



**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of September 23, 2008**  
**11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC**  
**Orientation Room**  
**Greensboro Cultural Center**

**ATTENDANCE**

Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT / Acting Director</i>	Dan Boyle	<i>Dan Boyle &amp; Associates</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Ted Partridge	<i>Greensboro Engineering</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i>	Bill Bruce	<i>Guilford County</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mark Kirstner	<i>Guilford County</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mike Kirkman	<i>Greensboro Planning</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT Engineering</i>	Patrick Wilson	<i>NCDOT</i>
Bruce Adams	<i>GTA</i>	Brian Thomas	<i>NCDOT</i>
George Linney	<i>GTA</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>PTCOG</i>
Kelly Larkins	<i>GDOT Planning</i>	Matt Talbott	<i>GDOT Planning</i>
		Ken Taffer	<i>NCDOT</i>

**Adam Fischer called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.**

**Action Items**

**1. Approve Minutes of August 27, 2008**

Mark Kirstner moved for approval of the minutes. Adam Fischer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2008 meeting.

**2. MTIP**

Peter Ohlms explained that last month the 2009 through 2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan was approved, but with ongoing coordination with GTA there are additional changes to the adopted program as an amendment. Some of the more major changes including adding an item for 2009 in terms of \$1.1 million in operating assistance from Federal funds matched equally with local funds. GTA is asking to use these funds already included now since the law has changed. Although, this reduces another

**Planning for the transportation future**

project titled Preventive Maintenance. There was also added an item for each to include \$125,000 in routine capital item purchases. What gets purchased is up to GTA but can include items such as shelters, supervisor vehicles, and spare parts, along with preventive maintenance items. The last funded project change is GTA's \$711,000 remaining federal earmark under Section 5309, the Bus and Bus Facilities Program. This money was previously set aside to provide advanced technologies for vehicles but due to current contracts, these technologies would be included at no additional cost. On the topic of bus facilities, Ohlms noted that the administrative facility is still a largely unfunded project but will use matching funds from various sources.

Key changes in the unfunded projects include adjusting costs for all future full-size bus purchases to reflect hybrid buses and adjusting small-bus replacement dates to reflect delays in recent purchases. Other parts include removing programmed purchases of HEAT vehicles due to the recent purchase of vehicles that will not be replaced until after 2015. This comes with an additional priority for funding under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program which funded the first three years of the HEAT service, is a rare example of federal funds covering 80% of operating costs rather than 50%. The project added to the MTIP would cover operating costs for the first three years of a service expansion.

Adam Fischer moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Mark Kirstner seconded. Committee voted unanimously to recommend the TAC to approve the MTIP amendment.

### **3. Approve National Highway System Intermodal Connector Changes**

Tyler Meyer noted this is similar to the topic in the last meeting regarding Federal Functional Classification System. In 1995, Congress created an overlay of the functional classification system which is called the National Highway System which is the primary routes through the nation including Interstates and principal arterials. Congress set this up for planning purposes and the Federal funding program. Along with the National Highway System are Intermodal Connectors - roadway links between the National Highway routes and key economic facilities. In Greensboro there are three identified economic facilities; the airport, tank farm, and Norfolk-Southern intermodal facility. The action today relates to the tank farm. In the past, the intermodal connector went up to Chimney Rock Road to Market Street to connect with the tank farm but with the construction of the Urban Loop the Chimney Rock interchange was removed. Now, Gallimore Dairy functions in this capacity with its interchange with I-40. NCDOT has requested concurrence from the MPO regarding this action. The action today is to approve a motion for the TAC approve a resolution and then to pass this resolution approving National Highway System Intermodal Connector changes onto NCDOT.

Bill Bruce asked about upgrades to Gallimore Dairy.

Meyer advised that it was already in good shape so there did not seem to be a practical funding benefit.

Chris Spencer moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Bill Bruce seconded. Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to the TAC.

## **Business / Potential Action Items**

### **I. Follow-up on Urban Loop Concerns**

Meyer noted this was going to be addressed at the TAC, but wanted to give a preview. Meyer advised that one of NCDOT's responses to the concerns raised was to install additional landscaping along the Urban Loop. The policy is to install landscaping on facilities like the Urban Loop, but can take a few years to implement. However, for this project, the landscaping is being started this fall and would be provided for places along the Loop that did not qualify for noise walls; development built before the date of public knowledge. These plantings include both single and double row plantings. For those places built before 1996 the TAC can choose to direct additional funds to support the upgraded landscaping.

