



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of September 26, 2007
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
Greensboro Transit Authority Board Room
320 East Friendly Avenue

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 & Inspections</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>		
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Bill Bruce	<i>Guilford County</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
George Linney	<i>GTA</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT</i>
Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT Engineering</i>	Brian Thomas	<i>NCDOT</i>
Scott Rhine	<i>PART</i>		

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and thanked committee members for their time, leadership, and participation in the MPO.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of July 25, 2007

Heidi Galanti moved for approval of the minutes. Chris Spencer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 25, 2007 meeting.

2. TCC Bylaws Amendment

Peter Ohlms advised that the amendment reflected a change to one of the voting members of the TCC. The current bylaws, adopted in July 2006, include the Community and Economic Development Assistant Director for Guilford County as a voting member. A recent reorganization dissolved the Community and Economic Development Department, so that position no longer exists. Roger Bardsley, the County's Parks and Recreation Planner, has usually represented that department at TCC meetings. Recognizing the importance of this position to nonmotorized transportation outside the City, the amendment reassigns this voting slot to the Guilford County Parks and Recreation Planner.

Planning for the transportation future

Tyler Meyer moved for approval of the amendment and recommendation of TAC approval. Bill Bruce seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the TCC Bylaws Amendment and recommend it to the TAC for approval.

3. Consider Resolution Requesting State Action on Transportation Funding

Tyler Meyer advised that some North Carolina MPOs and local governments have taken action requesting that the Governor and General Assembly make further efforts to address transportation funding issues in North Carolina. The first such resolution, from the Wilmington MPO, requested that a special legislative session be called, a response to speculation about that as a possibility. Since that time, a special session appears relatively unlikely, so the resolution before the Committee notes that some sort of action should be taken to address statewide multimodal transportation needs.

Scott Rhine inquired about recent legislation allowing counties to participate in road-building and whether it was related to the new county funding option of land-transfer taxes. Meyer advised that they were two separate but related pieces of legislation: without the ability to apply funding to road-building, Counties would have been unable to use the new funding option for transportation. NCDOT had proposed an earlier bill with a similar funding option that was tied to Safe Routes to School programs.

Jim Westmoreland advised that the legislation gives counties the authority to ask for voter approval for a quarter-cent sales tax or a land transfer tax. The money is not specified for any particular use. The other piece of legislation gives counties the authority, which they did not have in the past, to participate in funding of transportation projects.

Rhine advised that the High Point MPO's TAC did not approve a similar resolution. They noted that its usefulness seemed questionable because it requested a special legislative session, which is unlikely to occur at this point. Westmoreland advised that the resolution before the TCC was timely and critical in light of current events at the state level. Multiple groups have joined together to advocate for this issue, more so than in the past. As such, the MPO action would be advisable. Also, previous state-level study groups have not always incorporated local perspectives, and the resolution encourages this cooperation.

Meyer clarified that the approved legislation allows counties to enter into agreements with NCDOT for roadway improvements, and that while it may have been related to the new funding legislation, its wording is in no way tied to that legislation.

Scott Rhine moved to recommend TAC approval of the resolution. Heidi Galanti seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend TAC approval of the resolution as submitted.

Business / Potential Action Items

I. GTA Update

George Linney provided an update regarding the Greensboro Transit Authority. Ridership continues to increase, with over 3.7 million passenger trips in FY 2007 on fixed-route services, a 22 percent increase over FY 2006. This keeps GTA on track to exceed its goal of 4.2 million passenger trips in FY 2009 – the current projection for that year is 5.1 million.

Since implementation of 30-minute weekday service in January, GTA has provided over 500,000 additional passenger trips. In addition to new trips, some existing riders have switched from

the more crowded top-of-the-hour buses to the half-hour buses, which uses space on the buses more efficiently.

The first year of HEAT service was very successful, with over 360,000 passenger trips from students using HEAT passes. Over 265,000 of these trips were on regular GTA routes, with the other 130,000 on HEAT routes.

GTA's South Town Connector has been in existence for just over a year and is carrying 7 passengers per hour on average, which is under GTA's ridership goal for new connector routes (10 passengers per hour). Staff plan to conduct a survey of rider needs on this route. Heidi Galanti inquired where the route was, and Linney advised that it connects with Route 12 on South Elm-Eugene and continues south to Elmslee Square. From there, it uses Vandalia Road to reach Holden Road and nearby shopping centers. Some requests have been received for re-routing the bus to the Four Seasons Mall, which may be possible. Galanti advised that the area served by this route was continuing to see applications for new development.

