

Kendall County – Boerne – Fair Oaks Transportation Committee Minutes

**20 April 2021
2:00 – 3:57 p.m.**

The Kendall County – Boerne – Fair Oaks Transportation Committee convened in the City of Boerne City Hall 1st Floor Executive Conference Room.

In Attendance:

Co-chairs Bob Manning and Don Durden, as well as Ben Eldredge, Bryce Boddie, Gary Louie, John Kight, Jonah Evans, Northern Hendricks, Rich Sena, Steve Sharma, Jeff Carroll and scrivener Erika Yount.

Not in Attendance:

Josh Limmer, Kim Blohm, Marcus Garcia, Mark Stahl, Rankin D’Spain, Stephen Zoeller, Tim Bannwolf.

Visitors:

Two visitors were in attendance, one of them being reporter from the Boerne Star.

Item 1: OPENING REMARKS

Don Durden explains that this is the first meeting since things have begun to open back up after the COVID-19 shutdown. He introduces and welcomes Steve Sharma to the committee. He notes that some members will not be returning to the committee. He also introduces Erika Yount as the new scribe for meeting minutes. Durden thanks the City of Boerne for hosting the meeting. He also notes that this is a new location for the meeting to take place and that it is subject to change to a different room within City Hall.

Bob Manning opens with a note that the committee is being deeply encouraged by the Commissioners Court and Mayor Handren to reengage in discussion regarding transportation in Boerne. He notes that the recent “Mayor’s Minute” notes that there are lots of projects that the community would like to see activated. He explains that this committee is not an official

government entity, but that the goal is to be unprecedentedly open about the business that is conducted among the members and that the intent is to behave as if the committee *is* a public entity.

He notes that there will be areas for citizen comments at every meeting as well as detailed meeting minutes available on the website so as to capture the essence of discussion during the meetings.

Early on, the committee decided that there will be a vote on any issues brought in. There are a number of inflammatory topics and in an effort to keep the spirit of transparency and not being heavy-handed, there will continue to be voting among the committee.

Durden begins discussing a modified consensus decision-making model. He explains that decisions will be made by a consensus when possible, but if an instance arises where a modified consensus is necessary, there will be an opportunity for a motion to be made to have a vote. If that vote is approved by a 2/3 consensus of the committee, then the committee will vote on the question or issue on which consensus could not be achieved, and a 2/3 vote of the committee is required to be approved.

Durden explains that the hope is to meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every month, which would stagger between City Council meetings which fall on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month. The proposal is to meet at 2:00 p.m. on those days.

Item 2: REPORT ON COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Durden passes around a list and asks every member in attendance to list their primary phone number, primary email, committee email and to indicate which is the preferred method of contact.

Durden notes that Bob Hartwick has moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico and that his wife has passed away, therefore he will not be returning to the meetings. He offers that if anyone knows Bob and has his contact information, to reach out if they felt so led to express their condolences.

David Anderson had been representing Precinct 3 but has said he would not like to participate in attending the committee meetings any further.

This leaves Commissioner Elkins and Commissioner Chapman with no representatives attending, but Durden expects they will appoint new representatives.

Tim Bannwolf is not in attendance for this meeting but would like to continue meetings with the committee.

Dan Banks would like to withdraw.

Marcus Garcia is not present at the meeting, but it is mentioned later in the meeting that “he is still around.”

Gary Louie chimed in with a question about an appointment with City Council after the election since there has been a change of leadership. Durden explains that the Mayor would like to have a meeting with the Steering Committee last week, but because of Judge Lux’s mother’s passing, there has not been one yet.

Durden goes on to say that Kim Blohm with the Boerne Chamber of Commerce is with child, and while not in attendance, would like to start coming to meetings, but is not sure how long she will be able to continue.

Rankin D’Spain and Stephen Zoeller have both said they would like to participate; however, they are absent for this meeting.

Durden directs a question to Rich Sena about Boerne ISD’s spot being vacant. Sena replies and says their Director of Facilities would be a valuable member.

Durden says he needs to touch base with Josh Limmer.

Ben Bunker who was the EDC representative has been replaced by Steve Sharma.