Fischer noted that staff had requested double rows.

Taffer advised that NCDOT revised the plans per staff's request.

Cost estimate for the landscaping plan is \$443,000, with the MPO's share estimated at \$170,000. Meyer recommended that the TCC recommend endorsement of the landscaping plan and recommend directing up to \$250,000 in STP-DA funds for the MPO share.

Kirstner asked about where the \$250,000 would be pulled from. Meyer advised that these would be coming from STP-DA funds that NCDOT said are available at this time.

Fischer noted that the Loop was going to be landscaped anyway and what they were asking for was enhanced landscaping to help screen those places.

Kirstner moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Fischer seconded the motion. Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the TAC to approve funds for enhanced landscaping along the Western Urban Loop.

Meyer advised that another response to the issue from NCDOT was an announced plan to redesignate the current Business I-40 section as I-40. Also, US 421 would be designated along the Urban Loop. The I-40 section is related to motorists being confused about the nature of the Urban Loop as a bypass.

Craig McKinney inquired whether there was also any consideration of rerouting US 70. Brian Thomas spoke of routing US 70 down I-840 and along I-40 through Death Valley. They are planning to get counts on the new section of the Urban Loop in fall 2008, with additional counts planned after the signage changes are completed. Contrary to news reports there are no plans to block or limit traffic on the road.

Michael Abuya noted that NCDOT should work with Program Development on the signage, and Thomas advised that they had been involved in the decision-making process. Meyer inquired what the schedule for installation was. Thomas stated that it will be started in the Fall and completed in the Spring.

McKinney advised that he had already noticed a shift in traffic, with heavier traffic on Death Valley (I-40) after the media announcements – counts may not be accurate as a “pre” condition. Meyer noted that the entire Urban Loop will still have an Interstate Highway designation along all parts of it.

Chris Spencer inquired if there were any pavement marking changes planned. Thomas advised that they had been delayed until signage is complete. Spencer asks if a former portion US 421 will become a State Road; Thomas said that it will.

### **2. Public Transportation Planning Update**

Tyler Meyer introduced Dan Boyle was conducting a study on GTA's operations. Boyle described the purposes of the study: to analyze fixed routes, current service and ridership, to assess performance, to analyze transfers, to survey riders, to develop bus stop/amenities program, to refine performance monitoring system, to identify new technologies, and to propose recommendations. He noted that HEAT was not included as part of this particular study.

Boyle presented a summary of ridership by route, comparing 2003 data with 2008 data.

He noted that half-hour service on all routes resulted in increases. Productivity has actually gone up, from 22 riders per revenue hour to 27.8. Four routes did see lower productivity. Overall ridership increase since 2003 was 65%. Schedule adherence, however, has decreased by 20%; it was 74% in 2003 but is at 60% now, which is at the lower end of what is expected from a system of this size. One main reason for this problem is the increased ridership.

Transfer activity was analyzed by collecting all transfers, and made up 25% of all boardings. In 1999, Route 1 was truncated with a connector, and transfers between Route 1 and its connector account for 8% of all transfers.

Work or school trips accounted for 63% of all riders. Rider ratings were high, at 4.16 overall on a 5-point scale. Crowding, reliability, and cleanliness were lowest. Even the lowest ratings, however, were above the typical level. Operators are also generally pleased and were concerned about providing better service, not internal politics.

The study focused on the fixed route services but did look at SCAT in passing. Bus stops proposed for immediate action – consolidation of stops would help speed the service.

The Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) is working and provides a much more comprehensive data source for stop-level ridership data. It was also mentioned that other technologies such as Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) system and mobile data terminals are being used by other North Carolina systems.

Boyle advised that the Irving Park and Starmount Shuttle runs for five hours per day and provides only about 10 rides per day, with a subsidy per passenger of around \$30. A taxi voucher program is proposed as a demonstration to save costs.

PART should operate the Career Express shuttles in the airport area. Sunday service ridership has increased so much that its combined routes should be replaced with regular weekday routes. Eventually, the same changes could be made for evening service, which could be done piecemeal based on the most productive routes.

New connector routes need to be considered closely. Boyle advised that improved Sunday service would be more important than new connector routes.

Performance monitoring program and interlining busy routes with routes that have more built-in time can avoid the situation of delays and also helps to keep more experienced drivers on the routes. Customers also expressed support after the interlining changes were made.

