



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of November 14, 2007
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
4th Floor Conference Room
Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Brandt	<i>Town of Summerfield</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Craig Harmon	<i>Town of Summerfield</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Brad Wall	<i>NCDOT</i>
Bill Bruce	<i>Guilford County</i>	Pam Hawley	<i>NCDOT</i>
Roger Bardsley	<i>Guilford County</i>	Brian Thomas	<i>NCDOT</i>

Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. and noted that TCC Chair Jim Westmoreland was unavailable to attend.

Action Items

I. Approve Minutes of September 26, 2007

Roger Bardsley moved for approval of the minutes. Bill Bruce seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2007 meeting.

Business / Potential Action Items

I. Preliminary 2008 Meeting Schedule

Peter Ohlms advised that the preliminary meeting schedule for 2008 included TCC and TAC meetings the fourth Wednesday of each month except in November and December.

TCC members discussed potential changes to the TAC membership. Tyler Meyer advised that the new membership remains to be seen, with the Greensboro City Council likely to appoint new members at its December meeting. The December TAC meeting would likely be cancelled, so the January meeting would be the first with the new TAC.

Planning for the transportation future

2. LRTP Update

Tyler Meyer advised that the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan would build off of the work done for the 2030 effort completed in 2004. The timeline for expected future projects is based on an analysis of basic funding trends, and an analysis of air quality conformity will be necessary. The plan involves updated discussions of transportation issues, trends, and policies. Meyer advised that work to date included updating the regional travel model, updating the Congestion Management Process, developing Comprehensive Transportation Plan maps, and financial analysis.

For public involvement, staff propose to hold meetings in spring 2008, with TAC approval expected in summer 2008. Meyer advised that staff were coordinating with other Triad MPOs to develop shared assumptions and inputs for projects of regional significance. Outcomes from the LRTP include demonstration of conformity with air-quality and fiscal constraint requirements. The plan will highlight funding challenges that the area will face in light of future needs, supporting continued community dialogue and the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

3. 2009-2015 MTIP Development

Tyler Meyer advised that the Metropolitan TIP for 2009-2015 was under development. The draft State TIP has been released and mainly deals with changes to highway project schedules over a seven-year period.

The MPO's process will begin in early 2008 with a public meeting, coordinated with the public meeting for the LRTP. NCDOT plans to adopt the STIP around June 2008. Because the MPO cannot adopt the MTIP without a conformity determination, official TAC adoption will not occur before August 2008.

Meyer advised of the status of major transportation projects, including those identified as MPO Priority Needs. In the draft STIP, construction of the eastern section of the Urban Loop was delayed two years to 2013. The remainder of the Loop's western portion, which includes a mile-long bridge that adds significantly to the cost, remains unfunded as a post-year project.

Construction of the High Point Road widening project has slipped one year to 2012, along with the construction of the High Point Road interchange at the Urban Loop. The Jamestown section of the project, which is in the High Point MPO, was also delayed one year.

Other priority needs included US 220 widening (R-2309) and Market Street widening (R-2611). US 220 remained on schedule, but Market Street slipped one year for both right-of-way and construction, largely due to increased right-of-way cost estimates. As a result of these cost increases, the MPO committed some STP-DA funding to fill some of the gap, and a one-year delay is not bad for NCDOT to cover a cost increase of this size.

The main priority need for transit was a new operations, maintenance, and administrative facility, which remains unfunded. Meyer advised that the federal bus discretionary funds for the current fiscal year were completely allocated to a new federal program, the Urban Partnerships Initiative, that went mostly to larger cities. Staff continue to work towards implementation of the new transit facility.

Priority needs that remain on schedule include the US 220 - NC 68 Connector, Bridford Parkway, Hornaday Road, the Greensboro Signal System replacement, and the current phase of the Battleground Rail-Trail.

4. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

Peter Ohlms described planned efforts to develop a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. Conducting this planning effort in the Greensboro area would ensure that transportation-disadvantaged populations, such as low-income people and people with disabilities, can access the services they need. It would also ensure that the community provides transportation for human services efficiently across the boundaries of the multiple agencies involved. The planning process will explore what services already exist in the community, look at what is still needed, set out a strategy for addressing the gaps, and outline relative priority areas.

