



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of March 26, 2014
2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC
2nd Floor Greensboro Council Chambers
Melvin Municipal Office Building

ATTENDANCE

Nancy Vaughan	<i>TAC Chair</i>	Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT</i>
Marikay Abuzuaiter	<i>TAC Member, City of Greensboro</i>	Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Cheryl McQueary	<i>TAC Member, NCDOT BOT</i>	Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Jamal Fox	<i>TAC Member, City of Greensboro</i>	Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Sharon Hightower	<i>City of Greensboro</i>	Tram Truong	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Libby James	<i>GTA</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT/ Div 7</i>
George Linney	<i>GTA</i>	Scott Whittaker	<i>Town of Summerfield</i>
Bill Marley	<i>FHWA</i>	Bill Greene	<i>Town of Pleasant Garden</i>
Alex Rosser	<i>PTAA</i>	Claire Stone	<i>Greensboro resident</i>
Scott Rhine	<i>PART</i>	Anita Cunningham	<i>Greensboro resident</i>

Nancy Vaughan called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

Action Items

1. Conflict of Interest Policy Statement

Nancy Vaughan read the Conflict of Interest Policy Statement required by the State Ethics Act. The policy statement states that it is the responsibility of each committee member to avoid conflicts of interest and if there are any, to present them before the committee at the beginning of the TAC meeting. There were no conflicts of interest identified before the Committee.

2. Approve Minutes of February 26, 2014

Jamal Fox moved to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2014 meeting. Cheryl McQueary seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2014 meeting.

Planning for the transportation future

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

There were none.

4. Public Comments

Claire Stone, Greensboro resident, noted her support for providing additional STP-DA funds to GTA to prevent possible service reductions and fare increases. Stone reported on a public meeting on March 25, 2014, where many residents expressed their concern about possible changes and noted how important the current service is to them. She also noted the importance of developing a long-term solution to funding the public transportation system.

Anita Cunningham, Greensboro resident, noted her personal use and admiration of the current GTA transit system. Cunningham emphasized the importance of the GTA transit system to individuals that rely on public transportation for commuting to work, and raised concern that reduced services and increased fares will create substantial hardship for economically vulnerable members of the community.

Nancy Vaughan inquired if GTA funding strategies would be addressed in the current meeting. Adam Fischer noted that the first business item would include a proposal from MPO staff to redirect STP-DA funds from the cancelled Florida Street Extension project, and if enacted by the TAC, might enable GTA to avoid the need for an incremental fare increase over the next few years.

Business Items

1. Review *GTA Steering Committee for Proposed Service and Fare Policy Changes Findings & Federal Funding Options*:

Sharon Hightower, District One City Council Member and co-chair of the GTA Steering Committee for Proposed Service and Fare Policy Changes noted the proposed service and fare policy changes had been considered over six committee meetings and two public meetings. There was significant SCAT presence at the public meetings and strong public opposition to the recommended fare increase because of the financial strain it would create for those who rely on GTA as their primary means of transportation. Hightower noted consensus that both reducing services and increasing rates would be an unfair burden on the public. Hightower noted her support for allocating \$853,000 of STP-DA funds originally committed to the cancelled U-5523 Florida Street Extension project in District One in order to avoid the proposed fare increases until other funding alternatives were secured. Nancy Vaughan noted the significance of Hightower's support for reallocating funds originally committed to a project within District One for citywide use. Hightower confirmed the importance of preventing the fare increase and noted the recommendations presented today were at the request of a member at the GTA Board meeting who had been absent from all of the previous meetings. Hightower noted that securing funding in the future could include involvement from the private sector or from a bond.

Cheryl McQueary inquired if the four TAC members on city council would recommend a city vote to raise taxes by a quarter-cent or half-cent to support a fare-free bus system, similar to the current program in Chapel Hill. Jamal Fox noted earlier conversations with Adam Fischer about the possibility of fare-free bus system and with Marikay Abuzuiater about engaging the private sector. Fischer noted GTA is currently operating at a \$2 million deficit between revenues and expenses and to offer the service fare-free would require an additional \$2 million to replace lost revenues. Fischer noted UNC-Chapel Hill's student fees are a significant funding resource for Chapel Hill's fare-free service; the current UNG-Greensboro student pays \$18 compared to \$147 at Chapel Hill. McQueary noted public support appeared strong since UNC-Greensboro students recently elected to voluntarily increase their activity fee by \$3 to keep the HEAT service on-campus and Chapel Hill had recently approved a tax increase for transportation funding. Fischer agreed there are strategies to generate additional revenue but noted a past proposal for a \$5 vehicle registration fee to cover a budget gap was unable to gain approval in past TAC meetings. The MPO staff will continue to explore the revenue generating strategies recommended by the TAC to support GTA services. McQueary noted relying on the private sector for support could reduce companies' abilities to expand employment opportunities needed by the community.