Item 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

A reporter from the Boerne star is present.

Travis Sabine is also in attendance and expresses that he is an advocate for roundabouts.

No other comments.

Item 4: CONSIDER RATIFICATION OF INTERIM REPORT

Durden begins this item by saying that this report was drawn up back in October of 2020. He explains that even with COVID-19, transportation planning goes on. They needed recommendations for transportation progress and needed some basis on which to make recommendations. So, they pulled together an ad hoc subcommittee to see if they could come up with what was perceived as the consensus recommendations of the group. A report was drafted, committee members were pulled together—some of which are present at today’s meeting—and it was presented to City Council and to the Commissioner’s Court. Durden explains that he felt it was well-received but wants to do things correctly and present the same presentation to the committee and discuss what would be appropriate or not appropriate to move forward on.

Durden goes on to explain that the committee was formed in September of 2019 and met 12 times over 5 months. The focus of the committee is to develop recommendations. They suspended their work in March 2020 but were asked to continue making recommendations in December 2020. At this time, the Interim Report came to be, but Durden noted there is still a lot to be done moving forward. This report was important to layout for the two entities they were reporting to.

The committee is locally driven, committed to transparency, and data driven. The committee branched out into sub-committees—some are active; some not quite yet. Durden explains that there are two great internet-based resources, the website (www.kcbfotc.com) and a crowd source viewer.

Durden notes that funding for transportation comes primarily from local funds, regional funds, state, and federal funds. Generally, money is raised by toll-revenues, but there may be other opportunities as well.

They were able to come up with 8 project recommendations that should be taken responsible by the City and the County. They include:

- Scenic Loop Road
- IH-10 Eastbound and Frontage Road
- SH 27 RM 473 Roundabout
- Coughran Road and Upper Balcones to SH 46
- Old San Antonio Road
- Roundabout at US HWY 87 and Adler Road

- Pedestrian Crossing at Old No. 9 Trail
- South Esser Road Bike Lanes

Manning explains that one of the committee members has become a City Councilman. He congratulates Bryce Boddie and expresses that they are glad he could continue with the Transportation Committee.

Jonah Evans asks about a separate City effort regarding Blanco Road and road diet. He asks for clarification on which project they can move forward on right now. He notes that he was a big proponent for the road diet concept but understands that pulling paint off roads is very expensive.

Jeff Carroll says this report includes some of the feedback from the meetings concerning the loss of traffic capacity.

John Kight brings up the signals at Esser Road and Blanco Road. He notes that sometimes the signals are flashing (on the weekends, in the evenings and into the wee hours of the morning) and feels that those work better than regular stop lights.

Evans explains that regarding the fear for a lack of capacity, he feels that this is more of the perception of an actual problem.

Northern Hendricks brings up the Corvette Show from the previous weekend, saying that Blanco was down to one lane.

Durden explains that the committee had some non-project recommendations, but they were not discussed extensively. He says that BISD has routinely engaged with a demographer (projecting populations), and they thought they should take advantage of that asking AAMPO to update their travel demand model to reflect the BISD demographic study data. He also says one of the problems they heard revolved around Cul-de-sac-style developments. Developers do not connect Cul-de-sac developments unless there is a policy in place to do that. There has been encouragement from the committee to the City and County that would connect developments instead of developing Cul-de-sac developments.

Durden moves on to talk about major thoroughfare plans. He says the City has almost always had one, but that the County has not. He says the sense of the committee is that it would be beneficial for the City and the County to adopt an updated coordinated major thoroughfare plan to be able to secure

Right-of-Way where it is needed when developers are developing at least within the ETJ.

Ben Eldredge asks about hiring a consultant.

Carroll chimes in to say that the report has already been submitted to AAMPO, and he explains that their projections are higher than the City's projections. This could be good potentially for funding purposes. A Cul-de-sac deal is a comment on the City's comprehensive master plan about interconnectivity, and there are very good codes in place that require this. However, the City staff has not been enforcing this in the past, but that has changed since Carroll came aboard the City staff. So, this is a project that is currently being worked on.

