



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of June 25, 2008
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
4th Floor Conference Room (Room 401)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

Adam Fischer	<i>Acting GDOT Director</i>	Brian Thomas	<i>NCDOT Engineering</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i>	John Hunsinger	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Wayne Davis	<i>NCDOT Planning</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>PTCOG / PTRPO</i>
Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT Engineering</i>	Roger Bardsley	<i>Guilford County Parks</i>
Ted Partrick	<i>Greensboro Engineering</i>	Bill Bruce	<i>Guilford County Planning</i>
Mike Kirkman	<i>Greensboro Planning</i>	Alex Ashton	<i>Guilford County Open Space</i>

Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of May 28, 2008

Hanna Cockburn moved for approval of the minutes. Wayne Davis seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2008 meeting.

2. Amend 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Peter Ohlms advised that the amendment before the Committee reversed part of an amendment made at the May meeting. The previous amendment changed an earmark project for the Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA) from eight expansion small buses to four expansion small buses plus four ticket machines. NCDOT was not able to amend the State Transportation Improvement Program with this item before federal closing deadlines, so the item was being reverted to its original state. Ohlms advised that this would be considered a staff-level administrative modification but was before the Committee for the record.

Adam Fischer inquired where the ticket vending machines would have been located. Ohlms advised that they were planned to go at the Depot and at one other location. The machines would be added to the list of unfunded needs. Fischer moved for approval of the administrative modification. Mike Kirkman seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve the modification to the 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

Planning for the transportation future

3. Resolution of Support for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail

Tyler Meyer advised that the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) concept intended to provide an east-west hiking trail similar to the Appalachian Trail. He noted that a separate Mountains-to-Sea Bicycle Route also exists. Meyer introduced Alex Ashton, Open Space Planner for Guilford County, who presented a summary of the MST.

Ashton advised that some sections of the statewide MST are already in place and designated, including part in Guilford County. The initial idea was conceived in the 1970s, when Allen DeHart helped establish organizations to propel the concept. Locally, Bill Craft, Rick Boiling, and Mike Simpson helped establish and designate trails as a part of the MST system.

Ashton said that the statewide trail effort would contribute towards improved hiking opportunities. The trail is primarily suited for hikers, but local jurisdictions may construct portions as multi-use paths that accommodate other users. A “trunk line” is envisioned to form the backbone of the trail, with spokes and alternate connector routes along the way. Key destinations in Guilford County include Haw River State Park, Bur-Mil Park, Bryan Park, Northeast Park, and multiple schools along the trail. Economic benefits are expected for travel, tourism, and hospitality functions; recreation-related businesses; retailers; and wineries along the route.

Planning meetings for the MST have occurred statewide. In the Triad, the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments has led planning efforts. Two routes come into Guilford County from Forsyth: one on the Piedmont Greenway and one on the Atlantic & Yadkin Rail-Trail. Two connections exist to Haw River State Park, one from the Town of Summerfield and one from the watershed trails. The primary route travels along Greensboro’s watershed trails and north into Rockingham County, and numerous possible secondary routes exist. Although each trail section will be maintained, governed, and named locally, consistent signage will be used on the system statewide.

Ashton advised that Guilford County’s open space program is working to purchase land to make a connection from the watershed trail section of the MST to Haw River State Park. This connection would serve nonmotorized transportation purposes in a developing area near Lake Brandt Road.

Funding for the MST is expected from multiple sources. The State of North Carolina has earmarked \$10 million for the effort, including \$3 million within Guilford County. Local and grant funds are also anticipated, along with donations of easements and volunteer work. Maintenance would be by sponsors, volunteers, and local governments. Coordination and partnerships, including support from the MPO, will be important for the success of this multi-jurisdictional effort.

Mike Kirkman inquired how Greensboro residents would access the MST. Meyer and Roger Bardsley advised that the Battleground Rail-Trail or the current Lake Brandt Greenway would be a primary connection. Ohlms advised that the MPO’s Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan included other future connections. Hanna Cockburn advised that the Winston-Salem MPO had already considered and approved a similar resolution, and that the Burlington-Graham MPO would be given the opportunity to do so in the future.

Bardsley moved for approval of the resolution. Cockburn seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve a resolution of support for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Business / Potential Action Items

I. Interstate 73 Routing

Tyler Meyer advised that Interstate 73 was designated in 1995 along NC 68 and I-40 to US 220 south of Greensboro. Since then, a feasibility study looked at this routing in more detail and concluded that it would not work effectively. The two current alternatives route Interstate 73 along the section of Greensboro’s Urban Loop from Bryan Boulevard to US 220. NCDOT is seeking approval from the Federal Highway Administration to add this designation to the Urban Loop and seeks the MPO’s concurrence.

