



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of January 24, 2007
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
Blue Room
(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Jim Westmoreland | <i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i> | Heidi Galanti | <i>Greensboro Planning</i> |
| Peter Ohlms | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Donald Arant | <i>Greensboro Engineering</i> |
| Tyler Meyer | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Bill Bruce | <i>Guilford County</i> |
| Lydia McIntyre | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Roger Bardsley | <i>Guilford County</i> |
| Peggy Holland | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Mike Abuya | <i>NCDOT</i> |
| Chris Spencer | <i>GDOT Engineering</i> | Wayne Davis | <i>NCDOT</i> |
| Libby James | <i>GTA</i> | John Hunsinger | <i>NCDOT</i> |
| Hanna Cockburn | <i>PTCOG</i> | Brian Thomas | <i>NCDOT</i> |
| Pam Hawley | <i>NCDOT - PTD</i> | | |

Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and noted that TCC Chair Jim Westmoreland would be arriving shortly.

Action Items

I. Approve Minutes of November 15, 2006

Roger Bardsley moved for approval of the minutes. Hanna Cockburn seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2006 meeting.

Planning for the transportation future

2. Adopt Public Participation Plan

Peter Ohlms presented a summary of the revised Public Participation Plan, which provides a scripted process that can be used as a basis for public involvement activities and suggests additional strategies to augment the process. Improvements to public participation were recommended in the MPO's triennial review. While past public participation efforts have gone above and beyond the minimum requirements set out in the previous Public Involvement Plan, the missing step was to update the plan itself.

The last revision of the plan was in January 2001. The most recent revision of the plan is intended to fulfill federal requirements and serve as a guide for staff and the public regarding public participation procedures. The public review and comment period for this revision was at least 45 days as required under the previous Public Involvement Plan.

The plan uses a tiered system to match the amount of public participation effort with the size and scope of the planning effort. Smaller projects and plans get a smaller degree of public participation and outreach than larger projects. An administrative tier includes minor modifications and amendments, with no formal process other than public comment periods at TAC meetings. Tier 1 includes small, geographically focused projects with potential impacts and sets out requirements for public notice, document review, and comments. Tier 2 builds upon Tier 1 and adds additional efforts and a public meeting. It would apply to items such as adoption of the MTIP and similarly major projects. Similarly, Tier 3 builds upon Tier 2, adding stronger outreach efforts such as newsletters, mailings, surveys, and multiple public meetings, and would apply to adoption of the LRTP. Finally, a Toolkit contains additional optional procedures for consideration. Staff will be tasked with assigning tiers, with the TAC's guidance, for projects not explicitly assigned in the plan itself.

Ohlms discussed comments received during the plan's public review period. The final version of the plan includes an appendix with a summary of public comments. All the comments were from government employees interested in public involvement, with three comments before the public review period opened and three more during the public review period.

Some comments indicated that the plan was a good length and that the tiered system worked well. Ohlms noted that MPO staff were looking to keep the plan short yet comprehensive. Staff wanted to incorporate more detailed information about the public participation process but avoid repetitiveness. The tiered approach came out of staff discussions and avoided the need to repeat elements for each potential project or study type.

Ohlms described another comment, which suggested including an appendix of public comments. The MPO usually does this for its major documents, and a public comment appendix is included with this plan. Ohlms advised that staff will keep any future comments about the public participation process on file and use them to evaluate and revise the plan.

One comment included specific suggestions, such as an addition to MPO contact lists, technology for notifying affected residents, ways for the MPO to use Channel 13, and a note regarding the use of the word "citizen." The commenter noted that constituents who are not native English speakers often may not see themselves in this term, and that the term "resident" should be used instead in order to be more inclusive.

One comment noted that public education is a key part of the transportation planning process and requested a stronger public education element in the plan. Ohlms advised that it is not a separate element of the plan but is inherently a part of every effort at public participation.

The final comment Ohlms described was a suggestion to mention Guilford County Transportation more explicitly as a partner agency. The county is involved in MPO decisions through two other departments on the TCC, and staff are open to a discussion of adding a seat at the table for the transportation department.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the plan involved a good degree of detail and that the task of bringing the public into the fold of transportation planning is often difficult for long-range planning efforts.