Carroll also says that the City has an RFQ request for qualifications written for the City's Major Thoroughfare Plan, and they will eventually have it out in the community. The plan has made it to several lists—there are about 8 or 9 consulting firms interested and asking for status updates for the submittal of the RFQ.

Carroll notes that the current ETJ is 1 mile, but as the City grows to 25,000 the ETJ will bump up to 2 miles. Eventually they may be looking at 5 miles.

Durden says his personal perception regarding the County is that he would prefer to stick to 2 miles, but Carroll says it would take a long time for the ETJ to exceed that.

Louie asks if this is a discussion happening among commissioners, and if there is the possibility that there will be a study planned for the 2021-2022 budget.

Durden says it is unlikely that the County would take the initiative to develop its own Major Thoroughfare Plan, but it is more likely that they would participate in some sort of oversight of a consultant that is hired by the City of Boerne.

Louie says that leaves a lot of dirt unaccounted for.

Durden explains that at least one commissioner and one member of the court are very concerned about Major Thoroughfare Plans that run across private properties. Therefore, staying within the 2-mile ETJ is best. He says as Boerne expands, there can be adjustments made later. He says there is

support for identifying which roads function as Major Thoroughfares such as Old No. 9 and Waring Welfare Road but says that any “green field” roads will be a problem.

Carroll says Comal County Major Thoroughfare plan is just existing roadways, and it has allowed them to increase Right-of-Ways and development.

Eldredge asks if there is a way to make the Major Thoroughfare plan multi-mobile.

Carroll says the City is reevaluating street crossings. Most places have biking and sidewalks, and the current controversy is whether those trails should be wide, multi-use trails.

Durden says the Commissioner’s Court has is in the process of retaining an engineer to help to get cost estimates and address some of these issues. This concluded the presentation of the Interim Report, and Durden opens it up for discussion among the members.

Boddie mentions “high hanging fruit.” In other words, what are the top priorities regarding the projects mentioned.

Manning says they were asked to get a list of “low hanging fruit”; things that are non-controversial and would be easy to gain public support.

Evans asks a question about the crowd sourcing tool previously mentioned. He said he has briefly looked through the document and thought that the document could be improved if the crowd sourcing tool could be implemented further to describe the public support of which they seek.

Durden says they did investigate getting a summary of the data, but it did not show support or any controversy of one project over another.

Manning chimes in and agrees with Durden. He said while it is a very valuable tool, assessing what the committee can learn from it is what needs to happen next. It just has not been translated into usable knowledge, and not being able to use the crowd sourcing tool is a problem that needs solving.

Evans offers to look at the report and see if he can summarize the data for them.

However, Durden says the report was incomplete.

Hendricks reassures Durden and Manning that they made it to the first step of getting the public input collected.

Evans says the process may need to happen in “rounds” where the committee meets, the committee surveys public input, and have another round of committee discussion. He suggests proceeding with another public input period or allowing for public input on the document presented since there is typically very little attendance to public meetings where the document has been presented. He begs the question, “How much public input opportunity has there been before [the committee] votes to ratify?”

Manning addresses the question saying they had a list of “low hanging fruit” or publicly supported projects and there is still a lot of work left to do as a committee. He asks if it would be better to just have all the work Evans is asking about be a part of the committee’s future work product.

Sena chimes in saying that in addition to deciding on the “low hanging fruit”, the Interim Report was designed to be non-controversial saying that no one can really argue, for example, that there are things that need to be done on Old San Antonio Road. He notes that while these “low hanging fruit” project would improve the needs of today, it does not prepare the county for future growth. He says he does not know how much support there is for expanding and preparing to be a county of up to 90,000 people. He begs the question, “What can we do in terms of improving transportation without destroying our community”. He says that is the tough question.

Evans says in terms of controversial projects, the only project that posed a question for him was Coughran Road. He knows there are a lot of homes along that road and thinks that could be a controversial project for the people that live there.

Carroll makes a remark that Commissioner Bergman had a meeting at City Hall saying that every resident on Coughran Road showed up but one and says there are at least two or three residents that would prefer the road be turned back to gravel.

Evans asks about the goal of the road. Is the intent to encourage transportation to happen there?

