SUSTAINABLE PLACES POLICY COMMITTEE
July 12, 2019 Meeting Summary

Members Present
Brian Alferman, Johnson County
Jon Birkel, Hunt Midwest
Mary Cyr, Downtown OP Partnership
Michael Frisch, UMKC
James Joerke, Bridging the Gap
Edwin Lowndes, Housing Authority of KCMO
Rob McKim, ULI, KC
Janet McRae, Miami County
Mark O’Hara, HOK
Sean Partain, MoDOT
Josh Powers, Johnson County
Eva Steinman, FTA
Jeffrey Williams, City of Kansas City
Kelly Woodward, City of Gardner

Online Participants
Jessy Innocent, National Nuclear Security Administration
Tom Scannell, City of Independence
Allison Smith, KDOT

MARC Staff Present
Ron Achelpohl, Beth Dawson, Ashton Hess, Tom Jacobs, Marlene Nagel, Martin Rivarola, Alex Rotenberry, Patrick Trouba

Welcome and Introductions –

Approval of May 2019 Meeting summary –

Review RTP 2050 (Martin Rivarola)
- MARC will share results of an assessment that has been done for the alignment of programming and policy.
- There are some areas where our region has done well in tying our policies and goals, and other areas where we have not done so well.
- The RTP planning process is a 2.5-year process. We are 1.5-2.0 years into it. June of 2020 is the deadline for adoption of the new plan.
- SPPC helped on the regional vision statement. SPPC participated in the process to make the statement. The statement was approved by the MARC Board of Directors.
- MARC also completed a needs assessment. Added the policy goals of Data/Technology, Financial Sustainability as a result of the assessment.
- MARC staff made models with projects that were submitted. This will be relevant to project prioritization.
- There will be a push at public engagement in late summer/early fall.
- MARC staff have posted all of the projects at marc.org/2050.
- Total number of projects: 419.
• $15 billion worth of projects.
• ¾ of projects are highway/roadway projects, which were 56-57% of total costs.
• Active transportation had 58 submitted projects, adding up to $1.8 billion
• Eleven transit projects, tend to be packaged together, $1.86 billion.
• Some of the projects submitted discussed in MARC plans such as Smart Moves, MetroGreen.
• Audience question: What are the $2.1 billion of other projects? Electric vehicle carshare program is one project, environmental restoration project is another. Overland Park downtown parking, transportation operations, emergency response, etc.
• Staff will be preparing suggestions for project prioritization, and is finalizing scoring.
• Martin asked the committee to review projects and distribute project listing to their networks.
• Public comment is open.
• As of two days ago, there were 190 comments, many around two projects.
• Audience question: Was the PSP program a project that was submitted? Answer: No.
• The current plan, TO2040, does provide some programming guidance.
• MARC staff performed assessment to see where we are doing well/need improvement, and to see if staff can provide some additional guidance.
• Takeaways
  o Project scores significantly influence project selection.
  o 2/3 of entities that have looked for funding through MARC have received it over past two funding cycles.
  o PSP projects fare better, 2x as well, than other projects for funding.
  o Median score of submitted applications decreased, and median score of funded applications decreased.
  o Question: “Median score” as scored by MARC staff? Answer: Yes, by MARC staff according to criteria adopted by committees.
  o Question: Did scoring criteria change between two periods? Answer: Maybe some tweaking, but no.
  o Question: Did staff change between two periods? Answer (Ron Achelpohl): Some staff turnover occurred, hard to tell if that affected scoring.
  o 69 points was the median score of all projects; MO projects scored a little higher than KS projects.
• MO and KS STP committees have adopted a “one project per agency” practice. As a consequence, higher-scoring projects are skipped over for funding. Twelve high scoring projects this cycle were skipped compared to previous cycle.
• The “one project per agency” practice disproportionately affects larger entities, such as KCMO.
• MARC staff will continue sharing the results of this assessment.
• MARC is looking to adjust programming guidance, will look to committees for feedback.
• Martin reviewed scoring in the policy categories of funded projects.
• Martin’s question of the committee: We have adopted goals as a region, but lagging in certain goals in terms of what projects are submitted for funding.

Discussion
• Question: Is this a matter of the quality of the application? Or has the project itself at fault? Answer: All of the above all possible.
• Question: Do we take the time or opportunity to talk about previously funded projects in these lacking categories so that an applicant understands what is meant? Answer: Ron thinks we do. There is a workshop before the call for projects. We could possibly provide more examples. Questioner (Jeffrey Williams): might be nice if there were a case study.
• Audience member: at TTPC, on a regular basis, PSP awardees have made presentations.
• Audience member (Jeffrey Williams): at KCMO, not everybody filling out the application had been to presentations at TTPC, needs more of a reference.
• Martin Rivarola: PSP projects more likely over two cycles to be approved. They are located along corridors, which also sets projects up for success.
• Audience member (Jon Birkel): We might be looking at criteria for transportation in isolation. How do things like transportation and housing go together?
• Audience member (Mary): Some words need definition, such as “21st century economies.” Is that explained more?
• Martin Rivarola: We do the best we can with definitions and providing resources. In advance of the call for projects, we do symposiums. There are many different staff from around the region writing these definitions.
• Audience member (Kelly Woodward): There may be a perceived disconnect between transportation and other aspects. Planners are not always at the table for projects to draw connections. Are funding agencies influencing the end result?
• Martin Rivarola: This may be why PSP projects rise to the top: they lead to collaboration within each agency.
• Ron Achelpohl: It’s true that pots of money have strings attached to them, which may be frustrating sometimes and get in the way of high-level goals.
• Martin Rivarola: Question to leave with: What can we do? How can we raise the quality of applications?
• Audience member (Ed Lowndes): When writing application, focusing in on certain aspects, and missing other aspects.
• Audience member (Sean Partain): Stronger emphasis on location of project rather than elements of project may be helpful.
• Audience member (Jeffrey Williams): A cheat sheet or score card would be helpful. Can express core ideas and break them down.
• Audience member (Janet McRae): People with certain jobs, such as engineers, aren’t looking at certain aspects, such as equity.
• Audience member: Aren’t STP committees made of non-planner types?
• Ron Achelpohl: Generally, yes. Generally, it’s public works directors, but we do have planners on the committee. Membership is dependent on who jurisdictions decide to send.
• Audience member (Jon Birkel): Results revealing about how different jurisdictions internalize the regional goals. Concerned about whether private investment will follow projects. A good evaluation would be to look at where money is going.
• Audience member (Michael Frisch): Increase in investment in the core of KCMO has been amazing.

