



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 27, 2016
2:00 p.m., Greensboro, NC
2nd Floor, Greensboro Council Chambers
Melvin Municipal Office Building

ATTENDANCE

Marikay Abuzuaiter	<i>TAC Alternate Chair</i>	Adam Fischer	<i>GDOT</i>
Jamal Fox	<i>TAC Member, City of Greensboro</i>	Tyler Meyer	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Jeff Phillips	<i>TAC Member, Guilford County</i>	Craig McKinney	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Alan Branson	<i>TAC Member, Guilford County</i>	Tram Truong	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Justin Outling	<i>TAC Member, City of Greensboro</i>	Dan Amstutz	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Cheryl McQueary	<i>TAC Member, NCDOT BOT</i>	Lydia McIntyre	<i>GDOT/MPO</i>
Carla Strickland	<i>TAC Member, Town of Pleasant Garden</i>	Mike Mills	<i>NCDOT Division 7</i>
Shinita Wrenwick	<i>Town of Sedalia</i>	Joe Geigle	<i>FHWA</i>
Chandler Hagen	<i>Bicycling in Greensboro</i>	Eric Reynolds	<i>Proterra</i>
Laura Peoples	<i>Bicycling in Greensboro</i>		

Marikay Abuzuaiter called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm.

Action Items

1. Conflict of Interest Policy Statement

Marikay Abuzuaiter 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 March 23, 2016

Cheryl McQueary moved to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2016 meeting. Alan Branson seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2016 meeting.

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

There were none.

Planning for the transportation future

4. Public Comments

Laura Peoples, representing Bicycling in Greensboro (BIG), noted that resurfacing funds are needed to install bicycle facilities more quickly and asked TAC members who are also City Council members to support more resurfacing funds in the upcoming City Budget. She also thanked the TAC for their support of bicycling and Bike Month events.

5. FY 2016-2025 MTIP Amendment: Rail Projects

Tyler Meyer explained that NCDOT is requesting the MPO to amend the MTIP for two passenger rail projects and nine rail safety projects. The two passenger rail changes add funding to FY 2017 for P-2918, Piedmont Corridor Amtrak service, and C-5571, passenger rail marketing. The nine rail safety projects are essentially three umbrella project numbers that are divided into Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) tiers: *Statewide*, *Regional*, and *Division Needs*. Additional funding will be added in FY 2017 for rail-highway crossing safety projects (Z-5400 DIV, REG, and SW). New rail-highway crossing safety enhancement projects will be added as well; Z-5700 and Z-5800 are new umbrella projects with breaks for Statewide, Regional, and Division projects.

Marikay Abuzuaiter asked if any specific areas are identified by these projects. Meyer explained that these project numbers allow for NCDOT to do rail safety projects around the state as necessary while accounting for which Tier the funds are spent in. Statewide rail projects include Norfolk-Southern and CSX (Class 1 rail lines); regional rail projects include non-Class 1 railroads spanning two or more counties; and division projects would be short line railroads and the like. Abuzuaiter noted her concern with rail crossing safety, particularly in light of a recent tragic death of a pedestrian on a local rail line, and asked what types of rail crossing improvements may be in the works. Meyer noted that these projects do not specify areas of improvement, but the funding can be used for improvements such as better crossing arms and advanced signage, among other things.

Cheryl McQueary noted that the City had been involved in a rail crossing safety campaign and asked for an update on this effort. Adam Fischer explained that there have been discussions on having another meeting about rail safety with all the groups involved in the campaign. Education is a strong component of the campaign, and there will be a rail crossing component to a new Safety Town facility currently under construction at Barber Park. This will teach young children about rail safety along with the regular road safety curriculum. Other plans are to strategically place cameras to see where rail trespassing is an issue, and put up fencing as needed to deter this activity. Fischer noted that he will provide an update to the TAC after this group meeting has been held.

Jeff Phillips moved to approve the FY 2016-2025 MTIP Amendment: Rail Projects. Cheryl McQueary seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to approve the FY 2016-2025 MTIP Amendment: Rail Projects.

6. FY 2016-2025 MTIP Modification: Y-4807 B Lowdermilk & Sykes Realignment

Tyler Meyer noted that Y-4807 B will realign Lowdermilk Street and Sykes Avenue into a new signalized intersection with East Market Street and close the Pine Street crossing of the NCRR. This project emerged out of the East Guilford Traffic Separation Study from several years ago. Sidewalk and curb and gutter will be installed with this project and will meet up with the Holts Chapel/Lowdermilk Street sidewalk improvements. This project has the support of the community and the endorsement of the Greensboro City Council. NCDOT is funding the construction of the project with NCRR dividends made available for rail improvements by the NC General Assembly, while the City and MPO are funding right-of-way acquisition via STP-DA. This Modification moves construction from FY 2016 to FY 2017 to allow for more time to finalize the project agreement between NCDOT, NCRR, and the City of Greensboro. Right of way is still planned to be initiated in FY 2016.

