



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of July 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 Board of Commissioners</i>

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Ray Combs	<i>Town of Oak Ridge</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	David Hyder	<i>High Point MPO</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Paula Sloneker	<i>PTCOG</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Jesse Day	<i>PTCOG</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Hanna Cockburn	<i>PTCOG</i>
Jim Westmoreland	<i>TCC Chair</i>	Jane Whitehorne	<i>Jamestown News</i>
John Hunsinger	<i>NCDOT</i>	Daniel Ness	<i>UNC-Greensboro student</i>
Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT</i>		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. and deferred action items until the establishment of a quorum.

Business Items

I. BiPed Update

Peggy Holland advised that recently completed sidewalk construction included large projects such as West Market Street, with over 7100 feet of sidewalk, and smaller projects to fill gaps in the network. Elam Avenue between Friendly Avenue and Market Street now has sidewalk on one side. Other projects are ready to go forward but lack funding.

Planning for the transportation future

The City now has 6.3 miles of bicycle lanes, with 1.4 miles remaining to be added to Westridge Road this summer. Florida Street, Hobbs Road, and Cornwallis Drive have edgelines, which allow parking or bicycling, for a total of 6.7 miles. The edgelines are popular with bicyclists and joggers.

Holland advised that bicycle route signage should be installed shortly, and staff have been marking locations for 50 new bicycle racks to be installed, including about 15 in downtown Greensboro. The general public may suggest locations for new bike racks through the GDOT Web site. Printed bicycle maps are expected to be completed by the end of the week and will be distributed through local bike shops and other venues.

Jim Westmoreland noted that Tom Norman of NCDOT's Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation had commended the MPO and the Greensboro area for its efforts at improving walking and bicycling conditions. He thanked the NCDOT for its financial and technical assistance with the bicycle route signs and mapping, and he recognized Hanna Cockburn for her leadership on the State Bicycle Committee.

Keith Holliday inquired whether the bicycle racks are marked as being City-owned. He suggested using a decal for this purpose, and Holland noted that staff had investigated the idea of using instructional decals. Throughout downtown, Holland advised, most racks are clearly for public use, because they are located on the street side of the sidewalk, but some may be closer to businesses.

A quorum was established, and the TAC Chair returned to action items.

Action Items

2. Approve Minutes of June 27, 2007

Keith Holliday moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2007 meeting.

3. MTIP Priority Needs

Tyler Meyer noted the last meeting's review of the status of previous MPO Priority Needs and corresponding discussion. He then presented recommendations for the MTIP Priority Needs for 2009-2015. The Priority Needs List is one of the inputs for the 2009-2015 Metropolitan and State Transportation Improvement Programs. The MTIP and STIP processes will conclude in summer 2008 and will include public involvement and an analysis of air-quality conformity.

The priority needs list is intended to reflect the major priorities of MPO jurisdictions and are an opportunity to link back to the ongoing reassessment of transportation needs through the planning process. Considerations include (1) covering all modes, which can enhance the process by leveraging various funding sources; (2) the status of existing priorities; (3) new needs; (4) resource constraints; (5) opportunities for state and local partnerships; and (6) focusing on potentially achievable goals.

Meyer began with a set of priorities related to the Urban Loop. The Priority Needs List indicates that the completion of the Urban Loop remains a priority, with the following three projects: maintaining the schedule for the Eastern Loop from US 29 to US 70 (U-2525B) and obtaining funding for the remaining portions of the Western and Eastern Loop (U-2524C and U-2525C). Doug Galyon advised that the two unfunded Loop projects combined would amount to approximately \$330 million, with the western portion at around \$100 million.

Meyer advised that draft roadway priorities include the widening of West Market Street (R-2611), which is scheduled for construction in 2010-2012 and has experienced cost increases of around

\$7 million, mainly due to revised costs for right-of-way acquisition. This project is a priority to keep on track and fully fund.

