



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 7, 2008
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
Board Room
Greensboro Cultural Center

ATTENDANCE

Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i>	Roger Bardsley	<i>Guilford County</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Bill Bruce	<i>Guilford County</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mark Kirstner	<i>Guilford County</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John Button	<i>NCDOT</i>
Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT Engineering</i>	Dabney Sanders	<i>Action Greensboro</i>
Mike Kirkman	<i>Greensboro Planning</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>PTRPO</i>

Adam Fischer, Acting Director of the Greensboro Department of Transportation, called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of February 18, 2008

Tyler Meyer moved for approval of the minutes. Bill Bruce seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2008 meeting.

2. Annual MPO Self-Certification

Tyler Meyer advised that self-certification accompanies the adoption of the Unified Planning Work Program. It is a step for the MPO to certify compliance with federal laws and associated regulations. Staff reviewed a checklist provided by NCDOT and recommended that the MPO approve self-certification.

Chris Spencer moved for approval of self-certification. Roger Bardsley seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC certify the MPO's transportation planning process for the coming fiscal year.

Planning for the transportation future

3. Approve 2008-2009 Work Program

Tyler Meyer advised that the main purpose of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is to account for USDOT Planning grants to the MPO for the coming fiscal year and how they will be used. Documentation identifies the sources of funds and their expected uses. This includes planning funds from FHWA called PL funds, federal transit planning funds under Section 5303 and Section 5307, and State Planning and Research funds for NCDOT's use.

Meyer described priority projects for the upcoming year, including the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update and Congestion Management Program. He noted that the regional model would have its external station survey updated this year. Bicycle and pedestrian outreach activities, feasibility studies, corridor studies, and regional and local initiatives are other items that may be part of the year's projects.

Roger Bardsley moved for approval of the UPWP. Mark Kirstner inquired about the MPO's participation in implementing the recommendations of the regional Seamless Mobility Study. Meyer advised that the process was continuing to evolve and might not be completed in the upcoming fiscal year, but that the TCC could consider the Study's recommendations when complete. Lydia McIntyre then seconded the motion for approval. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the 2008-2009 Unified Planning Work Program.

4. Assign Designated Recipient and Amend 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program for the Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom Programs

Peter Ohlms advised that two actions were required to accompany the draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The first was approval of a resolution identifying the designated recipient for federal transit funds under the Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs. Ohlms advised that JARC provides funding to assist people with lower incomes to access employment, and New Freedom provides funding for services that exceed the Americans with Disabilities Act. Both programs are allocated to the urbanized area based on formulas, and a "banker" must administer the funds.

Ohlms advised that because the City of Greensboro already administered other federal transit funds, it would make sense for the City to administer JARC and New Freedom as well. The MPO would oversee a competitive selection process for these funds. Staff recommended approval of a resolution identifying the City of Greensboro as the designated recipient and noting that the MPO would conduct the competitive process.

Mark Kirstner moved for approval of the resolution. Tyler Meyer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC identify the City of Greensboro as the designated recipient for JARC and New Freedom funds.

Ohlms advised that the next step was to account for these funds into the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), which did not currently show them. Funding amounts from federal fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008 will be added to the MTIP without specific projects identified. Projects resulting from the competitive selection process will be eligible for funds under these MTIP items.

Adam Fischer inquired when the competitive process needed to be completed. Ohlms advised that the funds from 2006 would expire in September 2008 if not accessed, so federal funding applications are needed by mid-July. Roger Bardsley inquired what the required local match would be for these funds. Ohlms advised that operating projects required a 50% local match, and capital projects required a 20% local match.

Fischer inquired whether the funding sources would be ongoing, and Ohlms advised that they would continue through at least 2009 and possibly further, depending on the next federal transportation legislation. Kirstner noted that JARC funds had existed for a while but had been allocated differently.

Kirstner moved for approval of the MTIP amendment. Hanna Cockburn seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC amend the 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program to include JARC and New Freedom funding.

