



**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of June 27, 2007**  
**2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC**  
**Blue Room**  
**(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)**  
**Old Guilford County Courthouse**

**TAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

|                |                                  |               |   |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Sandy Carmany  | <i>TAC Chair</i>                 | Mike Winstead | <i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i> |
| Keith Holliday | <i>Mayor, City of Greensboro</i> | Kirk Perkins  | <i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i> |

**ATTENDANCE**

|                |                   |                |   |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Peggy Holland  | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Mike Stanley   | <i>NCDOT</i>                                  |
| Lydia McIntyre | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Adam Fischer   | <i>GDOT Engineering</i>                       |
| Craig McKinney | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Ryan Moats     | <i>GDOT Engineering</i>                       |
| Tyler Meyer    | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Chris Spencer  | <i>GDOT Engineering</i>                       |
| Peter Ohlms    | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Donald Arant   | <i>Greensboro Engineering and Inspections</i> |
| Michael Abuya  | <i>NCDOT</i>      | Yvonne Johnson | <i>Greensboro City Council</i>                |
| Mike Cowan     | <i>NCDOT</i>      | Taft Wireback  | <i>News &amp; Record</i>                      |

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and welcomed Yvonne Johnson of the Greensboro City Council. Due to the absence of a quorum, she deferred the approval of the minutes until later in the meeting.

**Action Items**

1. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns  
None
2. Citizen Comments  
None

**Planning for the transportation future**

## **Business / Potential Action Items**

### **I. NCDOT TIP Funding Allocation Constraints**

Tyler Meyer introduced Mike Stanley of NCDOT's Program Development Branch, who presented an overview of NCDOT priorities and funding and how it affects MPOs. Because MPO and RPO representatives often perceive a disconnect between local priority needs lists and what NCDOT actually funds, it is important to understand how the process works for funding transportation projects.

Stanley described the overall budget for NCDOT. Of the roughly \$4 billion total budget, about \$1.8 billion comes from the state highway fund, \$0.9 billion is from the federal-aid program, and \$1.1 billion from the state highway trust fund.

Sandy Carmany inquired what the sources of the state highway fund are. Stanley advised that the funding sources for the state highway fund include the state gasoline tax, which does not increase with inflation, and some fees, and it pays for routine maintenance activities, mowing, contingencies, operating costs, secondary road paving, contract resurfacing, spot safety improvements, public industrial access, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and transfers to other state agencies such as the State Highway Patrol. Transit, including ferry and rail operations, also receives funding from the state highway fund.

The General Assembly established the state highway fund, which includes no money for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); all STIP project funding comes from either the federal-aid program or the state highway trust fund.

Just over half the STIP budget is federal-aid funding, with the rest coming from the state highway trust fund. The main source of federal-aid funding is the motor fuels tax.

The state highway trust fund is a separate pot of money intended for specific state priority activities as directed by the general assembly in 1989. Its sources include the motor fuels tax and a small portion of fees, but over half of its money is from the highway use tax, which is similar to a sales tax but is assessed whenever a title is issued, not just when a car is purchased.

Stanley explained where the state spends the highway trust fund money. Program administrative support, transfers to the general fund, and formula programs receive funding under the state highway trust fund. Transfers vary each year and depend on the state legislature. While the current year's transfer is fairly low, it is likely to go back up in the future. Formula programs get funded at percentages specified in state law and include secondary road paving and state aid to municipalities through Powell Bill funding.

After net funding amounts are set for each major program, three takedowns apply: federal-aid matching, debt service, and a 1-percent set-aside for upgrading obsolete NCDOT facilities. Federal funding must be matched; a few programs are 90 percent federal and 10 percent state and local (90/10) or another ratio, but most are 80/20. The state highway trust fund is currently the only source for federal-aid matching funds. Debt service is the result of a 1996 bond that accelerated construction of various projects. Adding in takedowns for facility upgrades, the actual amount of funding available is about half of the net amount.

