



## TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of January 24, 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>	Keith Holliday	<i>Mayor, City of Greensboro</i>
Doug Galyon	<i>NCDOT</i>	T. Dianne Bellamy-Small	<i>Greensboro City Council</i>

### ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Wayne Davis	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John Hunsinger	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT</i>
Jim Westmoreland	<i>TCC Chair</i>	Ryan Moats	<i>GDOT</i>
Melanie Wells	<i>Resident</i>	Libby James	<i>Greensboro Transit Authority</i>
Taft Wireback	<i>News &amp; Record</i>	Donald Arant	<i>Greensboro Engineering &amp; Inspections</i>

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. and directed staff to begin with business items, as a quorum of TAC Members was not yet present to approve action items.

#### **Business / Potential Action Item**

##### I. Draft 2007-2013 MTIP Update

Lydia McIntyre noted that NCDOT held a public hearing on the state Transportation Improvement Program on November 14, 2006, and the TAC chair spoke on behalf of the MPO. The draft Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program public comment period (November 20, 2006 through January 22, 2007) garnered three comments, which focused on city projects, the need to

#### **Planning for the transportation future**

get funding for the completion of the Urban Loop, and a comment from Mark Kirstner discussed earlier in the presentation of the Public Participation Plan.

McIntyre advised that some projects did change during the revision of the Draft MTIP, which included a consultation meeting with NCDOT. A second public-review period will occur in March to coincide with public review for the Triad air-quality conformity document. The public transportation section of the MTIP saw major revisions. Staff anticipate holding a public meeting regarding the MTIP on March 8 at the Greensboro Central Library. The anticipated approval date for the state TIP is March 2007, and the TAC will likely approve the MTIP and conformity document on April 25. Doug Galyon advised that this date may get pushed back one month.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small asked when the March 8 public meeting would be held, and McIntyre responded that the tentative time was from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Jim Westmoreland noted that the one-on-one NCDOT consultation meeting was effective. He advised that the TCC will continue to push for construction of the remaining portion of the Urban Loop, and that the Eastern Loop funding in the TIP is encouraging.

McIntyre advised that the consultation meeting with NCDOT produced the news that an environmental document has been funded for the U.S. 70 corridor east of Greensboro. NCDOT's Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch will be moving forward on this study. The rest of the project remains unfunded. Also, a portion of the US 220/NC 68 Connector has been delayed one year for construction. On its new schedule, it will coincide with another project in the area, the widening of part of US 220.

Tyler Meyer noted that staff have been reviewing the transit portion of the draft MTIP in order to identify strategic improvements to maximize funding and ensure that capital needs are met. Staff are also examining options for the use of STP-DA funds and additional discretionary federal grants for unfunded transit needs.

Keith Holliday inquired about the schedule for revisions and adoption of the MTIP. McIntyre responded that staff would present a revised draft in February, with the final version to be approved in April. Meyer noted that because fiscal year 2007 is already underway, the state and metropolitan TIP documents will be in effect as soon as they are adopted, and until that time, operations will continue under the FY 2006-2012 TIP.

Noting the presence of a quorum, Sandy Carmany directed staff to move to the action items before completing the business items.

### **Action Items**

#### **1. Approve Minutes of November 15, 2006**

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the minutes. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2006 meeting.

#### **2. Adopt Public Participation Plan**

Peter Ohlms presented a summary of the revised Public Participation Plan, which provides a scripted process that can be used as a basis for public involvement activities and suggests additional strategies to augment the process. Improvements to public participation were recommended in the MPO's triennial review. While past public participation efforts have gone above and beyond the

minimum requirements set out in the previous Public Involvement Plan, the missing step was to update the plan itself.

The last revision of the plan was in January 2001. The most recent revision of the plan is intended to fulfill federal requirements and serve as a guide for staff and the public regarding public participation procedures. The public review and comment period for this revision was at least 45 days as required under the previous Public Involvement Plan.

Ohlms noted that the plan uses a tiered system to match the amount of public participation effort with the size and scope of the planning effort. Smaller projects and plans get a smaller degree of public participation and outreach than larger projects. An administrative tier includes minor modifications and amendments, with no formal process other than public comment periods at TAC meetings. Tier 1 includes small, geographically focused projects with potential impacts and sets out requirements for public notice, document review, and comments. Tier 2 builds upon Tier 1 and adds additional efforts and a public meeting. It would apply to items such as adoption of the MTIP and similarly major projects. Similarly, Tier 3 builds upon Tier 2, adding stronger outreach efforts such as newsletters, mailings, surveys, and multiple public meetings, and would apply to adoption of the LRTP. Finally, a Toolkit contains additional optional procedures for consideration. Staff will be tasked with assigning tiers, with the TAC's guidance and approval, for projects not explicitly assigned in the plan itself.