Bridford Parkway Extension (U-4006) is on track for construction to begin in 2009 and is specifically identified in the Priority Needs List to be kept on track. Keith Holliday inquired about a building under construction that appears to be in the way of the Bridford Parkway Extension. Staff advised that the right-of-way has been acquired and NCDOT has worked with the designers of the construction site to ensure that the bridge and roadway extension can be completed.

Meyer noted that the High Point Road widening project (U-2412) from US 311 to Hilltop Road is fully funded and scheduled for construction in two phases, beginning in 2011. It appears advisable to restate that the priority for this project is to fully fund it and maintain the schedule.

Galyon noted that he had not yet received information from the Town of Jamestown regarding opposition to the High Point Road widening project. NCDOT's position is that both the Greensboro and High Point MPOs support the project, so it is NCDOT's intention to proceed with the project as scheduled. Regarding the Jamestown Bypass, sufficient time remains to receive comments and alter the design as necessary, but the project will proceed as scheduled.

Holliday clarified that his comments at the previous TAC meeting were related to relative priorities only and not the general need for the project. Although he saw the need for the High Point Road project, he had questioned whether other MPO area needs such as the Western Urban Loop might be greater. He also noted that more public input and concern was likely regarding the project. Galyon advised that he had no indication that there was anything but full support from the MPOs. Holliday and Galyon noted that the Jamestown resolution against the project was the first they had heard of significant opposition to it. Sandy Carmany noted that she was in full support of keeping the project as a priority need, and other TAC members concurred.

Meyer described the Hornaday Road Extension (U-4750) partnership between the City of Greensboro and NCDOT. Construction of the bridge is scheduled for 2008. Galyon and John Hunsinger discussed revisions to the municipal agreement for this project. Meyer noted that the priority for this project is to fully fund it and maintain the schedule.

The Greensboro Signal System upgrade (U-4711) will affect the entire community, is scheduled for construction in 2008-09, and has experienced relatively minor cost increases. The priority for this project is to fully fund it and maintain the schedule. Carmany noted that a potential state law regarding municipal wireless corporations, which could have affected some aspects of this project negatively, had not made it through a state House committee.

Meyer described US 29 at Reedy Fork Parkway (R-4707), an interchange upgrade project that is eligible for funding sources other than the Surface Transportation Program. The need is to progress to the next step after completion of the environmental document. Galyon inquired whether the environmental document would be completed in time for the next STIP. Lydia McIntyre advised that the last task order, which includes a functional design and assessment of indirect and cumulative effects, was still being evaluated for approval. The document would likely not be ready for another two years.

Holliday inquired why it takes three years to create a study. Meyer advised that review teams from various resource and environmental agencies are involved during the process to ensure that the designs are compatible with their goals. The study is also the groundwork to obtain pre-construction regulatory permits. Jim Westmoreland noted that three years was actually a relatively quick

turnaround for a study process of this nature. Another reason to complete a high-quality environmental document is that it is a requirement for federal and state funding.

Meyer advised that the US 70 widening project (U-2581B / R-2910) environmental assessment has been discussed and negotiated with NCDOT, and the priority is to begin the documentation. Craig McKinney advised that the environmental assessment scoping meeting would be the first step of a multi-year process. Holliday discussed the merits and pitfalls of widening US 70 in light of other projects. Meyer advised that it was the magnitude of current and expected future development along the corridor, not necessarily the through traffic, that might make the widening necessary.

Galyon noted that Interstate 785 will not come through inner Greensboro on the current US 29 as described in a newspaper article, but will rather be routed along the eastern leg of the Urban Loop.

Meyer described the draft bicycle and pedestrian priorities, which include Phases I and II of the Battleground Rail-Trail. Phase I (EB-4709) has experienced some cost increases, and the priority for it would be fully funding the project. Phase II, from Markland Drive to Lee Street, is expected to become feasible due to rail abandonment in the near future. Other pedestrian and bicycle project needs include some Greensboro sidewalk projects that are in design but cannot be funded locally at this time. These projects would incorporate recommendations from the Greensboro Urban Area Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenway Master Plan.