All federal money comes with strings attached, because each program has its own eligibility requirements. With minor exceptions, the following eligibility requirements apply:

- The Bridge program is for repair and replacement of structurally deficient bridges.
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) is for air-quality improvements in non-attainment areas.
- Safety (a new program under SAFETEA-LU) is for safety improvements.
- Appalachian Development funds may be used on certain roads specified in federal law.
- Federal earmarked highway funds, which are a method for Congress to override TIP priorities, direct existing funds to certain projects (they are not new money).
- Interstate Maintenance (IM) funds may be used for maintenance activities.
- National Highway System (NHS) funds are flexible but can only be used on NHS roadways.
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds are the most flexible pot of money and can be used for many activities.

Of the STIP, about 57 percent of the funding is from the state highway trust fund – supporting the intrastate system and urban loops – with the rest from federal-aid programs. About one-fourth of the STIP budget is for non-road-building purposes.

Another element of the funding system is the 1989 statutory distribution formula known as the Equity Formula, which directs NCDOT to allocate funding regionally. Each of the seven regions defined in the law represents two NCDOT divisions. Funding distribution to each region depends on regional population (50%), remaining mileage of intrastate system roads to be completed within the region (25%), and an equal share of funding for each region (25%). Certain projects and funding sources are exempt from the Equity Formula.

North Carolina's 79,000-mile state-maintained highway system has a small share of paved and unpaved miles that remain eligible for state highway trust fund dollars. A significant portion of the system is eligible for federal aid but not for the state highway trust fund, leaving over 57,000 miles of state-maintained roadway ineligible for either funding source.

Stanley presented an example of a high-priority roadway widening project for a two-lane secondary road in a high-growth area. The road might be federal-aid eligible but would probably not be eligible for other funding sources. As a result, less than 10 percent of the STIP budget can be used to address this type of need across the state. Many of the high-priority projects around North Carolina are this type of project. In short, many TIP projects compete for the small sliver of STP funding: about \$10 million per year per division is available through STP. Each project averages \$10-\$30 million, so very small pieces of projects can be completed in each year. Stanley advised that NCDOT works to determine how to most effectively pursue projects given the funding constraints.

Stanley explained what funding sources were available for major projects in the Greensboro Urban Area. The remainder of the Urban Loop is competing with over \$5 billion of remaining eligible urban loop projects statewide – at \$250 million in urban loop funding per year, the end is not yet in sight. Three of the five eligible intrastate-system projects in the area are complete: I-40 widening near the airport, I-85 widening towards Burlington, and US 220 widening south of Greensboro. The remaining projects are the NC 68/US 220 connector and the US 158 project in Stokesdale. Most of the area's roadway capacity improvement needs are eligible only for small pieces of the funding.

Stanley used examples from the MPO's Priority Needs List to illustrate this situation. Widening projects for Horse Pen Creek Road and US 70 are only eligible for funding from STP. The

US 29/Eckerson Road interchange improvement project would be eligible for STP, NHS, and possibly IM funding.

Keith Holliday inquired who has the authority to change roadway classifications so that roads will be eligible for other funding sources. Stanley responded that the state and federal legislatures would need to be involved in such a change. Holliday inquired which funds could be affected on the state level alone, and Stanley responded that the state highway trust fund law could, in theory, be amended at the state level to change eligibility for intrastate and urban loop funding. While the General Assembly has amended the Urban Loop eligibility rules to include additional projects, the current legislative focus is to look beyond these smaller amendments to rethink the whole structure of transportation funding.

Carmany noted that multiple recommendations had been made and bills had been submitted, with none of them going anywhere. Stanley noted that bills addressing the Equity Formula frequently arise but never make progress. Bills that make headway have to do with other funding issues, such as local option funding or establishment of the North Carolina Turnpike Authority.

Meyer noted that enabling state GARVEE bond usage was the most recent small step towards additional flexibility in revenue generation from the state legislature. Stanley noted that as bonds, they are not a new revenue source but are worth doing if construction costs increase faster than inflation. The federal revenue growth picture is bleak, so committing future federal revenues can be a dangerous long-term strategy.

Holliday asked what the sources of the state highway fund were. Stanley noted that the motor fuels tax has about 18 cents federal tax and 29 cents state tax. The majority of the state highway fund comes from that source.

