

Kendall County - Boerne - Fair Oaks Transportation Committee Minutes

03 December 2019
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

The Kendall County - Boerne - Fair Oaks Transportation Committee convened in the Boerne Independent School Board administrative building's training wing.

In Attendance:

Co-chairs Don Durden and Bob Manning, as well as Ben Eldredge, Bob Hartwig, Bryce Boddie, John Kight, Jonah Evans, Marcus Garcia, Mark Stahl, Northern Hendricks, Rankin D'Spain, Rich Sena, Tim Bannwolf, David Anderson, Dan Banks, and scrivener Elaine Maltzberger

Not in Attendance: Gary Louie, Josh Limmer, Stephen Zoeller, and Kim Blohm

Item 1: Opening comments and Introductory Business:

Durden and Manning opened the meeting by asking for committee input regarding the committee's upcoming holiday meeting schedule which was ultimately set for 17 December 2019 followed by 14 January 2020.

Hendricks refreshed everyone's memory with regard to the committee's website www.KCBFOTC.com. She stated that the site offers the opportunity to view many presentations – including those that are given during committee gatherings. However, she cautioned that while Safari and Explorer allow the website to load, Chrome experiences some difficulty.

Item 2: Minutes:

Banks made the motion to approve last month's minutes as presented, with Rankin offering a second.

The minutes were unanimously approved.

Item 3: Presentation by Texas Mobility Summit Attendees:

The three who attended last week's Texas Mobility Summit shared their notes. Manning went first, saying that the conference had been "urban-centric," with "a lot of topics covered and insightful comments made" that Manning felt were generally irrelevant to the KCBFOTC's efforts. Manning said that although summit panel members were charged by their conference leader to "rethink everything we think we know," the observation was also made that short election cycles made any long-term efforts extremely difficult.

Manning referenced the "circular conversations" of participants who opined that "old solutions won't work" while also offering little in the way of applicable innovation. "There was no consensus – that was my take-away," Manning said in conclusion.

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Durden noted that autonomous vehicles had been a topic of summit discussion. Durden offered his personal observation that “autonomous vehicles are not likely to reduce capital costs, indeed the technology required to deploy widespread autonomous vehicles will likely increase our capital costs for both the technology itself, as well as for maintaining the traditional infrastructure to a higher standard.”

Durden mentioned a proposed possibility of truck “platoons” that could operate during low-traffic hours. He also noted a new proposed economic development paradigm that attracts workers after which new companies will follow the workers.

The challenges to the hype of new technology, according to Durden, exist not so much with the technology itself, but with its production and regulation.

Eldredge said that at the summit he had heard repeatedly about the “disruptive” qualities of autonomous vehicles without any real “assessment” to back up the claim. He stated that a representative from the head of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce regarding young, skilled workers who are entering communities, “looking for different mobility options than older generations.” “We have to acknowledge that generational differences do exist,” Eldredge said, “and if we’re planning in a forward-looking way we need to consider those differences.”

Eldredge noted the emphasis on “walkable, connected systems” and pointed to the lack of such amenities in Boerne. “Lack of sidewalk connectivity is an issue (here),” Eldredge said, pointing out that in such case, “people will not use them.”

Eldredge also mentioned that harnessing the private sector for its “creativity,” and “telecommuting” were other non-traditional solutions he’d heard discussed, along with making everything “smart, to be ahead of the game.” “Let’s not lock ourselves in – that was my biggest take-away,” Eldredge said. “We need to be holistic.”

Item 4: Presentations Regarding Current and/or Scheduled Transportation Projects

A) Jeff Thompson, City of Boerne Deputy City Manager/General Manager of Utilities, gave a presentation regarding the city’s future transportation projects, saying, “there really aren’t any major projects on the books.” Cascade Caverns and the South Glenn subdivision extension are projects that “keep recurring,” Thompson said, adding, however, that no funding has heretofore been available.

In the future, Adler Road is expected to cut through the Esperanza subdivision, joining up with Hwy 46E, Thompson said.

With roadways cost roughly \$10 million per mile to construct (with TxDOT a possible “primary funder” as well), Thompson said that the City of Boerne is “strongly considering” a bond issue for next November and he urged the committee to come up with a list of projects.

Evans noted that the city’s Thoroughfare Plan seems to mimic the Kendall Gateway Plan. To this, City of Boerne Planning and Community Development Director Laura Talley responded that since 1974, plans have all drawn on one another and still seem to follow the same lines.