**Discuss 2021 Planning Sustainable Places project solicitation and review (Beth Dawson)**

- Going to look at the 2019 PSP projects, what we’re seeing in applications, what is working and what is not, and summary statistics.
- Doing 5th call for projects soon.
- For 2019, $2.2 million in requested funds, able to fund 12 projects.
- Generally, seeing 20-35 applicants, over $2 million in funds.
- Moving into 2021, the funding level will be less than what we had in 2019. Kansas will have $600k, Missouri will have $345k.
$50k-$100k is the typical request for federal funds. Sometimes the local match is substantial, 1/3-1/2 of the federal funds requested.

- Project Development: only one project in this category.
- Implementation Activities: two projects in this category.
- Five sponsors on Kansas side, five sponsors on Missouri side. KCATA has the first regional project. Some sponsors are repeat sponsors, some have never received funding before. There have been two or more new sponsors with each new round of funding. Several communities did not receive funding.
- 2019 is the first round in which neither Wyandotte County nor Miami County had a project. No projects in Platte County, who has generally had projects in the past.
- Plans are multi-aspect, integrated plans.
- We’ve seen several green/complete streets plans over the course of the program.
- No plans for 2019 specifically focused on trails.
- After Smart Moves was completed, applications focused on mobility hubs more.
- In 2017, criteria of “equity and underrepresented stakeholders” saw lower scores; staff reworked the definition. Beth wants to find other ways to help applicants understand how to get underrepresented stakeholders embedded in the process.
- Audience member: underrepresented stakeholders difficult to involve because they often don’t have formal organizations to contact.
- Audience member (Mary): underrepresented stakeholders don’t have a lot of “bandwidth” to sit on a committee due to other stressors in their lives.
- Audience member: Surprised that partial scores are typical in partnerships.
- Beth Dawson: Partnerships can mean getting resources from partners. We only ask that question for Project Development and Implementation Activities plans. It is not a criterion for the Sustainable Places plans. The sponsors who received funding had been intentional about partnerships.
- Audience member: Does scoring well on equity and connecting to the needs on underrepresented stakeholders depend on their direct participation? Is equity being addressed anyway?
- Beth Dawson: In the application, applicants have to write a narrative of how they are engaging with underrepresented populations and how they are integrated in projects.
- Audience member: Lack of stability contributing to lack of involvement. These processes are also “white-led” and underrepresented populations don’t trust them. Must build relationships with these communities and solve other problems first.
- Audience member (Jeffrey Williams): Some problems get addressed by being “human-centric” first. There may be opportunities to pick up anecdotal information on and individual basis. It’s not going to be the case that the person engaging the community always “looks like” the community. Need to bring a whole new dynamic to public engagement.
- Beth Dawson will be looking for participants for a work group.

**Discuss Land Use Policy Resource website (Beth Dawson)**
- At MARC we have completed a variety of studies. Would it be helpful to have a land use resource?
- Audience member (Janet McRae): Struggling to find ways in the downtown core areas to effectively reuse buildings that have commercial on the first floor and meet fire codes for residential on the second floor.
- Audience member: land use resources available now are focused on zoning, but not reflective of what is there now.
- Audience member: Tracking where money goes important to working with the zoning process.
Concerned that government is investing money into areas that are not followed by private investment.

- Audience member: Would like to see some data on where multi-family housing has been integrated with single-family housing. How to overcome objections?
- Audience member (Jeffrey Williams): There is something to a search engine. Back in New York, 15-16 years ago, had a policy resource guide which had examples from communities.
- Audience member (Jon Birkel): Has a matrix that shows incomes and rents. For a rental, renter must be able to afford $1.50/sq foot per month.
- Marlene Nagel encouraged committee to share further ideas.

**Committee Member Sharing**

- Kelly Woodward: started a group of lower-level staff that reviews plans and gives comments on plans, such as public works people and planners.
- Jeffrey Williams: returned from National Association of City/County Health Officials conference. Doing more work with the health department, which is looking into non-traditional areas.
- Marlene Nagel: Having a regional housing summit next Friday, which is put on by our First Suburbs Coalition.

**Other Items/Updates**

n/a

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the committee is September 13, 2019.