



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of August 27, 2008
2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC
Horseshoe Room
(Room 201)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Robbie Perkins	<i>TAC Chair</i>	Kirk Perkins	<i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i>
Sandra Anderson Groat	<i>Greensboro City Council</i>	Mike Winstead	<i>Guilford County Board of Commissioners</i>

ATTENDANCE

Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT Division 7</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT TPB</i>
Peter Ohlms	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Kyla Purtell	<i>GDOT Planning</i>
Peggy Holland	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Kelly Larkins	<i>GDOT Planning</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT / MPO</i>	Michael Brandt	<i>Town of Summerfield</i>
Adam Fischer	<i>Acting GDOT Director</i>	Taft Wireback	<i>News & Record</i>
Ron Frazier	<i>Resident</i>	Marilyn Baird	<i>Kings Mill Association</i>

Robbie Perkins called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and directed staff to begin with business items due to the lack of a quorum.

Business / Potential Action Items

I. I-73 Update

Mike Mills described how plans for the funded US 220/NC 68 Connector were being coordinated with plans for the unfunded I-73 Connector project to ensure connectivity and avoid waste in construction. He presented a diagram with yellow lines showing proposed construction for the existing US 220/NC 68 Connector project and blue lines indicating the future I-73. A major concern is how to accommodate appropriate connections to Pleasant Ridge Road and I-73.

Mills advised that with either project, Pleasant Ridge Road will be an at-grade intersection with NC-68. Because two alternatives are still under consideration for the route of I-73 and the final choice will not be set until environmental documentation is complete, the US 220/NC 68 Connector is being designed with the possible alternatives in mind.

Planning for the transportation future

The US 220/NC 68 Connector is funded for right-of-way in 2010 and construction in 2013. Regardless of the status of the I-73 Connector, the former project will go forward. Access through the area will be discussed after a future public workshop, likely to be held in late 2008, to review the new design concepts.

Robbie Perkins inquired about impacts to existing businesses in the area. Mills advised that without the future I-73 Connector, NCDOT would likely bridge Pleasant Ridge Road over NC 68. However, with the potential future I-73 Connector, it would be best not to install a bridge that would need to be torn down in the future, so the recommendation is an at-grade intersection. The project does shift Pleasant Ridge to the north slightly and will make it a large intersection, but vehicles will be able to move through it. The main issue will be how to provide access to property, possibly via service roads.

Michael Brandt inquired whether US 220 (Battleground Avenue) from the Haw River to Horse Pen Creek Road is still a potential alternative corridor for I-73. Mills advised that it had been officially ruled out after the alternatives analysis, largely due to environmental and historical issues.

2. Airport Area Roadway Planning Update

Tyler Meyer noted that the Airport Area Transportation Study completed in 2003-2004 led to the addition of several new freeways and revisions of the Thoroughfare Plan. These included an I-73/I-74 Connector from the airport area towards Winston-Salem, an I-40 Connector from that facility to I-40, and an extension of Sandy Ridge Road to connect to the new freeway system as an arterial thoroughfare. NCDOT prepared this study in cooperation with the MPO and the High Point and Winston-Salem MPOs. Additional studies needed to validate or refine this part of the planned roadway network were on hold until the state completed the majority of its routing recommendations for I-73 in this area. Given that NCDOT has a recommended alignment for I-73, Meyer advised, it appears to be time to conduct additional planning work. Pending studies planned by the High Point MPO provide opportunities for coordination of roadway network plans to the south of I-40 as well.

The High Point MPO plans to conduct a feasibility study for the proposed North-South Connector from US 311 to Macy Grove Road to enhance access on the western side of High Point. High Point also plans to develop an environmental document for widening Johnson Street and Sandy Ridge Road in connection with a federal earmark. High Point requested for Greensboro to do a feasibility study of the Sandy Ridge Road Extension north of I-40 as well. One goal is to clarify how to connect a surface-street Sandy Ridge Road to the airport area, independent of any longer-term future freeways in the area. Reevaluation of the planned airport area future roadway connections is needed to support these studies, because the connections would have significant effects on area traffic patterns and traffic on the North-South Connector as well as Sandy Ridge Road and Johnson Street.

Adam Fischer noted that these connections would improve access to the airport area from High Point and would help serve development expected to occur in the area. Meyer advised that work would begin with a planning-level assessment of the airport area roadway network, looking at traffic flows and cost-effectiveness given traffic flows before conducting a more detailed study.

