

## Joint Policy Advisory Committee

MOUNTAINLAND ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
UTAH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIXIE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

JPAC

WASATCH FRONT REGIONAL COUNCIL  
UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
CACHE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### Joint Policy Advisory Committee

4550 South Airport Parkway  
St. George, Utah 84790

Friday, February 3, 2012  
1:00 p.m.

#### MINUTES

##### Members Attending:

Michael Allegra  
Councilmember Carlton Christensen  
James Christian  
Mayor Peter Corroon  
Mayor John Curtis  
Commissioner Jim Eardley  
Commissioner Larry Ellertson  
Jeff Gilbert  
Andrew Gruber  
Mayor Heather Jackson  
Commissioner Kent Millington  
Kenneth Sizemore

UTA  
Salt Lake City  
FAWA  
Salt Lake County  
Provo City  
Washington County  
Utah County  
Cache MPO  
WFRC  
Eagle Mountain City  
UDOT  
Five County AOG

##### Others Attending:

Doug Hattery  
Curt Hutchings  
Myron Lee  
Nathan Lee  
Ryan Marshall  
Dana Meier  
Cory Pope

WFRC  
Five County AOG  
Dixie MPO  
UDOT  
City of St. George  
UDOT  
UDOT

##### ***Welcome and Introductions***

Mr. Kenneth Sizemore, Executive Director of the Five County Association of Governments, welcomed everyone and solicited introductions. He informed the Committee that the focus of the meeting was descriptions of long range transportation planning in Southwest Utah.

Activities for the day included presentations by topical specialists followed by a field tour of the new St George airport, the on-going Southern Parkway project, and the new Dixie Drive interchange on Interstate 15.

***Approve January 2012, Meeting Minutes***

No Minutes for the January 2012 meeting were available; no action was taken.

***Discussion of Legislative Issues.***

Mr. Sizemore noted that legislation was being proposed and marked-up even as this meeting was being held. He mentioned the possible elimination of the entire Scenic Byway Program as an example of changing legislation. Mr. Sizemore invited Mr. Andrew Gubler to give an update of legislative issues at both the federal and state levels.

Mr. Gubler pointed out that transportation was getting good attention in Washington D.C.. Previously there had been lots of conversation among legislators about making significant cuts in transportation funding. Now the discussions include more possible ways to maintain current funding levels with a slight increase to adjust for inflation.

Transportation is currently operating on the 8<sup>th</sup> extension of the SAFETEA-LU surface transportation authorization bill. This bill is due to expire on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Both the Senate and the House are struggling to meet the real challenge of how to fund a multi-year transportation program without increasing taxes or cutting the size of the program.

The Senate is considering a two year authorization for fiscal years 2012 and 2013. The bill includes lots of program consolidation and total elimination of earmarks. However, the bill still needs twelve to thirteen billion dollars to fill in the shortfall between gas taxes coming in, along with whatever monies are still available in the trust fund, and the money needed to operate a transportation program

The House Transportation Infrastructure Committee usually produces a bi-partison proposal - but against precedent, the current proposal is by the Republicans only, who are looking at a five year authorization for highways and transit, and are also considering lots of program consolidation and zero earmarks.

At a very late moment, the House Ways and Means Committee proposed taking all money out of transit and move it into highways. Transit would then be funded with forty million dollars from general funds, with the source of that revenue to be determined in the future. This proposal has generated strong responses by many transportation related groups. It is uncertain how this proposal will be responded to by the full House.

Rural communities are concerned that their smaller transit systems which depend to a large degree on federal funding, could actually be decimated by this change in transit funding sources..

Other JPAC members offered facts and opinions regarding these transportation issues. The proposal by the House Ways and Means Committee has generated lots of activity on Capital Hill. But also, the Office of Management and Budget came out with information that the Highway Trust Fund is solvent for Fiscal Year 2012. This could slow down the current impetus to deal with transportation reauthorization.

Ideas being considered by legislators to increase transportation funding include an increase in oil and gas lease authorizations (but this would provide a fairly small percentage, and at a variable rate).

