

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

April 04, 2016

A Transportation Committee meeting was held on Monday, April 04, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Benton County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Committee Members Present: Adams, K. Harrison, Anglin, Slinkard, *Moore, Meyers

Others Present: JP Moehring, County Judge Bob Clinard, JP-Elect Bob Bland, County Assessor Linda Hambrick, Comptroller Brenda Guenther, Administrator of Public Services Jeff Clark, Bella Vista Mayor Peter Christie

Media: Tom Sissom – Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Transportation Committee chair JP Adams called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comments

Bella Vista Mayor Peter Christie addressed the committee about the traffic congestion on Highway 71 in Bella Vista. He stated that some of the grants under consideration may be able to help. He reported that last year representatives from the City of Bella Vista and the City of Bentonville, State Highway Commissioner Dick Trammel, and County Judge Bob Clinard met and discussed possible solutions for this problem. He said they considered converting the middle lane of Highway 71 into an HOV lane but this would prevent people from being able to turn left across the lane. They also asked the Bentonville School District Administration if they could provide a fleet of school busses that would only make four stops at four different schools in the hopes that this would encourage parents of school children to allow their children to ride the bus. However, the Bentonville School District was very concerned about the cost of buying more busses. They considered a third option of using the shoulder lane which is currently paved but not supported underneath for heavy traffic. The lane could potentially be converted into a right turn lane, however, the lane is not the same distance all the way down. There is a large rock outcropping that causes the lane to be too narrow and it would have to be widened. There is also an existing bridge that will not accommodate extra lanes. He stated that he, Judge Clinard and Commissioner Trammel have talked about the roads that are being looked at tonight and these alternatives that may help reduce some of the congestion on Benton County 40. He stated that he appreciates the committee's consideration in looking at the possible solution to be presented this evening.

2016 FASTLANE Grant and TIGER Federal Grants

JP Adams reported that these grants came to their attention a short time ago and need to be fast-tracked. He stated that he has read through most of the information on it and it appears that the county's rural urban area meets nearly all of the requirements.

County Judge Bob Clinard reported that, about two weeks ago, they got notice of a FASTLANE grant which is for a minimum of \$5 million up to \$25 million. The primary focus is on transportation and moving freight. After they got the notice, they had to do a notice of intent within five days. He understands that the Quorum Court has to approve all grants if there are any match to them, however, in this particular case he has already sent in the notice of intent. The application is due in on April 14, 2016. He stated that they will discuss three different grants tonight. Two of them have to do with the area in Bella Vista and one of them, which was not on the agenda, is an environmental grant through Arkansas Economic Development. The TIGER grant is in addition to the FASTLANE grant. It is up to \$100 million and is much harder to get. He stated that it also has to do with transportation in the county and these grants can be combined.

*JP Moore entered meeting.

Judge Clinard stated that the FASTLANE grant has to be in one location. Its function is to help with the movement of freight and transportation. He stated that the county does not have county roads primarily designated for freight, however, they do have freight on almost every county road. They do not have any particular roads with a concentration of freight that is anything like that of Highway 71 or Highway 72. They cannot improve a road that specifically has to do with freight, however, they can improve other county roads that will take freight off of the roads that are causing the congestion - look at ways to get automobiles into the city coming from the North and take them off Highway 71 and Highway 72. This would be to improve Benton County 40, Price Coffee, NE J St, Slaughter Pen Road, Gooseberry and the intersection of Spanker Creek and Fleetwood which needs to be a straight-through intersection. Traffic has doubled on Benton County 40 in the last two years and it is only going to get worse. He stated that this is a 60/40 grant; if the county spends \$8 million, \$5 million will be reimbursed. The TIGER grant is much better but it is much harder to get. He and Dick Trammell are going to meet to make sure none of this interferes with what the State has planned. Judge Clinard stated the third grant, the Economic Development Grant, would be used to protect Beaver Lake, especially the point loading areas. He said that when the lake was built in 1960, many roads were terminated into the lake and there is a continuing problem with silt in the storm water going into the lake from these roads. He stated that this is a \$75,000 grant with a 50/50 match. There are 121 point-loading sources for county roads that terminate into the lake. To eliminate that, each one is going to take some engineering. He suggested taking the top ten and starting there. He stated that they would discuss this grant again later in the meeting.

Discussion was held concerning how the planned road improvements would work with the bypass currently under construction, the grant requirements, and multi-jurisdictional cooperation in regards to project funding.

Administer of Public Services Jeff Clark gave a short presentation providing traffic count numbers to the JPs from the dashboard. He then presented four options to help alleviate the traffic in this area, along with photos and maps outlining the current conditions and the improvements that could potentially be made. He stated that they are requesting direction from the Transportation Committee on whether or not to proceed.

A short discussion was held on the logistics of applying for these grants, whether or not the work would be subcontracted out, the timeline of the grants and preliminary cost estimates of the project.

JP K. Harrison made a motion to forward the FASTLANE and TIGER grant discussions to the April 07, 2016 Finance Committee agenda, seconded by JP Anglin.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Arkansas Economic Development Commission Rural Services Grant

County Judge Bob Clinard stated that this grant is for \$750,000 and is a 50/50 matching grant. The deadline is May 5th. He said that this would be used for the Beaver Lake watershed on the county roads that are points of entrance into Beaver Lake. He stated that, if it is forwarded to the Finance Committee, a map can be provided at that time showing all the point sources where sediment might be entering the lake.

JP Slinkard made a motion to forward this grant discussion to the April 07, 2016 Finance Committee meeting agenda, seconded by JP Anglin.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JP Moehring asked, in regards to the FASTLANE grant, if Jeff Clark would provide cost estimates for the project, both with the county doing the work and if it is sub-contracted out. Jeff Clark stated that he would provide these numbers.

JP Adams said that these grants showed up too late but, in the future, he will endeavor to make sure everyone has a packet on what will be addressed at the meeting for review ahead of time.

JP K. Harrison reminded the JPs that a Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 11, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. He stated that there are currently three items on the agenda. The first item has to do with the State and the other two are regarding APERS and setting raises for elected officials.

JP Adams stated that, unless something comes up, there will not be another Transportation Committee meeting until it is time to discuss the War Eagle Bridge project again in a couple of months.

Public Comments

Bella Vista Mayor Peter Christie stated that this has happened so quickly that his city council does not even know about it yet. However, he assured the committee that there is a great deal of interest in the project.

JP K. Harrison made a motion to adjourn.

JP Adams declared the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.