The TAC concurred with conducting these studies at this time. Robbie Perkins noted that the biggest point is to study roads in the area in cooperation with High Point, which is vital to the area's success regarding traffic routes. Fischer advised that High Point may be able to join in a partnership at a later date to help with funding for the study. Kirk Perkins agreed that working with High Point was important. Meyer noted that staff would start doing preliminary assessments of the roadway network, then focus in more detail on the Sandy Ridge Road extension.

Having reached a quorum, Robbie Perkins directed staff to return to action items.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of June 25, 2008

Sandra Anderson Groat moved for approval of the minutes. Kirk Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 25, 2008 meeting.

2. Approve Air Quality Conformity Determination for the 2009-2015 MTIP

Lydia McIntyre advised that air-quality conformity refers to meeting air-quality standards. It is required because the area is designated as Maintenance for 1-hour ozone and Non-Attainment for fine particulate matter (PM 2.5). The conformity determination was made in consultation with other Triad MPOs, so the summary of the conformity report is for the whole Triad and includes the four MPOs of Greensboro, High Point, Winston-Salem, and Burlington and the rural portions of Davidson and Davie counties.

McIntyre noted that the area had been having issues meeting air-quality conformity requirements for its new 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). In order to ensure that projects are not delayed, the conformity determination for the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) was based on the old conforming 2030 LRTP. Staff recommends adopting this interim conformity determination to allow the MTIP to be adopted.

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the resolution. Sandra Anderson-Groat seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the air quality conformity determination for the 2009-2015 MTIP.

3. Approve 2009-2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

Lydia McIntyre advised that the MTIP includes projects for the MPO area, while the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) includes projects statewide. Highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects are shown. Staff began identifying priorities in summer 2007. NCDOT released its draft STIP in November 2007.

Public review for the MTIP occurred in February and July 2008 and resulted in a small number of comments. One comment was from the Town of Sedalia regarding the future widening of US 70, which is only scheduled for an environmental document at this time. The Division of Water Quality submitted comments regarding minimizing impacts to watersheds, streams, and wetlands. A resident questioned the continued need for the High Point Road widening project and whether it had been evaluated in relation to recent upgrades to other streets nearby.

McIntyre advised that the major projects summary provides a quick look at the status of projects in the area. Page 13 of the document shows significant changes to the MTIP since the release of the draft STIP in 2007. Public comments begin on page 65, and a resolution for approval is included.

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the resolution. Mike Winstead seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the 2009-2015 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

4. Approve Functional Classification Changes on Airport Area Roads

Tyler Meyer advised that NCDOT is seeking the MPO's concurrence regarding some changes to the Functional Classification of roadways. Functional Classification is a federal system based on a hierarchy of roadways, with lower-speed, lower-mobility, higher-access roads at the bottom and freeways at the top. Freeways, arterials, collectors, and local streets are included. NCDOT seeks to designate the future route of I-73 near Bryan Boulevard as a Proposed Urban Freeway/Expressway, which would be necessary in order for the project to be eligible to receive federal funds.

Other changes are proposed to accompany this one: re-designate a portion of Bryan Boulevard as an urban freeway/expressway, re-designate the relocated Bryan Boulevard from an urban freeway/expressway to an urban collector, and delete from the system the original alignment of Bryan Boulevard, which is now partially used as an internal airport circulator drive.

Kirk Perkins inquired how these designations would affect land use ability. Meyer stated that it would generally not affect land use. Robbie Perkins advised that the airport owns most of the land nearby anyway, which allows the I-73 Connector project to move forward rapidly.

Kirk Perkins moved for approval of the resolution. Mike Winstead seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the changes to the Functional Classification system.

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

Michael Brandt requested to get the US 220 project completed.

6. Citizen Comments

Ron Frazier, a resident near the western Urban Loop, advised that he was affected by noise from that facility. He said that the Committee never considered residents and the effects, including noise, of this type of facility on communities, and that NCDOT had handled residents' concerns improperly at the May 2008 public meeting. He said that there was not a public meeting between 1995 and 2008, after the facility was built. He noted that federal guidelines require community input in the planning process.

Frazier said that neighbors were told at public meetings that it would be a quiet boulevard that would blend into the neighborhood. He stated that the noise study had assumed a lower speed limit and a different pavement surface than was actually constructed, that he had been told that the neighborhood did not have enough receptors to qualify for noise walls, and that the proposed landscaping to be planted would not reduce the noise.

Frazier advised that he had petitions and over 300 names of people who were upset with what was done regarding planning the facility but were not able to attend the meeting. He also advised that something had to be done, whether legally, by the Committee, by the NCDOT, or by the federal government. He stated that he had tried to sell his house, but it was not worth what it should be, because the highway was nearby. Frazier invited Committee members to sleep in his neighborhood. Frazier requested repaving the road with a quieter material, lowering the speed limit, and rerouting trucks.

