



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 25, 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>	Kirk Perkins	<i>Guilford County Commissioner</i>

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John Hunsinger	<i>NCDOT</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Donald Arant	<i>Greensboro Engineering & Inspections</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>Piedmont Triad RPO</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Taft Wireback	<i>News & Record</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	John McLendon	<i>Bicycling In Greensboro, Inc. and the Downtown Greenway Committee</i>
Mike Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and advised that Keith Holliday would be arriving late. Due to the lack of a quorum, Carmany deferred the first three action items and began the meeting with Citizen Comments.

Action Items

I. Citizen Comments

John McLendon spoke first on behalf of Bicycling In Greensboro, Inc. (BIG). BIG's mission is to help transform Greensboro into a more bicycle-friendly community. McLendon commended staff on behalf of BIG for their work on the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan and expressed continued support for implementation. McLendon distributed the most recent BIG newsletter and commented about National Bike-to-Work Month and Bike-to-Work Day on Friday, May 18.

Planning for the transportation future

McLendon noted that the second BIG Salute to Bike Lanes is planned to begin at Barber Park and travel along Florida Street on Saturday, June 9. The ride will be similar to one conducted in fall 2006 on Spring Garden Street, and BIG hopes to involve the nearby neighborhoods in an education effort.

McLendon then spoke on behalf of Action Greensboro, as co-chair of the committee investigating the Downtown Loop Greenway. Action Greensboro and the Bicentennial Commission have formed this committee to work on the project in cooperation with City staff and consultants. McLendon distributed copies of the current conceptual design for the Greenway. The vision is for a four-mile loop around downtown Greensboro that connects to other on- and off-street facilities for nonmotorized transportation. McLendon stated that the greenway would be a significant economic development project, bringing construction, investment, and people into targeted areas of Greensboro. It would also be significant as a transportation project and a public health project. It would help to connect many neighborhoods and bring the community together. The project will also celebrate Greensboro's history and provide connections between parks and open spaces around downtown.

McLendon said that current plans focus on the south and east sections of the greenway. The group has applied for one grant and is investigating other funding sources. The Action Greensboro design consultant will refine the conceptual design to a preferred design proposal. In the meantime, GDOT will review technical issues involving traffic demand, roadway configurations, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities and their potential bearing on greenway design and location.

Sandy Carmany inquired when the next round of state enhancement projects would occur. Galyon advised that the new round may be imminent, and that the project should be submitted for partial funding through the enhancement program. Carmany inquired about a specific timeline for the greenway, and McLendon responded that part of the southern section may be complete within two years, but that the other parts of the project would take more time.

2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns

None

Business / Potential Action Items

1. State Bicycle Committee Update and Bike-to-Work Week

Hanna Cockburn advised that May is National Bike-to-Work Month, and National Bike-to-Work Week is May 14-18. The North Carolina Bicycle Committee will work with Bicycling In Greensboro, Inc. to hold events, and Cockburn asked the Committee to approve a resolution of support. Bike-to-Work events are intended to educate the community about the benefits of cycling in terms of health and air quality, to acknowledge that bicycling is a legitimate form of transportation, and to encourage people to try bicycling. Cockburn advised that new partners would be involved in Bike-to-Work events this year, including the Heart and Stroke Health Partnership and the Triad Air Awareness campaign. The PedPower program of the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments has been working with area MPOs to recognize Bike-to-Work events.

Kirk Perkins suggested that John McLendon and Cockburn might share their presentations with the County Commissioners and City Council. Sandy Carmany inquired if any local bicycle shops rented bicycles, and Cockburn advised that the City's Blue Bikes program provides free "rental" bicycles at Bur-Mil Park. McLendon noted that there might be a need to provide such facilities closer to downtown.

2. Project Updates

Craig McKinney discussed U-2412, the High Point Road widening project. The public hearing date has been changed from May 15 to May 22. The meeting will be at 7 p.m. at the Ragsdale High School auditorium and will be preceded by a pre-hearing workshop from 4:30 to 6:30.

McKinney summarized the status of B-4534, a project to replace the bridge on eastbound I-40 over southbound I-85 Business. NCDOT has scheduled the project to begin next year. The design plan indicates that four lanes will approach the project limits. One lane will drop into a ramp onto I-85, and three lanes will continue over the new bridge. The leftmost lane will drop past the bridge as the left exit ramp for Randleman Road. The project is proposed to be let in July 2008.