Carmany inquired if the General Assembly had capped the fuel tax. Stanley noted that it was a temporary cap and was being debated. Carmany noted that good news was hard to come by, in light of a presentation the previous day from Jim Westmoreland noting that many local funding sources were depleted.

Meyer noted that NCDOT's State Transportation Plan concluded that changes to the state's funding structure including more flexibility for the use of state TIP funding resources and revenue increases are required if the state is going to substantially address the transportation needs in the future. He noted that this is a significant public policy issue for this state to address.

### **Action Items**

#### **3. Approve Minutes of April 25, 2007**

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2007 meeting.

### **Business / Potential Action Items**

#### **2. Development of Priority Needs for 2009-2015 MTIP**

Tyler Meyer advised that the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is updated on an ongoing basis and that the process will begin shortly for the 2009-2015 MTIP. The process is compressed as a result of a shift from even- to odd-year development cycles. The priority development process is occurring during summer 2007, and the MTIP process will include public review and various drafts of the state and metropolitan TIPs, concluding in summer 2008.

Meyer advised that the priority needs process is an opportunity to identify the MPO's key priorities for the transportation system, including system elements that are below the level of statewide priorities. Key considerations include (1) covering all modes, which can enhance the process by leveraging various funding sources; (2) the status of existing priorities; (3) new needs; (4) resource constraints; (5) opportunities for state and local partnerships; and (6) focusing on potentially achievable goals. While it is an opportunity to address major facilities such as the Urban Loop, the priority needs process is a good time to advise NCDOT of priority improvements to key arterials, pedestrian/bicycle improvements, and other facilities.

Meyer reviewed the status of priority needs as set out from 1999 through 2005. The priorities have been multimodal, and have included roadway widening; new location construction; bicycle/pedestrian projects; public transportation vehicles, technology, and facilities; upgrades to the traffic signal system; priorities for Urban Loop implementation, and a range of studies. The results have varied, including some significant successes such as Bridford Parkway, West Market Street, the Signal System, and a range of GTA investments. In the case of R-4707 and the US 70 widening, the initiation of environmental documents represents significant success, with the remaining challenge of establishing funding for implementation. In one case, existing funds were replaced with earmarked funds, an outcome with no financial gain but which may have boosted the status of the project. Some identified priority needs remain unmet or addressed only through feasibility studies.

Meyer advised that needs associated with current TIP projects include the following:

- preserving funding for eastern Urban Loop implementation between US 70 and US 29 and acceleration of funding for other sections;
- full funding and maintenance of the construction schedule for the Market Street Widening project, signal system upgrade, and Battleground Rail-Trail; and
- maintenance of the construction schedule for Bridford Parkway.

Currently known and potentially achievable future needs include the following:

- a new GTA operations, maintenance, and administrative facility;
- Phase II of the Battleground Rail-Trail (anticipating abandonment of the rail line);
- various pedestrian and bicycle projects, particularly implementing priority sidewalk projects in the City of Greensboro for which design and right-of-way acquisition are well underway or substantially complete but which local funding resource constraints have currently sidelined. Examples include sidewalks on Randleman Road, West Market Street, East Bessemer Avenue, High Point Road, Cotswold Terrace, and others;
- US 29 interchange improvements at Eckerson Road (advance to right-of-way acquisition); and
- Horse Pen Creek Road widening. Meyer noted that this project would likely have to be a City bond project or perhaps a partnership project between the City and NCDOT for the project to proceed, given its cost and the relative scarcity of STP funding resources as outlined by Mike Stanley.

The next steps in the process include further review of project status and needs and the potential to address them, a review of opportunities to use STP-DA funding, and tracking of the projects through the creation of the state and metropolitan TIPs. Partnerships between the City of Greensboro and the State may also help to expedite projects. The July TAC meeting will likely include potential action on the STP-DA recommendations and Priority Needs List.

Sandy Carmany inquired how much the MPO draws down in STP-DA funding. Mike Stanley advised that it was around \$3.5 million annually. Meyer noted that the next TAC meeting would include a more detailed look at options for using this funding.