Kight said the reason for the project on Coughran is that TxDOT is working on turning the Frontage Road into a one-way, it is difficult to get to SH 46 from Upper Balcones road unless a driver wants to turn right.

Durden says that if nothing is done there, the residents will be upset that they will eventually not be able to back out of their driveway.

Carroll mentions The Birch at Spencer Ranch subdivision which is a part of the Major Thoroughfare that runs up to Johns Road and further, if coming out of the development, the only option is to either go left or go straight.

Evans circles back to his original question: Did the committee provide enough opportunity for public input.

Boddie speaks up and says that before he joined City Council, he thought the City could fund all projects that needed fixing. He says the scariest part to him is that all these projects need attention, but after looking at the budget, there is funding for only one project. He begs the questions, "How do we fund these things?"

Hendricks speaks up and asks a question about Coughran Road and how that will impact the traffic in that area.

Kight speaks up and says that this has been a topic of discussion for years now. As the town continues to grow and TxDOT continues to make changes to the highway and Frontage Roads, traffic will funnel to Old San Antonio Road. His concern is that if the City/County waits to do work over there, in the future there will be heavier traffic conditions to do work under as opposed to now where the traffic down Old San Antonio is moderately light, also considering that there is no funding for this right now. He circles back to the funding question.

Carroll explains that even small projects can be millions of dollars, and the longer the City/County waits, the more it will cost to do the projects.

Sena asks if the committee knows what the total costs will be for these projects discussed to be completed.

Durden says that they are not sure, but they were told by the Steering Committee not to worry about costs but were encouraged to come up with recommendations for projects that need attention. However, he agrees that to make decisions as a committee, knowing and understanding costs is

essential. He says that engaging TxDOT is crucial if there is any chance for getting these projects funded.

Rich Sena suggests that TxDOT has already spent millions in the area already, and says that getting funding from AMPPO, TxDOT, and using taxes to pick up the rest could be the way to fund most efficiently.

Kight suggests dividing projects into stages which could help cut costs.

Sena says the bottom line is that the City has only expanded one road in the last 30 years. He says as a community, the City/County has not planned for the future of transportation, and that is evident with the current school traffic situation. He suggests again that taxes are where the money should come from, and it is crazy not to know costs.

Ben suggests that this is more about efficiency rather than throwing more money out there.

Kight suggests considering user costs. He says it is more costly to not have proper mobility.

Durden says the “low hanging fruit” was meant to be “no-brainer” projects. He says if the committee can implement a few projects that are non-controversial and the public can get behind, then the committee can move on to the higher hanging fruit.

Louie chimes in to discuss the local match if TxDOT gets involved. He says it behooves the committee to know and understand costs for this reason as well.

Durden redirects the conversation back to what the next steps are regarding the Interim Report.

Kight suggests that everyone agrees with the report and that he feels the consensus is that the next step is to know and understand costs.

Eldredge asks about what projects make the cut as far as asking for funding. Some people may not agree with the projects the committee is asking for funding for. Do the benefits of the projects the committee chooses moving forward warrant the costs? He notes that this is something to think through.

Carroll notes that equity is a big part of the submittals right now in terms of deciding which projects are most equitable for the community. When seeking federal funding, that is something to include.

Northern notes that the Waring/Welfare area is problematic and foresees Old Fredericksburg Road as being problematic as well.

Kight says this issue was created by developers and that tax dollars should not be used to fix their mistakes; Hendricks agrees.

Sena asks about the widening of the road and says it will eventually be a very well-traveled road.

Durden says a left turn lane would be viable.

Carroll says he has not studied it but says there is building happening to connect Scenic Loop and Upper Balcones.

Sena makes mention that it would not surprise him if the population south of Upper Balcones will eventually match the City of Boerne population alone. Evans and Sena both agree that there will eventually be a “West Boerne” and an “East Boerne”.

Boddie circles back to costs, to which Carroll replies that the City has hired a consultant. Boddie asks if a consultant will look at one project or all projects, and Carroll says that it is an “order of magnitude” concept.

Durden says the county is planning to hire someone to help with some of these things.

Carroll mentions 4 projects, one of which is Esser and will be done internally.