McKinney advised that the project may help congestion some, but that the bottleneck to two lanes will still exist at the Randleman Road exit, and careful signage will be needed. Sandy Carmany noted that one of the major frustrations in the area was motorists who travel in the left lane until the last minute on purpose, rather than merging where indicated. McKinney noted that the opening of the southern Urban Loop should alleviate some of the traffic in this area. Kirk Perkins noted that each time he travels through the area, he witnesses near-misses.

3. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised that the Long-Range Transportation Plan update must be completed by fall 2008. A scope and work schedule are under development, and staff are beginning preparatory tasks for the project. Meyer discussed the need for public involvement in this update, which might be slightly less than what was required for the previous extensive reworking of the plan.

The Congestion Management Process, formerly known as the Congestion Management System, takes a look at operational issues along corridors and corridor-level congestion, building off of the City's Congestion Management System. Staff hope to complete the draft of the CMP in late 2007 in order to incorporate it into the LRTP.

Meyer advised that staff are developing the elements of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan with assistance from the Technical Coordinating Committee. After the TCC reviews them, the CTP maps will be presented to the TAC for review. The CTP will be closely linked to the LRTP.

Meyer described upcoming project-level studies, which include the Downtown Greenway, an expanded Battleground corridor assessment to factor in traffic at Wendover and Battleground, and potential other studies.

Of the four upcoming MPO meetings, Meyer noted, one or two may be cancelled.

Meyer noted that the process of developing priority needs for the 2009-2015 MTIP would begin shortly, with completion of the priority development process during the summer. He described how the priority development process would work.

Meyer advised that the urban area bicycle map was nearing completion, and that the next step would be to present the Committee with a copy of the map before publication.

Staff are studying STP-DA needs and opportunities and will provide more information in a future meeting. Westridge Road, one of the short-term bicycle improvements in the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan, is scheduled to be striped with bicycle lanes in the near future.

Meyer noted that staff continue to work on the development of the 2007 Conference of the North Carolina Association of MPOs.

Other Items

I. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon summarized the status of various NCDOT projects. The Eastern Loop is funded in the current TIP with construction scheduled for 2011. The US 220 – NC 68 Connector is in segments, with the first section to begin construction in 2013. Galyon advised that he was going to try to move that construction up within this TIP. The pavement has deteriorated on I-85/I-40 to the point that NCDOT has used GARVEE bonds to perform a resurfacing project earlier than originally scheduled. Galyon advised that the western Urban Loop is scheduled to be complete by Thanksgiving. John Hunsinger advised that delays could be possible.

Galyon described some of the issues involved in the West Market Street widening project. NCDOT staff reengineered the project in order to provide access to the adjacent properties and address stakeholder concerns, and the stakeholders were very appreciative.

The US 70 widening is not going to happen soon, Galyon noted, but the environmental document is funded. The High Point Road widening project is funded and will get moving after the May public hearing. The US 220 widening project from Horse Pen Creek to the US 220 – NC 68 Connector is sorely needed, has been delayed one year, and is a key project. Groometown Road widening is scheduled for this year and will provide access to High Point Road from the Urban Loop until the High Point Road project is complete.

Galyon advised that NCDOT would approve the contract for the US 311 Bypass in High Point in the near future. In conjunction with a Randolph county portion, this would create an Interstate-level highway from Winston-Salem to Level Cross. Galyon and John Hunsinger discussed the sequence of contract letting and construction for these projects.

Galyon noted that there were also about 15 bridge replacement projects scheduled for the urban area. Tyler Meyer noted that the project locations were identified on a map in the MTIP.

Keith Holliday inquired what “ROW PY” signified in the MTIP. Galyon responded that it stood for right-of-way acquisition in past years. The project in question, the Urban Loop from Bryan Boulevard to Lawndale Drive, has a \$90 million price tag, half of which is for a long bridge over wetlands. If the legislature allows GARVEE bond money to be spent on highway trust fund projects in a manner that would allow the GARVEE repayments to come out of the highway trust fund rather than general federal aid and other state revenues, Galyon noted, that could be a funding source. Hunsinger advised that the bridge would be around 1 mile long and cost roughly \$40 million. Holliday inquired whether the funding could be split so that NCDOT could fund the bridge and a local effort could finance the construction of the road. Holliday stated that this portion of the Loop would be a major priority and that he expected it to reduce traffic elsewhere.