Tyler Meyer moved to recommend that the TAC adopt the plan. Chris Spencer seconded the motion. Jim Westmoreland requested that MPO staff monitor and track its level of time and resource commitment under this plan, with the goal of using limited resources most effectively.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC adopt the Public Participation Plan dated January 24, 2007.

3. Adopt Amendment to 2006-2012 MTIP

Peter Ohlms described a proposed MTIP amendment. He noted that the amendment was a procedural formality necessary due to processing delays within NCDOT. A March 2006 MTIP amendment moved \$500,000 in STP-DA funds to GTA for fiscal year 2006. Delays prevented these funds from being disbursed during that fiscal year, so the proposed amendment was to carry forward the entire line item as an item for fiscal year 2007 instead of 2006. Ohlms advised that the state Board of Transportation had already amended its TIP to reflect this change.

Roger Bardsley moved to recommend that the TAC adopt the amendment. Hanna Cockburn seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC adopt the 2006-2012 MTIP amendment dated January 24, 2007.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. GTA Update

Libby James provided an update on GTA's continued provision of effective transit services to the Greensboro community. During the second quarter of fiscal year 2007, average weekday boardings continued increasing, to 12,000 passenger trips per day. This represents a 23% increase over the same period of FY 2006. Evening service provided over 71,000 total passenger trips during the most recent quarter, a 32% increase over the same quarter of FY 2006. Sunday ridership also continued to expand, increasing to around 2,800 passenger trips per Sunday, a 48% increase over the same quarter of FY 2006. James noted that Greensboro is one of only a few cities in North Carolina that provide Sunday service. Annual ridership data indicate that GTA is on track to achieve the Mobility Greensboro plan's goal of doubling ridership from 2 million to 4 million from FY 2003 to FY 2008.

James advised that SCAT, GTA's paratransit service, provided over 32,000 ADA-required passenger trips during the second quarter of FY 2007, a 12% increase compared to the same quarter of FY 2006. An additional 5,200 non-ADA passenger trips were provided during the second quarter of FY 2007, a 14% decrease compared to the same quarter of FY 2006.

The Higher Education Area Transit (HEAT) service has provided over 65,000 passenger trips since August 8, 2006, over 50% of which consisted of UNC-Greensboro students. Over 100,000 HEAT-eligible riders have used GTA's non-HEAT routes, with 75% of that total being students at GTCC. Installation of on-campus bus shelters is complete, and NCA&T State University has become a HEAT partner beginning January 2007.

Two service enhancements during fiscal year 2007 included the South Town Connector, which increased in ridership by 58% from the first quarter to the second quarter but is still below the ridership goal. Daytime fixed-route service every 30 minutes began January 2, and initial indications show that riders are accepting and enjoying this service expansion. To-date January ridership is up by 12% over the same period last year, representing over 10,000 additional passenger trips.

James noted that GTA's vehicle fleet now includes 10 new low-floor buses with technology features such as automatic passenger counters, talking bus announcements, security cameras, and electronic fare boxes. These vehicles were necessary for the expansion to 30-minute daytime service. Renovations are underway to expand the bus storage and parking area for GTA, along with Phase III renovations to the J. Douglas Galyon Depot. The completed renovations at the Depot will include a Visitor's Center, an expanded GTA and PART waiting area and ticket office, improvements to the Amtrak area, a police bike squad area, a security system, and other improvements.

James advised that the GTA Board adopted a fare increase for fixed route and SCAT service, changing certain passes and raising fares incrementally over three years. SCAT fare revisions have eliminated the Unlimited Ride monthly pass but made base SCAT fares equal to fixed-route fares.

GTA will undertake a five-year transit services plan over the next few months, reviewing performance standards, analyzing transfers, and identifying modifications to Saturday and Sunday services. A five-year plan for paratransit services will also be underway, as will a system-wide Technology Plan.

Brian Thomas requested clarification of one element of the fare policy, and James corrected an error in the presentation. Westmoreland commented that leadership from GTA and MPO staff and committee members, along with federal and state officials, had been instrumental in bringing GTA closer to its goals. Westmoreland noted that the 30-minute service had created a real transit system in Greensboro.