Kight mentions that consultants are more about getting money in their own pockets.

Louie and Durden go back and forth about getting project cost projections and then ratifying them. Louie says the costs of the projects would not change his mind on the importance of the projects at hand.

Evans says that public comments would help them determine which projects to prioritize, which would also help to ensure that the committee is living up to the spirit of transparency. He asks how the committee can incorporate the input from the public.

Kight suggests that there are several of the projects that need some fine-tuning. He suggests looking at other ideas to make sure the plans that are in place are exactly what the committee wants to focus on getting completed. In summary, he says he thinks the plan should be to fine-tune plans, get costs, and present it all to the public.

Hendricks asks if the Interim Report is a living, breathing type of document.

Durden notes that he does not want to withdraw any of the currently listed projects. He does not feel the committee has misled anyone on how they have obtained their consensus so far. He says there is clearly a desire to have a complete look at all the low hanging fruit projects. He thinks it is important to move forward on all the projects, low hanging and big visionary, and then go in with solid data, do a cost analysis, and at that point the ratification of the report will become a movement.

Louie says what he struggles with is where it becomes the committee's responsibility to get from point A to point B as far as cost, this is how much Right-of-Way is needed, etc. The committee gives an arching overview, but he thinks the public entity should take the information and move on it based on the budgets and what funds are available for which projects. He does not want to get into a "paralysis by analysis" situation where the committee sits on these topics for another year, and nothing gets done. Things must continue being discussed and worked on whether we have a pandemic or not.

Manning chimes in and reminds everyone that it was never the job of the committee to focus on those things. The Mayor wanted lots of recommendations from the committee and noted that it was not up to the committee to worry about costs or what would be politically acceptable.

Sena suggests using the public input information to whittle down the number of projects, but Manning notes that doing that would indicate that the committee felt the ideas that got turned down would indicate to the public that the committee felt as though some ideas from the public were not as good as others.

Manning suggests continuing to build on the low-hanging fruit projects and the high-hanging fruit projects.

Evans adds that for the purposes of which the Interim Report was created, it is spot on. His critique of it is only that it should not be the official document for now. He has no critiques on how the document has been presented.

Item 5: REVIEW WHERE COMMITTEE STOOD WHEN ACTIVITY WAS SUSPENDED

Durden reiterates “the charge” of the committee:

1. Develop a county-wide transportation plan that mitigates future transportation congestion in a way that preserves cultural and environmental resources and promotes appropriate economic development.
2. Create a short-range program of projects and operational improvements that can be implemented in the short-run, and a long-range program of transportation improvements that addresses current objective travel demand.
3. A program of recommended policies to guide the planning and design of the transportation system.

Durden also notes that the website and crowd sourcing tool are both wonderful resources. He then proceeds in asking about the current committee structure and if there is any reconstitution needing to be made in that regard.

Evans says the way that the project subcommittee evolved in the previous session was overwhelming in the sense that there was so much happening all at once.

Hendricks asks if the committee was always meeting twice a month, and Manning says yes but that the subcommittees were also meeting in between.

Sena says he thinks the committee is made up of a manageable number of members to have a robust discussion on projects and thinks the whole committee ought to be able to weigh in.

Durden chimes in and say one of the things he discussed with Manning is that it is his hope that the committee’s ultimate recommendations will be more than a list of projects. He thinks if they could come up with something that describes the transportation system in Kendall County in a way that lay-

people can understand it, then the committee can make some headway and get TxDOT engaged in cost funding.

Manning says the thing that made his eyes light up was finding a way to combine the need for automobile-centric solutions and non-automobile centric solutions, and he feels like this is a good basis to move forward on, as it is something the committee generally feels is something the community wants.

Louie notes that he has never liked the word “transportation”. He prefers the word “mobility” because the discussion is about more than roads and traffic, but rather how to move people around the community.

Eldredge chimes in to say he has been reading about federal discussion, and there has been a paradigm of how to build a city out. He notes that people are finding it is very expensive to maintain, to expand upon, and none of it has really solved any congestion issues. Traffic problems have not been solved ANYWHERE and begs the question, “How do we solve it? What is the most efficient way to create public infrastructure in Kendall County?”

