were able to remove ammonia chloride to control the bulking, which is no longer needed. They fed acetic acid to carbon, noting this is no longer needed. The capacity at the plant has increased by 50%. Their effluent quality is meeting and/or exceeding the Regulation 85 numbers. She stated because of this they have been able to earn acetic acid credits from the State, which would help them push the 2027 numbers out. They are saving over \$300,000/year on chemical usage and \$150,000/year on aeration energy. This process cost about 25¢ per gallon to install where the normal process would have been \$5 to \$10 per gallon to install. The \$25 million expected cost has reduced significantly. It gives the City a return of investment in two years where they will save enough to not pay anything to meet the Regulation 85 limits.

Mr. Flores asked about the status of lining the pipes on the north end of Pueblo and the COVID-19 testing which is being done for the community. Ms. Keller replied the shale in Pueblo is high in selenium and sulfate. The groundwater on the northwest side of town runs about 10,000-12,000 micrograms per liter. The stream standard the City must meet is 14.1 micrograms per liter. Any infiltration into the system creates an issue. The lining was installed to prevent this from happening. The City has a variance which allows them time to do things to meet the standards. The first 5 years, there will be \$10 million worth of lining done. The second 5 years will allow the City time to meet the standards if it cannot be met the first 5 years. She stated they have not been able to do testing because of the dry weather, noting the groundwater table is low. She stated when the weather changes, they will have a better indication. Annual reports are provided to the State. There is a hearing to report to the Water Quality Control Commission. She stated they have done pilots in the collection system and have found cheaper ways of lining and providing repairs without having to dig, which provides a cost savings. With respect to

COVID-19, they are sampling their influent and sending that to the Colorado State University lab, noting the State is paying to do the COVID analysis. It is not testing for the virus, but the RNA that's given off from the virus. They can tell 5-7 days before people get sick that there is an increase in the number of people who have COVID. It seems to be working well.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER/CDOT REGION 2 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There was no actual report from Mr. Bill Thiebaut, Region 10 Transportation Commissioner, but he only wanted the members to know about the Safe Routes to Schools Grants, which are now available. The information was emailed to the PACOG members prior to the meeting by its recording secretary.

Mr. Richard Zamora, CDOT Region 2 Director, reported he was selected as the new Region 2 Director on April 1st. He has been with CDOT 22 years, serving in various capacities. From 2001-2013, he worked at CDOT Region 2. He is familiar with the area and excited to be back. He reported, in May 2019, CDOT embarked on a planning process on usage of funding over the long term. A long list of projects was developed. PACOG identified Highway 50 to Purcell Boulevard, as well as the new Pueblo Freeway, as being high priorities. The Colorado Transportation Commission has adopted the 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan with these priorities in mind.

Mr. Zamora stated the financial impact of COVID is serious. CDOT is evaluating its 2021 budget. They have looked at ways to do things more efficiently, as well as cutting down on the amount of travel and other things to close that budget gap. There is still a shortfall projected for 2022, which begins July 1, 2021. They are uncertain of recovery efforts. CDOT is committed to the Long-Range Plan but is unsure of the timeline. Many of the projects were funded by Senate Bill 267 dollars, which are legislatively given to CDOT. CDOT is uncertain of years three and four of the program.

Ms. Ajin Hu, CDOT, reported there are two ongoing projects with Highway 50, as well as construction of a bridge north of Pueblo, which should be completed by the first week in November. Two projects have been awarded in this area. One is in the City of Pueblo for ADA project ramps, noting the project will be starting next month and be completed by next fall. Another project will be starting after Labor Day east of Troy Avenue on Highway 50. There will also be a project on Elizabeth which encompasses overlay and rebuilding. The project is by Eagleridge. Construction will start next year. One project on I-25 is the Dillon Boulevard ramp, noting the design should be finished by next year.

Mr. Aguilera stated that EVRAZ will be making a \$500 million investment in Pueblo, which includes an investment of \$200 million for solar panels that will be used for energy. He asked if a sound barrier could be erected in the area between Northern Avenue and Pueblo Boulevard on I-25. He said he didn't remember having an opportunity to speak about the sound barrier. It doesn't make sense for EVRAZ to make this huge investment in this area, noting the area by EVRAZ is an eyesore for Pueblo. He felt the area needs to be improved so it looks nice, so that when the travelling public goes by the new plant it will be appealing to them. He stated he was hoping with the change of directors at CDOT Region 2 that there might be an opportunity to do this.