Robbie Perkins inquired where NCDOT and the City were in terms of coordinating improvements. Mike Mills advised that the landscape design was underway, with draft plans to be ready in mid-September, when NCDOT will review them with the City. Mills advised that trees are expected to be planted by November, and NCDOT is still looking to see what can be done to continue addressing the noise issue. Since the May public meeting, staff met in June and July and would meet again. Frazier inquired if these were public meetings. Mills stated that they were NCDOT staff meetings.

Frazier noted that NCDOT's Traffic Noise Abatement Policy states that 200-foot-deep dense vegetation can reduce noise levels by 10 decibels and inquired how much landscaping would be installed. Mills advised that NCDOT has never said the landscaping would reduce the noise.

Adam Fischer stated that the human ear can only clearly detect about a 5-decibel decrease in noise, so if a noise wall is not going to decrease noise by that amount, federal guidelines say it will not make a difference. Frazier inquired how it is determined whether the wall will create that much of a reduction. Fischer advised that it was a projection and depends on the grade of the land. Frazier stated that he had been at Oka Hester Park, which has a 15-foot-high noise wall, and it was quiet.

Perkins advised that the Committee would not be solving the issues at the current meeting and that it did not have the authority to do so. Fischer stated that previous meetings had looked at how to apply additional funds to landscaping and other options.

Marilyn Baird, a resident of the Kings Mill neighborhood, presented her concerns regarding the Urban Loop, which focused on damages to her house. She stated that residents in her neighborhood had been lied to when they bought their homes. She described an issue regarding the distance between the road and her property; an embankment was included in the 150-foot distance given by various sources before construction, but was not mentioned. Baird stated that they should have been told that the 150 feet included an embankment. Baird expressed other concerns about NCDOT's lack of responsiveness to her inquiries, the process at the May 2008 public meeting, and what she considered the Committee's lack of concern for citizens.

Perkins noted that during the earlier discussion of the new I-73 construction near the airport, he had asked a question about how it would impact local businesses, and that Mills had responded that a public hearing would be held to gain input on the issue. Baird and Mills discussed a letter he was preparing to send to her regarding damages to her house. Mills described the process NCDOT used to determine how it would pay for damages to homes along the Urban Loop.

Baird stated that there was nothing wrong with the houses before construction and that the small amount of damages to be fixed were grossly inadequate. She stated that an e-mail from a consultant had said that he would make sure that the damages could not be attributed to the road.

Baird said that the state should have purchased their homes when it purchased others, and that the neighbors would not accept anything less. If the offer from the state does not include purchase, Baird stated, the neighbors would sue.

Sandra Anderson Groat inquired how many houses back up to the road. Mills advised that there were 14 houses along the Western Urban Loop that were identified and outfitted with vibration monitors. Seven of those were within a certain distance of the embankment, including Baird's, which the consultant determined could have had damage due to the project. Beyond that distance, the consultant determined that the project did not cause the damage. Mills advised that there were also many houses in other neighborhoods along the road.

Groat stated that it was clear that nobody living there was expecting all of this to happen, so there would need to be some give and take somewhere. Mills stated that the public hearing map showed an eight-lane facility and an interstate route, but that he did not know what was said regarding the term Painter Boulevard.

Perkins advised that he was glad that Frazier and Baird had stated their opinions and experiences. He noted that these complaints would help move towards some kind of conclusion. He noted that Frazier had been living there for 20 years before the road was moved and now has noise impacts. The Kings Mill subdivision was built before the date of record, and Mills advised that was why it received a noise wall.

Perkins advised that the Committee would seek to ensure that the state was taking appropriate and timely action regarding the citizens' concerns and that the state Board of Transportation was taking steps to improve the situation. Perkins advised that the Committee should give them the opportunity to give a final answer to the Committee and to homeowners before moving forward. He noted that he had been out to visit the neighborhoods in question and that the noise was a roar.

Perkins noted that there were a lot of angry people at the May meeting. He noted that by the next Committee meeting, he expected a fair amount of decisions to have been made. He requested a schedule to keep the Committee up-to-date and to keep the City Council updated as well.

Groat inquired if it was the state's responsibility to see that the residents were compensated. Mills stated that with the vibration issue, the state was taking the lead, but in some cases, it is the contractor's responsibility. With the noise issues, the NCDOT noise policy is complicated but is applied statewide. Mills noted that the public hearing for the Western Urban Loop was conducted in 1996. With possibly another 15 years to construction of the portion from Bryan Boulevard to Lawndale, many people living near it when it is built will not have had the opportunity to attend the public hearing.