Evans notes that there are fascinating lessons to be learned from the COVID 19 experience. Most people are working from home now, which got him questioning how much it costs for a person to use the roads every day for a year? Is there a way to incentivize getting people off the roads? Is there a tangible benefit to the county is less people are using the roads?

Sena notes that even with people working from home, there will still be a need to drop kids off at school, run errands, go to the grocery store. He does not expect, even with people working from home, that at the rate that Kendall County’s population is expanding, he wonders how the City/County develops a transportation plan efficient enough for the ever-growing community?

Evans discusses the astronomical costs to create roads, parking lots, etc.

Sharma says it is interesting how during the peak hour there may not seem to be much improvement, but during the other hours of the day, traffic moves smoothly. He notes that he has worked for TxDOT for quite some time and that there is in fact a road user cost per hour. Information like this can be found on the TxDOT website.

Durden notes the committee is 13 minutes away from concluding the meeting and expects that they will not come to a consensus by then. He gives the committee a homework assignment to continue to ponder where the committee stands and how to move forward.

Item 6: NEXT STEPS

Eldredge asks if it makes sense to prioritize taking the public feedback map and distilling it down to something firmer?

Manning discusses the GIS subcommittee, and says that he thinks they should drive it for them. If money and resources are needed, the public input analysis data needs to be organized, but notes that not everything can be done at the full committee level.

Boddie says that AAMPO may be able to provide data as well as a map. He suggests asking for them to create a report.

Manning says they have tried, and it is not decipherable. He notes that he thought that the subject matter expert committee was invaluable to them.

Eldredge says he will follow up with Tim Bannwolf on that matter. He thinks there is a more cost-effective way to go about getting the data.

Manning says his last comment had to do with a supporting appropriate economic development. He says it is very easy to get in the frame of mind that seeks to promote commercial enterprises, make traffic better, and make people rich—but he says, “not necessarily”. He talked with Kim Blohm about a trip he took to Eureka Springs, AK. He says when their roads became really congested, their Chamber of Commerce/EDC entities decided to create some parking lots here and there with a trolley that has designated routes to move pedestrians from one place to another within the town. He says this really promoted commercial activity. This had him wondering if the Boerne merchant community would benefit from a program like that.

Sena says he was in Cape Cod and said they had built a downtown area with buildings that had architecture that reflected an 1890’s style—Main Street was packed with tons of shops—but there was a ton of parking surrounding the area making it a really efficient way for shoppers and visitors to enjoy the downtown area because it only takes about 3 minutes to walk

from one end to the other. He says Boerne has a very long Main Street because that is just the way it was built.

Evans circles back to the trolley idea saying that he had never thought about that before, and it could be something that could really work well.

Hendricks says the trolley idea has fit in the bike/trails/pedestrian category but says it could fit in the mobility category.

Manning circles back to what Sena was saying, noting that Boerne's Hill Country Mile is smaller in area than the La Cantera Mall in San Antonio.

Sena chimes in and says that instead of building roads that foster more commercial development, if the community wants a vibrant downtown area, the committee just needs to be concerned about getting the residents from Point A to Point B in an efficient way that does not kill the quality of life that Boerne provides.

Hendricks chimes in to say that one thing good that came out of the COVID experience was the EDC zoning maps that the City/County can use to build on.

Item 7: PUBLIC COMMENT

Durden opens the floor once more for public comment.

No comments from the public were made.

Sena gives kudos to Boddie's wife who helped 20 3rd graders plant new trees.

Kight summarizes one more time saying they will move ahead with the plans but concludes that figuring out costs will be most crucial in moving forward with promotion with the public. He says that's the next step before they can move on to the other things they discussed.

Durden says the committee will have to do a little bit more work on identifying a few more projects even before that happens.

Kight reiterates that he thinks some of the projects already listed need fine-tuning.

Hendricks asks who makes the request to AAMPO for the data for the map.

Durden replies that he has the information needed to move forward on that. Durden says the next meeting will be the first Tuesday in May in the training room.

Item 8: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting concluded at 3:57 P.M.