

**Kendall County – Boerne – Fair Oaks  
Transportation Committee Minutes**

**29 June 2021  
2:00 – 3:59 p.m.**

The Kendall County – Boerne – Fair Oaks Transportation Committee convened in the City of Boerne City Hall 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Staff Training Room.

**In Attendance:**

Bob Manning, Don Durden, Rich Sena, John Ramirez for Henry Acosta, Bitsy Pratt, Steve Sharma, Jonah Evans, Northern Hendricks, Stephen Zoeller, Gary Louie, John Kight, Ben Eldredge, Melissa Eckert for Jeff Carroll, and Erika Yount.

**Not In Attendance:**

Bryce Boddie, Josh Limmer, Kim Blohm, Marcus Garcia, Rankin D’Spain, Tim Bannwolf, and Jeff Carroll.

**Visitors:**

There were 15 members of the public in attendance.

**Item 1: OPENING REMARKS**

Don Durden begins the meeting by welcoming everyone back after having missed a meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. He explains that one of the agenda items, the presentation by Dr. Andy Gluesenkamp, will be postponed until a future meeting. He says Dr. George Veni will be ready on a Zoom call to present at about 2:30 p.m.

Durden moves on to say that John Kight prepared a short dissertation to be read to the committee. Durden explains that he wants to articulate the positions of those who may not agree with the committee and wants to address those issues sooner rather than later.

Durden also welcomes Bob Manning back.

**Item 2: CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 1, 2021.**

Durden explains that the minutes from previous meetings have been placed on the website. Additional printed minutes could be found at the front of the room. He opens the floor for offers of suggestions and improvements for the June 1, 2021 minutes. Kight makes a motion to approve. Gary Louie seconds the motion. The motion to approve the minutes is passed with no objections.

**Item 3: PUBLIC COMMENT**

Durden opens the floor for public comment. There are no comments from the public at this time.

Durden moves on to Kight's statement. It read:

*“There appears to be four different group approaches in meeting the July 22, 2019 Court Order defining the purpose of the committee as being ‘to develop a countywide transportation plan to mitigate current and future traffic congestion in Kendall County in a way that preserves cultural and environmental resources and promotes appropriate economic development.’*

*One group remembers Boerne and Kendall County as it was forty or fifty years ago and yearns to relive those days of yester years when there were no traffic congestion problems, no double digit influx of people moving into the County and just continue on as a quiet, peaceful and friendly Hill Country German village. Unfortunately, the residents of Kendall County didn't realize that what they had was a magnet for City dwellers to move to with the beauty of the Hill Country, the cooler climate along with better schools and less crime. Therefore, little effort or planning was made to prepare for future needs, not at the scale that actually occurred. Some even held the idea that if you don't improve the transportation infrastructure development won't happen. History has proven this to be wrong. So here*

*we are, trapped today with all sorts of mobility problems and yet there is some push back evident to stop growth, by not doing sound long-range planning for the future. There have been infrastructure proposals on the drawing board for forty years, or more, but they have been collecting dust on the shelf with no action. We have got to stop this stagnation of effort in planning for the future or we will never be able to climb out of the hole we are in on future mobility, quality of life, safety, and welfare issues. Boerne and Kendall County will never be like it was forty or fifty years ago, but with proper planning we can manage the future growth for the betterment of us all. Boerne is not gone forever, it's still here but we just need to manage it better.*

*The next group supports infrastructure planning for the future, I believe, but are concerned that any final alignments developed through the public hearing process would involve their properties. Our committee is starting out with a clean sheet with no predetermined alignments at the start.*

*Final infrastructure alignments will be determined through public involvement and through the public hearing process after many iterations, considering many pertinent factors. Any final alignment will involve someone's property but will come after all issues are fully considered. The next group is going to try and use every environmental issue to try and block any proposal put forth. Development, road infrastructure, etc. They don't feel that proper design methods and technology can mitigate and protect any environmental issues. This tactic has been used nationwide to stop vital projects impacting human wellbeing. Water, energy, transportation, etc. I believe through careful onsite planning and design, infrastructure improvements can move forward and still protect the environmental issues at hand.*