Groat advised that residents need clear direction regarding who to speak to for each issue. Perkins stated that the TAC is an advisory committee and can pass issues up to the state Board of Transportation.

Kirk Perkins noted that NCDOT was very concerned and did not want the residents to have these issues. He noted that he had asked a question about how a project would affect land and people who own properties, and that the Committee did not simply rubber-stamp items.

Groat inquired whether the City Council had any responsibility for this issue. Robbie Perkins advised that the City, at the May 2008 public meeting, indicated it would work with the state to supplement the new landscaping, which is being evaluated for implementation. Groat stated that the landscaping is too little. Perkins advised waiting until it is clear what could be done.

Kirk Perkins suggested that residents call their state representatives and senators. Frazier advised that they had done so. Frazier quoted the state's noise abatement policy that a local government may assume the cost of noise abatement measures deemed not reasonable by NCDOT and advised that federal money can cover the costs.

Robbie Perkins stated that there was nothing more to be done, having registered the complaints and having heard that Mills was working on the issue to provide feedback at the next meeting. At that point in time, the package from the State would be ready, and the City of Greensboro could move forward with considering whether and how to supplement the State's package. Tyler Meyer noted that the next TAC meeting would be September 23 on the 4th floor of the Old County Courthouse at 2 p.m. but that the location was subject to change.

Fischer inquired if meetings of the state Board of Transportation were public meetings. Mills advised that they were public meetings in Raleigh but that they did not have citizen comment time.

3. Development of Priority Needs for 2011-2017 MTIP

Tyler Meyer advised that the next stage of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) process was to begin looking at priority needs for the next MTIP. This is an opportunity to look back at the key transportation needs for the years ahead. Multimodal priorities should be considered, including freeways, surface streets, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and public transportation.

Meyer advised that staff have begun reviewing existing priority needs and will give an update at the next meeting regarding former priorities for discussion and guidance, with a draft final list for consideration at a future meeting. Meyer noted that the list is important in NCDOT's process of developing its State Transportation Improvement Program. Meyer advised that part of the Priority Needs review was to incorporate public comment received to date, such as that received in the Long Range Transportation Plan and through other planning processes.

4. Bicycle Safety Month and Bike-for-a-Day

Peggy Holland advised that September would be Bike Safety Month, primarily due to multiple bicycle-related activities scheduled for September, including the Tour to Tanglewood on Sep. 6-7, the Carolina Cup on Sep. 7, and the Tour de Tammy on Sep. 20.

Also on September 20, Greensboro will host a Bike-for-a-Day event to encourage people to try getting around by bike. Partners include Bicycling In Greensboro, Inc.; the Bike Me! Collective; GTA; the Greensboro Police Department; Greensboro Fat Tire Society; Greensboro Velo Club; PART; the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments; and Safe Guilford. At a location yet to be determined, the event will offer quick safety checks, bike-on-bus practice, bike rodeos for children to learn maneuvering and signs, helmet fittings for children and adults, and helmet giveaways for children. Holland noted that the helmet giveaways would be through Safe Guilford. The web site will be updated as well. Four billboards promoting sharing the road will be placed around the City during September, and one has been up continuously since October 2007.

Holland noted that Greensboro had not had any bicycle fatalities in the last year, although there were a number of crashes that were well-publicized. She advised that staff would be sending bicycle safety information to parents through the public schools. Holland distributed blinking lights to attendees and noted that they could be used for walkers or bicyclists to make sure they are safe and visible.

Robbie Perkins noted that a former City Councilman's son was killed on a bike a few years previously. It does happen. Holland noted that the safety brochure to be distributed focused on making sure kids look when they exit driveways and setting a good example for them.

Tyler Meyer noted that as bicycling activity increases in the community, it becomes more important to share information with the public. He noted that the first bicycle safety month in 2007 was begun due to guidance from members of the TAC. Perkins noted that an attorney who lives down the street from him was bicycling to work and that in Portland, Oregon, 7 percent of the downtown work population commutes to and from work by bicycle, which is huge. Adam Fischer noted that fatalities from vehicle accidents are down, which is likely related to fewer people driving.

Sandra Anderson Groat stated that more bicycle trails and bike lanes are needed. She noted that she had considered how to pass costs on to bicyclists, perhaps by charging \$5 for bicycle registration.

5. Transportation Bond Update

Adam Fischer advised that City Council had authorized placing a \$134 million transportation bond package on a referendum for fall 2008. Ten-year critical needs are estimated at \$228 million. Some projects would be fully funded with the 2008 bond, while others will require additional funding from a future bond in 6 to 8 years. The bond package includes \$73 million in roadway improvements, \$13 million for intersection improvements, \$9 million for sidewalks, \$18 million for streetscapes, \$8 million for maintenance, and \$12 million for greenway and trail projects.

