


Local

New transportation improvement program is almost complete

 By Austin Ramsey Messenger-Inquirer

 11.28.18

Owensboro and Daviess County's Metropolitan Planning Organization is seeking input on the latest iteration of its Transportation Improvement Program set to expire early next year.

MPO members met alongside a technical advisory committee Tuesday, where they approved the six-year plan, pending any significant comments or changes from the public and local elected officials.

The plan, called a TIP, supplements the organization's 20-year transportation outlook with a short-term prioritized list of multimodal projects sponsored and funded mostly by the federal government. Near the top of that list, and making up the majority of its funds, are the I-165 expansion of William H. Natcher Parkway and the widening of Kentucky 54 between Owensboro and Whitesville. Together, they add up to \$117.1 million worth of National Highway Performance and Surface Transportation Block Grant programs.

Other major projects on the list include plans to address deficiencies with the Glover H. Cary and William H. Natcher bridges over the Ohio River. The two projects will be conducted over the next two years jointly with the Indiana Department of Transportation.

"This is what we're actually going to do over the next six years," said MPO Coordinator Tom Lovett. "These are the projects we will do, the phases we'll go through, and it outlines where the money is coming from to pay for them. It ensures, in a sense, that we have the money to pay for what we want to do."

The MPO Policy Committee took the unusual step Tuesday of approving the TIP prior to a required 30-day public review, because there was some concern among advisory committee members that the federal government may not have enough time to sign off on the document before it expires in mid-February. Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Planner Barry House suggested that the MPO move up its January meeting to just after the comment period closes on Jan. 4, but, instead, at Judge-Executive Al Mattingly's suggestion, the MPO decided to approve the document pending any major changes.

"It can take the Federal Highway Administration up to a month to approve it after a planning finding phase, and if that happens, we probably are going to go over the expiration deadline," House said. "It's not critical if the TIP expires for a short period of time, but it's better to avoid it if possible."

Plans like the TIP or long-range plan are designed to guide local decision-makers on how best to allocate federal funds, and they are critical when it is the KYTC through which those funds must be funneled.

As part of a Participation Plan that will go before the MPO for approval in January, Lovett told members of the advisory and policy committees Tuesday that he intends to make the TIP available at Owensboro City Hall, 101 E. Fourth St.; Daviess County Courthouse, 212 St. Ann St.; Daviess County Public Library, 2020 Frederica St.; and at Whitesville City

Hall, 10436 Main St. in Whitesville.

Both the current and former TIP, Participation Plan, long-range plan and other MPO documents are also available at the Green River Area Development District headquarters in Owensboro, 300 GRADD Way, or online at gradd.com/TRAN/Oboro_Daviess_MPO.

Questions or comments can be addressed to Lovett via email, tomlovet@gradd.com, or by phone by calling 270-926-4433.

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