



TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Minutes of May 28, 2008
11:00 a.m., Greensboro, NC
Blue Room
(County Commissioner's Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

ATTENDANCE

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Adam Fischer | <i>GDOT / TCC Chair</i> | Mike Kirkman | <i>Greensboro Planning</i> |
| Peter Ohlms | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Ted Partrick | <i>Greensboro Engineering</i> |
| Tyler Meyer | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Bill Bruce | <i>Guilford County Planning</i> |
| Craig McKinney | <i>GDOT / MPO</i> | Mark Kirstner | <i>Guilford County Transportation</i> |
| Kelly Larkins | <i>GDOT Planning</i> | Hanna Cockburn | <i>Piedmont Triad RPO</i> |
| Michael Abuya | <i>NCDOT Planning</i> | Claire Holmes | <i>Transportation Advocacy Center</i> |
| Brian Thomas | <i>NCDOT Engineering</i> | Sharon Smiley | <i>GDOT Public Transportation</i> |

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

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of April 7, 2008

Mark Kirstner moved for approval of the minutes. Hanna Cockburn 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).

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.

Planning for the transportation future

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.

Adam Fischer inquired whether the PART buses were for new routes. Ohlms advised that they would likely be used in new routes, including a new route to Asheboro. Hanna Cockburn noted that some of PART's existing routes are operating at capacity and that the agency will extend service to Lexington. Fischer inquired if these routes would serve the MPO area. Ohlms advised that some of them would, but that the PART projects are for the entire PART service area and should also be reflected in the funding programs of the Winston-Salem and High Point MPOs. Meyer suggested following up with PART regarding park-and-ride lot plans and performance to date. Cockburn advised that it would be critical to promote the use of PART and its park-and-ride lots. She noted that the lots are typically purchased or built in existing right-of-way rather than shared with shopping centers to maintain direct control of the property.

Mike Kirkman moved for approval of the amendment. Adam Fischer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC 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 described some of the gaps identified in the planning workshop. Categories of gaps included improved marketing and awareness, needing a comprehensive communication format and a resource/information center; infrastructure such as sidewalks and shelters or vehicle retrofits; system efficiency, including technology options, links between 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. Mark Kirstner inquired if any public comments were received. Ohlms advised that one comment was received 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.

Tyler Meyer noted that the plan looks broadly at the needs for human services transportation, but project-based recommendations will be dealing with limited resources. For example, the plan talks about the need to enhance sidewalks, but sidewalk projects were not proposed under the funding to be discussed. Ohlms advised that a wide sphere of possible projects could serve to address the needs identified in the plan. Some of these projects, including certain sidewalk projects, are eligible under the funding sources to be discussed after adoption of the plan.

Kirstner moved for approval of the plan. Hanna Cockburn seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC 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 Coordinated Plan was the selection of projects to receive funding under the Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom programs. JARC is intended to help provide employment transportation for people with low incomes. New Freedom is intended to improve travel for people with disabilities by going beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and projects must be new.

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. With a 10% reduction for administrative expenses, the available amount was around \$542,000.

Ohlms summarized the two JARC proposals that were received. 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.

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 mobility management strategy and a 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. This reduction is logical because three years' worth of funding is available in one year. Any remaining funds would be available for redistribution in a future competitive project selection process.

Mike Kirkman inquired whether projects that are awarded funds could receive additional funding from a future Call for Projects. Tyler Meyer noted that some of the projects proposed would provide multiple years of funding. Ohlms advised that he would check on whether New Freedom projects can only be funded once.

Kirstner inquired whether the Coordinated Plan would be updated when the 2009 funds are allocated. Ohlms advised that there was not a requirement to update the plan, but that it would be advisable to update it every four years, similar to the Long Range Transportation Plan. More frequent updates could be required if priorities or goals change or if all its recommendations are implemented.

Adam Fischer inquired what the mobile data terminals would be and how they would help. Sharon Smiley advised that they were expected to improve operational efficiency through real-time monitoring of paratransit vehicles. Fischer noted that riders have expressed dissatisfaction with scheduling. Smiley advised that the technology would ensure that the system is operating efficiently and could serve to improve scheduling and monitoring. Meyer noted that GTA had items in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program for additional mobile data terminals.

Fischer inquired what the likelihood was of the funding being approved. Ohlms advised that as long as administrative requirements are met, the funding is already allocated to the urban area and would be redistributed across the U.S. if not accessed by the deadline. Meyer noted that the deadline was in July, which was part of the reason the plan needed to be developed on a tight timeframe. Ohlms advised that the GTA staff would work with project recipients to administer funding.

Ohlms noted that fiscal year 2009 allocations would likely be significantly higher than any of the previous years due to the amount of expired funds from fiscal year 2006 that would be redistributed. Meyer noted that, like many federal programs, these had good goals but were not well funded, although Congress could choose to increase funding in the future.

Fischer moved for approval of the funding levels as recommended. Meyer seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC approve the use of funding under the federal Job Access & Reverse Commute and New Freedom programs as recommended.

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. About \$441 million in needs were identified for the next 10 years, and feedback was received from the public regarding the candidate projects to begin narrowing the list. 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.

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, despite aggressive sidewalk construction programs. 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. A significant portion of these assets are in poor condition and require immediate attention.

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.

A series of public meetings included information about the needs as well as a survey, also available online, to solicit input. City Council's input helped to refine the final recommended list to \$228 million. 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.

Streetscape projects can improve the appearance of areas that had been neglected. Candidate projects include South Elm-Eugene Street north of Vandalia, Church Street downtown, Summit Avenue in the Aycock neighborhood, Lee Street /High Point Road, and Eugene Street near downtown.

