



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of May 28, 2008
2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC
Blue Room
(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Robbie Perkins	<i>TAC Chair</i>	Doug Galyon	<i>NC Board of Transportation</i>
Yvonne Johnson	<i>Mayor of Greensboro</i>	Kirk Perkins	<i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i>
T. Dianne Bellamy-Small	<i>Greensboro City Council</i>	Mike Winstead	<i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i>

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	<i>TCC Chair</i>	Bill Marley	<i>Federal Highway Administration</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mark Kirstner	<i>Guilford County Transportation</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Lia Miller	<i>Shepherd's Center of Greensboro</i>
Nick Harrell	<i>GDOT Planning</i>	Sharon Smiley	<i>GDOT Public Transportation</i>
Matt Talbott	<i>GDOT Planning</i>	Claire Holmes	<i>Transportation Advocacy Center</i>
Adam Fischer	<i>Acting GDOT Director</i>	Taft Wireback	<i>News & Record</i>
Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT Planning</i>		

Robbie Perkins called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Action Items

I. Approve Minutes of April 7, 2008

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the minutes. Yvonne Johnson seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2008 meeting.

2. Amend 2007-2013 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Peter Ohlms described proposed amendments to the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) currently in effect. Most of these changes were necessary in order to reflect funding recently awarded to the Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA) and the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART).

Planning for the transportation future

Under the Bus and Bus Facilities program (known as Section 5309 or FBUS), Ohlms advised, the state awarded just over \$2 million to GTA to begin funding its highest-priority need, a new bus operations, maintenance, and administrative facility to replace the existing facility downtown. Land, design, and construction costs are expected to total \$20 million, so this initial funding will begin covering the costs of property acquisition and design. Federal funding can represent up to 80% of capital projects, so a 10% state match and a 10% local match will be required.

Under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, which can be used on projects that can mitigate congestion and improve air quality, both GTA and PART received funding. GTA intends to use its allocated funding to purchase a hybrid bus, and PART is looking to purchase expansion buses and begin developing additional park-and-ride lots. Ohlms noted that the PART projects were for the entire PART service area, not just the MPO area, and should also be reflected in the funding programs of the Winston-Salem and High Point MPOs.

Yvonne Johnson inquired whether the CMAQ funding could be used to retrofit existing buses with devices to reduce exhaust pollution. Ohlms advised that such a project would likely be an eligible use of CMAQ funds, but that NCDOT had awarded funding for the bus purchases.

Ohlms advised that GTA also requested a change to a project receiving federal earmark funds under Section 5309. The project was shown as eight expansion small buses but will be split into two projects, one with four expansion small buses and one for ticket vending machines, which are expected to improve the quality of GTA customer service.

Tyler Meyer noted that NCDOT made the CMAQ funds available because they needed to be spent in the current fiscal year but were slated for projects that were unable to move forward. The Section 5309 allocation was a congressional award to the state, and NCDOT determined to allocate those funds to local agencies based on priority needs.

Yvonne Johnson moved for approval of the resolution. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendment to the 2007-2013 MTIP.

3. Approve Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

Peter Ohlms advised that the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan looks at transportation in the MPO area for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with lower incomes needing to access employment. A planning workshop in February brought together various stakeholders and considered the vision for a fully coordinated human services transportation system, what services were already available, and what gaps were present. The workshop prioritized actions to begin filling those gaps. Ohlms noted that although certain federal funds are tied to this planning process, the Coordinated Plan is an umbrella that can include those as well as look at other options for improving coordination in human services transportation.

Ohlms described some of the gaps identified in the planning workshop. Categories of gaps included improved marketing and awareness; infrastructure such as sidewalks and shelters; system efficiency, including linked services and expanded fixed-route coverage; service enhancements, in terms of both time and geographic area; coordination and communication between agencies and passengers; and funding.

Administration of the funding programs that are tied to the plan will be split between the City of Greensboro and the state. The City of Greensboro will administer the Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom programs, and NCDOT will administer the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program. Although it is state-administered, Ohlms noted, projects in the MPO area under the latter program must be derived from the MPO's locally developed plan.

Ohlms advised that the plan had been available for public review and that staff received one comment from a nonprofit organization that was not informed about the planning workshop. He noted that

it was the type of organization that should have been involved in the process and that they would be notified in the future.