Good policy ideas are coming from both the House and the Senate. UDOT considers the consolidation of programs to be a positive, efficiency-increasing improvement. The same is true of streamlining many requirements. However, the bills refer to the need for “more performance-based planning” without explaining exactly what they are referring to, and this uncertainty is of concern to UDOT.

Any type of funding currently eligible to the State from the Federal government will still be available, but perhaps in fewer, but larger pots of money with more State allocation decision making opportunity. The change in eliminating earmarks reduces the need for as many applications for numerous discretionary projects. There will be more programmatic funding.

At the State of Utah level, revenues have actually increased slightly. UDOT has no real increases or cuts. The biggest bill is probably one to mitigate congestion but also fund maintenance for lower volume roads which have been under a maintenance restriction.

There is also discussion regarding substantial potential savings from the I-15 core project to projects that had been delayed and “had not been made whole”. Three projects that still need to be completed under the capacity improvement bonding include the; 1) Southern Parkway, 2) Mountain View Corridor; and, 3) I-15 Project. Maintenance of State and local facilities and are in great need of attention, along with transit.

### ***Transit Operations, City of St George – Ryan Marshall***

Mr. Ryan Marshall first welcomed the Committee. He is in charge of the transit division of the City of St George, named SunTran. The four dedicated fixed routes cover about 70% of the City boundaries. Expansion is planned for the future, including a route to the airport. Primary ridership is: 81% are 21+ years old, 10% are 13-19 years old, and 8% are 12 years old and under. Majority of riders are travelling to employment.

SunTran provides fixed route and para-transit services. Medicaid Pick-Me-Up is active in the area. Five County Association of Governments has a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Planning Committee that is working on mobility management and the integration of SunTran, the Washington County School District, and other transportation providers such as TURN Community Services to develop shared services. The local Senior Centers serve a major transportation role in the area.

SunTran began as a program developed by Five County Association of Governments, then was taken on by the City of St George. FTA 5307 and 5309 transportation programmatic funds have been used.

In 2003, ridership was 62,000 with three fixed routes. The system was expanded in 2008 to four fixed routes, and in 2010 new facilities were built using ARRA funds. Ridership in 2011 came in at just under 450,000, but paratransit has stayed steady.

Customers would like to see route expansion, reduced headways to 30 minutes, and improved bus shelters. They would also like longer hours and expanded paratransit service.

The Dixie Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (DMPO) recently funded a feasibility study to consider transit expansion options, including Commuter Service routes into St George industrial parks and heavy employment areas, as well as into neighboring communities based on interlocal agreements. This could eventually lead to a regional Transit Authority.

SunTran goals include running at an on-time performance level of 100% and currently run at 99%. They have only recently had their first FTA preventable accident in eight years of operation, but always want to increase safety. They also want to shorten headways to 10-15 minutes, educate Seniors to give them the skill and confidence to ride transit, attract more school youth, and expand their area of service.

The match monies required to receive FTA grants come from a City of St George transportation tax, of which a small portion is dedicated to SunTran. The fare box return is around 24%.

Mr. Sizemore added that the Dixie MPO Executive Council and other local leaders recognize that the next step for transit in this region will be a ballot initiative for a quarter-cent transit tax but that action is not expedient at this time. There were questions from the group as to how this expediency was determined. On the Wasatch Front the public was asked through a ballot question if they supported the quarter-cent tax increase for use in expanding transit services. Without querying the citizenry, Committee members inquired how Southern Utah leadership determined that the time was not right for such a tax to be put to vote. Commissioner Eardley responded that it is a general understanding that the public would not support the tax. He added that the general economy is possibly a bigger issue in Southern Utah. Housing and employment growth are some of the indicators used to determine the state of the economy here and those numbers are only slowly improving.

***Dixie Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Plan – Myron Lee***

Mr. Myron Lee began his presentation with a slide of the first building permits issued in 1880, and, with additional slides, progressed at five year increments up through 1970. At that point growth rates increased due to the introduction of air conditioning. More recently the growth rates indicate explosive growth, doubling every ten to twelve years.