Roger Bardsley inquired how NCA&T came to join as a HEAT partner. Westmoreland responded that it was a result of much planning and discussion, along with the fact that many NCA&T students made their voices heard to the institution's decision-making bodies. Many TCC members agreed that the students' voices were instrumental in bringing A&T to the table. Westmoreland noted that the next challenge is what will happen when the CMAQ grant, the current major funding source for HEAT, expires. Increased federal and state support based on ridership increases, increased funding from the college and university partners, and examining how GTA uses its resources are possible ways to address this issue.

2. Draft 2007-2013 MTIP Update

Lydia McIntyre noted that NCDOT held a public hearing on the state Transportation Improvement Program on November 14, 2006, and the TAC chair spoke on behalf of the MPO. The draft Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program public comment period (November 20, 2006 through January 22, 2007) garnered three comments, which focused on city projects, the need to get funding for the completion of the Urban Loop, and a comment from Mark Kirstner discussed earlier in the presentation of the Public Participation Plan. McIntyre noted that these comments would be discussed and summarized at the February meeting. Westmoreland inquired who had submitted the comment regarding the Urban Loop and noted that he had been involved in several recent discussions about the pursuit of this funding. McIntyre responded that Ashley Overton submitted the comment. Westmoreland advised that there seems to be no viable long-term funding source for building this segment at present. Nonetheless, the segment is expected to make a significant

difference in traffic congestion and economic opportunities, and the area's member of the NC Board of Transportation is committed to this project.

McIntyre advised that some projects did change during the revision of the Draft MTIP, which included a consultation meeting with NCDOT. A second public-review period will occur in March to coincide with public review for the Triad air-quality conformity document. The public transportation section of the MTIP saw major revisions. Staff anticipate holding a public meeting regarding the MTIP in March at the Greensboro Central Library. The anticipated approval date for the state TIP is March 2007, and the TAC will likely approve the MTIP and conformity document on April 25.

McIntyre advised that the consultation meeting with NCDOT produced both good and bad news. NCDOT's Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch will be moving forward on a funded environmental document for the U.S. 70 corridor east of Greensboro, which is the first step in moving forwards. The rest of the project remains unfunded. Also, a portion of the US 220/NC 68 Connector has been delayed one year for construction. On its new schedule, it will coincide with another project in the area, the widening of part of US 220.

Tyler Meyer noted that staff have been reviewing the transit portion of the draft MTIP in order to identify strategic improvements to maximize funding and ensure that capital needs are met.

3. Draft Unified Planning Work Program Discussion

Tyler Meyer advised that the Unified Planning Work Program is an annual process, involving a draft in January, TCC discussion, and a final UPWP in February. The UPWP covers the year's planning priorities for all modes and describes how the MPO will use federal planning grant funding.

Public transportation grant funds are expected to be used for short-range transit planning and transit technology assessments. PL funds will be split among a range of different activities, including the purchase of equipment to facilitate the counting of bicycles and pedestrians; special studies; and regional model development activities, including a household travel survey. Westmoreland inquired how much this survey would cost, and Meyer responded that it is anticipated to cost from \$700,000 to \$1 million, with the cost to be distributed among the regional planning partners. Pam Hawley noted that this project cost was not listed in the draft UPWP under *travel surveys* where High Point had listed a substantial sum, and Meyer responded that funds were listed under *travel model updates* but that he would consider a revision in light of Hawley's observation.

Meyer described other items included in the UPWP. Systems planning studies will continue for various corridors and locations. The Long-Range Transportation Plan update/development process will begin soon. Integrating it with the Congestion Management Process should make its development simpler, along with the fact that the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan is already complete.

Meyer noted that this item will be returned at the next meeting in more detail for approval. He inquired whether TCC members wished to discuss any of these items. Bill Bruce inquired what falls under the category of Special Studies. Meyer responded that these would be items such as feasibility studies, corridor studies such as the Florida Street/Young's Mill Road Extension study. Meyer advised that this item will contain more details on anticipated studies but will also show extra funding for additional studies not yet anticipated. Meyer requested that the TCC members consider the UPWP and provide comments before the next meeting.