Meyer advised that the most significant public transportation priority is to establish funding for the new GTA operations, maintenance, and administrative facility (TD-4915), which has a projected cost of \$20 million. This project is necessary for continued growth of the transit system and important due to the operational inefficiencies and problems with the existing overcrowded facility. Other transit priorities include technology improvements for GTA's paratransit fleet (TM-4711) and cameras and other technology improvements for GTA.

Holliday noted that a past initiative using local funds for automated vehicle location devices was not well-received. He also inquired whether staff were actively seeking federal funding for the new facility. Westmoreland advised that the GTA Board had made a project earmark request through the federal appropriations process and that GTA was also filing for a bus facilities grant through FTA's Section 5309. Holliday inquired whether transit expansion receives a different priority from other needs, and Westmoreland advised that it was a different process with separate pots of money. Whereas highway earmarks reduce the amount of funding available for other highway projects, transit earmarks add new money. Holliday encouraged the City and County to support federal earmarks for the new facility and requested that staff produce targeted information for elected officials to use in advocacy.

Meyer noted that the approval of the Priority Needs List would be followed by a discussion of STP-DA funding resources.

Galyon advised considering the inclusion of the US 220 widening project (R-2309AB) from Horse Pen Creek to the Haw River as well as the NC 68 / US 220 connector (R-2413). Both require the existing project schedule to be maintained. Meyer noted that the latter could be identified as an intrastate priority. The TAC agreed to add these projects to the list.

Keith Holliday moved to approve the Priority Needs List with the specified additions. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve a modified Priority Needs List.

4. STP-DA Recommendations and MTIP Amendment

Tyler Meyer advised that the MPO has seen an increase in its Direct Apportionment funding from the Surface Transportation Program (STP-DA) because the current Congress fully funded programs at the levels specified in federal law, which had not happened in the past. Around \$14.8 million is already allocated in the 2007-2013 MTIP, with \$15.6 million more estimated to be available for the 2009-2015 MTIP. The MPO may direct these funds to priority projects. Criteria used to develop these recommendations included a multimodal approach, opportunities for partnerships, potentially achievable new needs, and the MPO's draft Priority Needs List. Staff reviewed the recommendations with NCDOT staff.

Meyer reviewed current TIP project needs that are proposed to receive additional STP-DA funding. The current cost estimate for the Greensboro Signal System upgrade (U-4711) is \$24 million, a \$2 million increase over existing funding. To keep the project on track for construction in 2008-2009, an additional \$1.6 million in STP-DA funds with a \$400,000 local match is recommended.

The West Market Street widening project (R-2611) is programmed with right-of-way scheduled for FY 2008 and construction starting in FY 2010. This project is a joint priority and partnership project for the MPO and the NCDOT. The project has experienced significant cost increases (right-of-way costs were recently updated to replace the old estimate from 2000 and increased from \$2.3 million to \$7.7 million). The recommendation is for STP-DA funding to cover half of the project's total cost increases, around \$3.4 million.

The US 70 environmental document (U-2581B and R-2910) involves the use of \$500,000 in STP-DA funding, to be drawn down as the document is created. NCDOT has agreed to partner with the MPO on the environmental document. Because it is programmed for planning and environmental study only, the funding amount will not be shown in the STIP.

Phase I of the Battleground Rail-Trail has increased in cost to roughly \$2.8 million. The recommendation is to add \$1.2 million in STP-DA funding plus a \$300,000 local match.

Meyer presented two new projects for STP-DA funding: various pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects and Phase II of the Battleground Rail-Trail. The former will allow for specific pedestrian and bicycle projects to be defined through municipal agreements and is a step towards implementation of priorities from the BiPed Plan. The most significant need is the continuing implementation of Greensboro sidewalk projects that have been under development since the early 2000s but cannot be funded locally due to the recent exhaustion of local Powell Bill funding resources and the committed status of remaining 2000 Transportation Bond funds. The recommendation is to provide \$4 million in STP-DA from 2008 through 2010.