Staff narrowed the list from \$441 million to \$228 million. Fischer advised that City Council had authorized a bond including transportation and other items. Half of the transportation projects would appear on a bond this year, with the other half in a future bond.

\$112 million in roadway improvements were recommended, 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.

\$20 million was recommended for intersection improvements. \$34 million was 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. \$20 million was recommended for sidewalk construction, \$2 million for public transportation, and \$15 million for maintenance over the next 10 years. The sum of the recommended projects is \$228 million.

Mike Kirkman inquired if the MPO could leverage additional funds on state-maintained roadways. Fischer advised that the City was anticipating an ability to leverage some additional state funds. The City's 2000 bonds had allowed the City to leverage \$84 million in state funding, but NCDOT may reduce its participation in these types of projects in the future. Tyler Meyer advised that the City should seek and expect state participation and noted that the City and NCDOT have a long history of successful partnerships.

Peter Ohlms noted that the Downtown Greenway was a \$24 million project and had requested \$10 million in City funds but was shown with \$14 million in proposed funds. Fischer advised that the City Manager's office had decided to increase support for the project.

Fischer advised that a tight timeline would need to be met for the bond process. The public hearing on the bonds will be at the Council's meeting on July 15.

Kirkman inquired about streetscape projects. 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.

Mark Kirstner inquired whether the bond project possibilities fed into the Long Range Transportation Plan. Meyer advised that they were related.

2. 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Tyler Meyer advised that staff had prepared an executive summary version of the draft Long Range Transportation Plan (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. The MPO is required to update its LRTP every four years under federal law. This includes an air-quality analysis that demonstrates future compliance with air-quality budgets.

Meyer advised that the current LRTP Update is built on the 2004 LRTP Update, which provided extensive opportunities for public outreach and participation and involved extensive analysis. The current update reevaluates the financial situation, updates the travel model, and looks at the status of projects but shares the vision developed for the 2004 plan. The vision centers on an integrated transportation system that meets the needs of the community.

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. A separate discussion addresses efforts to date in transit security and disaster preparedness.

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. For projects to be included in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, they must first be included in the LRTP. The plan identifies almost \$2.7 billion of roadway improvement needs (in current dollars), and the financial analysis demonstrates that these investments are reasonable.

Public transportation recommendations focus on GTA and PART and are based on current efforts and plans as updated by current circumstances. Meyer advised that proposed transit investments through 2035 total just under \$1 billion, a majority of which is for operating expenses. 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. For PART, short-term expansion plans are included; no longer-range expansions were included.

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. The area could likely gain some value from enhancing its attention paid to the freight sector, and an expanded regional freight planning effort could be considered in the future.

Travel management strategies are discussed, including incident management, vanpools, rideshare matching services, and other travel demand management options. The Congestion Management Process is closely related to the travel management strategies. The goal is to seek to enhance roadway capacity through operational strategies before widening facilities.

The LRTP's environmental section includes planning-level analysis of environmental considerations, including expected and potential impacts from projects in the plan. Current federal law requires a higher level of consultation with state and federal resource agencies than under previous law. Staff contacted the applicable agencies and requested comments on the plan for our area. The environmental analysis includes maps of human environmental features as well as natural environmental features. This analysis can provide information for use in the project development stage, rather than starting from scratch in project development. Analysis of this nature can also suggest what additional project-level work may be needed in the project development process. Concentrations of Environmental Justice populations, including minorities, the elderly, and low-income individuals, were also compared to the proposed projects.

The plan's financial analysis included a review of funding trends, proposed investments, and the status of various revenue commitments. It identifies about \$2.7 billion in roadway capital costs and \$1.3 billion in roadway maintenance costs.

The air-quality analysis fulfills a process requirement for conformity. The area must meet its air quality budgets for ozone precursors and fine particulate matter. Analysis is still underway and must be completed before the public review period begins, which is anticipated to be in July.

Meyer noted that there are policy recommendations and action items for most areas 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 in July. Adoption of the plan is expected at the August TCC and TAC meetings.

Mark Kirstner suggested including additional information about the County transportation system. Ohlms advised that staff could look at what was in the plan already and consider changes. Kirstner noted that roadway and sidewalk improvements also help transit services, which require efficient roads and pedestrian access. Craig McKinney advised that sidewalks are built into roadway projects. Kirstner clarified that he was suggesting a policy statement supporting roadway and sidewalk improvements that improve operational

efficiency for fixed-route transit and paratransit systems. Meyer advised that a well-integrated multimodal system was part of the intent of the LRTP. Sharon Smiley noted that roadway improvements would improve operations for paratransit, while sidewalk improvements would help people access fixed-route services.

Bill Bruce noted that the Piedmont Triad Partnership has convened a group of logistics and distribution professionals to promote the logistics and distribution sector in the Triad. The industry is promoting the aerotropolis concept and would likely be interested in information about transportation and land use planning. County planning staff have met with the group to discuss land-use issues around the airport, and the group may provide an opportunity to work together on the transportation planning and marketing of the freight sector. Meyer noted that the 2004 LRTP update had included representatives of the freight industry, but that the Partnership was a new group.

Meyer noted that part of the reason the LRTP is updated frequently is to address changing conditions. Michael Abuya noted that the logistics and freight concepts would be good information to include in the next update to the regional travel model. Bruce noted that North Carolina ports were seeking to expand their services to more effectively compete with other ports in nearby states.

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.

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 noted that GTA's short-range transit plan had been delayed somewhat and would be expected to be complete in the fall. Meyer advised that the July 30 MPO meetings would be rescheduled for August 13 and that the September 3 meetings would be rescheduled to September 15. Meyer noted that the June 25 meeting is unchanged.

Other Items

1. NCDOT Update
2. TCC Member Reports – None.
3. Wrap-Up

The TCC was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.