Marikay Abuzuiater noted the Steering Committee was deadlocked on the vote to recommend increasing fares to the GTA Board and that providing transportation to jobs for individuals with very limited income should be a top priority for the city. Abuzuiater noted her approval of engagement with the private sector and/or a bond referendum to support a fare-free system. Vaughan noted GTA may need to make new service and fare change recommendations if the system was to become fare-free and inquired if the committee had considered other options for organizing SCAT, which currently operates at a 4 percent return.

George Linney, GTA Staff, reviewed the service and fare change recommendations approved by the GTA Board. One proposed service change is to discontinue the Career Express Shuttle Service that PART could replace with a new and improved service. In addition, 6:30 pm trips will be discontinued on all routes and the Evening Service will begin 30 minutes earlier at 7:00 pm, and end 30 minutes earlier at 11:00 pm. Also, the recommended changes also include reducing the number of evening routes on both weekdays and Saturdays from fifteen to ten, and adding three additional routes to the Sunday Service. The service frequency on Route 4 Benbow-Willow Road and Route 5 Gorrell Street will be decreased from 30 minutes to hourly during the weekday. The proposed incremental fare increase is \$0.25 effective September 1, 2014 bringing the total fare to \$1.75; and an additional \$0.25, effective July 1, 2016, increasing the total fare to \$2.00. The GTA Board has approved these changes and will submit these recommendations to city council.

McQueary clarified that a decision was needed by July 1, 2014 in order for TAC recommendations to be considered with GTA's presentation during city council's budget planning process. Fischer noted the MPO staff had a proposal to redirect STP-DA funds that might enable GTA to avoid the need for an incremental fare increase over the next few years and to allocate CMAQ funds to assist PART in replacing the Career Express Service. Abuzuiater inquired about the weekly ridership of the Career Express Shuttle Service and Linney recalled an estimate of 30,000 riders but noted he would confirm that number. Nancy Vaughan inquired about GTA's funding for the current year and Fischer noted that the TAC had allocated sufficient STP-DA funds last year with the stipulation that service reductions be considered before disbursement of any additional STP-DA funds would be approved in the future.

Tyler Meyer reviewed the substantial growth of GTA ridership and services over the last ten years and the role MPO funding played in assisting the development of the current system. GTA ridership has grown 230 percent from 2003-2010, the second largest increase in the state, as a result of both popular demand and system improvements that were supported by CMAQ and STP-DA funds. The projected annual funding gap of \$2.5 million per year is a result of reduction in funding sources, increased service costs, and a disparity between local funding and system growth. Meyer noted staff recommendations included shifting \$2.56 million from the cancelled U-5523 Florida Street Extension project to GTA preventive maintenance costs over a three year period, contributing \$853,000 per year.

Fox inquired about distributing the funds over a three-year period instead of all at once. Vaughan noted it was the understanding of the TAC members on the Steering Committee that the recommendation was only for one payment of \$853,000 and that the remaining STP-DA funds would be reserved for a proposed sidewalk project on Lee Street. Meyer noted the Lee Street project was still in the preliminary planning phase and right-of-way and construction was not expected for a few more years. Vaughan inquired if the remaining funds from the cancelled Florida Street Extension project could be used to accelerate the Lee Street planning process or diverted to support other sidewalk projects. Fischer noted that bond funds were already in place to support the early stages of the planning process and the Lee Street project would take at least two years to implement due to engineering complexity and right-of-way resolution. Vaughan emphasized the desire to see the remainder of the STP-DA funds be applied to sidewalk projects in District One to ensure that children in those neighborhoods would be able to travel safely to local recreational resources. Hightower noted she expected only one payment of \$853,000 from the STP-DA funds would be recommended for preventing the fare increase and also noted her disappointment in the miscommunication. Hightower noted her intention to participate in right-of-way negotiations and her expectation that it would decrease the expected time involved in that process. Meyer noted the progress of current sidewalk projects on Florida and Lee Street and that the recommendation to redistribute STP-DA funds was not expected to jeopardize the progress of the Lee Street project because significant federal funds were available for sidewalk projects that could be allocated in the future.

