

**Regular Meeting
Greater Bridgeport & Valley
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**Tuesday, March 27, 2012
Conference Room C, City Hall Annex
Bridgeport, Connecticut**

Name

Representing

Mark Lauretti, Mayor, Chairman	Shelton
Tom Herrmann, First Selectman, Vice Chairman	Easton
James DellaVolpe, Mayor	Ansonia
Bill Finch, Mayor	Bridgeport
Anthony Staffieri, Mayor	Derby
Mike Tetreau, First Selectman	Fairfield
Steve Vavrek, First Selectman	Monroe
Kurt Miller, First Selectman	Seymour
John Harkins, Mayor	Stratford
Anne Pappas Philips, Chair	GBRC
Laurie Goodsell, Chair (Doug Holcomb, Proxy)	GBT
Brian Bidolli, Executive Director	GBRC
Mark Nielsen, Sr. Transportation Planner	GBRC
Meghan Sloan, Transportation Planner	GBRC
Rick Dunne, Executive Director	VCOG
Yi Ding, Transportation Planner	VCOG
Doug Holcomb, CEO	GBT
Andrea Aldrich, Transit Planner	GBT
Tom Maziarz, Bureau Chief	ConnDOT
Roxane Fromson, Program Coordinator	ConnDOT
Gary Sojka, Transportation Planner	ConnDOT

Minutes

I. Call to Order

This was a regular meeting of the GBVMPO. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lauretti, Chairman, at 12:15 pm and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The roll of the MPO was called and proxies were received and accepted. A quorum was declared.

II. Public Participation

Mayor Lauretti asked if there was anyone from the public who wanted to address the MPO. Hearing none, the MPO proceeded to the next item.

III. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the MPO meeting held on September 20, 2011 were reviewed. A motion was made by Mayor DellaVolpe and seconded by First Selectman Miller to accept the minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Action Items

1. Presentation: Value Pricing Pilot Program – Mr. Bidolli introduced Mr. Maziarz who made a presentation on the planned Value Pricing Pilot Program study. Mr. Maziarz explained that the ConnDOT had been awarded funding from the FHWA to conduct the Value Pricing Study for the I-95 corridor from New York state line to New Haven. The goal is to determine if electronic tolling is feasible and whether or not it would be effective in changing travel behavior and reduce congestion. He explained that the study stems from a previous electronic tolling study conducted by the Transportation Strategy Board. Mr. Maziarz presented an overview of the congestion problems along I-95 and said the study is needed to help find solutions to the problems. He discussed the study tasks and emphasized that coordination with the MPOs is a critical element and that an extensive public outreach effort is also included. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Maziarz asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Harkins voiced his concerns with the concept of “all” electronic tolling. He stated that there would need to be toll booths somewhere to collect tolls from vehicles not equipped with a transponder. Mr. Maziarz explained that a video sensing would be used to capture the license plate information from vehicles without transponders and the owners would be notified to pay the toll. Mayor Harkins expressed his belief that video sensing would not be practical; too many vehicles would need to be recorded and processed and the cost to process would far exceed the revenue generated. He further urged the MPO not to support the project.

First Selectman Herrmann also expressed concern with the cost of the study and questioned the wisdom of spending \$1.4 million on a study that may not result in an actual project. He was also concerned that tolling I-95 will be another “tax” (user fee) that commuters in southwest would have to pay. He feels the costs are already too high in the area and affecting business and economy. The highway tolls would be a disincentive to use I-95 but will harm business. First Selectman Herrmann said he could better understand the purpose of the study if it was intended to raise revenues for improvements; he expressed uncertainty with electronic tolling potential for changing traveler behavior to reducing congestion.

Mayor Finch urged the MPO to support the planning project as it may provide innovative solutions to congestion on I-95 and provides an opportunity to determine what can and should be done. He said that without the study it would be hard to implement any actions to address congestion and felt that the MPO could decide at the end of the study to support or not support recommended actions. Mayor Finch emphasized that the study would allow a careful review of the technology and determine how best to reduce congestion.