4. Project Updates

Lydia McIntyre noted that the R-2612 project (adding interchanges on U.S. 421 near Pleasant Garden) had a design public hearing in December. The meeting was well-attended, and there were no comments that would indicate major problems. One person submitted a comment at the meeting about emergency response times, and other concerns regarded the closing of at-grade intersections.

McIntyre advised that NCDOT will hold a design public hearing for the U-2412 project (High Point Road Widening) in the spring, but the date has not yet been set. A design/map review is scheduled for early February.

Meyer noted that it was positive that NCDOT had reached the step of having a public hearing for the R-2612 project. Westmoreland inquired whether U.S. 421 was part of any future interstate corridor, and Meyer responded that it was not, but that it was one of the state's Strategic Highway Corridors.

5. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer inquired whether John Hunsinger had any comments on the NCDOT Active Projects Report. Hunsinger advised that some improvements to Interstate 40 in the Sandy Ridge Road area would be underway to address drainage issues. Demolition of pavement continues along the old alignment of Bryan Boulevard. The Groometown Road and Hilltop Road projects have been let, so construction will begin shortly on those projects. The Billy "Crash" Craddock bridge construction is underway. Other than that, there is a general pause in work for the winter. Letting of the U.S. 311 project, which is very important for High Point and will be the Interstate 73 corridor, has been delayed until February. Heidi Galanti inquired about the extent of this project, and Hunsinger responded that it would connect Interstate 85 to existing U.S. 311 at Business I-85.

Hunsinger advised that he expected to hear from Melanie Wells, a resident who has been giving input to NCDOT regarding U.S. 220 at Old Battleground Road, at the TAC meeting. This is a project that could involve the City and NCDOT. Wells is concerned about development, traffic congestion, and the delays in the R-2309 project. Hunsinger discussed technical details of the area with Jim Westmoreland and Chris Spencer and advised that a large part of the problem is a 700-student school with no school buses; all students are driven in private vehicles.

Lydia McIntyre provided a brief overview of the results of the TAC Quality Survey. Overall, TAC members had generally positive comments and had some specific comments about project updates and information they would like to hear. McIntyre noted that the TCC Quality Survey results had already been presented.

Meyer advised that the regional travel model may be adopted very soon, but has been a long time in development. He noted that the next TCC meeting will be February 21.

Other Items

I. NCDOT Update

Wayne Davis introduced Mike Abuya, the area's new MPO Coordinator from NCDOT. Abuya was formerly the NCDOT MPO Coordinator for the Burlington-Graham MPO. Westmoreland welcomed Abuya to the TCC.

Westmoreland inquired where NCDOT stands in terms of implementation of the statewide transportation plan. Davis responded that NCDOT was still evaluating the plan and that, when

complete, this evaluation would be presented. Westmoreland inquired how that plan related to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and Davis advised that the CTP team is also still working on its format. Hanna Cockburn advised that the CTP process was beginning to be implemented at individual MPOs, but the process might take up to 8 years. Davis noted that projects in the CTP would still continue to move forward. Lydia McIntyre that development of the Greensboro area's CTP was proceeding. Westmoreland inquired how the CTP and statewide plan connect, and Davis responded that the strategic corridor concept would link them, along with all modes of transportation. Westmoreland requested an NCDOT update on these items for the next meeting. Davis and Abuya agreed to provide such an update.

2. TCC Member Reports

Heidi Galanti announced the kickoff of the Greensboro Planning Department's corridor study for High Point Road/West Lee Street from Eugene Street to Interstate 40. A public kickoff meeting will be held on January 30. The Greensboro Comprehensive Plan identifies this corridor for reinvestment. The project will include a design and marketing component to identify what the corridor can bear marketwise, how to improve the appearance of the corridor, and how to bring in jobs. Galanti advised that roadway changes might be on the table, including the reversible lanes, and that long-term plans include higher-capacity transit options and activity centers in this corridor.

3. Wrap-Up

The TCC was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.