



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 26, 2006

2:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room

(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany TAC Chair
Jim Westmoreland TCC Chair
Doug Galyon NCDOT
Keith Holliday Mayor, City of Greensboro
Kirk Perkins Guilford County Board of Commissioners
T. Dianne Bellamy- Greensboro City Council
Small

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	GDOT / MPO	Peggy Holland	GDOT/ MPO
Allen Purser	Chamber of Commerce	Lydia McIntyre	GDOT / MPO
Craig McKinney	GDOT / MPO		
Scott Rhine	PART		
Taft Wireback	News and Record		
Eric Midkiff	NCDOT-PDEA		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:15pm.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of May 24, 2006

Doug Galyon moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2006 meeting.

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

None

3. Citizen Comments

None

4. Approve Committee TCC and TAC Bylaws

Tyler Meyer advised that at present neither the TAC nor TCC have existing bylaws. The bylaws will serve as a guide to operating TAC and TCC meetings. Meyer noted the bylaws were prompted by an effort to update the membership roster for the TCC. The bylaws also include information required by the North Carolina Open Meetings Law. Tyler Meyer advised that the TCC had approved their bylaws that morning, but under the MOU provisions, the TAC should also approve them. Doug Galyon inquired about changes made to the bylaws since the last meeting. Meyer responded that the TCC bylaws had been modified since the last meeting. Items modified were shown with an underline and included editing the name, requirements regarding voting membership, and appointment of alternatives. A standing provision was also added for the TCC where if members do not attend for a couple of meetings, their seat will be declared vacant for purpose of establishing a quorum. This idea was borrowed from the RPO and Winston-Salem's bylaws were used as a starting point. Doug Galyon also inquired about the two different voting groups for the TCC. Meyer advised that it was set up this way to ensure that we have a quorum with the members who regularly attend. Galyon also inquired if those members would be allowed to vote if they do attend a meeting. Meyer stated as the document is set up, they would not be able to vote. Jim Westmoreland noted that the bylaws should be approved as is. Westmoreland further stated if the issue does arise in the future, we could address it at that time.

T. Dianne Bellamy-Small moved to approve the TCC Bylaws as presented. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the bylaws as presented.

Doug Galyon moved to approve the TAC Bylaws as presented. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the bylaws as presented.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. TAC Quality Survey

Lydia McIntyre advised members to fill out a TAC Quality Survey as a part of the GDOT initiative to assess MPO service to internal and external stakeholders. McIntyre noted the TCC had also received one at a previous meeting and MPO staff reported back on the comments at the 11 o'clock meeting. It was requested that the TAC take the time to fill out the survey to get feedback on the MPO service. MPO staff has also discussed developing an online survey for citizens. Sandy Carmany inquired if this was an initiative the MPO was solely undertaking. McIntyre responded that the survey was to meet a GDOT initiative set out by Jim Westmoreland. Westmoreland noted it was a departmental quality initiative to evaluate our services and to identify areas where we are doing well and where we need to improve. Westmoreland gave his appreciation for the TAC taking the time to fill out the survey and asked them to let us know of any concerns or issues they may have.

2. Project Development Process

Tyler Meyer introduced Eric Midkiff from the Project Development and Analysis Branch (PDEA), where he is the Project Unit Head for the Central Area. Meyer noted that we invited Eric Midkiff as a result of past conversations the TAC had regarding the project development process. Eric Midkiff gave a presentation focusing on the development process for an NCDOT project. The projects going through this process have been included and funded in the TIP and in which right-of-way acquisition has begun. Depending on the complexity of the project, the time frame could be short (6 months to a year) or longer. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 is a congressional act that governs the process. This act requires an environmental impact analysis and the development of feasible alternatives. This act also requires coordination with federal, state, and local agencies and the public. The act also requires the preparation of environmental impact statements.