She stated that planned and future subdivisions must provide right-of-way platting “between Point A and Point B as long as it’s fairly reasonable” as dictated by the Thoroughfare Plan.

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Manning said, directing his request to Talley and Thompson, "We need absolute clarity about what roads and thoroughfares are already committed." He added, addressing the gathering, "We have got to address mobility and it's not just roads. Committee, I want a bunch of those projects to not have anything to do with roads. We have simply got to address mobility in its broadest sense in this community."

Talley continued her presentation saying that once the Unified Development Code has been completed, the city will revisit the Thoroughfare Plan as "little bits of puzzle pieces" composed of various rights-of-way, seemingly "roads to nowhere" until adjacent developments connect them.

With regard to the public's response to the existing plan, Talley said, "There was a lot of pushback. You're going to affect somebody. Period. End of story."

Bannwolf requested that Talley provide the committee with a list of rights-of-way already committed.

Manning asked who has oversight of the possible environmental impact of these rights-of-way, to which Talley responded, "every development that comes in has to do those environmental studies. I draw the lines on the map but do not get into the environmental studies. That's on the developer."

B) Rick Tobolka, Kendall County Engineer made a presentation regarding present and future county roadway projects, summing up how "Kendall County does not have any money earmarked for mobility projects." Primarily, the almost-four-million-dollar budget for 2020 is dedicated to maintaining/sealcoating 410 miles of roadway within the county, Tobolka said.

Anderson asked Tolbolka about traffic studies, to which Tobolka responded that while traffic "counts" are sometimes conducted, trouble spots are mostly known anecdotally. Tobolka stated that it will become increasingly more important for the county to designate certain roadways as "thoroughfares" in order to potentially receive federal monies.

Durden inquired about whether or not the county would be open to expanding its "library of street cross-sections, that would include bicycle paths, walkways, and things like that," to which Tobolka responded in the affirmative.

Answering a question from Evans, Tobolka explained that TxDOT oversees maintenance of roadways including state highways (SH's), farm to market roads (FM's) and ??? (RM's).

Tbolka also noted that a bridge is to be built at the Balcones Creek low water crossing.

C) Jonathan Bean, TxDOT's Regional Director for Transportation, Planning and Development gave a presentation describing projects currently under construction as well as upcoming funded projects and upcoming unfunded projects. The link to Bean's presentation is available on the KCBFOTC website.

When Anderson asked Bean if TxDOT considers "quality of life" installations such as walking paths, Bean answered "Absolutely. We like to plan alongside municipalities. I'm glad you guys have us at the table here."

When Durden inquired about the possibility of Main Street being returned from TxDOT to the City of Boerne, Bean responded, "It's not really being discussed right now."

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Bean stated that next call for projects would be due in October of 2020.

Using slightly different terminology, Bean spoke about “functionally classified” roads in Kendall County that might qualify for federal funding.

“There’s a significant opportunity for federal funds,” Durden agreed.

When Anderson spoke to the need for east-west connectivity at the north end of the county, and asked about how something like that would be funded, Bean answered that when the community as a whole works in tandem with local elected officials, TxDOT is more likely to add such proposals “to the system.” However, he cautioned that the process isn’t by any means simple – that “there’s a lot of steps to go through before you get to construction.”

Hendricks asked if four-year plans for I-10 are locked in, and Bean answered, “We’re open. The project’s not built.”

Bean stressed that TxDOT is “doing a lot of innovation.” However, he also emphasized, “We’re open to (innovation), but it has to be modeled to prove it works.”

Eldredge asked if TxDOT has resources dedicated to an “experimental component.”

Bean answered that the organization does not.

When Garcia asked about upcoming funding, Bean stated that in August of each year, TxDOT has a UTP (Unified Transportation Plan) process that involves some “bigger dollar amounts.” “Funding grants come kind of randomly,” Bean said, explaining that such grants are based on local monies.

Meeting’s Wrap-Up:

With scheduled time running out, Durden stated that the agenda’s Item 6 would be handled as the first order of business at the 17 December meeting.

Manning urged the committee as a whole to “move into action” on the four established subcommittees, at which point, Eldredge asked if perhaps an environmental subcommittee should be considered, after which Bannwolf wondered if the City’s Thoroughfare Plan should be undertaken by a subcommittee as well.

Hartwig asked for a clearer outline of “funding windows” which Durden said he would provide.

Adjournment.

Durden adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Submitted on 04 December 2019 by Elaine Maltsberger with edits by Don Durden and Bob Manning.