Mr. Zamora stated Mr. Eric Richardson, CDOT's Public Relations spokesperson, will be leaving CDOT this week. Mr. Richardson stated he enjoyed working with Pueblo. Mr. Zamora stated Ms. Julie George will be helping with public relations until a permanent replacement is hired.

STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC) UPDATE

Chairman Wiseman stated Mr. Hart was unable to attend today's meeting due to another meeting commitment, but he did provide a written report, which he read into the record. *"Since we met last on February 27, I have attended the monthly STAC meetings held on the second Friday of each month and several side meetings and communications with our Transportation Commissioner and CDOT staff on behalf of PACOG. All these meetings have been handled virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

In the monthly meetings the STAC received various reports and the updates on the budget and the impact of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 crisis. We also discussed the impact on the projects that were slated to be completed in 2020. As you all know, there was a significant reduction in the revenue coming from the State over this period of time and so the impact has been severe. However, I'm pleased to report that the CDOT staff has done a remarkable job of holding the annual maintenance program and the various projects that had already started in place during this period of time. In addition, the planning process has gone ahead full speed and several plans have been approved for recommendation to the Transportation Commission.

We also discussed the legislative progress at both the State and federal levels and the emergency funding that was coming into the State that could be used for transportation purposes.

Here in Pueblo, CDOT has pursued several projects that had already been started and are being started, including some brush up work on the I-25 Ilex project, the new interchange work at Highway 50 West and Pueblo Boulevard, drainage and overlay work on St. Charles Mesa, as well as various other projects throughout the City and County. And now the new project to improve the intersection of Highway 50 West and Purcell Boulevard has begun.

The most recent STAC meeting was held on August 14. In that meeting, we received a report from the activities of the Transportation Commission, legislative reports from the State and federal levels, we reviewed and recommended adoption of the 2045 Statewide Transportation Plan, and we began the process of updating the STAC bylaws.

Last Friday, August 21, I also participated in a debrief teleconference meeting with federal, State, and local representatives with regard to the City's grant request under the Federal Transit 5339(b) program. We were not awarded that grant, which was proposed for relocation of the admin./maintenance building of the City's Transit system. The purpose of the debrief was to help us understand why we were not successful so that we might be able to fine tune our game for the next round under the next federal budget cycle. Unfortunately, there's a lot of things that we need to figure out before we resubmit a new grant application.

I would ask John Adams to answer any questions you might have with regard to any item I have covered in this report or any other items he might want to reference that I might have missed. John and I attend these meetings together on behalf of PACOG.

The next meeting of the STAC will be held on September 11 and it is anticipated to be held via Zoom."

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, added there are five sections to the Federal Transit 5339(b) grant application. There was \$1.8 billion in projects across the country. There was \$674 million available for the Ilex project, noting Pueblo did not get it this time. The application will be going

back to the drawing board and try to figure out how to phase it. The need has been recognized and staff will continue moving forward.

STATUS ON SOUTHWEST CHIEF PASSENGER RAIL

Chairman Wiseman read into the record Mr. Hart's status report. *"Since PACOG last met, I have attended a number of meetings of this Commission on behalf of PACOG. Those were primarily the regular monthly Board meetings held on the fourth Friday of each month. But I also attended a series of side meetings to deal with issues that came out of those monthly meetings. All these meetings have been handled virtually.*

In each of these Board meetings, we discussed the status and progress on improvements to the Southwest Chief line, the various federal TIGER and CRISI grants that we are implementing that have already been awarded and new grants that we are seeking. We also discussed the efforts leading to connecting Pueblo to the Southwest Chief as well as the Station Siting project. We implemented several action items to keep this important project moving forward. We also discussed and implemented several critical action items at these meetings regarding the progress and efforts that we are making to plan for the Front Range Passenger Rail system. And finally, we discussed Amtrak's efforts on a national level as well as the federal infrastructure funding proposals and their potential impact on passenger rail lines such as the Southwest Chief and the Front Range Passenger Rail system.