Midkiff noted there are also several other laws that must be considered during the process. A very important component of the project planning process is Section 404 NEPA Interagency Merger Process, also known as Merger 01. The process requires PDEA to coordinate with state and federal agencies and the MPOs at various key decision points throughout the development process. The key for the Merger process is to address tough concerns early in the development process, instead of when it is time to get a permit. Doug Galyon commented on the importance of the Merger process and its effectiveness in recent years. Midkiff noted that projects that have gone through the Merger process are just getting to the stage of applying for permits. NCDOT has been using the process for about 10 years. The key decision making points are Concurrence Point 1- Purpose and Need, Concurrence Point 2 – Alternatives to be Carried Forward, Concurrence Point 2a- Bridging, Concurrence Point 3 – Least Environmentally Damaging Practical Alternative (LEDPA), and Concurrence Point 4- Minimization. Points are disbursed throughout the process and the next point is only moved to after all agencies have signed off on the concurrence point at hand. The agencies that must sign off on the concurrence points include NCDOT, Federal Highway Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, Division of Water Quality, North Carolina Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wildlife Resource Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, the MPO, and other agencies depending on where the project is located.

Sandy Carmany noted the lengthiness of the Merger process, but Galyon offered that NCDOT is hoping to cut the process from 10 years to 4 years. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about NCDOT purchasing land for I-840 near Huffine Mill Road, but the land was never used due to a shift in alignment. Jim Westmoreland noted that MPO staff would follow up on the inquiry.

Midkiff showed a slide that listed the steps for the development of a project from its inception in the Long Range Transportation Plan, funding the project in the TIP, performing the environmental analysis, designing the project, and constructed it. A slide was also shown with colored coded steps to represent areas where NCDOT fully control the step or where coordination with other agencies is required. Eric Midkiff noted that many of the steps in his area do require coordination with other agencies, which is good collaboration, but can make the process lengthy.

Eric Midkiff went through the major steps for the project development and environmental analysis phase of a project. Work begins in PDEA when the project is funded. Preliminary data is collected through GIS data, talking to the MPO, assessing environmental impacts, site visits, potential accident and safety issues, traffic data, and aerial photography. The next major step is to hold a scoping meeting for NCDOT branches, federal agencies, state agencies, local officials, and the MPO to provide a framework

for the project. This is followed by Concurrence Point 1, in which the Purpose and Need is presented to the agencies. Data collected for the project is also presented at this time. Next is the development of potential corridor alternatives that could be used based on data collected and with input from the MPO. Concurrence point 2 includes identification of the alternatives which will be carried forward for detailed study. At this point alternatives could be deleted or added based on feedback from the merger team members. In most cases, alternatives are usually added. Once the alternatives for further detailed study are chosen, environmental specialist are dispatched to walk each alignment to collect data. The process could take from 9 months to two years. Citizen informational workshops are continuous throughout the whole process. The workshops are a tool to introduce the project and to get feedback. There is also a local officials meeting prior to the citizens workshop. In addition, there are other small meetings held in the community and neighborhood meetings. Newsletters are also sent out to citizens. Concurrence point 2b is to make a decision on whether to bridge or use a culvert. This decision relies heavily on the quality of the resources being impacted. Culverts are generally less expensive, however many of the agencies prefer the bridge which is more costly. Other items considered may include the type of access control, service roads, and possible wildlife crossings.

A draft NEPA document is now prepared usually in the form of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement or a Draft Environmental Assessment. These documents will include all of the data that has been collected and may also make a recommendation for an alignment. The documents are circulated to State agencies, federal agencies, and the public. The next major step is the public hearing which presents the project and its alternatives. The mapping is detailed such that the public can identify possible impacts to their property. The citizens may also make comments which will become a part of the public record for the project. NCDOT takes the accumulated data to formulate the preferred alternative or selected corridor. Concurrence Point 3 is the next step and includes making a decision on the Least Environmentally Damaging Practical Alternative (LEDPA). All data and public comments are presented to the merger team. NCDOT will also recommend alternative(s) which they prefer. Keith Holliday inquired about the MPO's and elected official's role on the Merger team. Midkiff stated that the MPO is represented on the merger team. However, elected officials may also attend the meetings. Keith Holliday noted that it would be important to touch base with the elected officials before this step. Tyler Meyer advised that the MPO staff endeavors to brief the TAC before these meetings to gain feedback so the staff can represent the MPO accurately. Doug Galyon noted that the public meeting procedures purpose is to allow everyone's input. Eric Midkiff noted the MPO is very much involved in the process. Concurrence Point 4 is minimization of the proposed LEDPA. The step can be time consuming because the entire alignment is reviewed to minimize impacts to environmental sensitive areas. Sandy Carmany inquired about High Point Road (U-2412) and if the issue had been resolved near the Guilford Memorial Park. Doug Galyon responded the Church across the street had been purchased to minimize impacts to the cemetery.