Ohlms advised that the MPO would seek to move forward to manage this planning process. Any other stakeholder could do so instead of the MPO if all parties agree. Managing the process would include outreach to stakeholders, conducting planning workshops, and creating a draft plan. The first planning workshop could occur in January 2008.

Ohlms advised that, depending upon the outcome of the planning process, the MPO might also serve as the administrator or “direct recipient” of a competitive selection process to direct some small amounts of federal funding to providers. This would only apply for funds under the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) and the New Freedom Program. Ohlms noted that just under \$389,000 is available through these two programs combined for the Greensboro area for FY 2006 and 2007, with additional allocations expected through FY 2009. Although the Coordinated Plan does allow the area to access this funding, the community benefits to conducting this planning process exceed the benefits from being able to spend these limited funds.

Bill Bruce inquired how JARC funding was currently distributed. Ohlms advised that in the past, JARC funding was distributed to states, which in turn distributed funding to providers. JARC became a formula program in FY 2006, meaning that funding was allocated directly to urbanized areas.

Tyler Meyer inquired how a similar process in Winston-Salem was going, and Ohlms noted that the first planning workshop addressed what the area was already doing, what the needs were, and what the priorities should be. Meyer noted that the Triangle Transit Authority had also conducted a similar process using an approach developed by a nationwide group. Ohlms advised that he was planning to use the same process.

Pam Hawley advised that North Carolina was ahead of the game in terms of coordinating human service transportation, because it had already brought human service agencies together to discuss the provision of service using a single fleet of vehicles rather than individual agencies each providing service. Hawley noted that the Coordinated Plan would be more of a gap analysis. Meyer noted that the program was something of an unfunded federal mandate, although it could result in some community benefits.

Michael Brandt inquired about whether the MPO could access some of the funding to cover administrative costs. Meyer advised that if the MPO became the direct recipient, the City of Greensboro, as lead planning agency, would become the administrator. Ohlms advised that each of the federal funding programs allow up to 10 percent of the area’s allocation to cover planning and administrative expenses. Brandt noted that Guilford County was already providing human services transportation countywide and that it might be an appropriate entity to serve as direct recipient. Pam Hawley noted that there is also state funding directed to the county transportation system for rural transportation; the formula funds for the MPO are intended for the urbanized area. Meyer noted that the key idea was that there would need to be some sort of administrator to oversee a competitive project selection process and that the administrator would need to ensure impartiality.

5. Safe Routes to School Funding Opportunities

Peter Ohlms described the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in light of recent grant announcements by NCDOT. Total SRTS federal-aid funding in North Carolina is approximately \$15 million through 2008-2009. Grants are 100% federally funded; no local match is required. The program encourages communities to address education, encouragement, engineering, and enforcement to support safe and routine walking and bicycling to school, as well as evaluation of the effectiveness of SRTS programs.

Ohlms advised that currently available grant funding includes Action Plans, which are intended to identify the infrastructure and non-infrastructure needs and proposed actions at schools serving grades K-8, and Non-Infrastructure Grants, which are intended for relatively small non-engineering activities such as encouragement and enforcement. In addition, each NCDOT Highway Division has some funding to use for improvements on state-maintained roads.

Ohlms noted that NCDOT was expecting to begin accepting applications for Infrastructure Grants in summer 2008. These grants would be for significant engineering improvements, and cities and counties are eligible to apply for these funds to make roadway improvements. Schools with action plans will receive extra points towards receiving infrastructure grants beginning in 2009.

Projects must have a resolution of support from the MPO in order to receive grants. In addition, the MPO would need to include federally funded SRTS projects in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

Bill Bruce inquired if the MPO's Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan would address the elements of an Action Plan, and Ohlms advised that the Action Plans were intended to be more school-specific and more detailed than the BiPed Plan, which did recommend pursuing SRTS. Tyler Meyer noted that the intent of the Action Plan is to ensure that education and encouragement efforts are coordinated with infrastructure improvements.

6. Transportation Project Updates

Craig McKinney advised that NCDOT began a feasibility study for widening I-40 from Sandy Ridge Road west into Forsyth County. The study is anticipated to take around a year and will consider what it would require to add one or two lanes in each direction.

