



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of October 23, 2008
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
Plaza Level Conference Room
Melvin Municipal Office Building

ATTENDANCE

Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT / Acting Director</i>	Ted Partridge	<i>Greensboro Engineering</i>
Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i>	Catherine Campbell	<i>NC Railroad Company</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John Spencer	<i>NC Railroad Company</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Jim Kessler	<i>HNTB</i>
Dick Hail	<i>Greensboro Planning</i>	Kelly Larkins	<i>GDOT Planning</i>
Roger Bardsley	<i>Guilford County</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>PTCOG</i>

Adam Fischer called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of September 23, 2008

Tyler Meyer moved for approval of the minutes. Adam Fischer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2008 meeting.

2. Approve National Highway System Changes

Meyer noted changes to the National Highway System had been approved during previous meetings. The current changes would designate the I-73 Connector as a NHS facility from NC 68 to Bryan Boulevard. A portion of Bryan Boulevard would also be designated as a NHS facility from the I-73 Connector to the Western Urban Loop.

Roger Bardsley recommended the maps be able show the bigger picture with Tyler concurring that seeing the bigger picture was helpful.

Fischer asked how this could be implemented.

Meyer explained that at the meeting in August there were functional classification changes and part of Bryan Boulevard changed to a freeway and another portion to an urban collector.

Planning for the transportation future

Tyler Meyer moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Adam Fischer seconded. Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to the TAC.

3. Approve Priority Needs for 2011-2017 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Meyer advised that development started in August and continued through September. The MPO started looking at future needs and started looking closely at the status of current projects. As well there was also an examination of future candidate projects for the draft MTIP. The start of the MTIP process is the MPO's articulation of top goals for the TIP. This is particularly for projects that can be realistically funded from a strategic evaluation. Priorities include multi-modal projects with public transportation, highways, pedestrian and bicycle components. Meyer further noted that there are different funding sources and partnership opportunities with the City.

Finishing the Urban Loop is at the top of the list. Funding is needed to complete the western part of the Urban Loop. The Lawndale to US 29 section is under design now. There is a three year threshold where progress on the project must be made.

Critical projects include the Urban Loop connection from US 29 to US 70 which is still scheduled in the TIP. Right of way purchasing for this has begun, with construction starting in 2013.

Keeping the 68/220 Connector on schedule. I-73 Connector is also priority for the transportation system, but key issue is obtaining funding. The Connector is not eligible for the Highway Trust Fund. NCDOT hopes to be able to do a categorical exclusion.

Road system improvements include Bridford Parkway and High Point Road. High Point Road is most in danger for funding slippage. US 421 interchanges have CMAQ funding.

Roadway projects that are not ready for funding, but the environmental documents would be ready within three years. US 29 / Reedy Fork Interchange document should be ready next Fall. US 70 document about to be underway and will take 5 years.

Roadway Planning Priorities include the evaluation Airport Area Roadways. A focus will be on Sandy Ridge Road extension as shown now to tie into I-73/ I-74 Connector. However it may be more logical to tie Sandy Ridge Road into Bryan Boulevard. The study will look at various alternatives for the extension of Sandy Ridge including possibly using Market Street and Pleasant Ridge Road.

Meyer advised Pedestrian and Bicycle priorities. Top priorities are Greensboro sidewalks including 18 miles. The sidewalks projects are ready to be constructed next fiscal year. The sidewalk projects include a 1 ½ mile on Randleman Road; 4 ½ miles on West Market; 4 ½ miles on East Wendover Avenue.

Bardsley inquired about the status of the Battleground Rail Trail Phase 2.

Meyer advised the project can not go forward until Chandler Concrete relocates and Norfolk Southern proceeds with abandonment.

Public Transportation projects include the following items. Top priority is the GTA Operation, Maintenance, and Administration Facility. Have funding for design, but need to acquire funding for construction. Also have GTA service priorities which will be discussed in conjunction with CMAQ funding. CMAQ funding can be used for operation support. PART requested 4 expansion buses. Not sure of exact use, but will enhance current service.

Meyer noted next steps include adopting priority needs and taking closer looking at GTA funding options. The priority needs list will be submitted to NCDOT.

Fischer inquired about GTA plans for the hybrid buses regarding replacement or expansion.

Meyer advised hybrid buses could make a difference in operating costs.

Hannah Cockburn noted alternative fuel vehicles were very cost effective. Davidson looking converting over to compresses natural gas.