Kirk Perkins inquired when the portion of the Urban Loop from US 29 to US 70 would be completed, and Hunsinger advised that the construction would begin in 2011 and take roughly two years. Holliday described the perceived benefits of the various portions of the Urban Loop, noting that the section from Bryan to Lawndale would carry significant amounts of traffic for the money. Meyer and Galyon discussed funding options related to GARVEE bonds and the Highway Trust Fund. Galyon advised calling Susan Coward about how local officials might most effectively advocate for this.

Because Holliday arrived during the Board Member Report, Carmany returned to the action items at the beginning of the agenda.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of March 28, 2007

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2007 meeting.

2. Approve Conformity Determination

Lydia McIntyre presented a summary of the requirements for demonstrating conformity with air-quality regulations. Because the urban area is a maintenance area for ozone and a nonattainment area for PM 2.5, conformity analyses must be performed for Long-Range Transportation Plans and metropolitan transportation improvement programs. The MTIP conformity analysis was conducted on a regional level, and Winston-Salem and High Point already approved the Triad Conformity Determination Report. The conformity document confirms that the MTIP is a subset of the projects in the conforming LRTP. Tyler Meyer advised that this finding signified that a new analysis of air-quality impacts was not required. Keith Holliday moved for approval of the determination of air-quality conformity. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to certify conformity of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2007-2013 with applicable air-quality regulations.

3. Approve 2007-2013 MTIP

Lydia McIntyre presented an overview of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program and the development and approval process. An initial public review draft in November 2006, a second in March 2007, and a public meeting on March 8 provided opportunities for public participation. Public comments received were incorporated into the final MTIP.

McIntyre noted that Doug Galyon had provided an overview of the changes to major highway projects in the MTIP. Regarding transit projects, many changes were made to GTA's projects, ensuring that key capital needs, preventive maintenance, and operational needs could be funded wherever possible. Projects shown on the unfunded needs list are key needs for which additional funding will be sought. Also, the announcement of federal appropriations for transit systems for FY 2007 caused changes to some transit projects and facilitated the addition of others. Page 13 of the MTIP describes significant changes in the MTIP. Keith Holliday expressed appreciation for these changes.

Doug Galyon noted that the Greensboro signal system replacement is on track.

McIntyre advised that the MTIP needs to match the State TIP, so the next step after approval will be to forward the MTIP to NCDOT. Tyler Meyer noted that the STIP has already been adopted but will be modified in June to reconcile any differences between the STIP and the various MTIPs. After that, federal approval of the STIP and MTIPs will occur concurrently.

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the MTIP. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. Bike-to-Work Week

Sandy Carmany summarized the intent of the resolution that Hanna Cockburn had presented. Kirk Perkins moved to support Bike-to-Work Week. Keith Holliday seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve a resolution declaring May 14-18 as Bike-to-Work Week.

Holliday noted that publicity would be important for Bike-to-Work events. Peggy Holland advised that a Bike-to-Work “refueling” station would be staffed on May 18 on the government plaza. Meyer advised that staff would work to publicize the action.

Other Items

2. Regional Transportation News

Doug Galyon advised that regional planning is the next step for North Carolina’s future and that the Triad is fortunate to have PART performing regional planning already. He stated that PART is the only regional taxation authority in the state. Tyler Meyer noted that PART’s Seamless Mobility study and the regional Long-Range Transportation Plans should help the area move forward in its regional vision.

Keith Holliday noted that portions of the MTIP were provided in Spanish.

3. Other Items

Keith Holliday inquired whether GTA bus purchases are made through the City or the MPO. Tyler Meyer advised that the City purchases the buses, sometimes through statewide contracts, but that the MPO does adopt the MTIP in which bus purchases are programmed. Holliday inquired how to proceed with a bus purchase to create a downtown circulator route. In the past, private groups had tried to raise funds for such a route, but it might make more sense for GTA to operate it. Meyer advised that Jim Westmoreland might be able to discuss the item with Holliday and provide an update.

Doug Galyon noted that fare-free transit service has had impressive results in Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill Transit is 80% subsidized by the University, but its fare-free bus system has a yearly ridership of about 6 million. Meyer noted that the fare-free system had led to significant increases in ridership.

4. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.