Business / Potential Action Items

I. Proposed Downtown Greenway

Dabney Sanders, special projects consultant with Action Greensboro, provided an overview of the proposed Downtown Greenway project. She advised that the Downtown Greenway is the official commemorative project of the Greensboro Bicentennial Commission. The 4.8-mile path loops around Greensboro's central business district and will be designed for bicycling, walking, and other forms of active transportation. It will also form a central hub for the future greenway and trail network. Possible benefits include enhanced quality of life and encouraging development in downtown Greensboro. Sanders noted that although many cities were building greenways, a connected loop greenway would distinguish Greensboro as unique in the state and nationwide.

Sanders described the wide range of community partners involved in the project, including the City of Greensboro, Guilford County, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions. Neighborhood connections and nearby neighborhoods include Glenwood, Warnersville, Asheboro Square, Arlington Street, Ole Asheboro, Southside, Cumberland Court, the East Market Street area, Aycock, Fisher Park, Latham Park, Lake Daniel, Westerwood, Cedar Street/Bellemeade, and College Hill. The greenway is envisioned to have eventual connections to Country Park and the watershed trails, Barber Park, and Hester Park, and the future Keeley Park.

Community involvement has included numerous meetings with civic organizations and neighborhoods, seeking to identify items that should be addressed and taken into consideration. Neighborhood history can be incorporated into public art, which will be incorporated into functional and other elements of the project.

Total project cost is estimated at \$26 million, with \$17 million in transportation-related improvements for the construction of an urban trail. The balance of the cost includes short- and long-term trail-related parks and trailheads, along with a fund for initial operating costs. The City's Parks and Recreation Department will eventually oversee annual maintenance for the project. Funding for equipment and personnel expenses will be required in the first phase, and maintenance funding of about \$85,000 annually is anticipated to be necessary in the future. The police department has also been involved in the discussion of cost estimates to ensure safety and security of trail users. Sanders noted that the bicycle squad in the central business district was willing to add the first phase of the greenway to its existing patrols.

The trail is envisioned as a public-private partnership. Funding for Phase 1 includes a grant from Fit Communities and funding from the Bicentennial Commission, local foundations, and the Moses Cone/Wesley Long Community Health Foundation. NCDOT has approved the use of public funds for relocation of a ramp and installation of a traffic signal at Lee Street, and Guilford County placed the project in its 2008 parks and recreation bond for potential funding. Greenways, Inc. will develop a phase-by-phase funding strategy that explores multiple options for the project.

Official community support to date includes the Bicentennial Commission, Greensboro City Council, the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Guilford County Commissioners. Sanders advised that official MPO support was desired. The project may also be supported in a potential City transportation bond in 2008. Sanders noted that additional issues will need to be addressed related to engineering, safety, neighborhood concerns, and funding.

Mike Kirkman inquired how individual financial contributions would be handled. Sanders advised that the group would conduct a public campaign as part of a later phase. Bill Bruce inquired whether the \$26 million cost estimate included at-grade road crossings or grade separations. Sanders advised that the Committee was considering mainly at-grade crossings but would also rely on GDOT staff for recommendations related to potential grade separations.

Adam Fischer noted that the project was a priority but would likely take some time to come to fruition due to its high cost.

2. Long Range Transportation Plan and Congestion Management Process

Lydia McIntyre advised that staff were updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Congestion Management Process (CMP). The CMP, known as the Congestion Management System in 2004, is a required document for urbanized areas and serves as input for the LRTP. It is not required to be updated on the same schedule as the LRTP, but it is convenient to do so. It serves to examine the future roadway network, estimate future traffic and congestion, and explores options for managing congestion. Staff worked with a consultant to develop the data and recommendations in the CMP.

The CMP evaluates traffic in 2002 and 2015 only, representing existing conditions and near-term future conditions. The LRTP uses additional data to plan through 2035. The CMP and regional travel model predict that vehicle hours of travel will increase in the future, despite completion of new roadway projects. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT, the number of vehicles times the number of miles they travel) will similarly rise, and over-capacity facilities will represent a larger portion of the total VMT in 2015 than in 2002.