*The last group is those who serve on the committee and sincerely feel they are conscientiously, and fairly, addressing the future mobility needs of both the City and County as directed by the Court Order. Some of the "low hanging fruit projects" have had public acceptance for decades with no action to implement. Many have been on Boerne's Capital Improvement Program but have never actually advanced to implementation. With*

*funding, plan preparation and right of way acquisition these “decades’ old projects could go a long way in relieving local congestion problems. Mobility projects addressing the diversion of traffic around downtown Boerne will be a tedious and time-consuming process with a myriad of issues to consider. Environmental, historic, developmental, economic, topographic, cost etc. Working together through the public involvement and public hearing process it can be accomplished in a fair and balance manner. We have got to work together, or we will never achieve the community we all would like to have and live in.”*

Durden thanks Kight, and he encourages other committee members to reflect and create their own statement.

While waiting for Dr. Veni to join the meeting, Durden asks Bitsy Pratt for a brief update from the Projects Subcommittee.

Pratt responds and says that the subcommittee took to heart many of the concerns that Kight made in his statement. She explains that they have very good data provided by BISD that shows a massive wave of double-digit folks heading to very specific places. She says using that report was very helpful in determining the places with the most growth. She says they have divided the area into quadrants, looking at where the growth will occur and looking a lot at the BISD district. She explains that the subcommittee is meeting every Wednesday with the intention of bringing a final document in and presenting it to the committee. They plan to have a separate discussion regarding Comfort and Boerne’s downtown area. Another component they are looking at is heavy pedestrian traffic—how to create safe pathways to schools as well as looking at how to combine neighborhood assets so that thru-traffic is more feasible for buses. She says the northwest quadrant was not really an option for this because of the nature of the community, but the southeast has potential. She concludes by saying they are also looking at the City of Boerne plans and other available documents to work with what has already been put in place. Durden says he looks forward to the report.

Louie chimes in and asks how the committee will use the GIS information as a tool to communicate with the community at large.

Pratt responds by saying a lot has been done to collect the data, but it has not yet been pulled back into conversation. She agrees that it could be useful.

Jonah Evans takes the floor asking if anyone has had an opportunity to reach out to AAMPO. He thinks this task would make sense for the GIS committee to take on. He also asks about Marcus Garcia.

Durden responds and says that Garcia has expressed his intent to attend the committee meetings but has not yet been able to make it.

Evans suggests getting a data download of the GIS information. He says it may be best for the Committee Chairs to reach out to them for it. Evans asks for an update on the GIS data from AAMPO.

Northern Hendricks speaks up and says that there was only a summary of the data sent over, and it turned out to be a lot of people arguing. She also mentions the roundabout suggestions for locations like Adler, School Street, and Business 87 did not end up making it in because so many people kept circling around the topic.

Evans says it could be a matter of adjusting the data manually. He asks if the City or County already has a GIS person that could look it over. The consensus of answers was no.

Hendricks says that even creating a screen or a summary snapshot for each line might be a good way to get through the data little by little.

Manning chimes in to discuss man-power help and resources. He reminds the committee that anything they need help on, Mayor Handren has agreed to help provide them resources in whatever way he can. He reiterates that this committee aims to be citizen-based and does not seek to be directed by any outside public agency. He says that getting a GIS person could be a request they could make to the Mayor. Hendricks agrees the GIS data will be the first hurdle.

Evans says that there are maps already available on the committee's website, and if a GIS representative were to come in and toggle with the maps, they would still have the originals to go back to. He expresses his concern that there might not be good communication happening with AAMPO.

Durden asks if Evans would be able to help facilitate exporting and organizing the data. Evans responds by saying he is limited on time but would definitely be willing to be involved. He reiterates that getting in touch with AAMPO is step one. Durden says he will engage with them and get back to Evans.

Louie asks why AAMPO has not continued to be engaged, and Durden responds that it is because they have not been pushed to do so. Durden says it should not be a problem re-engaging with them going forward.