First Selectman Tetreau said congestion is a major issue on I-95 and the study may provide some solutions; however, he voiced concern that the focus and scope of the study was too narrow; other possible actions should be included in the scope and not limited to just electronic tolling. Several members agreed that the study should look holistically at the problem of congestion; such as closing ramps/interchanges. First Selectman Vavrek agreed that congestion is an issue on I-95 and the study may provide some solutions; however, he also expressed concern about the impact value pricing would have on small businesses.

Several members voiced concerns about equity in that drivers may have a legitimate need to use the highway or express lane at peak times but would be unable to afford it; those who can pay the toll would be able to by-pass congestion while those who can't afford to would be stuck in traffic. Ms. Pappas Phillips also expressed concern that electronic tolling may redirect congestion to local roads and shift the burden of dealing with congestion to municipalities as travelers divert from I-95 onto local roads. Mayor Staffieri felt that some travelers just don't like or want to use technology and would be opposed to using transponders in vehicle to pay toll.

Mr. Holcomb voiced support for the study emphasizing that it could result in data and information valuable in other planning efforts and help reinvest revenues back into the transportation system, including bus and rail improvements.

2. **Amendment: FFY 2010-2013 TIP/STIP** – Mr. Bidolli presented and summarized the proposed amendments to the TIP/STIP requested by the ConnDOT, including adding the funding for the Value Pricing Pilot Program. He explained the proposed amendment to shift the construction of the regional bike trail from the Transportation Enhancement program to STP: Urban and the request to use STP: Urban funds to conduct the East Bridgeport Development Corridor project. Mr. Dunne discussed the amendment related to the Canal Street project. Mayor Harkins requested that the MPO consider the endorsement of the Value Pricing Pilot Program funding as a separate action. On a motion by Mayor Finch and seconded by Ms. Pappas Phillips the MPO endorsed the TIP/STIP amendments as presented and agreed to consider the VPPP project as a separate action. Motion carried.

After additional discussion on the VPPP project, Mayor Harkins stated that the MPO should not support funding for the project. Mayor Finch disagreed and urged the MPO to support the funding as important for finding solutions to the congestion problem. It was the consensus to the MPO to postpone action on the proposed funding to allow for further deliberations. Staff was directed to request additional information from ConnDOT and answers to the questions raised by members. It was further agreed that the MPO would convene for a special meeting to vote on the amendment.

- 3. GBVMPO By-Laws Amendment** – Mr. Bidolli explained that proposed changes to the By-Laws were proposed and discussed at previous meetings. The proposed changes would dictate how proxies would be made. On a motion by Ms. Pappas Phillips and seconded by First Selectman Herrmann, the GBVMPO voted to amend the By-Laws as presented. Motion carried.

VI. Discussion Items

- 1. Coastal Corridor Bus Study** – Mr. Nielsen presented an overview of the bus study being completed on the coastal corridor between New York and New Haven. He explained that the draft study has been completed and that it will be presented at a series of public information meetings. Mr. Nielsen said the study report was being presented for information purposes and no action was required at this time.
- 2. Regional TOD Pilot Program** – Mr. Bidolli explained that the GBRC is working with the GBT on combining the funding and work programs from several federal and state projects to develop a regional plan for alternative transportation modes, long range transit plan and promoting TODs in the region. He indicated that the state funds awarded to the Town of Stratford for the TOD pilot program would used as the match for federal aid grants.
- 3. STP: Urban Program** – Mr. Nielsen presented an update of the STP: Urban program and explained that several projects are nearing completion of the project scoping process and would be added to the TIP. He explained that the program is being revised to reflect changes in project schedules. Mr. Bidolli indicated that the shifting of the Route 8 interchange project created a surplus in the FFY 2012 program that is being partially allocated to the bike trail project.

Having no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Harkins and seconded by Mayor Staffieri.

Respectively submitted

Brian Bidolli, Executive Director,
GBRPA, MPO Co-Secretary

Rick Dunne, Executive Director, VCOG
MPO Co-Secretary