Ohlms discussed comments received during the plan's public review period. The final version of the plan includes an appendix with a summary of public comments. All the comments were from government employees interested in public involvement, with three comments before the public review period opened and three more during the public review period.

Some comments indicated that the plan was a good length and that the tiered system worked well. Ohlms noted that MPO staff were looking to keep the plan short yet comprehensive and that the tiered approach avoided the need to repeat elements for each potential project or study type.

Ohlms described another comment, which suggested including an appendix of public comments. The MPO usually does this for its major documents, and a public comment appendix is included with this plan. Ohlms advised that staff will keep any future comments about the public participation process on file and use them to evaluate and revise the plan.

One comment included specific suggestions, which have been incorporated where possible. The comment also noted that the use of the word "citizen" can be problematic for constituents who are not native English speakers, who often may not see themselves in this term, and that the term "resident" should be used instead in order to be more inclusive.

One comment noted that public education is a key part of the transportation planning process and requested a stronger public education element in the plan. Ohlms advised that it is not a separate element of the plan but is inherently a part of every effort at public participation.

The final comment Ohlms described was a suggestion to mention Guilford County Transportation more explicitly as a partner agency. The county is involved in MPO decisions through two other departments on the TCC, and staff are open to a discussion of adding a seat at the table for the transportation department.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired how citizens are expected to understand what the MPO is. Tyler Meyer responded that the best the MPO can do is to provide clear information in places where people will find that information, The MPO has made opportunities available for learning about long-range transportation planning, but obstacles remain for the public to become familiar with the MPO.

Sandy Carmany noted that most of the public meetings are targeted, project-level efforts. Ohlms noted that as a direct result of one of the PPP comments, he filmed a short interview about what the MPO is, which is to be aired on local government Channel 13.

Keith Holliday noted the irony of a public review period for a Public Participation Plan with no comments from the non-governmental “public.” He speculated that rotating shifts for county commissioners and council members to serve on the TAC would enhance their awareness of transportation and transportation planning. Putting documents into layman’s terms, rather than technical terms, would also help. Carmany noted that unless a planning effort involves a road that will go through their back yards or another item that affects them directly, residents are unlikely to pay much attention. Bellamy-Small noted that simply noting the availability of the PPP in documents such as her annual report might perk the interest of residents before the bulldozer arrives in their back yards. Holliday noted that a billboard or variable message sign, placed where traffic congestion is bad, would likely lead to increased participation. Meyer responded that one of the strengths of the revised PPP was its practicality in presenting the minimum requirements while encouraging extra efforts such as those mentioned.

Holliday moved for adoption of the plan. Doug Galyon seconded the motion. Holliday inquired whether AM traffic advisory radio is still operational and discussed this with Chris Spencer and Jim Westmoreland. Westmoreland advised that Channel 13 broadcasts traffic information every morning and afternoon. Holliday advised investigating the possibility of using this system to notify people of planning efforts. Galyon and Carmany discussed the benefits of the statewide 511 system, which provides traffic information, weather conditions, and other travel information. Westmoreland noted that television and radio stations generally do a good job of advising motorists of traffic information. Holliday noted that the new Channel 2 school-closing text-messaging program is working well, and that it would be nice to provide automated text messages about individuals’ own routes to work. Adam Fischer noted that the private sector had been instrumental in the text messaging system. Galyon noted that NCDOT only uses its variable message signs on highways when specific events are occurring, which is why the signs are blank much of the time.

The Committee voted unanimously to adopt the Public Participation Plan dated January 24, 2007.

### **3. Adopt Amendment to 2006-2012 MTIP**

Peter Ohlms described a proposed MTIP amendment. He noted that the amendment was a procedural formality necessary due to processing delays within NCDOT. A March 2006 MTIP amendment moved \$500,000 in STP-DA funds to GTA for fiscal year 2006. Delays prevented these funds from being disbursed during that fiscal year, so the proposed amendment was to carry forward the entire line item as an item for fiscal year 2007 instead of 2006. Ohlms advised that the state Board of Transportation had already amended its TIP to reflect this change.

