

Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 19, 2020
To: Citizens Advisory Committee
From: Benjamin H. Pingree, PLACE Director
Subject: Summary Minutes for September 3, 2020 CAC Meeting

Committee Members present:

Elva Peppers, Chair	J.R. Harding
Jim McShane, Vice Chair	Allen Stucks
Bill Berlow	Kathy Bell
Linda Vaughn	Neil Fleckenstein
Robert Volpe	Peter Okonkwo
Sean McGlynn	

Committee Members absent:

Claudette Cromartie	Hugh Tomlinson
Daniel Petronio	

I. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

There were no agenda modifications.

II. CITIZEN COMMENTS RECEIVED VIA EMAIL

Public comments were submitted by email to Comments@BlueprintIA.org until 5 p.m. on September 2, 2020. There were no comments received.

III. CONSENT

ACTION TAKEN: Allen Stucks moved, seconded by J.R. Harding, the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed 11-0

1. Approval of the June 25, 2020, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Option #1: Approve the June 25, 2020, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee meeting minutes.

2. Acceptance of the Status Report Update on Blueprint Infrastructure Projects

Option #1: Accept the September 2020 Status Update on Blueprint Infrastructure Projects.

3. Approval of the 2021, Blueprint Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule

Option #1: Recommend approval the proposed 2021 Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule.

4. Recommendation of Approval of a Reappointment to the Blueprint Citizens Advisory Committee

Option #1: Reappoint Peter Okonkwo to serve a second three-year term on the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Citizens Advisory Committee.

5. Review of the Annual Status Report on the Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality

Option #1: Accept the Annual Status Report of the Tallahassee-Leon County Office of Economic Vitality.

6. Approval of Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with FloridaMakes for the Establishment of the Big Bend RMA

Option #1: Approve the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with FloridaMakes for the establishment of the Big Bend RMA.

IV. GENERAL BUSINESS

7. Recommendation of Approval of the Capital Circle Southwest Greenway Conceptual Design Plan

Junious Brown, Project Manager, and Robert George, Design Consultant with George & Associates, provided a presentation to the CAC on the conceptual design plan for the Capital Circle Southwest Greenway that included project scope, schedule, information and amenities for the Golden Aster Trail Greenway Trail, Debbie Lightsey Nature Park, and Munson Slough Connection, summary of public engagement and outreach results, inclusive and universal design features, natural playground equipment and material use, and funding sources for the project. A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Bill Berlow questioned if the playground could incorporate universal design features. Robert George stated that the play area would be a graded to level and have synthetic turf surface for American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. The Design Consultants were also investigating ADA compliant equipment.

Neil Fleckenstein stated that conversations with the bike community prompted questions regarding the multi-use trail along Capital Circle Southwest and if a buffer would be constructed between the trail and roadway. Robert George stated that the multi-use trail would be within the right of way and a buffer would also be included. Regarding the Golden Aster Trail, Mr. Fleckenstein questioned if prescribed fire, a natural maintenance for that environment, would be part of future management plan to encourage the Golden Aster plant growth. Mr. George stated that the trail would be

managed by the City of Tallahassee Parks & Recreation Department. He did not have any information on the management plan. Elva Peppers stated that the habitat existed for the Golden Aster plant species, however, she doubted that Parks & Recreation would use prescribed fire for maintenance given the close proximity to Capital Circle Southwest.

Allen Stucks questioned what type of security and restroom amenities would be included. Robert George stated that the park would be open only during daylight hours with visibility of other park users and passersby as security. The restroom facility would be portable, similar to the facility on Miccosukee Greenway, and screened with fencing or possibly landscaping.

JR Harding thanked George & Associates for their willingness to be inclusive with the design and think in terms of a 50-year usability from a universal design perspective.

Allen Stucks moved, seconded by Jim McShane, to approve Option #1.

Option #1: Recommend that the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors approve the Capital Circle Southwest Greenway Conceptual Design Plan.

The motion passed 10-0.

