

FMPO Fall Retreat

October 30, 2013



Summary Report



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Summary

The elected officials, appointed executives and technical experts met in Flagstaff to discuss the future of FMPO and actions needed to shape the desired future. In preparation for the retreat, several of the attendees participated in a brief telephone survey regarding their desired outcome for this retreat. There were several points of similarity. There was no attempt to group the comments by current role (elected, appointed, technical). The shared views, affirmed by discussions at the retreat were evident across the board had everyone been surveyed regardless of role. Those themes are consistent with the retreat outcome:

- Have a clear shared focus... a vision
- Address the public with a unified message
- Identify priorities to be addressed and resources needed
- Take actions and communicate to shape positive public perception
- Maintain current systems with great care
- Define clear role for FMPO going forward
- Agree on the next steps starting now

The group stayed on task and accomplished a substantial amount. There will be need to turn the visionary directions discussed into action plans with measureable results. This was a very good start with lively and productive dialogue. I believe that regardless of the time spent, we would have landed on the vision (trajectory target). The limitation of financial resources was viewed as a major issue that must be dealt with to provide the level of transportation service that is expected. Engaging the community in this critical issue will be addressed through education, engagement, quality performance and open honest dialogue.

There is a fairly simple bottom line position for this retreat; define where we want to be in 5 years, understand and manage the trajectory so we land on that spot, and determine the specific detailed strategy to successfully get there. This retreat was a discussion of both the desired future and the nature of the trajectory to achieve it. The

hard work will be the diligent attention to the strategic and tactical components along with unity of intention and consistency in delivering the message to the authorizing environment... the voting public. The discussion of “dynamic tension” was intended to suggest that the landing point in the trajectory model needs to be seen as inspiring, of substantial public value, and achievable. It is obviously critical to garner a level of public understanding and support necessary to go forward with trust and voter support for funds. If the goal is too high, perceived as unachievable or too expensive, motivation to support is diminished and the inspiration is diminished.

This report is a limited summary. The minutes taken by the FMPO administrative specialist are the official record and an important companion for reference in understanding or recalling the discussions.

Discussion

The participants were divided into three groups; elected officials, appointed executives and technical experts. It is interesting to note how each of the three divisions, while having somewhat different ways of expressing it, saw things just about the same. Each group was asked to discuss the questions noted and arrive at a consensus on the top 5.

Question1: What factors should weigh most heavily in determining the application of limited transportation resources among seemingly unlimited needs?

Elected Officials

1. Outside impacts... Understand the importance of demonstrating how decisions will impact the greater FMPO area... look at things holistically?
2. Credibility... going to voters with a tax increase will only be successful if we show the voters what we are going to do, why we are going to do it and how it will benefit them. We do what we said we are going to do.
3. Capacity... “Needs was a disconcerting word in the sentence.” The specific needs can be viewed as different for each jurisdiction. Fiscal capacity must support an acceptable and realistic level of service. Fiscal reality and limitations must be explained well. Organizational capacity is very important. Increased road building and maintenance. The capacity of the public willingness to support is a challenge. Certain aspects will have certain repercussions. Clarity in our collective presentation of the need is imperative.
4. Equity... Asking for votes with a sound, shared value proposition is critical.
5. Creative Opportunity... Creative opportunity possibilities empowering individuals to public private partnership. Expand public partnerships. Who can be helping us create opportunities? Thinking outside of the box. Consider the rules. What opportunity can we give the locals—within the rules? What opportunities may be there?

Appointed Leadership

1. How well does the proposal brought forward accomplish the future as defined by the elected officials with their agreement on the vision and its associated trajectory that needs to be filled in with thoughtful interaction and the associated give and take
2. Fiscal realities and anticipated future financial conditions will greatly influence reality and call for adaptation
3. Public safety and welfare are always at the forefront
4. Public support and expectations
5. The greatest economic benefit from investment made should be considered in formation of priorities, recognizing public preference and political reality

Technical Experts

1. Public and political support
2. Need identification and greatest value priorities
3. Funding availability is the obvious fundamental component with “shaky” State and Federal ...calls for citizen involvement in revenue
4. Technology... efficiency and safety need to be clearly understood and appreciated by the public
5. Partnerships are important in forming strategies, illustrating community implications and assuring a unified voice to the degree possible

Question 2: Using the agreed upon factors as a guideline which projects are your top priority?

With the stated desire to go beyond the idea to identify action items each group was asked to get more specific about the things that must be done to move forward toward successfully achieving the vision.

Elected Officials

1. Funding... specifics need to be clear in an election...State and Federal funding is uncertain but important
2. Alternative and Alternates... capacity on Milton Road... consider all alternatives and alternate means for this and other top issues
3. Maintenance... this has a lot to do with funding ... sustainable, adaptive ways to handle maintenance... looking at neighborhood districts to cover the cases... determine level of service that serves the public well.
4. Comprehensive education about transportation...resources, needs, and importance
5. Silos and barriers... uncertain money from Federal and State government... dealing with these barriers won't be easy... reduce scope so we can be more successful

Appointed Leadership

1. Money, money, money... nothing moves without it expect our capacity to serve and the subsequent implications for public movement and current system incremental deterioration
2. Maintain well what we have now... ongoing to keep public aware and appreciative of our commitment to community well being
3. Increase connectivity
 - a. Across the railroad
 - b. Across the interstate
 - c. Others where citizens and business are served proportionate to the investment
4. Increase capacity
 - a. Bottlenecks
 - b. "Five points" congestion
 - c. Modes
5. Modernization
6. Improve safety

Technical Experts

1. Establish secure support of viable funding source(s)
2. Significant advancement of overall condition of existing transportation infrastructure and services
3. Enhance capacity and connectivity
4. Plan for the future ... both the predictable and non-predictable (scenario)
 - a. RTP convene and play a strong public role
 - i. Implement Regional Plan
 - ii. NAIPTA Five Year Plan
 - iii. Master Plans
 - iv. Identify critical projects (Milton, 180, Lone Tree)
5. Build greater awareness and understanding

SWOT Exercise

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is not just space filler in a retreat day. It is a very important element to be considered in the prioritization and strategic tactics in moving the agenda forward. The comments noted below and in the PEST assumption summary, are not intended to suggest collective viewpoint. While there were many agreements as noted in the opening summary, there are also differing viewpoints that need to be reported and considered. Use this information as a reference and foundation for continued conversation.