Keith Holliday commented that we may do more planning and drafting than getting anything done. It seems that needs assessments for projects like High Point Road may be out-of-date by the time they finally reach implementation. Meyer noted that, on the contrary, the area has been more successful in working with NCDOT and its partners on meeting area needs than most. The ongoing nature of the planning process and the requirement to continually update the plan, the TIP, and various studies means that old analyses are revised and updated periodically, which tends to keep the work fresh. Holliday and Carmany discussed the long development process for the High Point Road project. Holliday noted that although the project is now ready to be constructed, the need may have changed over time. It remains a need but may not be as high a priority now as it was 25 years ago. Traffic needs may change before projects are completed. Meyer and Carmany noted the current project study work included up-to-date traffic analysis and that future traffic forecasts remain consistent with the need to improve the High Point Road corridor.

### 3. Long Range Transportation Plan Schedule

Lydia McIntyre explained the requirements for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). SAFETEA-LU legislation requires this 20-year plan to be updated every 4 years for air-quality nonattainment areas and also includes some new requirements, such as a safety element (as distinct from security) and increased consultation with federal and environmental resource agencies.

The TAC must approve a plan that conforms to air-quality requirements by October 1, 2008. The general schedule for the LRTP development process begins now and continues through August 2008, with public meetings anticipated for September 2007, December 2007, and June 2008. Staff will coordinate the process with other MPOs in the region to ensure that assumptions are consistent.

The 2004 LRTP was a major effort, but because this iteration will be more of an update, the public involvement process will not need to be as extensive as it was before. Draft CTP maps will be part of the materials presented at the public meetings, and McIntyre noted that the bicycle and pedestrian CTP maps would be available at the next TCC meeting. Tyler Meyer advised that the LRTP is a good opportunity for the MPO to reassess needs and the feasibility and timing of transportation improvement projects.

### 4. Project Updates

Craig McKinney advised of the status of U-2412, the High Point Road widening project. NCDOT conducted a well-attended design public hearing on the project. Most comments dealt with access to properties and associated impacts due to right-of-way expansion, as well as with other NCDOT projects in the area. NCDOT will schedule a post-hearing review meeting shortly.

Sandy Carmany noted that most of the public comment or debate at the meeting was over whether the project should be built or not, although that was not the purpose of the meeting. Instead, the meeting provided an opportunity to comment on design changes. The main complaint was that some existing roadside businesses will no longer have frontage on the relocated thoroughfare. Keith Holliday noted that there would not be much design discretion if the right-of-way was already purchased. McKinney advised that no right-of-way had been purchased yet, although it is funded. Tyler Meyer advised that the design changes and flexibility involved median breaks, exact alignment at specific locations, and other minor changes, but not major redesigns.

## 5. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that the bicycle map project, which was recommended in the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan, is completed and that the printing process is expected to occur shortly. Meyer also noted that a new acronym guide and project update newsletter were included in meeting materials and that everyone was encouraged to take the Triad Commute Challenge.

### **Other Items**

#### 1. Board Member Report

Sandy Carmany advised that Doug Galyon was unable to attend due to a funeral. Mike Cowan noted that various minor projects were in various stages of construction across the area. NCDOT hopes to have the Urban Loop segments that are currently under construction completed by the end of the year. Cowan advised that committee members could always call NCDOT Division 7 with questions.

#### 2. Regional Transportation News

Sandy Carmany advised that Randolph and Davidson Counties had granted PART the authority to impose charges to support express bus service in those counties. In a related issue, the area is on track to meet the 8-hour ozone standards by December 31. However, EPA has recently announced that it may tighten its air-quality attainment standards. This is likely the beginning of another 10-year process of deciding on the rules and how to meet them.

#### 3. Other Items

Kirk Perkins noted that construction processes take a long time. Mike Cowan noted that the first efforts at designing and planning the Greensboro Urban Loop were initiated in 1950. Things can be done more rapidly, but the process is designed to take a long time in order to ensure the best-quality products with minimal environmental impacts.

#### 4. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.