The recommendation for Phase II of the Battleground Rail Trail is to add almost \$5 million in STP-DA funding for this future project. Setting aside resources for this project also allows for flexibility, because if the project cannot proceed as anticipated due to rail abandonment issues, these funds can be reallocated where needed.

Meyer advised that if the Committee chose to accept these recommendations, an amendment to the 2007-2013 MTIP could be adopted at the same time in order to program the funds.

Keith Holliday moved to approve the STP-DA action and corresponding 2007-2013 MTIP amendment. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the STP-DA action and MTIP amendment.

5. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns – None

6. Citizen Comments – None

Business / Potential Action Items

2. Scenic Byways

Tyler Meyer introduced Jesse Day of the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments. Day summarized the five-county Scenic Byways Screening Study completed by the Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization (RPO). The purpose of the study was to determine routes for potential new state scenic byways to promote rural economic development. Of the 47 state-designated Scenic Byways statewide, Guilford County has the Football Road and the Colonial Heritage Byway. One of the proposed new scenic byways, the Revolutionary High Rock Road, is largely within Rockingham County but enters the northeast corner of the MPO area for a short distance as a loop off the existing Colonial Heritage Byway.

The proposed byway enters the northeast portion of the MPO area and passes a 1753 mill that was decommissioned in 1914 and a house built by a relative of Senator John McCain. NCDOT has a two-step process for designating Scenic Byways. The initial step is to perform a study, which is awaiting NCDOT review, and Day requested MPO support for NCDOT to place the byway on its list for study. Later, the MPO may be asked to provide support for the second step, a detailed analysis of each corridor that will discover additional points of interest.

Day noted that Scenic Byway designation makes a route eligible for enhancement funding to add signage, interpretive centers, and pull-offs. Billboard advertising is not allowed on Scenic Byways.

Kirk Perkins moved that NCDOT should study the proposed Revolutionary High Rock Road Scenic Byway. Keith Holliday seconded the motion.

Holliday inquired about the distinction between a byway and a highway. Doug Galyon advised that a byway is a scenic, rural route rather than a major thoroughfare. Hanna Cockburn noted that NCDOT calls them “the roads less traveled,” and John Hunsinger advised that they are special sightseeing routes that through traffic would normally not use. Galyon advised that this is the first step so that the NCDOT environmental unit will review the proposed designation.

Holliday inquired about the designation of any scenic byways in Guilford County in the future. Day advised that because the RPO study focused on RPO counties, it did not evaluate potential byways in Guilford County. He noted that Guilford County’s urbanized nature makes it less suitable for scenic byways.

The committee voted unanimously to support the study of the proposed scenic byway. Doug Galyon noted that he had spent two summers working on paving Guilford County’s Football Road, a scenic byway, in the 1950s.

3. Jordan Lake Rules

Paula Sloneker of the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments advised that the proposed Jordan Lake Rules provide a way for the state to monitor changes to the water quality in Jordan Lake. Two major watersheds, the New Hope River and Haw River, supply water to Jordan Lake. The New Hope arm of the lake includes most of the Triangle region and has been designated as “impaired” since 2003. The Haw River arm includes most of Greensboro and was designated as impaired more recently. Because of the way the lake is constructed, water from the Haw River arm remains in the lake for a much shorter time period (5 days) than water from the New Hope arm (418 days).

The Rules were proposed in order to control nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorous. The main problem is nonpoint-source runoff, which is very difficult to regulate and control. The new requirements affect both new and existing development, requiring localities to retrofit existing areas with additional controls. This is estimated to cost \$750 million for local governments in the Haw River arm, with an unspecified additional cost to NCDOT. New development must include best management practices (BMPs) in order to meet target reduction levels. Similarly, NCDOT must retrofit existing roadways with stormwater BMPs and meet target reduction levels for new roads. Although the state has indicated that the cost to the state would be zero, compliance would be very expensive for NCDOT.