McKinney advised of the status of R-2612, a project to construct interchanges on US 421 at Woody Mill Road and at Neelley Road. An upcoming meeting of the merger team will determine which alternative is the least environmentally damaging. A Finding of No Significant Impact is expected in the first quarter of 2008.

McKinney advised that the second public involvement session for the NC 150 Relocation feasibility study was well-attended. The study is being conducted at the request of the Town of Summerfield to determine feasibility of a more direct route for NC 150. The technical team will review comments received and make recommendations regarding which alternative to pursue for the final feasibility document.

Tyler Meyer advised that former TAC member Bob Landreth had requested the Greensboro City Council to consider what could be done to improve Burlington Road in eastern Greensboro for pedestrians. Sidewalks can be added to the corridor with the installation of curb and gutter, which would likely require a future municipal transportation bond or a federally funded sidewalk project. It does not appear to be a strong candidate for a federally funded road project. In the near term, GDOT

will install additional street lights in the area to improve nighttime pedestrian safety. McKinney noted that the preliminary cost estimate for the one-mile section is approximately \$3 million.

7. NC MPO Conference

Tyler Meyer noted that the MPO was honored to host the 2007 NC MPO Conference. Meyer acknowledged the efforts of Craig McKinney and Peter Ohlms to help organize the conference, oversee logistics, and arrange the technical program. Mobile tours were well-received despite rainy weather. Around 300 people attended, which exceeds previous attendance records. Meyer noted that the conference also helped to involve the state's RPOs.

8. MPO Strategic Topics

Tyler Meyer advised that NCDOT issued a call for proposals for pedestrian and bicycle grants, which could be useful for smaller municipalities. Peter Ohlms noted that the state had created a committee to study transportation issues, named the 21st Century Transportation Committee.

Brad Wall noted that NCDOT staff were excited about the potential outcomes of the NCDOT Transformation process. Pam Hawley noted that the original 423-page report regarding the Department was posted on the NCDOT web site. Michael Abuya noted that NCDOT had held question-and-answer sessions to receive input from its staff regarding Transformation.

Meyer noted that Jim Westmoreland was involved with representatives of NCDOT to ensure that the Transformation process considers MPO and local needs. Michael Brandt inquired whether it was primarily an internally-focused document, and Meyer advised that it was to a large extent, but that it also related to the priority development process and how the agency uses its funding externally. Abuya noted that one emphasis was on project delivery and setting priorities.

Other Items

1. NCDOT Update

Brad Wall advised that contractors were nearing completion on the western Urban Loop. The section from I-40 to Bryan Boulevard was ahead of the section from I-40 to I-85, but prospects are promising to have both portions of the road open to traffic by the end of 2007.

A project was awarded to a contractor to mill and resurface a significant portion of I-40 from High Point Road to the I-85 Bypass and will begin this spring. The project is using GARVEE bonds for funding.

2. TCC Member Reports

Michael Brandt introduced Craig Harmon as Summerfield's new Town Planner and thanked MPO staff for assisting with the NC 150 Relocation study. Brandt inquired about whether any survey work was occurring related to the NC 68 / US 220 project; residents had noticed surveyors around the area. Brad Wall advised that it was possible. Craig McKinney noted that a bridge project was scheduled for Bunch Road, in the area of one of the reports of surveying. Brandt advised that the recent reports were along NC 150. Wall advised that he would follow up on this.

Roger Bardsley advised that Jamestown had visualized a different future for itself about 12 years earlier, which included a push to construct sidewalks on all the main corridors where no sidewalk had previously existed. A recent citizen survey indicated that walking has become the most popular activity, and the Town will follow that up with an application for additional improvements

using Safe Routes to School funding. Bardsley noted that the change to a pedestrian-friendly place had brought about a corresponding change in people's attitudes towards walking.

Tyler Meyer and Brandt discussed the idea of including sidewalks on the upcoming US 220 widening project and other projects in Summerfield. McKinney advised that the new roadway design included 6-foot shoulders but that right-of-way could be too limited to add sidewalks.

Brandt and Wall discussed other issues including improvements in the Summerfield area and upcoming NCDOT resurfacing projects.

Meyer congratulated Peggy Holland on a successful campaign for bicycle safety awareness in October.

3. Wrap-Up

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