Jim Westmoreland suggested considering new and different ways to market the route, because it is GTA's first cross-town route.

Linney advised that Phase III renovations are nearing completion at the J. Douglas Galyon Depot. This work includes a police bicycle squad substation, replacement of flooring, addition of a PART ticket office and waiting area, addition of an elevator and restrooms, expansion of the GTA waiting area, addition of lease spaces, a courtyard, and development of a new dynamic Visitor's Welcome Center.

Crews have completed an expansion of the parking lot at the current GTA maintenance and administration facility to provide more space for bus parking. Efforts continue to secure funding for a new facility to meet GTA's current and future needs.

Enhancements for top-priority bus stops are underway in coordination with the GDOT Engineering Division. Westmoreland thanked staff for the work and effort that had been involved in increasing ridership towards the goal.

Galanti inquired when a new maintenance and administration facility was expected to be completed. Westmoreland noted that federal and state funding assistance would be necessary for the \$20 million project, but that it was a priority for the next few years. It may be necessary to combine various funding sources over multiple years. Scott Rhine advised that PART was fortunate to receive funding for its facility as part of the SAFETEA-LU authorizing legislation, so it did not have to seek funding through the annual appropriations process. Rhine noted that North Carolina, like many other states, did not receive any non-earmarked Bus and Bus Facility funding in the previous year. Instead, the funding went to a few localities as part of a federal congestion-pricing initiative. Westmoreland noted that the federal transportation reauthorization in 2009 would be another process to consider for obtaining funding.

2. LRTP Update

Tyler Meyer advised that staff were working on updating the Long Range Transportation Plan, which was last adopted in 2004. The update must be effective in October 2008, meaning it must be completed well before then to allow time for air-quality analysis. The plan must look at least 20 years into the future while it is in effect, and this update will look forward to 2035. Environmental screening will consider impacts on resources and communities and support later phases of project

development. NCDOT's process for Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP) will be incorporated.

The plan will also consider the impacts of transportation on land use and the built environment. Fiscal constraint is a major portion of the plan, because the plan must indicate that projects can reasonably be expected to be funded along the timeline shown. Outside the fiscally constrained portion of the plan is an illustrative list of other projects, which can help call attention to potentially unmet needs. Although Triad MPOs will each update individual plans, they will be regionally coordinated. For this plan update, public outreach will include a few public meetings throughout to review existing goals, which is less extensive than during the planning process for the 2004 version.

Meyer noted that the plan is required to be updated at least every four years. Transportation projects cannot be programmed without an approved LRTP. The LRTP's technical methods, outreach, and consultation efforts must also conform with federal requirements. Air quality analysis must also conform to applicable federal and state requirements. The LRTP can benefit the locality and the state by assessing travel patterns and future demand, the challenge of creating an integrated multi-modal system, and future investment and revenue needs.

Meyer advised that regional coordination and technical work are ongoing. Public involvement efforts will be initiated later in 2007 with presentation of draft CTP maps, and those maps will be brought to the TAC for approval in December 2007. CTP maps represent the illustrative list of projects or unconstrained needs. The first phase of public involvement would consist of information-gathering, and the second phase would allow people to review and comment on draft information.

Meyer advised of the status of work performed to date. Draft CTP maps have been created, and staff have worked with travel models and input data. Refinement of the travel model and data has required additional work. A draft Congestion Management Plan is underway, along with fiscal analysis.

Jim Westmoreland observed that the CTP is a creation of NCDOT, not the federal government. Meyer advised that the CTP maps were to be adopted by MPOs and the Board of Transportation, but that there were also CTP process steps to be incorporated into the overall planning process. Westmoreland noted that staff should track time and cost as they develop the LRTP in order to make the case for additional support and funding to meet needs.

3. Project Updates

Craig McKinney advised that a public meeting in Summerfield regarding the proposed relocation of NC-150 attracted about 30 participants. In years past, the town had requested the state and MPO to identify a possible relocation of NC-150, with the goal of providing a shorter route to facilitate east-west travel through the Town, as well as to remove some traffic from US 220.

Four alternative routes have been proposed. All are fairly similar in terms of monetary costs but have different impacts to the human and natural environments. The first two alternatives would impact seven or eight unspecified structures. Alternative 3 would impact natural environment including woodlands, critical watershed, and wetlands. Alternative 4 has the fewest structural impacts but passes near some structures with historic designations. Also, Alternative 3 would attract less traffic than the others because it is a less direct route.