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the plan. Mike Winstead seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

4. Select Projects to Receive Job Access Reverse Commute and New Freedom Funds

Peter Ohlms advised that the first implementation step of the newly adopted Coordinated Plan was the selection of projects to receive funding under the Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom programs. The MPO conducted a competitive selection process for these programs. Ohlms advised that funding was currently available from federal fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008 under both programs; if unspent, the funding is redistributed around the U.S.

A committee reviewed and scored the projects that were submitted. Ohlms summarized the two JARC proposals that were received, which were shown on a handout. JARC is intended to help provide employment transportation for people with low incomes. One was from Guilford County Transportation and Mobility Services (TAMS) for the continuation of its existing JARC-funded 24/7 Employment Transportation service, an operating project. The second was to purchase minivans for the Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA), a capital project.

The New Freedom program is intended to improve travel for people with disabilities by going beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and three New Freedom proposals were received. One was from the Joy A. Shabazz Center for Independent Living for a program called Greensboro Area Travel Education, which would provide travel training to individuals with disabilities and better allow them to access fixed-route buses. Travel training is an eligible capital project expense. The second proposal was to add mobile data terminals to GTA's paratransit vehicles, which would improve operational efficiency and scheduling for people with disabilities. The third project was proposed by the Shepherd's Center of Greensboro and TAMS. It would expand the Shepherd's Wheels volunteer driver program to southeastern Guilford County using operating funds.

Ohlms advised that staff recommended reducing the administrative takedown for the New Freedom program, which would allow all five projects to receive full funding. Any remaining funds would be available for redistribution in a future competitive project selection process.

Adam Fischer commended staff's work on this project, which was on a short timeline due to the need to expend funding before eligibility timeframes ended. Robbie Perkins noted that it was beneficial to access the area's funding rather than allowing it to be redistributed.

Yvonne Johnson moved for approval of the funding levels as recommended. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the use of funding under the federal Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom programs as recommended.

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

None

6. Citizen Comments

None

Business / Potential Action Items

I. Greensboro Transportation Needs

Adam Fischer described an across-the-board program to identify short-term transportation improvement needs in the City of Greensboro, including roadways, sidewalks, maintenance issues, public

transportation, greenways, and intersection improvements. Fischer noted that roadway construction costs, in particular, had risen quickly in recent years, making it impossible to fund all of the projects proposed under the 2000 bonds. Traffic congestion, as measured by congested intersections and arterial streets operating over capacity, has increased in the City. About 10 percent of the City's arterial streets operate over capacity, which is expected to increase.

Short-term needs total \$441 million. A series of public meetings was intended to consider how to narrow the list to only the most essential needs.

Fischer noted that sidewalks do not exist along 600 miles of streets in Greensboro, and additional sidewalks and greenways are needed to meet the demand for walking and bicycling. The total package includes 72 miles of sidewalks and 31 miles of greenways.

Maintenance is another growing need; the City's 946 miles of streets, 305 miles of sidewalk, and 105 bridges require attention on a regular basis. Robbie Perkins noted that although 20% of City streets require resurfacing based on an objective study, the City Council had voted not to resurface streets for one year in order to balance the budget. Perkins and Fischer discussed that costs to maintain streets are also rising. Perkins advised that the Council should reconsider its decision in light of rising construction and maintenance costs and current needs.

Fischer advised that public transportation ridership has increased by 85% since fiscal year 2003, and additional transit needs continue to emerge. The GTA Board identified five critical expansion projects for the transportation needs package.

Fischer noted that streetscape projects, which improve aesthetics on deteriorating corridors, were often popular with the public, and some were included in the package of needs.

A series of public meetings included information about the needs as well as a survey, also available online, to solicit input. When asked for their top concern, respondents included traffic congestion, traffic safety, public transportation, and pedestrian/bicycle accommodations. Respondents largely reported driving alone, with some bicycling and walking activity, some of which may be recreational use.

Intersection improvements, pedestrian projects, greenway projects, and infrastructure maintenance were well supported. The Downtown Greenway and public transportation had slightly less support, but still had over 50 percent of respondents indicating that they would support funding. Perkins noted that public support for maintenance was over 90% in these meetings.