A good portion of the meetings were devoted to the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the substantial reduction in funding that's been coming into the Commission to continue planning for these projects. I am very pleased to report that CDOT has stepped up and agreed to provide critical expertise and staff support in lieu of our ability to finance consultants during this difficult time. I'm also pleased to report the additional great news that Amtrak has reported to us that it is proposing a significant investment in the Front Range Passenger Rail system in their federal budget proposal. It's my understanding that they are requesting over \$2 billion to invest in the planning and construction of this critically important Front Range Passenger Rail system. We are continuing to do our best to inform both CDOT staff and the Transportation Commission how critical it is for Colorado to continue to fund the SWC and FRPR Commission and this critically important project in order to keep the planning and design work going and completed in a timely and expedited manner and to help support and keep Amtrak's proposal alive. Members, your help in contacting our State and Federal legislative contingent members as well as the Governor and CDOT leadership to let them know how important this project is to us here in Pueblo and to ask for their support for the State and Federal funding that is necessary in order to make this dream become a reality would be extremely helpful in this time of restricted budgets.

I have also participated in periodic reporting meetings and public meetings regarding the Station Siting project here in Pueblo for the passenger rail station that would ultimately serve our community for both the east-west Southwest Chief line and the north-south Front Range Passenger Rail line. A number of you have attended those public meetings and my thanks go out to all of you! We report on a regular basis the excitement that these projects are causing in Pueblo and members of the Rail Commission, CDOT and the Transportation Commission have definitely taken notice.

The next meeting will be held Friday, August 28th."

MPO STAFF REPORT

(A) The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported one of their requirements as the MPO and TPR is to develop a Long-Range Transportation Plan, which is a 25-year horizon. The State has finished its Statewide plan to 2045. He stated a survey is being done, noting the link is pacogmovestheregion-2025.com. It is a short survey. Staff is doing a lot of things by social media, noting as of this morning 370 responses have been received. Staff has a couple more weeks of doing the survey, noting Facebook will be utilized. He stated the results so far indicate a good representation by zip code, as well as age and income groups.

(B) The Transit Administration and Maintenance Facility Relocation FTA 5339(b) Grant Application Update

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported this item was covered under Mr. Hart's report.

(C) Pueblo Area Station Plan for Passenger Rail Update

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported another public hearing was held two weeks ago, which was well attended. The consultant started out with three locations and boosted it up to five. They are now down to two, noting one is in the Union Avenue area by "B" Street and the other is behind the Pueblo Justice Center off Mechanic Avenue. Support for the two areas were solid. He stated a Transportation Advisory Committee is scheduled on Tuesday, September 1, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., via Zoom. The consultants will be making a presentation and providing the final recommendation at that meeting.

(D) Other Transportation Matters

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, reported there is a small grant for emergency health services. Legislatively, at the end of September, the Transportation Bill (FAST Act) is due to expire. It is anticipated the Federal government should be able to pass something for transportation funding for the Year 2021.

Mr. Flores asked about the status of PACOG's request for the overpass at Belmont to be the next phase of I-25 to be done. Ms. Hu responded \$60 million was set aside from Senate Bill 267 funding. She stated she is not aware when the money would become available. The total cost of the project is between \$125-\$128 million. CDOT will be applying for Bridge Enterprise and FAST SAFETEA money, noting it is a combination of many funding sources. Mr. Zamora stated it remains part of the Plan, but this based on available funding. Mr. Flores stated PACOG was led to believe if they put aside the \$200 million section of Pueblo's freeway that they would have a good shot at getting the Belmont interchange done. Mr. Zamora stated it is contained within the Statewide Long-Range Plan, but he did not know the timeline depending on Senate Bill 267 funding, noting it is a priority. Mr. Flores asked if PACOG could look at the City Center Drive to 13th Street to be the next phase for funding after the Belmont interchange is done. Mr. Zamora replied it is up to PACOG to set its priorities. Ms. Hu added they are continuing to work on the preliminary design, noting it is ongoing.

OTHER BUSINESS

(A) Municipalization

Mr. Gradisar left the meeting early, so there was no report.