Hanna Cockburn inquired if the portion would be designated immediately. Meyer advised that it would, because it is constructed at Interstate standards, and that it would make the segment of roadway eligible for Interstate Maintenance funding and add to the state's mileage total of interstates. It would also clarify the route to the community. Cockburn noted that Randolph County was in strong support of completing I-73. Meyer advised that the NC 68 - US 220 Connector would provide another link in the I-73 corridor.

Bill Bruce inquired whether I-73 designation to Bryan Boulevard implies that the preferred routing will be a new connection west from Bryan Boulevard, not the former alternative of traveling west on I-40 to NC 68. Meyer advised that this would most likely be the case, but that future studies and negotiations with regulatory partners would determine the outcome. John Hunsinger noted that NCDOT expected NC-68 to become a secondary route and that it was not designed for its current traffic volume. Adam Fischer noted that two options remain for the new connection. Bruce noted that the timing of the future I-73 facility would be important in terms of land use and development in the area. Mike Kirkman advised that the biggest current issue was the future alignment of the NC 68 - US 220 Connector. Fischer repeated that there were still two options for making the connection from NC 68 to Bryan Boulevard.

2. 2035 LRTP and Air Quality Conformity Update

Lydia McIntyre advised that staff were working towards an October 1 completion date for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Recently, it became apparent that the analysis was showing the area out of conformity for the one-hour ozone test in one horizon year. Additional horizon years were added as a result of air quality conformity issues, which brought Davidson County into conformity but not Guilford County. Under the normal conformity process, analysis shows that the area will meet air quality requirements, and the LRTP and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) are adopted and implemented. If conformity cannot be shown, the area enters a conformity lapse.

In the conformity lapse scenario, staff will review the previous, conforming 2030 LRTP and the new 2009-2015 MTIP. Projects that have not shifted between horizon years will be able to move forward. If any projects have shifted across horizon years, they cannot move forward until conformity is reestablished. The standard that is not being met will be formally revoked in April of 2009. Because this will occur during a one-year grace period, the MPO would be able to approve the 2035 LRTP document in April 2009.

Adam Fischer inquired whether projects would be back on schedule as of April 2009. McIntyre advised that they would be able to resume after the six-month delay. Tyler Meyer noted that Congress added the provision for a one-year conformity grace period in recent years, which was a change from previous requirements. Coincidentally, the standard is being removed during the area's conformity grace period. Meyer advised that the best-case scenario would still be for the technical problems to be resolved quickly and the plan to be adopted on schedule.

Fischer noted that the area was only exceeding the standard by a small amount. Wayne Davis advised that the current analysis is reexamining the assumptions about vehicle mix. Previous assumptions included increases in the percentages of light trucks, including SUVs, on the road, which is no longer realistic. NCDOT staff are discussing the issue with Environmental Protection Agency staff. McIntyre advised that the emissions budget in question allows 20.87 tons, and the analysis results in a figure of 20.9 tons.

McIntyre advised that if conformity can be met, public review is expected in mid-July with approval expected in August. Otherwise, full approval will wait until April 2009. McIntyre noted that creative suggestions were being investigated and reviewed with the environmental agencies.

Fischer inquired about potential problems with new standards that would go into effect in the coming year. McIntyre advised that current projections show the area exceeding the new 8-hour standard for NO_x, although the area has participated in the Early Action Compact (EAC) process to allow itself to be designated as attainment in the past. Meyer advised that the most likely outcome would be that the area would be in violation of the standards initially and would not be able to form another EAC.

3. 2009-2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Lydia McIntyre advised that NCDOT approved its 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which includes all projects across the state. The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) includes only projects within the Greensboro Urban Area.

McIntyre reviewed major project changes since the draft STIP was released in November 2007. A feasibility study for the I-73 Connector recommended two possible alternatives. This project does not have funding attached to it, but has been added to the STIP with an ID number.

McIntyre advised that the Hornaday Road Extension project includes a bridge over the Urban Loop near I-40 Business. This project was shifted from construction in 2008 to construction in 2009. Tyler Meyer advised that this really represented a delay in letting of only a few months.

McIntyre advised that in the bridge category, project B-5119 was added. It will replace two bridges near the US 29 and Business I-40 interchange. New public transportation projects included funding for the area's Job Access / Reverse Commute and New Freedom Programs as a result of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. For enhancements, Phase II of the Battleground Rail-Trail (from Markland Drive to Lee Street) was shown as a new project in the MTIP. The STIP includes it as another phase of an existing project, EB-4709.

Meyer advised that an adoption action will be needed for the MTIP at a future meeting; the program may be modified depending on the outcome of the air quality conformity process.

Tyler Meyer described an effort to pursue Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding to upgrade GTA's evening routes that would follow up on the Greensboro City Council's recent action to fund an additional GTA route on Yanceyville Street. The proposal would replace existing evening routes, many of which are long one-way loops, with the daytime routes, including the new route. The proposal does not require additional buses, because the additional service is at off-peak times. Anticipated operations costs are expected to total \$2.5 million from 2009 through 2011.