Evans asks about what happened to Jeannie with AAMPO and who her replacement is. Durden says that Christina Bergman is the City of Boerne representative on the MPO. Jeff Carroll serves on the Technical Committee. Evans brings this topic to a close by suggesting contacting AAMPO in the next week.

Durden moves on to discuss the issue of a lack of quorum for the last several meetings. He opens the floor for the committee to discuss whether they think there need to be amendments made to what is currently in place.

Evans says one option is to replace members who continue not to show up. Kight says they have done that before. Rich Sena explains that most boards around the City do that. Evans then suggests rather than removing committee members and simply not replacing them, we give the organizations they represent the opportunity to appoint someone in their stead. He suggests the quorum be 2/3 of the total committee.

**Item 4: PRESENTATION BY DR. GEORGE VENI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE.**

Dr. George Veni begins by discussing his background. He lives in New Mexico but has always considered San Antonio home. He is the Executive Director at the National Cave and Karst Institute. He explains that they are not a consulting or advocacy company, but he says their purpose is to provide the best available research and information about caves and karst. They were established to promote research, education management, data, and anything that supports the pursuit of those things.

Looking at a geological map of the area, he reiterates that there is a big traffic flow issue. He says he has spent time working with TxDOT on several projects. He looks at the west side of Boerne and says it is very hilly and rugged, which would be very expensive to develop on, and most of the traffic is coming from east of Highway 46. He says that Ralph Fair Road has the potential for expansion.

He then looks at placing a road from Highway 46 to Interstate 10. Logically he says, this makes sense, but he notes that there are other issues. He explains that engineers may not be entirely familiar with this area. He points to a dark green area on the map, noting that this is a very cavernous unit. He acknowledges that one of the issues in question is placing a bridge over the Cibolo Creek. He points out that there are many swallets (aka swallow holes) in that area looking at the features of the Cibolo Creek and its surrounding karst. A swallet is a cave entrance located above a creek bank. In fact, he says there is a high concentration of swallets in this area. The swallets take the brunt of the run-off from the Creek when it rains.

He also notes the aquifers close by and says he has been swimming in them before. He explains that lots of contaminants flow into these aquifers and there is no filtration system whatsoever.

He compares this situation to the Mississippi River, which is over a mile wide. He goes on to say that most streams meander and never stay in the same place. Part of the definition of "karst" is area that is formed by dissolving bedrock. Caves form, fractures get larger, and the environment changes. The highest permeability are in the creek bed areas and their floodplains.

He moves back to the Cibolo Creek, looking at the floodplain, caves, and sinkholes close by. He notes a natural stream that leads to Cascade Caverns, but the Cave owners built a dam to avoid flooding from happening inside the cave. However, that would not stop water from getting into the cave. Dr. Veni says the cave itself was formed by a stream that was created by the Cibolo Creek. So how many more sinkholes are there that we do not know about? There are features that are both known and unknown. He says when just focusing on the Kendall County area alone, there are 83 caves and sinkholes known in this area—and that is a minimum number because there is uncertainty about what else exists. Therefore, it is an obvious area of concern.

He says that while trying to grow and expand on caves and karst has its challenges it is not impossible to do. Karst is complicated and highly sensitive, so it is good to know what challenges there are regarding it. Trying to come up with a holistic approach is tricky, but he says the method he has developed to improve assessments on where karst is located has allowed him to be successful 75% of the time.

Durden notes that there are also property boundaries that the City and County might want to consider as well. He asks Dr. Veni if the best approach is to look at karst features first and then the property boundaries, or if they should approach development the other way around.

Dr. Veni responds saying that he spent time working on creating a route in Austin connection Mopac and 640. He says their team went out and searched properties and a Phase 1 survey. They were able to come up with a high-ranking mobility and were able to weave a highway, but they eventually found endangered species and had to reroute until they found the path of least resistance. Eventually there was a road developed over a cave and there were other things done to protect the species. He concludes this statement by suggesting the Phase 1 survey, but he does not recommend looking at the entire area because that could get expensive.

Pratt chimes in and asks what the committee should ask for to consider additional roads in different regions for other projects?