Meyer presented the second funding recommendation to provide PART \$250,000 annually from CMAQ funds for FY 15-17 to assist their replacement of GTA's Career Express Service with a new and improved service. The adjustment to the CMAQ budget would reduce sidewalk funding availability, but at a pace that could be considered manageable given sidewalk project development delays, and would ensure that currently available CMAQ funds had the opportunity to be utilized. Meyer noted that additional sidewalk project funding is provided by the Transportation Alternatives Program and the MPO is currently under spending its CMAQ allocation for years 13-15. McQueary inquired if the \$70,000 difference between the cost of the current GTA program and of the proposed PART service was significant. Meyer and Fischer noted that PART offered an improved service at lower cost because they employ a non-unionized workforce. McQueary recommended decreasing the amount of proposed support to PART for a six-hour daily service and her preference to use CMAQ funding for expanding the sidewalk network. Meyer noted both the importance of sidewalk construction and of the Career Express Service that delivers GTA, HiTran, WSTA, and other PART riders to employment sites in the airport area. Meyer requested the TAC consider the proposed strategies and noted they will be asked in April to approve the revised recommendations for GTA so that MPO staff can begin drafting the redirection of funds. McQueary requested a matrix of the decisions being proposed by the MPO staff at the April meeting.

Fischer noted that MPO staff had recommended these shifts in funding because they were not expected to delay or prevent any current or potential sidewalk projects. Fischer apologized for the misunderstanding on the allocation of the STP-DA funds for the proposed Lee Street project and noted the early stage of the process ensured there was sufficient time to allocate funds for the project from future STP-DA resources.

Abuziater clarified that there were three vehicles in the Career Express Service and requested elaboration on the associated costs. MPO staff noted they would provide the TAC with an itemized cost sheet. McQueary clarified that the Career Express service ran five days a week.

Meyer noted a difference from the cost-savings in an earlier GTA memo of \$274,000 and in the MPO presentation of \$320,000 because if GTA eliminated the Career Service Express and PART was unable to provide a comparable service it would decrease FTA Section 5307 Funding as a result of reduced service miles.

This item will be brought back for further discussion and possible action at the April TAC meeting.

2. Project Updates

Craig McKinney presented the following project updates:

EB-5518 Latham Park Greenway: The first public workshop was held on Monday, March 26th. It experienced good attendance and all comments received were supportive of the project. Cheryl McQueary noted the state had approved accelerating funding for this project and McKinney noted the let date for the project was expected before July 1, 2015.

U-5532 Aycock Street and Walker Avenue Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project: The first public workshop will be held April 14th at the UNC-Greensboro Recreational Center. The project will reduce Aycock Street by one northbound lane to shorten the crossing distance and will make improvements on the wheelchair ramps and pedestrian signals.

Lydia McIntyre presented the following project updates:

Prioritization 3.0: The initial public involvement period for the MPO's Prioritization 3.0 methodology has begun and these documents are available on www.guampo.org. Three additional TAC meetings have been proposed in regards to the Prioritization 3.0 process and member agencies involved in the process will be invited to speak at these meetings.

Travel Demand Model: MPO staff is currently improving the Travel Demand Model and will be updating socioeconomic data using the 2010 Census. The TAC will be asked to endorse these changes at the next meeting. The MPO is also working in a three-stage enhancement process to incorporate freight more effectively in to the model.

3. Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer presented a resolution to endorse the City of Greensboro's application to become a Watch For Me NC campaign partner. Cheryl McQueary moved to endorse Greensboro's Watch For Me NC application. Jamal Fox seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to endorse Greensboro's Watch For Me NC application.

Meyer issued a reminder that TAC members and their alternates are responsible to file both a 2014 Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) and a 2014 Real Estate Disclosure Form with the State Ethics Commission by April 15th. If members expect difficulty in completing the forms by the deadline they should contact the State Ethics Commission.

Other Items

1. Board Member Update

Bids for the PTIA Taxiway Bridge open on Thursday, March 27th and the project will be on the Board's April agenda. The proposed let date for the Eastern Urban Loop from US 29 to US 70 has been shifted from the middle of May to the middle of June due to extra time needed to resolve a railroad crossing design issue. The two remaining pieces of the loop are subject to reprioritization. It is expected that their preliminary scores will be released along with the scores for other preexisting projects on Monday, March 31st.

Regional Updates

There were none.

2. Wrap-Up

The next TAC meeting will be held on April 23rd at 2:00 pm on the 2nd floor in the Greensboro Council Chambers.

The meeting was adjourned by Nancy Vaughan at 3:27pm.