Hanna Cockburn inquired whether the enhanced evening service would have the same frequency as the daytime route. Peter Ohlms advised that service frequencies would remain hourly, but trips would be more direct through the elimination of long one-way loops. Meyer advised that it was not the ultimate improvement for evening service but was a major improvement. Adam Fischer noted that the need for this change became evident during public discussions about the Yanceyville route.

Meyer advised that the CMAQ funds could act as seed money to cover operating costs for the service for three years, allowing GTA to build ridership in the evening, but that local operating support would be needed thereafter. Staff will begin developing an analysis of the air-quality benefits of this improvement to meet CMAQ requirements. Fischer advised that after the third year, a \$5 increase in vehicle registration fees was a potential way to cover future operations needs.

4. Recommendations of North Carolina's 21st Century Transportation Committee

Tyler Meyer provided an overview of statewide legislative items. The 21st Century Transportation Committee was convened in late 2007 to provide recommendations on transportation priorities and funding. The two-year process included an interim report for the 2008 short session of the General Assembly. A final report is expected before next year's long session. The group has looked at transportation needs in a broad way and has considered strategies to address funding gaps. Meyer noted that the state's Highway Trust Fund currently has a \$172 million transfer taken from it each year, which was initially established to reimburse funding sources that lost revenue due to the creation of the Highway Trust Fund. Removing this transfer has been a subject of discussion in the past.

Meyer advised that subcommittees prepared the recommendations. The Intermodal subcommittee looked at rail and transit needs. It proposed expanded options for local sales taxes for transit, vehicle registration

fees, and taxes at the local or regional level. The subcommittee also recommended some items related to rail projects as well as a transit grant program to support certain regional transit projects with a state share of 25%.

The Prioritization subcommittee focused on eliminating the transfer from the Highway Trust Fund and on providing gap funding for the North Carolina Turnpike Authority, which could cover costs not financed by toll revenues. Along with the Finance subcommittee, this group proposed a state transportation bond of \$1.3 billion to \$1.8 billion for urban loops and bridge preservation.

The Intergovernmental subcommittee endorsed a resolution urging the federal government to allow North Carolina to recoup 100% of the gas tax revenue it contributes to the U.S.

The Finance subcommittee mirrored some recommendations from the Prioritization group, including eliminating the transfer from the Highway Trust Fund and providing gap funding for the Turnpike Authority. It also proposed a statewide transportation bond and debated tolling the replacement of the Yadkin River Bridge on I-85, ultimately deciding to seek a federal earmark instead for that project.

Meyer discussed issues with the Committee's recommendations. The Intermodal subcommittee looked at specific funding opportunities for various transit programs but did not identify a dedicated funding source other than a "suitable portion" of the statewide transportation bond. The single-county sales tax option is only for transit and would be overseen by a regional authority. The funding program and background would benefit from more directly stating support for bus-related needs as opposed to rail, because a key part of a viable rail system is a strong bus network to support it.

Meyer described recommendations from the Prioritization and Finance subcommittees. Half of the proposed state transportation bond would go to urban loops and interstate projects. The other half would go to intrastate projects, as defined by the General Assembly, and to bridges, but the funding program would not contribute to meeting non-intrastate urban mobility needs such as widening US 70 in the Greensboro area. Meyer discussed some issues involved with tightening project scopes and avoiding over-designing projects and noted that applying design standards without considering context can be counterproductive.

Adam Fischer inquired whether the sales tax was primarily for rail transit or if it could support general transportation projects. Meyer advised that it is currently recommended as intended to support transit, but could be clarified that it can support bus projects. Fischer inquired if the tax could be used to support roadway improvements. Meyer advised that it was not set up to support roadway improvements. Hanna Cockburn noted that a program called Penny for Progress in South Carolina, which funded multimodal transportation needs, was the basis for the sales tax concept, but it has since changed. Cockburn noted that rural counties, in particular, ought to be able to spend local sales tax revenues on projects other than transit. Meyer noted that the committee was likely seeking to address the most immediate issues first but not seeking to be comprehensive, and that an opportunity remained to share input.

Meyer advised that the bill related to sales taxes for transit was currently in committee and would likely not see a vote until the next session, but a state budget bill will be adopted at some point and will deal with transportation funding in some way. The 2007-2008 state budget bill included a plan to reduce the transfer from the Highway Trust Fund over time, eliminating it by 2011. NCDOT made its funding assumptions in the 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) based on the projected increases in the Highway Trust Fund, as an element of state law. However, the 2008-2009 budget phases out the transfer on a different schedule and diverts the revenue to cover gap funding for the Turnpike Authority instead of to address general statewide transportation needs. It is likely that the Triangle Expressway project, which is under time pressure, may be a reason that this change was made. This creates implications for the next STIP and will impact the ability to deliver urban loops unless the proposed statewide bond is passed.