Fischer advised that survey respondents' top 10 short-term roadway improvement projects include intersection improvements on Battleground Avenue, corridor improvements on North Elm Street, improvements on North Church Street, extension of Cone Boulevard to the Eastern Urban Loop, the Florida Street Extension, Horse Pen Creek Road, a railroad grade-separation on Hilltop Road, Vandalia Road, the connector between Cone Boulevard and Nealtown Road, and widening on Benjamin Parkway/Bryan Boulevard. Some of these projects were also included on the 2000 Bonds, but funding was insufficient, mainly due to rising construction costs.

Yvonne Johnson inquired whether staff could create a segment about the Downtown Greenway for Channel 13 so people could have a vision of how it would transform the community. Fischer advised that staff had used that medium in the past and that staff could investigate what could be done.

Potential streetscape projects include South Elm-Eugene Street, Church Street downtown, Summit Avenue, Lee Street/High Point Road, and Eugene Street near downtown.

Staff narrowed the list to \$112 million in improvements, including the Lewiston Road Connector from Fleming Road, which should be built before the Urban Loop so the Loop will have a bridge over it and eventually an interchange; Vandalia Road; Stanley Road; Alamance Church Road; Horse Pen Creek Road; the connector between Cone Boulevard and Nealtown Road; corridor improvements on North Elm Street, including intersection improvements and potentially a small-scale changeable-use lane; Florida Street

Extension; Benjamin Parkway, adding an inbound travel lane; and intersection improvements on Battleground Avenue.

Just under \$25 million is identified for streetscape improvements, including South Elm-Eugene Street, Summit Avenue, Lee Street/High Point Road, and Church Street. Fischer noted that the \$7.5 million for Lee Street and High Point Road would not be on the order of the East Market Street streetscape but rather for spot improvements at intersections.

Intersection improvements in the \$20 million short list include Market and College, Battleground and Cone, Clifton and Wendover, Pisgah Church and Lawndale, Elm and Pisgah Church, downtown bulbouts to narrow crossing distances and calm traffic for pedestrian safety, Friendly Avenue and Friendway Drive, Norwalk and Wendover, Florida and Randolph, and Fleming and Lewiston.

\$34 million is recommended for greenways and trails, including \$5 million for the Battleground Rail-Trail, \$14 million for the Downtown Greenway, and \$15 million for other greenway projects.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about a bond in 2006 for a greenway in the Ole Asheboro neighborhood that had not passed. Residents have expressed that they felt excluded from greenway projects. Tyler Meyer advised that staff would verify the list of greenway projects in that area, including the Vance Arlington Greenway and the Southeast Walking Trail.

Bellamy-Small inquired whether redevelopment of brownfield properties would upgrade South Elm Street or if a streetscape project would be needed. Fischer advised that it was not shown as a streetscape need but that the redevelopment could look at some streetscape options. Bellamy-Small noted that there was some concern about the flow of traffic in that area.

Fischer advised that \$20 million was recommended for sidewalk construction, \$2 million for public transportation, and \$15 million for maintenance over the next 10 years. These needs total \$228 million, with likely half of that in a bond in 2008 and the rest at a later date in the short term, with potential reassessment.

Fischer noted that the City had a good history of leveraging state funds for state roadways using bond funds, although state funding continues to weaken. Perkins noted that the only guarantee was that without local money, the City would not be able to leverage state funds. He noted that the City would be in worse shape had it not approved transportation bonds in the past. Doug Galyon agreed that the bonds were helpful for allowing the localities to leverage state and federal funds.

Bellamy-Small noted that PART was looking for a location for a mini hub somewhere near I-85/I-40. She suggested that GTA should discuss its new maintenance, administration, and operations facility with PART to investigate a potential partnership.

Bellamy-Small stated that at a previous TAC meeting, the then-Mayor and then-GDOT director pledged that people in summer school, such as GTCC students, would be able to ride City buses at no cost over the summer of 2008, but the promise was not kept. Fischer advised that the passengers had been notified what would be available to them this summer. Bellamy-Small noted that many of these passengers rely on public transportation. Perkins advised that a formal update to City Council on this issue would be appropriate. Meyer advised that staff would review the minutes of the previous meeting.

Perkins noted that transportation was a legacy of Greensboro and would continue to be so with continued investment.

2. 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Tyler Meyer advised that the MPO is required to update its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) every four years under federal law. This includes an air-quality analysis that demonstrates future compliance with air-quality budgets. He noted that staff had prepared an executive summary version of the draft LRTP as well as the full draft plan. A public review period for the LRTP, air-quality analysis, and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, will occur before adoption.

