



# GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

## TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

July 26, 2006

11:00 a.m. Greensboro, NC

Blue Room (County Commissioners' Briefing Room)

Old Guilford County Courthouse

### ATTENDANCE

<b>Jim Westmoreland</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>	<b>Taft Wireback</b>	<b>News &amp; Record</b>
<b>Tyler Meyer</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>	<b>Scott Rhine</b>	<b>PART</b>
<b>Lydia McIntyre</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>	<b>Lorelei Elkins</b>	<b>Triad Air Awareness</b>
<b>Peggy Holland</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>	<b>Eric Midkiff</b>	<b>NCDOT</b>
<b>Craig McKinney</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>	<b>Brian Thomas</b>	<b>NCDOT</b>
<b>Bill Bruce</b>	<b>G.C. Planning and Development</b>	<b>Roger Bardsley</b>	<b>G.C. Community &amp; Economic Development</b>
<b>Heidi Galanti</b>	<b>Greensboro Planning</b>	<b>Pam Hawley</b>	<b>NCDOT Public Transportation Division</b>
<b>Katie Rose</b>	<b>GDOT / MPO</b>		

Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at 11:05 am.

### Action Items

#### 1. Approve Minutes of May 24, 2006

Roger Bardsley moved for approval of the minutes. Bill Bruce seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2006 meeting.

## **2. Approve Committee Bylaws**

Lydia McIntyre 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 and are a supplement to the MOU. McIntyre 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.

Roger Bardsley moved to approve the TCC Bylaws as presented. Scott Rhine seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the bylaws as presented.

## **Business / Potential Action Items**

### **1. 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. The 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. 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. 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.

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, accident 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. 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.

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. 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.

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.

## **2. PART Air Quality Awareness Program Update**

Scott Rhine gave a 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). Meyer requested that Rhine look into the feasibility of receiving funds from DAQ to support the program. 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 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.

Jim Westmoreland requested that Elkins send him a copy of contacts she has for Guilford County. Westmoreland also suggested that the TV ads and billboards include stronger ties to the local area (Greensboro).

## **3. 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.

## **4. 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 ways for allowing full access at Brigham and Burgess Roads although it may not be possible because of their proximity to NC 68.

## **5. 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.

### **Other Items**

#### **1. TCC Member Report**

Lydia McIntyre gave feedback on the TCC Quality Survey. Overall TCC members believed the meeting dates and times are convenient. Members are also believed the MPO staff does a good job of distributing meeting material in a timely fashion and keeping the members informed. The one area of improvement would be to increase cooperative work with PART and other Triad MPOs, and RPOs.

The TCC was adjourned at 12:35pm.