8. Recommendation of Approval of the Northeast Connector Corridor Feasibility Study and Consideration of Project Funding

Joshua Logan, Project Manager, and Dave Snyder, Consultant with RS&H, provided a presentation to the CAC on the Northeast Connector Corridor Traffic Feasibility Study that included project scope, schedule, phasing, proposed alternatives, level of service evaluations, and a safety analysis. In summary, roadway improvements were necessary for Bannerman Road to operate at an acceptable level of service by adding operational improvements and a median in Segment 1 (Meridian to Preservation) and widening to 4-lanes in Segment 2 (Preservation to Tekesta). A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Bill Berlow questioned if the traffic projections were based on existing or future development. Drew Roark, consultant with the RS&H Team, stated that the projections were for anticipated capacity needs through 2045. The traffic model used in the study included socioeconomic data and blended it with historic growth rates to determine the future projections. Mr. Berlow noted the homes nearer Meridian Road and questioned if eminent domain proceedings were anticipated for those parcels. Joshua Logan stated that the design and IA Board direction on it were unknown variables however a project principle for the Northeast Connector Corridor was to minimize the footprint of right of way, particularly on the western end of Bannerman Road. Dan Scheer clarified that to meet that design principal, Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency would not recommend four-lanes on the western end of Bannerman, but rather, two-lanes with operational enhancements.

Neil Fleckenstein stated that it appeared there would be a budget shortfall given the enhanced scope of the project as well as an overall reduction to the Blueprint budget

based on COVID-19. He questioned the timing of the project given that for the next few years, the level of service for Bannerman Road was acceptable through 2035. Dan Scheer stated that Mr. Fleckenstein was correct regarding the increased cost to widen to Preservation Road and install operational enhancements to Meridian Road. Blueprint would seek the IA Board of Director's direction acknowledging that. Autumn Calder stated that Blueprint was in the preliminary phases of the project. The Feasibility Study was highly technical, thorough, and indicated the future need to widen Bannerman Road. With IA Board approval, Blueprint would continue forward with the study, conduct public outreach, refine the cost estimates, and present funding options in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget process. That would provide a budget plan for the next several years with funding for construction to be determined in the future FY 2022 budget development cycle.

Bill Berlow moved, seconded by Jim McShane, to approve Options #1 and #2.

Option 1: Recommend that the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors approve the Northeast Connector Corridor Feasibility Study.

Option 2: Recommend that the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors direct Blueprint staff to move forward with community engagement and further refinement of Alternative A for Bannerman Road Segments 1 and 2 through the Bannerman Road Corridor Study and direct Blueprint staff to develop funding options to fully implement for this project as presented in the study as Alternative A through the Fiscal Year 2022 budget process.

The motion passed 8-1.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

9. First Public Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2021, Operating Budget and Fiscal Year 2021-2025 Five-Year Capital Improvement Program Budget for the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency

Elva Peppers opened the first public hearing on the proposed FY2 021 Operating Budget and FY 2021-2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency. Under the Blueprint Budget Policy, the first public hearing was an opportunity for the public to provide comment on the proposed budgets. It was the first of two public hearings, the second would be held at the September 17, 2020, virtual IA Board of Directors meeting. The function of the CAC was to hold the first public hearing only. The CAC did not approve or disapprove the budgets because that was a function of the IA Board.

Susan Emmanuel stated that no public comments were received on the budget item.

Autumn Calder provided a presentation to the CAC on the proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget and FY 2021-2025 CIP that included the combined agency revenue forecast for Blueprint and OEV of \$756 million in sales tax projected over 20 years

and \$182 million in bonds and loans projected within five years. COVID-19 impacts to date included an 8.5% sales tax reduction, approximately \$16 million, over the next five years, with a projected 7.5% sales tax reduction, approximately \$62 million, over the life of the program.

Regarding the Infrastructure program budget, Autumn Calder stated from FY 2021-2025 that the Infrastructure program would receive an estimated \$147 million in sales tax collections, bonds and loans would contribute another \$140.85 million, and anticipated \$5 million in local and state grant matches. Highlights of the Operating Budget included an overall 8% reduction from FY 2020, while maintaining all existing personnel. The FY 2020 CIP saw reductions of approximately 11%, due to COVID-19 that resulted in a mid-year budget amendment. The FY21 CIP included a reallocation of funds to all of the projects that saw reductions in FY20. Bond issuances would be spread over FY 2022 and FY 2024 in order to better align with project schedules. Ms. Calder also provided updates on annual allocations to City, County, and Blueprint projects. A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Allen Stucks questioned what guided the decisions to reallocate funds from completed to active projects. Autumn Calder stated that the completed projects were from the Blueprint 2000 program. Staff first looked for outstanding projects from that program that could be funded, which currently is the Magnolia Trail Project. Mr. Stucks requested clarification on the lost revenue from COVID-19. Ms. Calder stated that, specifically for the infrastructure program, FY 2020 would see a reduction of \$3 million, and over the five year CIP, FY 2021-2025, revenues would be reduced by \$13.5 million from what was originally projected and approximately \$52 million over the life of the tax.