Meyer advised that the current LRTP Update is built on the 2004 LRTP Update, which provided extensive opportunities for public outreach and participation. The current update reevaluates the financial situation and status of projects but shares the vision developed for the 2004 plan.

The plan addresses land use partly through the regional travel model, which includes socioeconomic data tied to traffic analysis zones. Land use was also considered through developing a composite generalized future land use map based on the land use plans of area jurisdictions. This map was compared to the planned transportation projects.

Under the current federal transportation legislation, safety and security are two separate elements required in the LRTP. The plan reflects what MPO member agencies are doing in the areas of safety and security. Recommendations take into account those activities and put forward additional actions for continuing to improve these areas in the future.

The plan identifies proposed future transportation investments in the MPO area by network year, including both well-defined short-term projects and long-term conceptual recommendations. It identifies almost \$2.7 billion of roadway improvement needs (in current dollars).

Public transportation recommendations focus on GTA and PART and are based on current efforts and plans as updated by current circumstances. For PART, short-term expansion plans are included. Because the plan is fiscally constrained, it does not include the PART regional rail project, which does not currently have an official *locally preferred alternative* selected. Robbie Perkins noted that an estimate for the capital costs of the rail project was \$550 million. Meyer advised that proposed transit investments through 2035 total just under \$1 billion, a majority of which is for operating expenses.

Bicycle and pedestrian recommendations draw from the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan. The LRTP recommends that the investment phasing from that plan be incorporated into the LRTP.

Freight is addressed in cooperation with other Triad MPOs and PART and includes an inventory of major distribution facilities in the area and trends. An expanded regional freight planning effort could be considered in the future.

The plan also contains recommendations for travel management strategies, including incident management, vanpools, and ridesharing.

The LRTP's environmental section includes planning-level analysis of environmental considerations, including expected and potential impacts from projects in the plan. NCDOT and federal agencies assisted in this effort.

The plan's financial analysis identifies about \$2.7 billion in capital costs and \$1.3 billion in maintenance costs for roadways. Part of the value of updating the plan every four years is to update financial assumptions.

The air-quality analysis is still underway and has encountered problems in the process of demonstrating conformity in each network year. This analysis must be completed before the public review period begins, which is anticipated to be in July. On this schedule, adoption is anticipated on August 13.

Meyer noted that there are specific recommendations for each area of the plan, which are summarized in an action plan. Public involvement so far included a well-attended meeting and feedback, and a second meeting is expected during the public review period. Yvonne Johnson noted that public involvement efforts were important.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired whether staff had spoken with staff in the Charlotte area regarding the impact and effectiveness of its high-occupancy vehicle lanes. She inquired if the lanes could help with meeting air-quality requirements or were mainly for moving traffic faster. Meyer advised that the conversation was ongoing and that a recent study had not recommended such lanes for use in the Triad. Adam Fischer advised that the trend now was towards providing high-occupancy toll lanes, which allow single-occupant vehicles to use them by paying a toll.

3. Transportation Project Updates

Craig McKinney advised that the project to widen US 220 from Horse Pen Creek Road north through Summerfield (R-2309 AB) had a field inspection meeting on April 30 to review comments. The most significant comments regarded new right-of-way shown in the Summerfield area, including on Scalesville Road and NC 150 west. The right-of-way was shown as going through the Town's nationally registered historic district and will be scaled back to avoid impacting that district. These concerns will delay right-of-way acquisition by about two months, so the new date for right-of-way acquisition will be August 2008. Construction is not delayed and is scheduled for summer of 2010.

The project for two interchanges on US 421 (R-2612) had a meeting of the merger team on April 17 to follow up on a field meeting. The purpose was to review interchange locations and designs to lessen environmental impacts. As a result, the Woody Mill interchange has been redesigned to relocate a ramp and combine it with another ramp in order to minimize stream impacts. The interchange design at Neelley Road continues to fluctuate. Initially, the EPA requested a redesign to avoid wetlands. After seeing that redesign, which likely did more harm to wetlands than was originally thought, EPA requested that the project revert to the original design. There has been no change to the project schedule: the Woody Mill interchange is scheduled for right-of-way in 2009 and construction in 2010, and the Neelley Road interchange is scheduled for right-of-way in 2010 and construction in 2014.