Next steps include review of the information with a technical group and the Town, completion of the document, and presentation to the Town. Summerfield will make its own choice

about using it as part of its comprehensive land-use plan or to allow it to become a state TIP project. McKinney advised that more information would likely be available in November.

4. BiPed Implementation Update

Peggy Holland advised that the printed bicycle maps are now available for free through the City Contact Center. The maps show the new bicycle routes, numbered 3, 6, 9, 12, and 16, where signs are being installed, along with bicycle suitability of various roads. 1,000 maps will be handed out during a cycling event next week.

Crews have finished installing bicycle racks, mostly at public buildings near downtown and on Tate Street near UNC-Greensboro.

Holland advised that a billboard will be unveiled in early October as part of Bicycle Safety Awareness Month. City staff served as models for the billboard photography. Mayor Keith Holliday had suggested a campaign for bicycle safety awareness, and Fairway Outdoor Advertising agreed to partner with the City to provide three billboards during October and one for a year thereafter. A new web site will provide easy access to information about bicycling and bicycle safety. Television and other media will provide more information about how bicyclists and motorists should interact safely, and business partners have donated prizes for weekly drawings.

Holland noted that the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan (BiPed Plan) had received an award for comprehensive planning from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Jim Westmoreland recognized staff for their efforts regarding Bicycle Safety Awareness Month. It is an opportunity to provide education and raise community awareness about bicycling issues, sharing the road, and mutual respect between drivers and cyclists. He noted that implementation activities related to the BiPed Plan would continue to unfold and exceed expectations. Westmoreland encouraged TCC members to be involved in Bicycle Safety Awareness Month activities.

5. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that the 2007 NC MPO Conference was coming up in a month in downtown Greensboro and encouraged Committee members to attend. Craig McKinney advised that he had received just under 240 paid registrations, along with payment from 12 sponsors and 11 vendors. A total of \$45,365 has been received to date, most of which will be used to pay expenses associated with the conference. The balance will be used to replenish the reserves of the state association of MPOs. McKinney noted that he expected around 275 total participants, including a significant number from various branches of NCDOT.

Meyer noted that PART had kicked off its Seamless Mobility Study. Scott Rhine noted that 14 firms had received solicitations for proposals. A committee of representatives from PART's member agencies and counties will review the submitted proposals. Sanford Cross, former NCDOT Public Transportation Division director, is a consultant serving as project manager. Jim Westmoreland noted that the study process would take up to a year and would look at opportunities for increased cooperation and consolidation. Rhine advised that the project's outcome was not predetermined and that it would be an interesting process.

Westmoreland noted that PART had been featured in a News-Record article regarding increasing ridership, and Meyer noted that there was also a recent positive editorial regarding PART.

Meyer advised that the MPO had received an honorable mention award from the national Association of MPOs for its efforts to coordinate the CMAQ funding and partnerships for the HEAT transit project.

Meyer advised that the October 17 meeting would likely be cancelled unless stakeholders raised any critical action items, with a formal notice to be sent when the decision is made. With that cancellation, the next meeting would be November 14 in the 4th Floor Conference Room of the Old Guilford County Courthouse, because the County Board of Elections will need to use the Blue Room.

Other Items

1. NCDOT Update

Mike Mills advised that milling and shoulder work is nearly complete on I-40/I-85. Another nearby 5-mile resurfacing project is to be let in October and funded by GARVEE bonds. This project will likely involve closure of Business I-40 during off-peak hours after the new portion of the I-40 Urban Loop is completed.

Craig McKinney inquired when the Business I-40 bridge over Business I-85 would be replaced, and Mills advised that it was scheduled for 2009.

Mills noted that the Hilltop Road and Groometown Road projects were underway.

Jim Westmoreland inquired about an NCDOT initiative to reform its operations and structure and discussed this initiative with Mills. Westmoreland noted that NCDOT should seek feedback from MPOs and municipalities regarding potential changes to the way it allocates resources. If NCDOT intends to divest itself of some facilities, localities will need guidance on how to manage them. Mills advised that meeting needs of around \$65 billion may require a new funding source.

2. TCC Member Reports

Bill Bruce advised that the Guilford County Planning Department was nearing completion of its Northern Lakes Area Plan. The citizen committees there has supported the recommendations of the BiPed Plan, which will be included in the Area Plan to require developers to provide bicycle and pedestrian improvements where appropriate. Both cyclists and drivers support better on-road facilities to provide space for both road users. The county has also rewritten its parking ordinance to reduce many parking ratios and offer credits for access to transit, bicycle parking facilities, and carpool spaces.

3. Wrap-Up

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