Neil Fleckenstein stated that the reduction in sales tax revenue projects spoke to the heart of the issue raised on the Northeast Connector Corridor project from a timing perspective. He wondered if the IA Board would exercise the opportunity to evaluate the timing and if it was appropriate to utilize those funds when traffic capacity issues were acceptable by Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) standard for two decades. Autumn Calder stated that Blueprint would present funding options to the IA Board through the standard budget process in order to provide them the full analysis and review of impact to each project in the program. Mr. Fleckenstein reminded the CAC that advance funding projects in the beginning of the program could prohibit the funding of other projects, programmed for the later years, due to the interest and payment of debt services. Ms. Calder stated that the IA Board, having previously approved the \$100 million bond, allowed Blueprint to keep several projects in motion and moving forward at a time when jobs and positive impacts to the economy and community were needed.

Cristina Paredes provided a presentation to the CAC on the Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) portions of the proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget and FY 2021-2025, Capital Improvement Program that included a 2.58% reduction to the Operating Budget and maintained existing personnel, the five-year \$3.4 million CIP, annual allocations to previously approved funding commitments, and allocations to business development activities, local businesses, workforce, and Minority Women Small Business Enterprise (MWSBE) activities. A copy of the presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Allen Stucks questioned how OEV supported local businesses through COVID-19. Cristina Paredes stated that OEV stood up three grants with more an \$1 million in awards to 571 business, \$600,000 in awards to non-profits, and OEV was currently working with Leon County government on the Leon CARES Program, which had \$7.5 million allocated for small business support.

Linda Vaughn questioned the criteria used in the grants. Cristina Paredes stated that all three grant programs had eligibility requirements. The CEDR grant required a 50% revenue loss and was based on employee count. OEV published the list of businesses and non-profits who received grants were published on OEV website as well as published in the Tallahassee Democrat. The same applied for the non-profits too. Regarding Leon CARES, Leon County has contracted with Ernst & Young to implement and provide review of the SBA and IA grants.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/PRESENTATIONS

- Office of Economic Vitality Project Updates
Cristina Paredes, Drew Dietrich, and Richard Fetchick provided a brief overview of the activities of the Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) that included employment statistics, Leon CARES report, census count, business development and MWSBE activities. Presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Richard Fetchick stated that the Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) lost approximately 30,000 jobs in April 2020 with steady recovery since however, not yet back to the pre-COVID-19 record highs of employment for the area. Tallahassee-Leon County currently unemployment rate was 8.4%, approximately 4.7% higher than 2019. Taxable Sales dropped 18.6% in April 2020 and rebound in May 2020, by 18.1%. Regarding Leon CARES, OEV received 860 applications to date with \$514,000 awarded to 106 businesses. The grant would close September 11, 2020.

Bill Berlow questioned if OEV had the ability to determine what percentage of the taxable sales came through internet purchases. The sales tax data presented does not include a breakdown of sales by internet purchases. Mr. Berlow noted past challenges with states collecting taxes from internet sales and how counties suffered because of that. If that were the case in Florida, it could have a direct impact on Blueprint revenues.

Cristina Paredes provided a brief overview of MWSBE activities including fall 2020 Academy offerings and tutorials, certification metrics, upcoming major projects that if held the potential to award approximately \$27 million in contracts to local MWSBE firms.

Drew Dietrich provided a brief overview of Business Development activities including COVID-19 response, regional partnerships, business consultations and public engagements, and active projects for business relocation or expansion, retail center analysis, the launch of a virtual site selection platform, and new website. OEV would be launching a Big Bend Regional Manufacturers Association (RMA) in fall 2020, which would provide assistance to area organizations, increase

competitiveness in the national economic landscape, and fulfill key objectives of the economic development strategic plan.

Allen Stucks questioned who would make up the RMA and how it would be funded. Drew Dietrich stated that the Association would be comprised of regional manufacturing business that elected to join. Funding would come through membership dues and be self-sufficient.