4. MPO Strategic Topics

Tyler Meyer recognized Bill Marley of the Federal Highway Administration. Marley noted that he had been working with Lydia McIntyre to review the Long Range Transportation Plan. He advised that the executive summary included all the necessary elements and that the process was on target with its timeline. Marley advised that all appeared to be in good order.

Meyer advised that the July 30 meeting would be rescheduled for August 13 and that the September 3 meeting would be rescheduled to September 15. Yvonne Johnson noted that she would be on vacation on August 13.

Meyer noted that the state's 21st Century Transportation Commission was continuing to consider transportation recommendations, having made preliminary findings for the short session of the state legislature. Doug Galyon noted that several of the ways the Commission was proposing to return highway funding to the highway trust fund were related to loops, part of which was already included in the Draft state Transportation Improvement Program. He noted that he expected the Commission to work these items out. Meyer advised that staff would continue tracking these legislative discussions. Galyon noted that he doubted any substantial action would come from the short session of the state legislature.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon and Robbie Perkins provided a joint report on a recent public meeting about noise walls on the Urban Loop. Galyon advised that NCDOT would reexamine its efforts and would install significant landscaping, hopefully in conjunction with the City of Greensboro. He noted that the landscaping will not immediately be mature like that on Bryan Boulevard, but that it could make some difference. Perkins noted that there were approximately 350 people in attendance for the meeting, which lasted almost four hours. He advised that many residents were frustrated with the process, and a recurring theme was the labeling of the road as Painter Boulevard rather than as an Interstate highway with high speeds and volumes and heavy truck traffic. Galyon noted that a report filed on February 28, 1996 clearly stated I-40 and did not use the term Painter Boulevard. Craig McKinney noted that the 1964 Thoroughfare Plan does not call the facility Painter Boulevard and advised that the name came from City officials long ago and persisted. Galyon advised that it was still not possible for NCDOT to address the concerns of those who purchase property after 1996 except with some landscaping.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted some concerns of neighborhoods near US 220 and I-40. She also noted that Councilwoman Wade is proposing an ordinance that would make developers responsible for installing noise controls in the area of the future portions of the Urban Loop. Galyon and Perkins noted that both the City and County would need to look closely at planning controls for development near highway corridors. Perkins noted that a scenic corridor overlay on the Loop does provide some buffering, but not enough. He also noted that he expected the City to take action on a resolution regarding support and cooperation with NCDOT on mitigation including plantings. Fischer advised that the City would continue seeking funding and investigate what could be done for people who purchased property after 1996.

2. Regional Transportation News

Robbie Perkins advised that the PART Board retreat included a report on the service from Mount Airy on US 52, which has high ridership. Perkins noted that PART's long-range plans did not include park-and-ride lots in Rockingham County due to a lack of support from local governments there. He suggested that people from Rockingham would likely use a park-and-ride lot to access transit to major job centers rather than drive their personal vehicles as gas prices continue to rise.

Perkins advised that PART's fund balance is projected to decline each year, with additional revenue sources required beginning in 2012 to conduct future expansions. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted that PART is working with Alamance County to connect regional transit systems in the Triad and the Triangle. She advised that cooperation with Rockingham County would also help access to employment in the northeastern part of the MPO area near Browns Summit. Bellamy-Small suggested increasing the PART fare for certain services, including the bus to Boone, which Perkins noted is subsidized as an intercity route.

3. Other Items

Doug Galyon advised that the upcoming NCDOT Board meeting included funding for the Greensboro Signal System at \$24 million. Adam Fischer advised that the City of Greensboro was contributing \$3.5 million for a local match and additional technology items.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about funding provided to the County for elderly and paratransit services, specifically Title III dollars. She noted that residents of Anointed Acres, an area on the outskirts of the City, are in need of transportation service at least occasionally. She requested that City and County transportation staff collaborate on this issue to investigate potential solutions. Meyer advised that staff would investigate this issue and return with a report in June.

Bellamy-Small requested a study to investigate privatizing SCAT rather than providing it with City services if it can be done legally. She noted that it is an expensive service to provide but that riders are not satisfied with the quality of service, and suggested looking at consolidating the City and County systems. Fischer noted that PART could step in to look at these issues. Fischer advised that PART's ongoing Seamless Mobility Study might touch on these issues but that staff would investigate additional options.

4. Wrap-Up

Tyler Meyer noted that the June 25 meeting would be held. The TAC was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.