The final step is preparing the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document. The documents include the chosen alternative, rationale for choosing the alternative, public comments receive and responses to the comments. Sometimes design public hearing for large projects are held to inform the public of the final alternative. Midkiff noted environmental documents do not last forever. An EIS has a shelf life of 3 years. Within 3 years of completing the document a federal action must take place such as buying right of way or construction. If three years elapse, then a reevaluation must be performed to make sure data collected is still accurate. The reevaluation could be lengthy, depending on the project. Jim Westmoreland noted that with requirements becoming more stringent it would appear that the 3 year requirement would be extended. The requirement is a NEPA regulation and Doug Galyon responded they would follow up his inquiry. Jim Westmoreland inquired about how land use is tracked once an alignment is chosen, particular if

assumptions change. Doug Galyon responded that NCDOT is looking to regional land use planning by working with local governments. Craig McKinney noted that the City's Comprehensive Plan has impacted a design for a portion of the loop. Previously NCDOT was doing a rural design, but with the assumptions in the Comprehensive Plan the design was changed to an urban design. Tyler Meyer also noted that large projects are often broken up into phases and that taking action a phase at a time extends the document shelf life. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about new development being built in the alignment for a new road. It was noted that these alignments are shown on zoning maps; however NCDOT can not prevent a person from building. Doug Galyon noted the importance of the Corridor Protection Act, which is not done for every project.

Lastly, Eric Midkiff presented a potential development schedule for US 70 (U-2581), beginning in October 2006 and ending in 2010. The schedule was on a 4 year timeframe and would go to 6 years if an EIS was required.

3. PART Air Quality Awareness Program Update

Scott Rhine gave an historical overview for the Air Awareness Program. The Triad Air Awareness program began in the late 90's and was housed at the Winston-Salem Chamber. The Forsyth County Environmental Affairs Department (FCEAD) is now housing the program as a result of funds being cut by Division of Air Quality (DAQ). The program is currently working with PART and has been partially funded by the Triad MPOs. Scott Rhine showed a slide showing funding for the program through 2012. Lorelei Elkins, area coordinator, gave a presentation on air quality outreach in the triad. Thus far in 2006, there have been six code orange days. The purpose of the awareness program is to present these issues to the Triad to result in behavioral changes to protect their health and the environment.

By teaming up with PART, they have made presentations to the public in Forsyth and Guilford Counties. A transportation and air quality message is presented together in order to show the important link between the two. Three basic marketing strategies are used to convince the public that air quality is an issue. They include gaining buy in, making sure citizens understand it, and encouraging the citizens to try to change their behaviors. Behavior changes may include trying transit or checking the air quality forecast. Elkins noted there are over 300 air quality coalitions. Lorelei Elkins visits and talks about air quality and transportation options with these members. Transportation methods are included in these discussions, encompassing local transportation options as well as altering driving practices and using alternative fuels. They also discuss the benefits of cycling and greenways.