Strengths

- Relationships
- FMPO structure going forward
- Planning
- Local government

- Track record of accomplishments
- The region works together on many issues including this transportation challenge
- We love this place and are committed to take care of it
- We listen to the public, which drives public policy
- We do really well with what we have
- We have credibility based on performance—the public recognizes our commitment

Weaknesses

- Lack of funding
- At an authority level—not a flexible funding structure to accomplish stuff together. Lack of freedom at the local level in terms of funding
- Small size, reduces our clout for funding
- Parochialism fractures structures
- Are we technologically effective? Layering data to get informed decisions.
- Physical Space—limited space/land availability
- Value on not “expanding our space”
- Attitude—we don’t want it in our backyard.
- Monopoly/no competition—we don’t have to compete for business, like we should—it works against us.
- We think alike in the same group all of the time.

Opportunities

- Time, part of taking advantage of time as a private investment. Set standards and expectations and stand by them. How many public/private dollars are we putting into infrastructure?
- Easier to come to consensus
- Funding alignment—transit as an example—easy to get into alignment. City and County asking for public support in alignment.
- Define broader transportation system for improvement
- Diversification in the modes of transportation
- Slower than average growth rate, so that we can get things done.
- Public is seeing the problem with condition of streets and sidewalks.
- Dialog with the public—multi-partner project to gather public dialog
- State and Federal measures are not anticipated to be a great a player as in the past—we will get less of pie—our opportunity to come up with local funding/support.
- Work more together as these 3 units on Local, County and State level.
- System is in everyone’s everyday life
- Increase in gas tax in next legislative session

Threats

- Anti-government, anti-tax—don’t get the funding

- State legislature—no control
- Continued funding shifts (such as HURF revenues)
- Long term decline of funding sources/ we are vulnerable in changes regarding the entire funding system and how it effects transportation.
- Dwindling opportunity in funding formulas/Super majority in the metro areas—so we are invisible and get less funding
- Organization Myopia—getting my needs met
- Competing interests.
- Flagstaff voters for funding in un-incorporated areas—driving out of Flagstaff
- ADOT policy change—ADOT is going to administer local projects
- State funding priorities- I-17 is a huge pipeline—should State change funding focus. Travel reliability.
- Community burn-out (funding, elections, support)
- Transportation is a high profile issue
- Transportation myopia-- not seeing whole system

PEST Assumptions

The PEST assumptions exercise was an open discussion of the participant’s beliefs about the future state of the political, economic, social, and technology conditions that may impact the efforts to follow the trajectory intended. They could be positive or negative. The importance of spending a few minutes having the discussion is to understand the individual and collective perception of context as we move forward. It took only a few minutes but I suggest the comments made are the first on the minds of the participants and worth taking into consideration in formation of scenarios.

Political

- No change in elected leadership’s view of this issue
- Increased level of community engagement and support
- We must show them a plan; who, what, when, why
- The community will ask for a plan and we better be ready to address with unity
- Community expectations may change depending on context changes
- Political angst at Federal level resonates with local level and must be considered
- Increased reliance on local governments (because of ineffective Federal government system related to transportation) will bring the community into the conversation and decision-making
- State and Federal government will likely come up with some funding mechanism
- Community of contradiction will stay the same

Economic

- Will be more focused on local infrastructure needs
- Stronger economy will support the plan
- Tourism will increase and add to the revenue growth
- Property values will continue to accelerate

- Roller coaster of revenue
- Major employers versus small business
- Losing Major employers—losing jobs in the community (undiscussable)
- Greater influence of NAU
- Employment with Economic future
- Business climate

Social

- Economic disparity
- More students, capped at 25K
- Increasing anti-government attitude
- Polarization issue—rising expectations for government services
- Retirement of the baby-boomers—how it impacts services
- Accessibility for public dialogue will be of value
- Outdoor recreation increases
- Destination unto itself—Flagstaff
- Planning and delivery of services in relationship to weather and climate
- Bedroom community

Technical

- Fuel technology
- Work from home/telecommuting
- Public participation and community involvement
- Smart vehicles/smart roads
- Modeling data
- Sophisticated data
- Data used and accessed by the public
- Invisible majority
- Social media
- Better at conservation and resources/do more with less

The Bottom Line

The retreat discussion had clear themes as noted in the first paragraph of this report. Each is a topic demanding further attention, as the group noted, and forms the skeletal structure to be fleshed out in a collaborative give and take fashion

- Have a clear shared focus... a vision
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The FMPO has a major role to play in helping the community understand its trajectory and capacity and has a need to clarify its own purpose before engaging. While there was not a thorough discussion regarding the FMPO role, there seems to be no quarrel with the very appropriate elements of convener, collaborator, connector, public educator, and technical advisor. There is more discussion to occur on all points noted in this report. However, the platform seems well structured and ready to build upon.

It was a pleasure to serve you. While I understand fully that my engagement is limited to this event, I will stay interested and supportive of the bold and necessary components of your collective vision as a property owner in Flagstaff and a grandfather interested in the future of the city they love to live within. Thank you and be well.

Respectfully submitted,

R.A. Bowers

Richard A Bowers