5. Transportation Project Updates

Tyler Meyer advised that GTA's top priority was its new maintenance, administration, and operations facility. The Greensboro City Council approved purchase of a site off Meadowview Road near South Elm-Eugene Street using \$2 million in federal discretionary transit grant funds distributed from NCDOT. With

this step taken, staff can continue to seek funding for construction. Hanna Cockburn inquired what would be done with the existing GTA site after the move. Adam Fischer advised that it would be sold, and that the City would likely be required to reimburse federal funds put into the existing facility.

Meyer advised that a portion of the Downtown Greenway project was moving forward through an easement agreement between Greensboro College and the City of Greensboro. The section of trail would be built by Action Greensboro and its subsidiaries.

6. MPO Strategic Topics

Lydia McIntyre advised that at the last TAC meeting, T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about Charlotte's experience with High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. McIntyre advised that the Charlotte project was part of NCDOT's widening of I-77, during which the decision was made to include HOV lanes. State policy requires HOV lanes to be new capacity, not conversions of existing general-use lanes. In Charlotte, the lanes were added by reducing the median width. The lanes should be used where existing corridors have congestion, and funding for enforcement is required to maintain the lanes' efficiency. A ridesharing program is desirable along corridors with HOV lanes. Charlotte's 2005 traffic counts for the morning peak hour included 1600 vehicles with 1700 people in the general-use lanes and 296 vehicles with 836 people in the HOV lane. In 2007, the number of vehicles in the HOV lanes increased slightly, but the number of people increased more. The Charlotte region is considering implementing additional HOV lanes.

Adam Fischer inquired if existing lanes could be converted to HOV lanes. McIntyre advised that the policy is to always add HOV lanes rather than converting existing general-purpose lanes. Tyler Meyer advised that it has been done, but NCDOT's policy is to avoid doing so. McIntyre advised that the Greensboro area did not likely have facilities in need of HOV lanes currently. Meyer noted that the idea is to increase capacity by maintaining free-flow conditions, and another option is the use of High-Occupancy Toll lanes, which allows single-occupancy vehicles to use the lane for a price. The price is regulated to keep the lanes free-flowing. McIntyre advised that Charlotte would likely investigate this option.

Meyer advised that NCDOT is continuing to analyze where heavy landscaping can be added along the Urban Loop at locations where noise walls were not constructed. GDOT will also look at the potential for improvements to areas built after 1996, the date of public knowledge of the alignment, where NCDOT is not permitted to make improvements. Potential funding sources could include STP-DA funds.

Adam Fischer advised that the process was ongoing for Greensboro to pursue a transportation bond for fall 2008. The bond would include transit projects, sidewalks, trails, intersection improvements, roadway improvements, and streetscapes. The initially identified list of over \$400 million in needs was scaled down to a list of \$228 million, \$134 million of which would go on a referendum in fall 2008. Of this amount, \$100 million would complete certain projects within 5-7 years and \$34 million would begin work on others. Certain projects may require additional time even if they receive full funding, and the projects begun with the \$34 million would require the second half of the bond funding to complete.

Alex Ashton inquired how much of the reduced bond amount would be for trails and greenways. Fischer advised that the \$228 million total includes \$112 million for roadway projects, \$19 million for sidewalks, \$2 million for public transportation, \$25 million for streetscapes, \$15 million for maintenance, and \$34 million for greenways and trails. Fischer noted that a public hearing would be held in July.

Other Items

I. NCDOT Update

Wayne Davis noted that NCDOT is reviewing Comprehensive Transportation Plan maps and will provide comments to MPO staff.

John Hunsinger advised of some active NCDOT projects. Overhead signs on the Urban Loop have been delayed three times due to excessively high bids, and work continues to award the project to a contractor.

Ground-mounted signs should be complete shortly. The overhead signs require a general contractor's license, due to an element in law. Underpass lighting at the Friendly Avenue bridge should be completed by August.

Hunsinger advised that NCDOT had received spot safety and contingency funding in May for two turn lane projects: Alamance Church Road at Southeast School Road and Lee Street Extension at Sharpe Rd. The signal replacement project for Greensboro will be a five-year project and has been awarded to a contractor. Adam Fischer noted that the contract was awarded 12 percent under the estimate. Hornaday Road is anticipated to be let in September, after delays related to the municipal agreement.

2. TCC Member Reports – None.

3. Wrap-Up

Tyler Meyer noted that there was no scheduled meeting in July. He advised that the scheduled August 13 meeting would be needed but might be rescheduled due to the conformity process. The TCC was adjourned at 12:25 p.m.