



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of September 26, 2007
2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC
Greensboro Transit Authority Board Room
320 East Friendly Avenue

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	<i>TAC Chair</i>	Keith Holliday	<i>Mayor, City of Greensboro</i>
Doug Galyon	<i>NCDOT</i>	Kirk Perkins	<i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i>
T. Dianne Bellamy-Small	<i>Greensboro City Council</i>		

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	<i>TCC Chair</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John Hunsinger	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT Engineering</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	George Linney	<i>Greensboro Transit Authority</i>
Scott Rhine	<i>PART</i>	Taft Wireback	<i>News-Record</i>

After waiting to reach a quorum, Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:25 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of July 25, 2007

Doug Galyon moved for approval of the minutes. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small 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 amendment to the TCC Bylaws requires a vote of the TCC and also approval from the TAC. The amendment reflects a change to one of the voting members of the TCC. The current bylaws include the Community and Economic Development Assistant Director for Guilford County as a voting member, but a recent reorganization dissolved the Community and Economic Development Department, so that position no longer exists.

Planning for the transportation future

Ohlms noted that the County's Parks and Recreation Planner had 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. Ohlms advised that the TCC had approved the amendment and had recommended that the TAC approve it.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small moved for approval of the amendment. Doug Galyon seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the TCC Bylaws.

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 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 in light of population growth, increasing costs, and multimodal needs. The resolution also requests that any study involve input from MPOs and local jurisdictions. Meyer advised that the TCC had recommended approval.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about seeking other funds to improve the bus transit system in Greensboro. Jim Westmoreland advised that the resolution before the Committee would advocate a comprehensive review of the state's transportation needs, to include transit. He noted that recent legislation authorized counties to levy sales-tax increases and land-transfer taxes but did not require that funding to be used for transportation purposes.

Sandy Carmany noted that many state-level study commissions and task forces had come forward with recommendations, but that the General Assembly has failed to act on those recommendations. Doug Galyon related a similar experience.

Westmoreland advised that a resolution from the TAC would add support to other efforts already occurring statewide. Galyon encouraged adoption of the resolution, noting that the more the issue is brought before legislators, the more attention it is likely to receive. Bellamy-Small inquired about bringing the resolution to the conference of the state League of Municipalities, and Galyon advised that a resolution from that organization would also be very helpful.

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the resolution. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the resolution requesting state action on transportation funding.

4. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns

None

5. Citizen Comments

None

Business / Potential Action Items

1. 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.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the ridership goal was set through the Mobility Greensboro long-range transit planning process, and that the expectation is that GTA will exceed ridership goals during the five-year period ending in 2009. He advised that ridership increases were occurring elsewhere in the state and nation, but that the 22 percent increase was substantially higher than in other areas.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired how improvements to weekend and Sunday service affected ridership. Westmoreland advised that weekend and Sunday service was already in place when Mobility Greensboro was completed, but that further improvements to weekend and Sunday service are high-priority items due to high weekend ridership.

Linney advised that 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 additional 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.

Galyon clarified that over 265,000 passenger trips on the non-HEAT GTA buses were taken by college students eligible for free rides and noted that this was impressive. Westmoreland noted that many of those trips were likely GTCC students using the GTA routes that serve those campuses, along with students using the buses for non-school trips. Kirk Perkins inquired if there was a fare for these rides, and Westmoreland noted that there was not; it is included in the HEAT agreement. Westmoreland advised that it was imperative to begin planning now for how to continue the system when the CMAQ grant funding expires.

Linney advised that GTA's South Town Connector has been in existence for just over a year and serves South Elm-Eugene, Vandalia Road, and Holden Road in southern Greensboro. The route carries 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 and to conduct further marketing efforts.

Keith Holliday advised not altering the route until six months after the southern section of the Urban Loop is completed, noting that the road would make the area more visible to the general public and increase interest in transit service in the area. Holliday predicted a significant boost in ridership a few months after the new road opens.

Bellamy-Small suggested having more uniformity in GTA bus stops, in terms of benches, shelters, and other facilities. Eye-catching features other than the existing GTA sign could also be provided so that visitors and newcomers could recognize bus stops. She also advised that HEAT service should be provided over the summer, noting that many students and other riders had expected to be able to use HEAT routes and to ride GTA routes fare-free during the summer months. Bellamy-Small also suggested additional efforts to attract choice riders, who can choose to drive their own vehicles. Sandy Carmany noted that PART was providing wireless Internet access on its buses. Bellamy-Small also noted that additional housing had just been built along the route of the South Town Connector, and that residents of the Creek Ridge Road area would like this route to be adjusted to serve their area.

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.

Keith Holliday inquired where the funding came from for the Phase III expansion of the Depot. Westmoreland advised that there was funding remaining from an earlier phase of the project, and local bond money had provided matching funds.

Linney noted that 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. Bellamy-Small advised that a bench and bus shelter are needed at the Wal-Mart on South Elm-Eugene, and that a development across the street could also incorporate such facilities. Westmoreland advised that the Wal-Mart on Battleground had agreed to allow a shelter near its building, but that the situation with the Wal-Mart on South Elm-Eugene had not been resolved. Westmoreland advised that the GTA Board had adopted a set of standards for bus stops and that staff were identifying stops to receive these improvements. Bellamy-Small also noted that the City should publicize its use of solar-powered lighting in bus shelters. Kirk Perkins inquired about how many bus stops and shelters there were. Linney advised that there were around 1,000 bus stops, and Westmoreland noted that each stop sees different levels of boardings.