McIntyre advised that the volume-to-capacity ratio helps to identify potentially congested roads by comparing volumes to the capacity of roadways and intersections. In 2002, roadways over capacity in the afternoon peak hours included portions of I-40 (before widening), Wendover, NC 68, US 220 north, and US 70 east of Greensboro. In 2015, this measure shows that congestion becomes more evenly distributed across unincorporated areas.

McIntyre advised that this year's CMP update included the following corridor-specific studies: US 70 east of Greensboro, High Point Road, New Garden Road, US 220, West Market Street, West Wendover Avenue, and East Wendover Avenue.

Mike Kirkman inquired if the area's population growth was tracking evenly with increasing vehicle hours and miles per person. McIntyre advised that the time spent traveling per person was increasing, reflecting the fact that increased road-building will not lead to reduced commuting times. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities and improved transit headways were also included in the model. Kirkman noted that the model's results would help from a land-use perspective as well. Adam Fischer noted that land use was key, since additional development in areas with inadequate transportation facilities can lead to congestion.

3. Draft 2009-2015 MTIP and Air Quality Conformity

Lydia McIntyre advised that as the Draft 2009-2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is being updated, the analysis of air-quality conformity is also occurring. Ongoing air-quality analysis will lead to a draft MTIP and conformity document available at the May MPO meeting, with public review expected in June. Adoption of the MTIP and conformity analysis is expected in August 2008.

McIntyre provided background on air-quality conformity. Standards are based on requirements from the Clean Air Act. Designations are tied to air-quality monitoring and include ozone (nitrous oxides and volatile organic compounds) and fine particulates. Conformity applies to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the MTIP, and analysis is tied to the horizon years of the regional travel model. Conformity means that new projects will not cause the area to exceed its pollutant budgets or cause the area to worsen in its violation of standards.

Triad MPOs work together on a regional conformity report with PART and NCDOT rather than creating separate reports for each MPO. Regulators such as FHWA and EPA are included in the process. Next steps include a review of the analysis of conformity and approval with the MTIP and LRTP.

4. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

Peter Ohlms summarized the draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. It relates to the funding sources addressed under the Action Items and focuses on the area's vision for transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes who need to get to work.

Ohlms advised that a one-day planning workshop allowed stakeholders to discuss their vision for a fully coordinated transportation system for the area. The plan contains a summary of this vision, where the area is today, and how to address the gaps in service to prioritize improvements. Elements of the vision included better marketing about services, better infrastructure such as sidewalks, on-time performance, and other information. Ohlms described some of the other issues and opportunities that arose from the planning workshop.

Ohlms advised that administration for funding programs related to this plan would be split between the City and the State as discussed under Action Items. Projects for funding under these programs must be derived from the Coordinated Plan. Next steps include completing the draft plan and call for projects, a public review period, and then selection of projects for funding. The tight timeline for developing the plan is due to the potential for FY 2006 funds to lapse if not accessed by September.

Tyler Meyer noted that staff had been considering how to accomplish this type of plan for some time but had not begun until recently, partly due to a lack of conclusive guidelines from the Federal Transit Administration. Meyer advised that the process was moving forward and would hopefully be complete in time to access funds.

Mark Kirstner thanked Ohlms and the MPO for taking on the planning process and noted that the funding related to it would relieve a bottleneck in his agency.

5. Bike-to-Work Week

Peggy Holland advised that May would be National Bike Month and that Bike-to-Work Week would be the week of May 12. GDOT will sponsor a “refueling station” in downtown Greensboro on the 16th, and other organizations will be sponsoring similar events around the Triad. Hanna Cockburn noted that PTCOG was looking to operate refueling stations across the community. Holland noted that this would be a good opportunity to meet the requirements of the Triad Commute Challenge.

Adam Fischer noted that he would try to get his bike in shape for a ride. Holland noted that there would also be opportunities throughout the month to learn the basics of safe cycling and maintenance.

6. Transportation Project Updates

Craig McKinney referred Committee members to an information sheet for R-2612, a project to add interchanges along US 421. He advised that staff could create similar information sheets for other area projects that have completed the planning process but are not yet constructed. Adam Fischer noted that a major rezoning case was coming up before the county shortly at this location.

7. MPO Strategic Topics

Peter Ohlms advised that the April 23 meeting would be cancelled due to its proximity to the current meeting and that additional schedule changes past June would be forthcoming.