Dr. Veni responds and says that one thing that can be done is a data request process to gain information. He says for the good of the public, the right entities would provide the proper information.

Durden circles back to a question about 3351. He wonders if expanding 3351 would be safer rather than creating a second road. He asks Dr. Veni what he thinks is a less risky move?

Dr. Veni responds and says most of the area has not been researched. He notes that there are more swallets going upstream of Camp Bullis. Upstream, he would be more concerned about karst. He mentions a parkway option—the idea being that there are no on or off ramps, which would limit the traffic in getting from Point A to Point B. On/Off ramps increase the risk of contamination, but he says that it is one compromised option if planning to work over areas of karst.

Evans chimes in to compliment Dr. Veni on his presentation and says it was very helpful.

To close. Dr. Veni notes that he and his organization are just following the science. He knows a lot about the area, and he reiterates how much he considers this area home.

Durden thanks him again and says he Veni's presentation has reinforced the the fact that drainage from the entire City of Boerne runs through this sensitiv area. It is something that needs to be brought to the community's attention. He then opens the floor for other observations from committee members.

Pratt says she thinks we should have Dr. Veni back for another session. Having his insight could help them decide which topics and suggestions to present.

Louie agrees with Pratt, saying that there is a lot of information they want to have but they are unsure how to ask for it.

Sena says that is a valid point. Some of the results from past studies have not included environmental factors.

Evans wonders if it would be possible to get a map that shows the most sensitive areas, considering all the layers that Dr. Veni brought into the conversation: environmental issues, species issues, drainage issues, etc.

Donna Taylor is a public attendee. She has worked with Dr. Veni and she explains that there has not been a thorough study of the area. She says that protecting the water supply is paramount. She suggests doing a mile-wide survey, but even then, there is a need for money and expertise to get that done, and it can be very unpredictable. She says this would be the first step.

Evans asks her about surveying aerially, and Taylor says that is not something they do in that manner. There is surveying on the ground through a lot of thick vegetation. Then there is the issue of gaining access to land, which can also get very tricky.

Manning chimes in asking the committee to consider the aspects that would make it manageable to move forward with limited resources and time. He also notes that the idea of a parkway has been discussed several times in the community.

Ryan Bass with the City of Boerne Planning Department speaks up, suggesting that the cost can be spread around in protecting the recharge features throughout the county.

Taylor responds noting that there is a lot of water going toward San Marcos and the Guadalupe. This is a very big, complicated project and funding for anything like that has never come to fruition. San Antonio purchased a lot of land, but how will they protect it? She says they could ask for money and funding using *that* as the purpose in asking for it.

Durden notes that he is worried about the regulation of development and transportation. He says they have started a conversation on finding other funding solutions with national experts that may be able to help them fund some groundwater modeling. They are working on getting a cost estimate

from a hydrologist, and there is some money allocated for water infrastructure in the ARPA.

Lance Kyle, a public commenter, takes the floor saying that the USGS mapping is limited in Kendall County and superficial. More funding is needed. He notes a salamander protection project he has been working on. He also says that TCEQ maps are also insufficient within Kendall County. He says the Lily Ranch has not been hit with ground radar, but there are features visible on the surface. He circles back to a comment Pratt made earlier about the northeast quadrant. He says it is probably close to a series of cave clusters. He says looking at the TSS maps will be most useful to see where the recharge features are located. Some even have 30-40 caves.

Vialissa Gearhard also chimes in saying the presentation was very eye opening. She appreciated the environmental perspective and says that perhaps if funding is not available, a GoFundMe page could be useful. She says that it is important that the community knows what the risks are. Being someone who suffers from kidney disease, she worries about the water quality. She also expresses that she thinks the roads that are already in existence could be developed with turnarounds.

Hendricks asks about whether there is a central database.

Taylor chimes in saying that Dr. Veni is one of the caretakers who manages that, and when a feature is found, a landowner will typically allow them to put that information into their database.