The air quality index information is a main tool used in their presentations to emphasize the importance of monitoring ozone and particle pollution on a daily basis. The public is becoming savvy about understanding the index, particularly medical agencies or parents with asthmatic children. The Air Awareness Program has partnered with American Lung Association, School Systems, and the Greensboro Science Museum. Elkins also shared examples of TV ads and billboards in the Triad area. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small inquired about engaging citizens who may not be sensitive to the air quality issues. Elkins noted that once the air quality reaches code orange, many people are affected by it. However, it does present a challenge to engage everyone. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small also inquired if there is a method to evaluate the impact particles from industry have on residential areas. Elkins noted there are PM monitor stations in the area, which would show a localized problem. Sandy Carmany noted a PM monitor is located at Mendenhall School. Elkins also noted that a new environmental justice grant is available to identify EJ issues. Tyler Meyer offered that FCEAD or DAQ could provide technical assistance on the impacts. Eric Midkiff noted that the federal government is requiring PM 2.5 analysis for projects in 3 North Carolina counties including Guilford.

4. Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Update

Lydia McIntyre discussed the CTP and its new processes given by NCDOT. NCDOT recently had meetings for external stakeholders on the CTP process. In 2001, the law (G.S.136-66.2) was changed from requiring a thoroughfare plan to requiring a CTP. The thoroughfare plan is no longer required, but the Comprehensive Transportation Plan maps are now required for NCDOT approval. The CTP is moving from focusing just on roads to a more multi-modal plan. NCDOT has also developed a process for developing these maps. Outcomes from the process will include maps and supportive documentation. The maps will include highway, bike, pedestrian, and rail / public transportation elements. MPO staff is currently working on a bike and pedestrian plan which will be used for the bike and pedestrian elements. Essentially, the MPO is already doing this as a part of the Long Range Transportation Plan to meet federal requirements. Therefore, maps for these specific elements will be extracted out of the LRTP and sent to NCDOT. GIS data is being collected for the highway element, which will be presented in a special TCC meeting and then presented to the TAC.

5. Project Updates

Craig McKinney presented R-2611, the widening of West Market Street from NC 68 West to Bunker Hill Road in Colfax. The project was dropped from the merger process. There was also a public hearing a few months ago. MPO staff attended the post public hearing meeting on Monday to review the map and public comments. Concerns discussed during the meeting included providing better access to Colfax Elementary and the post office. Relocating median opening from Little Santee to Marshall Smith Road. Paving a shoulder 400 feet west of the Bunker Hill Road and providing a left turn bay at Frances Daily Court. NCDOT is also looking at a design to minimize impact to the pond in front of the Girl's Scout building. NCDOT is also looking at ways for allowing full access at Brigham and Burgess Roads although it may not be possible because of their proximity to NC 68.

6. MPO Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer advised work is still underway on the bicycle-pedestrian-greenway plan to prepare a draft document for public review and comment within the next month. Staff hopes to provide an overview update at the next meeting. Meyer reminded TAC members to fill out the quality survey and thanked them for their feedback.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon advised still working to get a draft TIP before the board in September. The final approval will be June 2007.

2. Regional Transportation News

Sandy Carmany reported PART ridership is continuously increasing. There was a kick off event for PART's Park and Ride in Pilot Mountain on July 13th and the express service will begin on July 31st. Doug Galyon noted ridership at the Depot is also increasing.

Sandy Carmany made an announcement of the HEAT (Higher Education Area Transit) service kick off next week on August 8th. A verbally commitment by NC A&T to join in the service has been made.

Scott Rhine reported new PART buses are in and are fueled by ultra low sulfur diesel. There is no local supplier; therefore the fuel is being shipped. Rhine reminded everyone of the trip to the Charlotte area as part of HOT study to look at the rail line under construction and the developments along it. PART and NCDOT are also further studying the feasibility of providing service to Boone along US 421 to serve students and commuters.

3. Wrap-Up

Tyler Meyer recognized the MPO and GDOT for their leadership in the HEAT service. T. Dianne Bellamy-Small noted on August 15th Councilperson Goldie Wells is having a college council meeting at 4pm in the council chambers. Wells is trying to establish a relationship with the local colleges in Greensboro. Bellamy-Small requested that some members of the staff attend so the students could see the faces behind city government.

The TAC was adjourned at 4pm.