Adam Fischer moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Hannah Cockburn seconded. Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to the TAC.

4. NCDOT Policy on CMAQ Funds

Meyer advised that NCDOT made revisions to the CMAQ process. Noted the revisions were problematic. MPO's requested changes and pleased to see that NCDOT made all the changes recommended. NCDOT did an excellent job incorporating comments. There is funding available now, the same funding that went to start HEAT service, there will be more at the end of the current cycle.

5. Modify 2009-2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program – GTA Project

Meyer stated that \$1.9 million in CMAQ funds were left from the 2005 CMAQ Call. The committees previously agreed on the need to fund GTA top service priorities: expanding the evening service. The existing evening routes are a composite of the daytime route. This proposed expansion would use the existing buses more efficiently by extending their use into the evening. This should generate 60,000 new riders.

These CMAQ funds will cover the first 3 years of operating expenses; after 3 years GTA/City would need to find funding. The air quality analysis was completed and approved. Fischer noted that this came up with Council and they are interested in the nighttime expansion. Meyer stated the expanded service will begin July 1st.

Hannah Cockburn moved for the recommendation to the TAC. Adam Fischer seconded. Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendation to the TAC.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. Proposed 2009 MPO Meeting Schedule

Lydia McIntyre advised of the proposed 2009 Meeting Schedule. Meeting Calendar notices will be distributed.

2. 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan and Air Quality Update

McIntyre advised of the status of the 2035 LRTP and Air Quality documents. MPO is preparing to go out for public review. Public Review Period started on Oct. 13 and will run through Nov. 14. The documents are available at various locations including libraries, member towns, and the MPO website. A public meeting/open house is coming up Oct. 30th to share the LRTP with citizens. We expect to bring the LRTP to the TAC on December 3rd.

We are coming up on our certification review with FHWA to make sure we are following the regulatory requirements. High Point and Winston Salem are also preparing to go out for public review and bring the entire process to a close by March.

3. Corridor and Commuter Rail Capacity Study

John Spencer from the NC Railroad Property Department introduced Jim Kessler from HNTB. Kessler is principle engineer with a background in rail road engineering and rail transit planning.

Kessler started his presentation by noting HNTB conducted a commuter rail study between Greensboro to Burlington; Burlington to Raleigh; and Raleigh to Goldsboro.

The North Carolina Railroad started in the 1850s and partners with Norfolk Southern. It has 317 miles of rails which starts in Charlotte which then proceeds to Salisbury and then to Greensboro. From Greensboro it goes east to Durham, Raleigh, Goldsboro, and to the port in Morehead City. When the rail lines were constructed, it was 75% state funded and 25% private. In the late 1800's the company made an agreement with Southern Railway for the rights to operate the system for one-hundred years. This expired in 1999. Currently Norfolk Southern operates the rail line and maintains it, while the North Carolina Railroad owns the property and right of ways. A provision in this new agreement allows for a commuter rail service to operate on the same lines. Considerations with this included the need to maintain 24 hours a day and seven days a week freight service and servicing the customers. Safety is also included.

Over 24% of North Carolina's economy depends on rail freight service. A ridership study was not included in the study. There are 18 colleges or universities that are within 2 miles of the rail road.

In North Carolina there is the Amtrak service. Three of them come through Greensboro. Charlotte has the Lynx system.

The difference between light rail and commercial freight has to do with the equipment. The passenger vehicles are not Federal Rail Administration (FRA) compliant. Light rail vehicles do not meet the strength requirement.

For the scenarios, we looked at the services that would be provided. Most start-up commuter rail services have a peak time in the morning and evening. The schedules we set up ran four trains in the morning; one midday round-trip; and four returning in the evening in the opposite direction.

To begin developing the schedules, they are first put into build a rail traffic control model with characteristics of the railroad. Some of the characteristics include the curves and grades. Also included in the model are the current Amtrak trains and the freight trains. What comes out of the model is average train speed and minutes of delay for every 100 train miles. With those parameters, you predict freight traffic along with inner-city traffic up to 2012. The commuter train is added to this and the speeds go down and the delays go up. Then you come up the infrastructure which brings the speeds back up.