Keith Holliday moved for adoption of the amendment. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to adopt the 2006-2012 MTIP amendment dated January 24, 2007.

### **4. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns - None**

### **5. Citizen Comments**

Melanie Wells, who lives in northwest Greensboro near U.S. 220 / Battleground Ave., shared her concerns about traffic problems along that corridor. Wells questioned that this corridor was

supposedly a priority on the TIP but was not getting funding until beyond 2009 and stated that citizens in the area were upset about the way the road had been altered at the intersection with Horse Pen Creek Road. She said the residents desired guidance on where to go for more funding, how to address the recent problems, and how to make themselves heard. Wells claimed that there had been no improvements for the 26 years she had lived there. She noted that a charter school between Horse Pen Creek Road and Owl's Roost Road generated substantial traffic, that there were crash problems along the corridor, and that emergency access was lacking. Wells noted that she had discussed the need for more funding with Mike Mills of NCDOT and gave him some other suggestions for improvements. She noted that major facilities such as the new FedEx facility and the Greensboro Coliseum had received roadway improvements but that this area had not.

Sandy Carmany noted that Council members had encountered these traffic problems during the recent Council retreat and thanked Wells for her comments. Discussion continued about the issues of traffic congestion, safety, funding, and development, with a particular focus on a new traffic island that residents perceive to be problematic. Adam Fischer provided comments from the traffic engineering perspective.

Doug Galyon advised Wells that the six-mile segment of U.S. 220 north of Horse Pen Creek was programmed to be widened at a cost of \$50 million. The FY 2007-2008 TIP called for right-of-way to be acquired in FY 2008 and construction to occur from FY 2010 through 2012. The project was fully funded and was proceeding as fast as it could. Galyon and Wells discussed MPO priorities and other planned improvements in the area. Galyon advised that NCDOT will do some traffic studies and evaluations to identify potential short-term improvements.

Carmany, Fischer, Wells, and Galyon continued discussing new development and improvements. Keith Holliday inquired what the traffic count in that area was, and Chris Spencer responded that a recent study of Battleground from Cotswold to Westridge found 32,000 to 35,000 vehicles per day. Holliday advised Wells that he agreed with her about the traffic problem, but that the fact that the widening project was funded was good news. He stated that much of the increase in traffic was coming from growth in the Summerfield area at the north end of the corridor.

Wells and Carmany discussed the traffic generated by a charter school in the area, and Carmany advised Wells that her concerns had been heard. Holliday and Jim Westmoreland discussed potential piecemeal or short-term improvements, and Westmoreland advised that the Greensboro DOT would do what it could to improve the short-term situation.

Wells thanked the TAC for listening and noted that getting involved had been an educational experience. Galyon, Wells, and Carmany discussed issues with federal transportation funding. Holliday and Donald Arant discussed a road constructed in 1997 as a short-term improvement or stopgap measure. Holliday advised that stopgap measures could be more costly than they were worth.

Carmany and Galyon thanked Wells for making her comments on behalf of her neighbors. Fischer and Galyon discussed recent levels of inflation in construction costs. Wells and Holliday discussed project priorities. John Hunsinger invited Wells to visit his office to see maps of right-of-way to be acquired for the project.

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

### **2. GTA Update**

Libby James provided an update on GTA's continued provision of effective transit services to the Greensboro community. During the second quarter of fiscal year 2007, average weekday boardings

continued increasing, to 12,000 passenger trips per day. This represents a 23% increase over the same period of FY 2006. Evening service provided over 71,000 total passenger trips during the most recent quarter, a 32% increase over the same quarter of FY 2006. Sunday ridership also continued to expand, increasing to around 2,800 passenger trips per Sunday, a 48% increase over the same quarter of FY 2006. James noted that Greensboro is one of only a few cities in North Carolina that provide Sunday service. Annual ridership data indicate that GTA is on track to achieve the Mobility Greensboro plan's goal of doubling ridership from 2 million to 4 million from FY 2003 to FY 2008.

James advised that SCAT, GTA's paratransit service, provided over 32,000 ADA-required passenger trips during the second quarter of FY 2007, a 12% increase compared to the same quarter of FY 2006. An additional 5,200 non-ADA passenger trips were provided during the second quarter of FY 2007, a 14% decrease compared to the same quarter of FY 2006.