Using various types of data indicators, the MPO is projecting travel demand in order to plan future transportation services and infrastructure required. The planning is based on the goals of the Vision Dixie planning process, growth projections, land use plans and zoning, and potential revenue sources. Population numbers were taken from the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget which has not adjusted for the current recession. But even if the projections are too aggressive, the growth is coming and the improvements will still be necessary.

Mr. Lee provided the DMPO Long Range Plan containing growth indicators, modeling results, and projects planning in ten year phases for the coming thirty years. This Plan is updated every four years and adjusted for changes in growth and other factors.

A Committee member inquired regarding the amount of bicycle use in the area and if it is increasing. Mr. Lee responded that he did not have any specific numbers, but noted that bicycle

advocacy groups have been in discussion with local leadership about creating more and better bicycle infrastructure. An Ironman Triathlon has been successfully hosted in this area for the past two years. Commissioner Eardley commented that bicycle routes have become an important conversation in local transportation discussions, and the inclusion of bicycle routes in future road projects will be discussed in the upcoming Council of Governments (COG) meeting. Bicycle congestion and safety issues are becoming very important.

Another Committee member shared that he recently attended an excellent presentation by Ms. Mia Birk who was involved with bicycle system development in Portland, Oregon and authored "Joy Ride". He suggested that she is a good resource and can be contacted through Mr. Jim Price from the Mountainland Association of Governments.

There was discussion regarding the upcoming Road Respect event, including a ride from Beaver to St George followed by a Road Respect Rally in St George.

### ***Southern Parkway and Dixie Drive Projects Overview – Dana Meier***

Mr. Dana Meier is the Program Engineer for UDOT Region Four. He is part of the team supervising the Southern Parkway and Dixie Drive Interchange projects. Mr. Meier provided a media preview of both of those projects. After this presentation, the Committee will go on a van tour to visit the projects.

#### Southern Parkway:

Segment One of the Southern Parkway begins at the I-15 Atkinville interchange and extends to the intersection with River Road. Segment Two continues to the Airport Parkway. Section Three(a) has been funded from Airport Parkway to the Warner Valley Road. Section 3(b) is currently unfunded. Section 4(a) is funded and provides a link between Hurricane and Washington City at Washington Dam Road. Washington Dam Road connects with Washington Field Road reaches east to Werner Valley Road and to the airport. This provides access from the Hurricane area to the airport while the rest of the Southern Parkway is being completed.

The Southern Parkway provides access not only to the airport, but also to important industrial areas and new residential development.

There were some interesting features discovered in the Warner Valley area. First is the Washington Fault. A series of eleven deep trenches were dug perpendicular to the fault and geologists identified the actual location of the fault and determined dates of earthquake events. The result of these findings was to move the Parkway about 150 feet west of its original location.

A projectile point was found sticking out of one of the trenches. This led to archaeological mitigation. A hearth was found near the point, along with other projectile points. Dating indicates this habitation area may be the oldest in southwestern Utah, dating around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. The site will probably be fully mitigated later.

In the area of Washington Dam Road there are threatened and endangered species, CCC historic sites, and prehistoric sites. The road was designed to miss these items and only impact an area with surface ceramics. Instead, underneath, was an entire village with some features indicating multiple habitations covering a time period of 1,000 years.

Dixie Drive Interchange:

This is an unusual interchange in that it is located only one mile from the existing interchange on Bluff Street. But due to the geographic constraints of the St George area, with bluffs and converging rivers, there are few areas to create major roads. Bluff Street is one of the most congested roads in the State. Providing freeway access from the Ivins and Santa Clara areas through Dixie Drive would lessen that congestion.

Challenges to this project included the converging Santa Clara and Virgin Rivers, habitat including threatened and endangered species, impact on a City of St George golf course and trail system, flood plain determinations, and archaeological findings. However, the project is due to open on time on July 26, 2012 and the project will be completed according to budget.

***Tours***

The Committee then departed for a tour of the airport, the Southern Parkway, and the Dixie Drive interchange.

***Other Business***

- Next Meeting - The next JPAC meeting will be held on March 1, 2012 at 11:30 am, at the Utah Transit Authority building.