Fischer described the projects expected to be funded. Roadway projects that are expected to be fully funded and completed in 5-7 years include Battleground Avenue intersection improvements, Florida Street Extension, North Church Street, and the Cone Boulevard/Nealtown Road Connector. The Horse Pen Creek Road project will include completion of a feasibility study and construction. Fischer noted that many projects were left over from the 2000 transportation bonds due to rising construction costs and inflation.

Robbie Perkins noted that there was a 20 percent increase per year in the costs. Mike Winstead inquired how these increases were estimated beforehand. He noted that the school bonds had only paid for half the projects stated. Fischer advised that school construction often goes quicker than roadway construction due to the need to work with multiple property owners, and that staff have put as much cushion in the estimates as feasible without making the numbers look lopsided. Winstead noted that it is not a good situation if people are told certain projects will get done which then cannot be fully funded. Fischer noted that some transportation projects can happen quicker because they are already designed, but it is hard to guess at how much the prices will change for the longer-running projects. Perkins noted that demand for raw materials such as steel, asphalt, and concrete from developing countries was also driving prices up.

Fischer advised that other items on the bond included streetscapes and greenways such as the Downtown Greenway. He noted that the bond would cover only half of the immediate needs over the next 10 years and that additional funding would be necessary to complete others. At the public hearing before City Council, there were still people identifying more sidewalk needs that were not included in the package. He noted that with past bonds, the City had been able to get about \$2 back from state and federal funds for every local dollar invested, so the bonds have a record of enabling the community to leverage other funding sources.

6. Transportation Project Updates

Tyler Meyer advised that the US 220 widening project (R-2309AB) from Horse Pen Creek Road northward into Rockingham County was on track with right-of-way acquisition scheduled to begin in

October. Craig McKinney noted that there had been delays in final development. Meyer noted that the right-of-way acquisition for the US 220 – NC 68 Connector was expected to begin in approximately one year.

Michael Brandt noted that the citizens had complained a lot about the fact that projects are built long after their public hearings. He said there had not been a public hearing on the R-2413 project for quite a while. A recent rezoning near a future interchange raised issues, and a meeting with NCDOT representatives would likely help. Brandt requested a briefing regarding the purchase of right-of-way and the roadway design. Mike Mills advised that right-of-way plans were underway. McKinney stated that a public briefing is being planned for the R-2413 project for the end of the year, but there was some confusion regarding whether this applies in the Summerfield area or only in western Greensboro. Robbie Perkins advised having a public hearing or workshop on the entire project to allow people to have the opportunity to ask questions and understand the scope of the project. Mills advised that he would investigate this possibility. Perkins noted that there would be some issues up through Summerfield, but a bigger issue will be when the Urban Loop is built through the Lake Jeanette area.

Meyer advised that the MPO and NCDOT had negotiated funding for an environmental document for widening of US 70 in eastern Guilford County. The study has not yet commenced, but the state recently determined to begin it using a consultant designer. Perkins requested a letter on behalf of the TAC thanking NCDOT for moving this project expeditiously, with copies to Alamance and Guilford Counties and the City of Burlington. Perkins noted that a number of economic development initiatives had been undertaken between the entities in the last year, and one of the critical aspects is the widening of US 70 from Greensboro to Burlington. Perkins advised emphasizing to the state the regional importance of this facility. People continue wanting to locate there, many of whom are commuting to the Triangle. Meyer advised that staff would draft such a letter. He noted that although the project is unfunded for construction, part of the value of doing the environmental study now was that the project could move forward if funding becomes available. Perkins suggested notifying Elon University as well.

7. MPO Strategic Topics

Tyler Meyer advised that the meeting schedule for the rest of the year is Tuesday, September 23 in the 4th Floor Conference Room, which may be moved to a larger room; Thursday, October 23 in the Plaza Level Conference Room; and Wednesday, December 3 in the Blue Room. Meyer noted that at least the September and October meetings would be needed, as well as, possibly, the December meeting.

Other Items

1. Board Member Report – None.

2. Regional Transportation News

Adam Fischer noted that NCDOT is administering the signal system replacement project, which is getting underway but will not be under construction until 2009. Fiber-optic cables will be laid before then. The project cost is currently under the engineer's estimate by about 5 percent and is scheduled to be completed sooner than anticipated. It will be the most modern traffic signal system in the state.

3. Wrap-Up

The TAC was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.