(B) School District No. 60 School Bond

Ms. Barbara Clementi, School District No. 60 Board member, reported the bond passed in the last regular election. The bonds were presented and sold at a premium. In the spring, School District No. 60 was awarded a Building of Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant. The premiums from the bonds allowed the District to match those funds. The District is looking at building two high schools and two elementary schools in the next 5-6 years. The high schools are in the planning phase. There is going to be a town hall, which will be held virtually on September 23rd, at which time the plans will be shown. A design team meeting was held last night, at which time, the exterior materials were shown. Meetings are being held with each of the user teams to make sure that the plans inside meet the needs of the teachers, the building facilities, the managers, the athletics, etc. The District expects to break ground with those sometime late winter or early spring. Occupation should either be the fall 2023 or winter semester 2024.

Chairman Wiseman asked if the buildings are being built to LEEDS' standards. Ms. Clementi replied there is a different standard for school buildings, noting it is not the same as LEEDS. The District is working towards that type of certification. The design team talked about meeting with Black Hills Energy to see if whether solar made sense for the two high school buildings. All the buildings are being built to conserve energy.

Mr. Aguilera felt the school board doesn't listen to anyone, noting he has received a half dozen letters about the unwillingness of them to restore the Centennial Hall of Fame, which the public paid for and the school board is refusing to replace it. He stated whether people want to admit it or not, the labor force in Pueblo for the future is going to be Hispanic. He felt their refusal to teach Spanish at Central High School is outrageous, noting it is cultural competence. The hospitals require people who speak Spanish to the patients. He felt this would be two easy things. He stated the other schools have teachers, but Central does not, noting it is being done virtually. Ms. Clementi replied there is an after school Spanish program at all the high schools, including Central. She stated she saw a personnel report that there is a Spanish teacher at Central. There are alumni museums at each of the high schools, and each were built by the alumni association for the schools. The bond issue specifically dealt with usable, instructional square footage for the buildings. There was nothing in the taxpayer approved bond to include museums. In both the new high schools, things have been shifted so that there is an area for alumni organizations to display memorabilia and historic artifacts. There is nothing that allows the District to spend taxpayer money to build a museum at any of the individual high schools. Chairman Wiseman stated the Board of County Commissioners also goes through the same process on its 1A money, noting it must go to the attorneys and bond counsel for review to make sure what the money is being issued for meets the requirements. If it is not specified within the ballot initiative, you cannot spend money beyond that. Ms. Clementi clarified in the new buildings there was discussion on a provision for displaying in a community room, which will be used by the community for historic artifacts and memorabilia. Mr. Aguilera asked the other City Council members if they had received a letter from Mr. Mike Sexton that the District was not going to have a museum. Mr. Flores responded he did receive a letter indicating they were not going to pay for the museum. Mr. Aguilera stated he didn't think they were asking for

that. Ms. Clementi replied that they are. The meeting which was held yesterday dealt specifically with that issue.

Mr. Brown asked about the planetarium. Ms. Clementi responded the planetarium has been around for 20-30 years and, unfortunately, the equipment is that old. It is expensive to update. They have a hard time keeping it functional at the current time. The usage of the planetarium has decreased considerably. At this point, it doesn't make financial sense to put the kind of money that would be needed to update the planetarium and then spend the resources to keep it. Mr. Aguilera stated what happens with the School District is that things such as the swimming pools are built at all four high schools so that our children can learn how to swim are not used, which is important. The School District figures a way to get rid of the pools by stopping the swim lessons and not requiring it. The School District wants to close the pools because they said there was no use for them. Ms. Clementi stated the Legislature and the State Department of Education have graduation requirements and what is needed to graduate.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. John Adams, MPO Manager, stated CDOT Region 2 offered in January/February to make a presentation on the I-25 project. He stated he would reach out to CDOT Region 2 to see if they would be willing to make this presentation at the next PACOG meeting.

Ms. Clementi stated she would be happy to provide updates on the school bond issue. Chairman Wiseman suggested it be done every other month.

Chairman Wiseman thanked Ms. Louella Salazar, Mr. Adam Uhernik, and Ms. Laurie Ward for setting the PACOG meeting up. He stated the meetings would be conducted monthly and would continue to be offered by Zoom in order to provide the opportunity for those that can't attend in person to do so virtually.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further regular business before PACOG, it was motioned by Dennis Flores, seconded by Ed Brown, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 1:22 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 24, 2020, at 12:15 p.m., at the Pueblo County Emergency Operations Center, 101 West 10th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,



Louella R. Salazar
PACOG Recording Secretary

LRS