- Presentation on Northeast Gateway
Dan Scheer, Design & Construction Manager, and Ryan Wetherell, Consultant with Kimley Horn & Associates (KHA), provided a presentation to the CAC on the Northeast Gateway project that included project purpose and need, scope, history, and schedule, an update on the Project Development and Environmental Study (PD&E), and public outreach. The funding strategy included use of sales tax revenues for the PD&E, design, and permitting. Blueprint would apply for a State Infrastructure Bank Loan (SIB Loan) for construction. The presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Staff analysis of the Buckhead Homeowners Association proposed alternative alignment found four areas of concern. Significant fill material would be required to meet the roadway geometric requirements; additionally an elevated viaduct might be necessary. Potential wetland impacts could be incurred by crossing the natural drainage flow-way at a point greater in width than originally contemplated. Elevation challenges that may require significant structural wall and fill material to transverse the differences in grade. Furthermore, shifting the roadway further east would increase the length of both the Welaunee Boulevard and Shamrock Extension portions of the project resulting in additional design and construction costs. In total, the proposed alternative alignment would add approximately \$3.1 million to the cost of the project.

Jeremy Floyd, with the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department, provided a presentation on the Land Use and Roadway Interaction of the Welaunee Arch Alignment Study area, which included analysis of residential and mixed-use areas and distances to the Buckhead neighborhood, environmental and karst features, conceptual renderings, explanations, and examples of how the roadway would interact with the topography. Presentation is on file at Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency.

Allen Stucks questioned if any of the discussed road projects aligned with the work plan for FDOT whereby Blueprint could receive reimbursement. Dan Scheer stated that Blueprint received \$1.5 million from FDOT to support the PD&E Study. In general however, if Blueprint performed work on roads that were not included in the state highway system, that was not reimbursed by FDOT but did allow for leveraging opportunities for state funds. The Airport Gateway would be an example of leveraged state funds for an enhanced Blueprint project.

Autumn Calder stated that the Northeast Gateway would be a local roadway, maintained by the City of Tallahassee. The traffic analyses show benefits to state roadways, such as Thomasville Road, which held the potential to leverage some state dollars for the construction of the Northeast Gateway. The availability of

FDOT funding was yet to be determined, however staff would monitor it closely in order to take advantage of every opportunity to fill the revenue gap.

Speaking to the connection of Welaunee Boulevard to Roberts Road, Ryan Wetherell stated that it would create operational challenges through signaling five roadways in one intersection. Therefore, the Design Team considered a roundabout option that would create greater separation between each leg of the intersection and accommodate all movements from all legs. Mr. Wetherell stated that other options shared though the community engagement were under consideration including terminating Centerville Road at Pimlico Road or shifting the Welaunee Boulevard alignment west to tie into Centerville Road south of the schools; the options would also include improving Centerville Road at the schools and up to the existing intersection with Roberts Road.

VII. PROJECT LIAISON UPDATES

Regarding St. Marks Trail and Lake Lafayette Linear Park, Sean McGlynn stated that the project was on hold due to a reallocation of funds by the IA Board.

Regarding Midtown Placemaking, Robert Volpe stated that the project timeline was proposed to be advanced by two years by Blueprint to take advantage of the three years of work and two studies by the Capital Regional Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) to widen sidewalks and narrow Thomasville Road through Midtown. The project also held the potential to improve pedestrian connectivity across additional streets in the area. Overall it was an excellent example of collaboration to improve efficiency and better serve the Tallahassee-Leon County community.

Regarding Market District Placemaking, Bill Berlow stated that the virtual community engagement week was informative and well organized; a second round was scheduled for the week of October 18, 2020. An online community survey was also made available. The Design Consultant seemed eager to avoid duplication of amenities that were available in other nearby parks. The design concepts would be available possibly by winter 2020 or spring 2021.

Regarding the Lake Jackson Greenway, Elva Peppers stated that the Design Consultant was beginning the environmental study and alternative alignment for the greenway. The Design Team was coordinating with the Lake Jackson Aquatic Preserve and planning community engagement activities for November 2020.

VIII. ADJOURN

JR Harding moved, seconded by Bill Berlow, to adjourn.

The motion passed 8-0 with Kathy Bell, Jim McShane, and Peter Okonkwo having already exited the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.