Sloneker discussed some problems with the proposed Jordan Lake Rules, including the way the critical watershed was defined and the way reductions in pollutants were to be measured. She advised that written comments on the Rules are due September 14 and that there has been a significant amount of opposition to the Rules at public meetings to date. Written comments are encouraged.

Sloneker advised that her staff would continue working with area governments and the Division of Water Quality to seek a compromise that would improve water quality without undue burdens. She noted that the Division of Water Quality would likely be open to revisions to the Rules but could possibly push them through as proposed, at which point numerous objections would send the Rules to the state legislature for review.

Keith Holliday inquired whether Guilford County had approved a resolution opposing the Rules. Sloneker indicated that most local governments had done so, but that she was unsure whether the County was among them. Sandy Carmany noted that individual letters from elected officials are also welcome.

Holliday inquired whether, considering that the Haw River empties into Jordan Lake so close to the edge of the lake, there had been any consideration of piping the lake around the dam to bypass the lake. Sloneker responded that such a project would likely not survive the environmental permitting process. She also noted that even if the Haw River watershed were to reduce nutrients to zero, it would still not fix the lake, because the Haw River water impacts a relatively small area of the lake.

Keith Holliday moved to approve a resolution in opposition to the proposed Jordan Lake Rules. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to oppose the proposed Rules.

Doug Galyon noted that a presentation to the state Board of Transportation led to very vocal opposition from Board members. Galyon and Holliday discussed other ideas for improving the water quality in Jordan Lake by charging the users of its drinking water. Sloneker noted that the agreement that created the lake specified that those using its water should pay for maintenance.

4. Project Updates

Craig McKinney provided an update on the planning efforts for the MPO Conference to be held in downtown Greensboro October 24-26, 2007. Sponsorship commitments have been strong, but only two vendors have signed up to participate. Conference information is available at www.guampo.org.

5. MPO Strategic Reports

Lydia McIntyre described proposed changes to federal air-quality standards. As part of its 10-year review of pollutant standards, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has proposed to

make its air-quality attainment standards stricter, just when the Triad's Early Action Compact (EAC) will have nearly reached attainment of existing standards. The primary (human health) and secondary (vegetation and agriculture) standards are being examined.

A final decision on the change is expected in March 2008, with re-designation of conformity areas in June 2009. If the standards are tightened, it is likely that the MPO area would be in nonattainment for ozone in addition to particulate matter.

Sandy Carmany inquired if the EAC process would be allowed again under the stricter standards. David Hyder of the High Point MPO advised that, because they were very controversial five years ago, they might not be allowed this time. Carmany noted that the good news was that the area was on track to be in attainment of the existing standards.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report

Doug Galyon reported that the northern portion of the western Loop project was looking good, but the portion from I-40 to I-85 was lagging behind due to the need to install shoulders. The northern portion will probably be completed by Thanksgiving.

From a regional standpoint, Galyon noted that the groundbreaking was held for the US 311 Bypass project in High Point. With its completion, all of Guilford County's portion of the future Interstate 74 will be built to Interstate standards, so the High Point Road widening discussed earlier in the meeting would provide a major thoroughfare into southwestern Greensboro from the future I-74. Galyon noted that the completion of Interstate 74 projects would be another reason to include I-73 projects, such as US 220 widening, in the Priority Needs List.

Galyon noted that the Governor's Highway Safety Committee would report that the state's highway fatality rate, which had been decreasing steadily, has increased for the past year, a disturbing fact. Jim Westmoreland noted that the committee will look at the data to try to determine what has caused the increase and investigate ways to reverse it. The committee discussed potential causes of this increase and potential initiatives to address it.

2. Regional Transportation News – None

3. Other Items – None

Jim Westmoreland thanked NCDOT for its assistance with emergency repairs and maintenance for the recent sinkhole on Wendover Avenue.

4. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.