Evans adds that he has used the database, mentioning that it is not much of a digitized database at all. It is cabinets and files in a basement, and there would probably be a need to hire someone to go in and manage it. Taylor says George has been working on that. She says the data that TSS has acquired has been acquired over a long period of time. It is not based on a comprehensive survey, but rather reports from cave owners and property owners. That is a limitation that was George referring to in the areas he was highlighting.

Durden begins to close the meeting by saying that today's meeting was a special called meeting; it was not on the schedule. He says the committee will meet a week from this meeting.

Ben Eldredge chimes in and says that he and Jeff Carroll wanted to introduce wide-nodes/narrow roads to the committee to facilitate better traffic flow while using less concrete.

Durden asks Pratt if she thinks their subcommittee will have something meaningful to present at the next meeting for the committee to consider. He says he is just looking for a preliminary list.

Pratt responds and says the information they have is in a narrative format, and there are very few new roads that are being proposed that do not already exist.

Durden notes that he and Manning will work on getting in touch with appointing entities and getting the committee reloaded. They will also work on getting in touch with AAMPO.

Evans adds that Manning mentioned the Mayor has indicated that he wants to know anyway he can provide help and support to the committee. He says it may be worth it to find a GIS person who can help sort through the data that has already been collected.

Pratt says it would be nice to have information on thru traffic from TSS in downtown Boerne. She says it would be helpful in coming up with ideas in the future. She explains that most of her team will be out the following week, but she will plan to forge ahead.

Durden notes that the intent is not to make any decision, but just to ensure she and her team are on the right track.

**Item 5: PRESENTATION BY DR. ANDY GLUESENKAMP, DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CONSERVATION & RESEARCH, SAN ANTONIO ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.**

As previously stated in the minutes, this presentation was postponed for a future meeting.

**Item 6: PUBLIC COMMENT**

Public attendee Tom Adlestein begins discussing the money spent to do any future environmental studies. He explains that based Dr. Veni's presentation and discussion taken place it may be best to use and expand the roads that have already been built. He says the situation may have become more complicated than it needed to be.

Denise Dever is in attendance and directs her comment to Donna Taylor. She says that a lot of discussion has been had about personally going to speak with landowners and she knows that Jeff Carroll has some of that information as does she. She mentions a map with red dots on it and that it had a lot of spots where karst features and sinkholes could be found. She explains that this information was part of the maps that were drawn out.

Durden responds to her and says that he knows there was a map that was made, but out of respect for the landowners and their property he has been reluctant to make it public record. Dever seeks to clarify whether the map she is referring to actually exists, and Durden says he says he knows what document she is referring to but the purpose of it he is unaware of. Kight points out that the red dots were to avoid any sinkholes.

Taylor says there is a lot of non-authoritative data out there. She says a landowner would most likely not be able to recognize recharge features unless they were significant.

Kight says the map was not made public at the request of affected landowners.

Hendricks asks if the public would give officials access to the map to work off and not publish it, or have them not look at the map at all and not publish it.

Evans adds that when going to TSS and asking for the cave data, they may not give any information to Kendall County, but he proposes a small group to do the inquiry.

Durden notes that it is not the committee's job to draw lines through a map. It is good information, but their conversation is meant to be geared toward solutions and suggestions.

Public attendee Vialissa Gerhardt mentions that she already has 3 caves on her property. She supports Taylor's earlier comments by saying when it rains 5 or 6 inches, the run off is considerable even with huge drainage ditches. She notes that the presentation from this meeting was insightful, offering a different perspective of how transportation development could impact the environment.

Kight says the development of subdivisions could double or triple the amount of run-off. He explains that if they are not careful, the run-off issue could become worse with high density development and become an even bigger problem than the transportation issues.

Taylor speaks up again saying that there is a swallet located in the creek bed right downstream from Herff Road. When looking at calculations based on flows, if something spills into Cibolo Creek and Herff Road, such as a tanker spill or an accident with a gas leak, she explains that with a heavy rain, there would only be about 15-20 minutes until the creek would become contaminated from the run-off. She says this is not an issue that needs to be of concern just for the future, but these kinds of problems are happening now.

#### **Item 7: ADJOURNMENT**

- The committee adjourned at 3:59 p.m.