Holliday inquired whether HEAT-eligible students could ride GTA routes for free during the summer, even when HEAT routes were not operating. Westmoreland advised that the terms of the contract with participating institutions were to provide HEAT routes and fare-free service in the fall and spring semesters only, and that riders would have to pay the regular fare during the summer. The main problem was with GTCC students who expected to be able to ride for free in the summer. Sandy Carmany noted that there was no City of Greensboro funding in the HEAT project other than the required local matching amounts.

Holliday inquired what the cost is to allow an additional rider on a bus that is not full. Westmoreland responded that there is no additional cost, but such an allowance would raise issues of fairness in pricing. Holliday advised that the pricing should favor students, and that complaints would be unlikely if the agency continued to provide free rides to students over the summer as it does during the school year. Westmoreland advised that this concept would be proposed to the GTA Board for review and consideration. Holliday clarified that he was not suggesting adding new routes or operating HEAT routes in the summer. Westmoreland noted that an alternative would be to allow free trips only for trips to and from the GTCC campus. Carmany inquired if this would put the bus driver in the position of asking passengers where they are going. The Committee continued to discuss this concept further.

2. LRTP Update

Tyler Meyer advised that staff were working on updating the Long Range Transportation Plan, which was last adopted in 2004. The plan must look at least 20 years into the future while it is in effect, and this update will look forward to 2035. It will consider roadway, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian needs. 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 to look at potential impacts. 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 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.

Meyer provided an overview of the CTP maps. He advised that each map resembles the old Thoroughfare Plan and has a similar purpose. The Highway map identifies existing and future roads and classifies them based on the facility's character and type of access. The bicycle map shows existing and needed bicycle facilities, and the pedestrian map shows sidewalks, paved shoulders, and trails and greenways. Both the Bicycle and Pedestrian elements were drawn from the recommendations of the BiPed Plan. Meyer noted that the CTP does not specify when specific facilities are expected to be constructed.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about how sidewalk maintenance was considered in the LRTP. Meyer advised that it would be discussed in a general way.

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. The study is not yet a project; it is only intended to begin exploring the effects of a potential relocation.

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.

John Hunsinger advised that he had not yet received any calls inquiring about the study.

Sandy Carmany clarified that this study was at the request of a local government, not NCDOT. McKinney noted that preliminary feasibility studies such as this don't typically involve public input, but it was desired in this case. McKinney advised that the current LRTP programmed this improvement for around the year 2020.

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.

Jim Westmoreland recognized Holliday and 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. The Committee discussed other issues related to bicycling. Holliday suggested allowing bicyclists to ride GTA buses for free. Holland noted that staff were also in the process of distributing public service announcements to area radio stations.

Holland advised that the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan (BiPed Plan) had received an award for multi-jurisdictional comprehensive planning from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association. Westmoreland noted that implementation activities related to the BiPed Plan would continue to unfold and exceed expectations.

Holliday inquired about adding bicycle lanes to the newly reconstructed portion of Friendly Avenue versus promoting sidewalk cycling. Westmoreland advised that bicycle routes are designed to allow cyclists to find and use alternatives to high-traffic roads such as Friendly Avenue. Although the routes are not always the most direct path, they provide a better and safer alternative. Holliday noted that future widening projects on key connections such as Friendly Avenue should take into account the need to consider improvements for bicycles, and Westmoreland advised that this would be a consideration. Westmoreland also noted that the improvements on Friendly Avenue, like many projects, required additional right-of-way. Including bicycle lanes would have required the purchase of additional right-of-way and significant impacts to roadside trees and property.

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.

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. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon complimented Taft Wireback of the *News-Record* regarding his article on bridges in North Carolina, noting that the article dispelled many common misconceptions about bridge safety and evaluation. Wireback noted that it was interesting to study the work of the bridge inspectors.

Galyon complimented Sandy Carmany on her work with PART, noting that the positive effects of regionalism can be seen at PART meetings. Scott Rhine advised that Yadkin County and Stokes County were both planning to consider joining PART as funding partners.

Regarding the construction of the Urban Loop, Galyon advised that the section from I-40 to Bryan Boulevard will be complete by Thanksgiving. The remaining portion to I-85 is not as likely to be completed by that time. John Hunsinger advised that NCDOT might accept the new construction "with reservations" because some portions may not be complete in time; all ramps may not be open at interchanges. Holliday inquired whether a delay would mean a January completion date, and Hunsinger responded that it would be spring 2008 due to the inability to perform some work in cold weather. Holliday advised opening as much as feasible of the new road as soon as possible. Galyon and Hunsinger advised that safety was the first priority.

Kirk Perkins disagreed with Holliday, noting that the facility should be opened only when it is fully complete, to avoid having construction work conflict with traffic. Holliday noted that the Wendover Avenue exit would be the only one closed if the ramps were incomplete. Galyon noted that he had been assured that crews were making their best efforts but that he was not impressed with the progress of Archer Western. He advised that a dedication could be considered for the opening of the highway.

2. Regional Transportation News

Sandy Carmany acknowledged a *News-Record* article highlighting PART's ridership increases. PART exceeded 28,000 boardings in the month of August. Scott Rhine advised that Randolph County had approved a vehicle-registration tax, with other counties having approved a rental-car tax. Plans are to open express routes on US 220 to Asheboro and US 52 South to Lexington by June 2008, using park-and-ride lots.

Rhine advised that the Surry County Express was continuing to receive high ridership from its long-haul commuters. The route to Boone has also seen increases in both general public riders and users for medical transportation. Hospitals along the route are responsible for providing

transportation to discharged patients, and they are beginning to use PART for this. PART recently awarded a five-year contract for the purchase of new buses.

Carmany advised that the Early Action Compact for air quality improvement would likely result in attainment status at the end of 2007. However, EPA has published notice of an intention to lower standards in the following year, likely with no provision for Early Action Compacts.

3. Other Items - None

4. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.