The service provided by this is broken up into two pieces. The Green Line is a Burlington to West Greensboro service. Originally this was going to be extended to Winston Salem on the K-line but PART is studying these areas. The North Carolina Rail Road decided to terminate its study in West Greensboro at the Pomona Yards. For that service, the four trains would leave Burlington between 6:30 and 8:30 in the morning and travel to Greensboro.

The service would utilize two existing stations in Greensboro and Burlington. Others like in Elon, East Greensboro, and West Greensboro need to be built.

The other line is the Blue Line which leaves Greensboro; runs through Burlington and Durham and terminates in Raleigh. The Yellow Line goes down to Chapel Hill as a connection which will make it a shuttle service meeting trains on the Blue Line. Potentially, someone from Greensboro could catch a train to University Station and take a train down to Chapel Hill in the morning or continue to Raleigh and further east.

The third line is the Red Line, beginning in Goldsboro in the morning and traveling west up to Raleigh and West Durham and reverse in the evening.

Breaking it up into sections, we looked into upgrading the equipment for the commuter rail. This would include upgrading the signals at the grade crossings, rehabbing or replacing bridges for the second track. In the Burlington to Greensboro segment, we need a second track for the entire distance between the two cities.

Dick Hails inquired about a Greensboro Urban Loop station location.

Kessler advised that they looked at where stations could be located for the commuter rail service, but there was not an effort to pinpoint exactly where they should be located. The location where the Urban Loop and US 70 meet the North Carolina rail road would be a likely place.

The cost shown is for the infrastructure, the track, and signals. It comes to \$213 million at 23 miles long with 21 miles of double track in this segment. The cost per mile comes to \$9.3 million. The second segment is Burlington going east towards West Durham which is University Station road, which is where you would go down to Chapel Hill. This segment did not need all double tracks. Some new siding is needed in Mebane and Efland. This part is less expensive at \$56 million dollars or \$2.3 million dollars per mile. The third segment is the West Durham to Raleigh. Overall the North Carolina Rail Road is single track, but some double tracks do exist. This portion is essentially a single track, except between Raleigh and Cary where a double track does exist. A double track would be needed between Cary and West Durham. This area is interesting considering most commuter rail services goes in and then out from the city during the day. With the case of Durham and Raleigh there are two lines that overlap, we have four trains in morning in both directions and four trains in the evening in both directions.

Bardsley inquired about what side a train would run on.

Kessler responded the tracks are bi-directional; it is not like the highway were you stay to the right. Trains can pass other trains on alternate tracks if one is slower. Generally they would run on the right side.

Hails confirmed that the limit of the study did not include High Point. Noted including this service would increase ridership just as the case between Durham and Raleigh.

Kessler noted initially the study included the K-Line to Winston-Salem, but it stops in Greensboro.

Craig McKinney noted that there is a double track from Greensboro to High Point now. Kessler confirms that there is a double track and it is being built right now. There are about 70 trains on the North Carolina rail road; about 60 of them are on the main line from Greensboro to Charlotte. 10 of them go east from Greensboro.

Someone inquires if there are trains coming from Danville.

Kessler noted Norfolk Southern comes down from New York to Hagerstown, Maryland which is northwest of Baltimore. From there, one route comes down following 81 through eastern Tennessee to Knoxville and turns east to Danville. The other is to the east through Rocky Mount.

Meyer inquired about Triangle Transit Authority and a commuter service.

Kessler noted he was noted involved in the study but understands that TTA was going to build a system from Durham down to Raleigh and north to Wake Forest on CSX. TTA was looking to build a commuter rail service but FRA said they needed to use the larger vehicles that are FRA compliant. Their plan was to build a completely second track and have their own separate service from the railroad. They were going to be in the same corridor as NCR, but run on a completely different system. Their system was also going to run more frequently than the current study was showing at around seven minutes to 15 minutes per train that would run all day long.

TTA had a staff committee in the Raleigh/Durham area and reviewed the transportation system for the whole Triangle area. One of the scenarios they came up with was the TTA system, now they have gone back to a light rail system with a waiver from the FRA but it's generally the same line. In this segment there is also major bridges over I-40 and 15/501 to Durham; the cost for the next section is \$250 million or \$7 million.