Boyle noted that while it is bad to run late, it's worse to run early. To avoid this, many systems schedule early route segments very tightly to avoid running early. APC data can help adjust schedules with more confidence and realism. Bus stop consolidation can improve speeds and schedule adherence. Boyle noted that the report is still in progress.

Ohlms asked about including non-riders in the survey. The response is that Mobility Greensboro did a telephone survey of non-riders; most didn't ride because they like driving their cars. Most of the riders who stopped riding the bus stopped because they bought a car. Meyer inquired whether the HEAT service had been looked at. Boyle noted that another analysis had been established to study HEAT. The HEAT service is doing well and has increased considerably. Boyle noted that college and university partners were fairly positive regarding the transition from CMAQ funding to operational funding coming solely from the colleges and universities. Although GTCC may be a stumbling block due to funding issues, but the popularity is there.

Adam Fischer inquired about the survey. Boyle noted that the results were similar to a survey done in 1999. People responded well to the Depot facility. If riders are unhappy, it is about not being able to get a seat. Boyle gave his opinion stating that this is a good problem to have. Fischer noted that there was a need to work on on-time scheduling and inquired if AVL would help. Boyle noted that the AVL system could help monitor performance, but it would also be necessary to look at what measures to take when vehicles are running late. He noted that it is also a safety issue. Spencer inquired if it could be linked to stops to provide real-time information. Boyle advised that that could be a next step, but even posting schedules at stops would be an improvement; real-time information provides a major benefit for new riders.

Mike Kirkman inquired about the parameters for the bus stop amenities program. Boyle advised that they are prioritized based on boardings during the day. The highest priority stops have high ridership but no facilities other than a bus stop sign. People react well to having facilities such as shelters; they act as an advertisement for the system.

### **3. 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Update**

Lydia McIntyre advised that the plan is on a four-year cycle, and that the current update had been in development for a year. Issues with meeting air quality budget targets have been resolved, so the plan is ready for public review. Regional coordination is ongoing, with the regional air quality conformity document expected to be complete in October.

The second public meeting is scheduled for October 30, with TAC approvals in December. Tyler Meyer noted that the Conformity Analysis will cover the MTIP and the LRTP, but the FY 09-15 MTIP has already been adopted based on consistency with the conformity finding for the 2030 LRTP.

### **4. Priority Needs for 2011-2017 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program**

Meyer described the schedule for developing the 2011-2017 MTIP. The first step in the process is for the MPO to review and articulate its priorities for the draft State 2011-2017 TIP. The rest of the process involves consultation with NCDOT in spring or summer 2009, a draft STIP document in fall 2009, public involvement and air quality analysis, and the final documents approved in summer 2010.

Meyer advised that the priority needs should reflect major priorities in the MPO area and are a key input into NCDOT's TIP development process. Various multimodal planning documents provide a basis for the priority needs. The list should include highways, lower-level roadways, public transportation, and bicycle/pedestrian projects. These modes often have different processes for prioritization and funding. The highway and bicycle and pedestrian projects are federally funded ones. The status of the existing priorities, considering fiscal constraints, is a key challenge. Consideration of new needs is important in the context of resource constraints, and partnership opportunities can impact prioritization and funding. Finally, it is crucial to focus on potentially achievable goals, in terms of both cost and project development.

Meyer noted the status of the items from the last priority needs list, and commented on the funding picture for the next TIP. He noted key project issues for the next priority needs list, including keeping the Urban Loop and the NC 68/ US 220 Connector moving forward and finding a way to advance the construction of the I-73 connector (I-5110). He also noted the need to establish full funding for the GTA operations, maintenance and administrative now that the site and funding for design are in hand, as well as to support area pedestrian and bicycle priority projects.

Meyer noted that at the next meeting a draft priority list will be available for review, and that future steps include looking at opportunities to address needs through STP-DA funding and tracking the projects through the draft and final TIP's.

### **5. NCDOT Policy on CMAQ Funds**

Meyer advised that the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program allows funding for certain types of projects, including transit, bicycle and pedestrian, and other projects. NCDOT has proposed changes to the process. Some aspects of their proposal are logical, including using up unprogrammed balances. Other items not proposed would be logical, including working with MPO's to spend future funds.

Based on a discussion with the North Carolina Association of MPO's, more consideration is needed to develop an effective CMAQ process for the future. Details of regional funding distribution need to be worked out if this option is to be pursued.