Peggy Holland advised that the Triad Commute Challenge was well underway and that there was still time to sign up.

Tyler Meyer advised that there would be a statewide transportation summit in Cary on April 15 that was slated to include a gubernatorial candidate forum.

Meyer noted that multiple noise-related complaints had been made relating to the newly opened western portion of the Urban Loop / I-40. Mike Mills noted that NCDOT had conducted several television interviews, one of which was inaccurate in stating that the City would have to cover costs. According to the State’s noise policy, NCDOT cannot provide mitigation for properties that were developed after 1996, the date of the public hearing for the project. Mills advised that NCDOT would seek to work with the City to create a plan after a review of its studies, including holding a public meeting. Mills noted that it might be possible for the City to assist owners of property developed after 1996.

Meyer advised that nationwide air-quality standards for ground-level ozone would be tightened, which will affect the MPO. This change was anticipated, but intervention from President Bush limited the extent of the change, making it potentially easier for areas such as Greensboro to meet the new standards. It is likely that the area will be in nonattainment, but there is a possibility that final conformity designations beginning in 2010 could be met without nonattainment status.

Meyer noted that staff had reviewed a draft feasibility study for routing of the I-73 Connector from the NC 68 / US 220 Connector to the Urban Loop. Two alternatives were retained for further study. The preferred alternative follows the 68/220 Connector and connects to Bryan Boulevard at the Old Oak Ridge Road interchange. It appears to be more feasible than the other alternative, which has more environmental impacts, would also come down the 68/220 Connector, but would branch off to Bryan Boulevard before reaching the alignment of existing NC 68.

Mills advised that a recommendation would be made in May regarding preference. He advised that the 68/220 Connector was slated for construction in 2013, but that the connection to Bryan Boulevard was not yet funded. Adam Fischer inquired if the design for the 68/220 Connector was complete. Mills advised that it was and that Rockingham County had requested for the 68-220 Connector to be accelerated, although the project development process would likely not allow it to be accelerated more than a year even with additional funding. Hanna Cockburn noted that Rockingham saw the project as vital for providing truck connectivity between that county and the new FedEx hub.

Chris Spencer inquired what would happen at Pleasant Ridge Road with the alternatives under study. Mills advised that the 68/220 Connector would include a grade-separation there, but that the I-73 Connector could complicate matters. Spencer advised that immediate congestion issues at the intersection with Pleasant Ridge and NC 68 would likely require short-term improvements. Mills said that NCDOT should know more in the summer.

Bill Bruce inquired if this project was in the vicinity of the future connector to the Winston-Salem Beltway, and Mills advised that it was a consideration. Cockburn noted that the I-73/I-74 Association would likely be interested in information about this project and had a meeting scheduled in Greensboro in May. Mark Kirstner inquired about combining the 68/220 Connector and the I-73 Connector. Mills advised that from a construction and environmental analysis standpoint, it would likely be possible to combine the projects, but funding would be a problem.

Meyer described an upcoming implementation effort related to the MPO's Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan. Although an able-bodied person can navigate improperly constructed wheelchair ramps, it can be difficult for a person with disabilities. Because standard or typical designs cannot always be applied across-the-board, new wheelchair ramps are often built incorrectly. The City and NCDOT are required to install or upgrade ramps when resurfacing streets. An upcoming accessible design training course would apply to City, County, and NCDOT engineers, designers, inspectors, and maintenance officials. The MPO will sponsor this training for 70 participants on April 22 and 23 using federal planning funds. The course instructor is with the national Association of Bicycle and Pedestrian Professionals. Holland noted that she, Cockburn, and Meyer had taken the course two years ago, and Cockburn advised that it had been very eye-opening.

Fischer advised that as acting GDOT Director, he was considering yielding the TCC Chair position to a staff designee in the future, most likely Meyer. Fischer noted that he could still serve as an ex-officio member, along with potentially some others, on the TAC. He advised that he could discuss this further with the TAC.

Other Items

1. NCDOT Update – None
2. TCC Member Reports – None
3. Wrap-Up

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