Farther to the east, the NCR has spent about \$25 million to build three passing sidings between Raleigh and Selma; they have just installed a new signal system between Raleigh and Gardner down to Selma. About 2 1/2 mile of double track was needed down to Selma. There is also no signal system east of Selma which will need

to be built. Most of the speeds are at 60 mph with the one segment going to Chapel Hill going at 40 mph. Constructing that system would come to \$115.7 million or \$2.2 million per mile. Right now the line down to Chapel Hill is only good for 10 mph with lots of steep grades and sharp curves. Part of the money will take care of this issue with \$233 million at \$2.4 million needed per mile. The total of all the costs come to is \$657.4 million for infrastructure improvements. Running a commuter service requires passenger equipment, a place to maintain and inspect the passenger equipment, and a place to store the equipment. The passenger train would consist of a locomotive with four coaches. The train would not turn around, so the locomotive would pull in one direction and push in the other. This would all have to be Federal Railroad Administration compliant equipment with a cost of \$283 million. There is needed \$58 million for a place for maintenance and inspection and \$14.6 million for storage yards. The total comes to approximately \$1.02 billion for everything.

McKinney inquired if there would be dedicated rail equipment.

Kessler responded all the equipment is the same. The same locomotive could run on any line.

McKinney inquired about the total cost on the line between Burlington and Greensboro.

Kessler noted the cost for this line will be about a quarter of the total cost. One maintenance facility would serve them all.

NCRR is very concerned about safety in the proximity of the railroad. People trying to cross tracks could be an issue. The preferred type of development would be kept to one side of the track. The NCRR has 200 ft of ROW. There have been some encroachments at some locations. Light rail could be built in the same corridor. There has to be a minimum of 26 feet between freight traffic and the commuter traffic. There is 14 to 15 feet between main tracks, but there is room in the corridor.

Kessler emphasized the reason for the study. Gas prices, air quality, frustration with congestion and to minimize traffic on our highways.

Again, a ridership study was not done. This commuter rail study was to provide MPO's or transit authorities with a tool to know what the infrastructure is going to cost. It also will help to establish if there is a need. This also shows where NCRR should place their resources.

Meyer noted the study would be useful for the MPO in determining feasibility for the area and would generate comments.

Hails noted his involvement with some of the rail plans for TTA in Durham. One thing that they got all the jurisdictions is to adopt a land use plan. This is a helpful tool to establish capacity and higher density land use.

Kessler noted the study did not pick exactly where a commuter rail stations should be. They were just placed there for use in the model.

Hannah Cockburn noted the importance of the stations in regards to park and ride lots. The Elon area was offered as an example. Kessler agreed places for stations would need to consider places to accommodate parking, so not all locations might seem right away like the best.

Hails noted Greensboro is currently doing a West Lee Street corridor study. The discussion is about UNCG and the Coliseum. One thing is UNCG creates many jobs, but is constrained in development. The Coliseum would have more special events. Hails inquired where development is on both sides of the track, what side of the rail corridor will work better for a rail station?

Kessler responded the model was set up to have the station on the UNCG side.

Meyer noted Greensboro officials will appreciate clarity about specific services that benefit Greensboro.

Kessler noted a summary report and a cross schedule handouts were available and John Spencer noted also available on website.

4. Transportation Project Updates

McKinney advised we have received plans for widening West Market Street. McKinney will be attending field inspection. McKinney noted final build plans included comments submitted by MPO, specifically accommodating sidewalks.

Hails noted his involvement in Heart of the Triad and the need for a grade separation at Sandy Ridge Road and Market Street. Meyer advised that it would be evaluated as a part of the Sandy Ridge Extension Study discussed earlier as a part of the Airport Area Roadway Study.

McKinney noted NCDOT Rail Division is studying a possible rail crossings closing in East Greensboro at Pine Street. Proposed closing included as recommendation in the Eastern Guilford County Rail Study. A public workshop is scheduled for November 10th at Hairston Middle School.

5. MPO Strategic Topics

Meyer advised the next meeting is December 3rd.

Other Items

1. NCDOT Update

None

2. TCC Member Reports

Hails provided an update on the High Point Road corridor study; the meeting had a good turn-out and there was discussion about pedestrian and bike issues. The hope is to get the plan up for adoption in December. Following in January there will be more detailed area studies in Meadowview/ High Point Roads. Hails also noted the signs on High Point Road currently with reversible lanes have served their purpose. The existing structures could be use for other purpose like advertisements or public art.

Hannah Cockburn advised that invitations have been extended to TAC's from the RPO's and MPO's to join a statewide association that will advocate for legislative and other issues impacting transportation.

3. Wrap-Up

The TCC was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.