The Transportation Planning Branch proposed some changes to the process which did it from a request from the board committee. Some aspects of the proposal makes sense and should be moved forward and those include using the main balances from the previous allocations. It might include fast-tracking 2009

projects. A provision in Federal energy law to have 2009 CMAQ funds to be fully federally funded and the DOT has a backlog of these funds and partly due to that organization; the state is taking a long time to deliver these projects.

Adam Fischer inquired if the policy requires additional work. Meyer described the recommendations: Support implementation of the proposal to fast-track program expenditures to CMAQ projects in 2009. Support moving forward with the proposal to program unallocated funds remaining from the 2006-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) cycle. Encourage NCDOT to work with MPO's to fast track projects that would otherwise not be possible.

He noted that NCDOT planned to bring the policy to its next Board meeting, and the MPO's are requesting that the Board act on some of the policy changes but defer others for additional consultation with the MPO's. NCAMPO will send additional information to NCDOT. Meyer advised that staff at the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch were comfortable with considering the proposed changes.

Adam Fischer moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Chris Spencer seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously to approve the recommendation to the TAC to approve the resolution of support.

## **6. Triad Commute Challenge and Triad Air Awareness Update**

Ohlms began by saying the Triad Commute Challenge is something that has been going on for two years. This was the second year it was done to get people to try ways to get around other than using single occupancy vehicles which can include carpooling, walking, biking, taking the bus, riding a non-motorized scooter. Part of the emphasis for that is to improve air quality especially during the worst days of the spring and summer when you are more likely to see code orange and code yellow days. The handout provides interesting results from this years challenge.

He noted that one such item is the amount of pollution that could have been reduced by people switching from one type of travel to another. The idea with this program is getting people to try to take the bus or bicycling or whatever they choose to try just once. They might like it and then there might be sustained changes, although this leads to the question if we really see those changes or not. Triad Air Awareness is the organization that works with PART to spearhead this challenge.

Fischer inquired if there would be a "try transit" week or month from GTA.

Bruce Adams responded by saying that GTA was thinking of ideas.

## **7. Project Updates – None.**

## **8. MPO Strategic Reports**

Tyler Meyer advised that a draft 2009 meeting schedule had been prepared and requested feedback on the schedule or proposed changes.

Meyer noted that September was Bicycle Safety Month, and that Peggy Holland had spearheaded various promotions. Holland thanked everyone who helped with the Bicycle for a Day event and described the event. She further commented some coverage from the Good Morning Show. Holland noted that the Share the Road billboard was in four locations and would remain up for another year.

Meyer noted that state and federal legislative issues are being reviewed and hoped to give everyone more details in the next meeting.

Meyer noted a regional transit fact sheet entitled Comparison of Transit Systems in the Triad. He further noted that there were problems with the Seamless Mobility report because it did not get into the operation of the various Triad systems. It highlights the growth of the GTA system, having exceeded WSTA's ridership and having gone from 40% to 50% of the regional fixed-route ridership. Fischer noted that the Seamless Mobility Study gave a good overview of the various systems, but that long and short-term recommendations

would take time to reach fruition. With nine separate transit systems in the area, all of which provide different levels of service to different markets, it will take some refinement to reach a fully coordinated or consolidated regional system.

Ohlms added that they were trying to get the point across and looking at the different levels of service the different transit agencies. Not all of them are the same and GTA's quality will need to stay the same while there is a move to consolidate.

Fischer noted about the report being released and that they were a long way off from making recommendations in the study. Things that seem simple - like consolidating a call center or procuring buses are a challenge when there are nine different transit agencies targeting different customers. He concluded that it is a work in progress before we get to a consolidated service in the region.

Meyer announced Peter Ohlms pending departure and recognized for his contribution to the MPO and wished him well.

### **Other Items**

#### **1. NCDOT Update - None.**

#### **2. TCC Member Reports**

Adam Fischer thanked Peter Ohlms for his hard work especially behind the scenes.

Mark Kirstner noted that the Guilford County transportation system was bursting at the seams, with 250,000 trips projected for the coming fiscal year. The system will have to consider how to meet the needs or cut back on service to meet budgetary requirements. Rapid ridership growth began in January and February 2008, which has left the system somewhat underfunded when trips went from 14,000 to 16,000 trips per month. Most of these trips taken by riders are employment related.

#### **3. Wrap-Up**

The TCC was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.