The Higher Education Area Transit (HEAT) service has provided over 65,000 passenger trips since August 8, 2006, over 50% of which consisted of UNC-Greensboro students. Over 100,000 HEAT-eligible riders have used GTA's non-HEAT routes, with 75% of that total being students at GTCC. Keith Holliday inquired how GTA could calculate this item, and James responded that the fare collection equipment classifies students using their student ID cards.

James advised that installation of on-campus HEAT bus shelters is complete, and NCA&T State University has become a HEAT partner beginning January 2007. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted that she had participated in a radio broadcast and had suggested that listeners contact the NCA&T decision-makers and encourage them to become a HEAT partner.

Jim Westmoreland noted that the combined total ridership related to the HEAT program was 165,000, including HEAT bus usage and regular GTA bus usage by people eligible to ride HEAT. For each participating institution, the price per student per semester is \$2.50, but Westmoreland noted that this figure could increase when the federal grant funding expires. He advised that GTA will look to provide NCA&T with a shuttle similar to what UNCG receives. TAC members expressed pleasure that NCA&T was coming onboard.

James advised that the new South Town Connector increased in ridership by 58% from the first quarter to the second quarter but is still below the ridership goal. Bellamy-Small noted that a bus stop for that connector is situated in an odd, potentially unsafe location and suggested looking into shifting the location of that stop. She also noted that passengers are using upturned shopping carts as seats at the Wal-Mart stop, which lacks permanent benches. James advised that GTA would need approval from Wal-Mart's management and district office to install seating, and Bellamy-Small provided a commitment to sharing her concerns with Wal-Mart management.

James advised that 30-minute daytime fixed-route service began January 2, and initial indications show that riders are accepting and enjoying this service expansion. To-date January ridership is up by 12% over the same part of January last year representing over 10,000 additional passenger trips. Holliday inquired what type of wording is on bus stop signs, specifically whether they include the schedule. James advised that the signs do include the route numbers that serve each stop but do not include a posted schedule. Holliday recommended using decals noting the 30-minute daytime service, perhaps with individual times for each stop, to encourage ridership.

Bellamy-Small noted the benefits of providing information onboard the buses. James noted that GTA had initiated an education campaign to inform the public about the 30-minute service, which included using the talking bus feature, reprinting the schedules, and making announcements on Channel 13. Sandy Carmany noted that the City Council had denied funding for a technology system

proposal that would have included signs at bus stops with bus arrival times. Bellamy-Small noted that she gives out bus passes whenever she can.

James advised that GTA's fleet now includes 10 new low-floor buses with technology features such as automatic passenger counters, talking bus announcements, security cameras, and electronic fare boxes. The bus stop improvement program and shelter enhancements continue, with implementations to begin mid-spring. Renovations are underway to expand the bus storage and parking area for GTA, to be complete by mid-February, along with Phase III renovations to the J. Douglas Galyon Depot. The completed renovations at the Depot will include a Visitor's Center, an expanded GTA and PART waiting area and ticket office, improvements to the Amtrak area, a police bike squad area, a security system, and other improvements.

Holliday noted that he had recently arrived at the Depot by train early in the morning and needed a taxi. Holliday noted that there were no taxicabs waiting at the Depot at 4 a.m. and that phones or computers that connect to taxis, as most airports have, would be beneficial. Westmoreland advised that the Depot Visitor's Center would include a 24-hour information kiosk and other items that could help with this situation. Bellamy-Small inquired whether area hotels and/or the visitor's bureau might help pay for a system that would connect to area hotels for their shuttle services. Westmoreland advised that the Visitor's Center would include computers that could connect travelers to these services.

Bellamy-Small inquired about a bus stop on High Point Road near GTCC, noting that the stop is in the bushes. James responded that she would investigate the situation.

James advised that the GTA Board adopted a fare increase for fixed route and SCAT service, changing certain passes and raising fares incrementally over three years. SCAT fare revisions have eliminated the Unlimited Ride monthly pass but made base SCAT fares equal to fixed-route fares.

GTA will undertake a five-year transit services plan over the next few months, reviewing performance standards, analyzing transfers, and identifying modifications to Saturday and Sunday services. A five-year plan for paratransit services will also be underway, as will a system-wide Technology Plan.

Carmany inquired whether these plans would be coordinated with PART's Seamless Mobility initiative, and James responded that they would be. Bellamy-Small noted that Guilford County Transportation receives certain funds that GTA is not eligible to receive and inquired why. Westmoreland advised that staff were initiating a discussion with the state about the development of a plan with the county and possibly PART, which could become part of the Seamless Mobility study. Holliday inquired what it would take to change the policy of NCDOT so that it would stop providing transit funds to counties if they do not operate a transit service. Carmany noted that the county does operate a transit service outside the city limits. Holliday inquired why the funding is going directly to the county rather than through the MPO. Tyler Meyer advised that a portion of federal funds are specifically for rural public transportation, which the county would receive in any case, and that another type of funding could be used in cities or counties to support services to the elderly and disabled. Doug Galyon advised that Regional Planning Organizations have multi-county responsibility and that the funding does not go to individual counties. Westmoreland noted that a discussion needs to occur regarding paratransit from the ADA-required area out to the city limits. Holliday inquired how much funding the county was receiving and if any was not being spent on transit services and being transferred to a general fund. James advised that GTA's five-year paratransit plan would look at these issues.

### 3. Draft Unified Planning Work Program Review

Tyler Meyer advised that the Unified Planning Work Program is an annual process, involving a draft in January, TCC discussion, and a final UPWP in February. The UPWP covers the year's planning priorities for all modes and describes how the MPO will use federal planning grant funding.

Meyer noted that Wayne Davis and Mike Abuya would update the State Planning and Research component for the next meeting. Meyer requested that committee members let him know of priorities for planning by the next meeting. Meyer distributed an initial draft and noted that additional documentation including anticipated planning priorities would be distributed in advance of the next meeting.

### 4. Project Updates

Tyler Meyer advised that the R-2612 project (adding interchanges on U.S. 421 near Pleasant Garden) public meetings were held. The preferred concept is interchanges at two locations. Doug Galyon inquired about access at Hagan-Stone Park Road. Craig McKinney advised that the at-grade connection would be lost but that a parallel road will be built to connect the roads to the interchange. McKinney noted that the public meeting was well-attended and that one main issue will be to coordinate with the fire departments in the area, ensuring that they redraw their coverage maps appropriately.

Meyer advised that a public meeting is planned for the U-2412 project (High Point Road Widening) in the spring.

### 5. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that a Heart of the Triad study meeting would be held on January 29 and that TAC members were invited to an elected officials' luncheon. Galyon noted that he was scheduled to make a presentation at this meeting.

Meyer advised that the regional model's executive committee would consider approval shortly, so staff would soon be able to use it. Meyer advised that the next meeting would occur February 21. Carmany noted that at least one of the county commissioners will need to be present in order to have a quorum.

### **Other Items**

#### I. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon advised that one possibility for NCDOT in 2007 was to expand the use of alternative methods and programs to help meet more of the state's growing transportation needs. This could relate to the northern section of the Urban Loop. Galyon advised that he is looking to bring information to the TAC regarding alternatives to move the project forward. This could include the possibility of a toll road.

Galyon advised that Len Sanderson retired as state highway administrator. Bill Rosser is coming back from retirement to work with NCDOT on several areas, including implementing new procedures to improve oversight and delivery of highway projects. This is to ensure that contracts are let properly and that appropriate progress is made.

Galyon advised that the western portion of the Urban Loop will probably be finished by Thanksgiving 2007. Construction has encountered problems with bridges and the railroad. A dedication might be considered for this segment.

Keith Holliday inquired whether a bridge connecting Bridford Parkway and Guilford College Road is still in the plans. He noted that it appeared that a building was being constructed in the area of the planned bridge. Tyler Meyer responded that the bridge has been delayed a year, with construction scheduled for 2009.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted that some residents of Kings Mill have complained that they feel plowed over by NCDOT. Galyon and Sandy Carmany responded that the situation had been ongoing for many years and that NCDOT is dealing with it.

## 2. Regional Transportation News

Sandy Carmany advised that PART ridership continues to boom. Meeting all the needs will outstrip funding capabilities, but multiple counties are on the verge of approving the car-rental taxes. This will provide relatively little revenue but require PART to provide service to those counties, so PART will have to revisit its funding options.

Doug Galyon noted that NCDOT's plan is to use GARVEE bonds for maintenance on the I-85 corridor, which will enable resurfacing to begin in spring 2007.

## 3. Other Items - None

## 4. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.