Jeff Phillips inquired as to what buildings are going to be impacted by this project. Craig McKinney noted two service business parcels -- one with a two-story auto garage and another with a one-story metal garage -- must be acquired to realign Lowdermilk and Sykes. The City intends to fairly compensate the property

owners for these two structures and the underlying parcels. Phillips asked what stage the project is in. Meyer noted that right-of-way acquisition will begin in a few months, after the project agreement is finalized, and the project should begin construction in 2017. Phillips asked about the property owner's position on the purchase? Adam Fischer said he was not aware of that but noted that the City will approach the property owner to purchase the property with a fair market valuation, but if that does not work they may have to enter eminent domain proceedings. Phillips said he understood the need for the project but noted concerns about the purchase and the potential use of eminent domain if the property owner is opposed. Fischer added that there was a lot of public involvement on this project and the community is in support of it. This project also directly dovetails with the conversation on the previous action item with regards to improving rail safety.

Justin Outling moved to endorse the FY 2016-2025 MTIP Modification: Y-4807 B Lowdermilk & Sykes Realignment. Alan Branson seconded the motion. The TAC voted to endorse the FY 2016-2025 MTIP Modification: Y-4807 B Lowdermilk & Sykes Realignment with six in favor and one opposed. Jeff Phillips voted to oppose the motion.

7. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Amendment

Tyler Meyer explained that this change is considered a Routine Amendment under the Public Involvement Plan, meaning that this change is administrative in nature and that the public was notified through the regular meeting process and updates for scheduled MPO meetings. The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2014) identifies eligible projects and guides project selection for the Section 5310 FTA grant program, *Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals With Disabilities*. Public transit agencies and non-profit organizations are eligible to compete for funding from this program. GTA, as the direct recipient of these funds for the MPO area, is responsible for administering and overseeing compliance for these funds from sub-grantees. This funding can be used for a variety of purposes, including transit vehicle acquisition.

However, FTA regulations make purchase of transit vehicles by agencies other than the direct recipient (GTA) excessively difficult. These difficulties include sub-grantee reporting requirements (required monthly over the useful life of the vehicle); useful life requirements (vehicles must be kept in service for their full useful life as defined by FTA or grant funds must be repaid); and GTA oversight requirements (ensuring sub-grantee compliance and financial responsibility if the sub-grantee defaults on the grant). As a result, FTA and NCDOT recommend removing the eligibility from the Coordinated Plan. The eligibility of non-profits and other potential sub-grantees to compete for operating funds will remain the same with this amendment. This amendment is being made now because the MPO is about to open its call for projects for Section 5310 and this will provide needed clarity to potential applicants about this type of eligibility.

Cheryl McQueary commented that it was unreasonable for FTA to request monthly status reports from sub-grantees about every vehicle purchased with their grants. She asked if non-profits would still be able to get grant funds that could be used to lease vehicles to provide transportation services. Meyer said he thought that they would, and the reporting requirements in that situation would be less arduous. Also, contracted transportation service and some preventative maintenance are considered capital expenditures under FTA rules.

Cheryl McQueary moved to approve the Coordinated Human Services Plan Amendment. Jeff Phillips seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to approve the Coordinated Human Services Plan Amendment.

8. Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Electric Bus Acquisition

Tyler Meyer noted that GTA is applying for a new discretionary transit grant provided for under the FAST Act to support the acquisition of electric buses. GTA has been exploring the possibility of purchasing electric buses to replace retiring buses in their fleet. At the end of the meeting more information will be provided about electric buses, but this action is to support their grant application for Section 5339 funds.

Marikay Abuzuaiter noted that she has read about the electric buses that are being considered and was impressed with their capacity to hold a charge and charge quickly. Adam Fischer noted that a representative from Proterra will make a presentation at the end of the meeting and also has a bus outside the building for TAC members to take a test ride on afterwards. Fischer also said that he has looked at the financial side of acquiring the buses and believes that doing so will save the City money. Jeff Phillips asked about the quick charge system for the buses. Fischer noted that he has been able to visit existing systems that use electric buses such as at Clemson University in South Carolina to learn about how those systems work. The electric bus product GTA is looking at has about a two hour battery life and has a fast-charge system to charge a battery in five to seven minutes.

Jeff Phillips moved to endorse the Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Electric Bus Acquisition. Alan Branson seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to endorse the Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Electric Bus Acquisition.

9. Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Galyon Depot Renovations

Tyler Meyer noted that GTA is applying for another new discretionary transit grant provided for under the FAST Act. The Galyon Depot needs to be renovated in order to reconfigure and expand the customer waiting area to a centralized location, expand the driver's lounge area and public restroom facilities, improve the security and vending areas, relocate staff offices, and create a public meeting room. GTA ridership has more than doubled since the Depot opened in 2003 and the number of drivers has grown by more than two-thirds since that time. This renovation is necessary to accommodate the current ridership as well as future riders and operational needs.

Cheryl McQueary moved to endorse the Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Galyon Depot Renovations. Alan Branson seconded the motion. The TAC voted unanimously to endorse the Resolution of Support: GTA Grant Application for Section 5339 Funds for Galyon Depot Renovations.

Business Items

1. Prioritization 4.0 Update & Next Steps

Lydia McIntyre noted that NCDOT has released the draft quantitative scores for the projects submitted for P4.0. At this point, all scores represent just the quantitative component. No local input points have yet been assigned. McIntyre noted that NCDOT does allow the MPO to review the individual scores and to seek any needed data or calculation corrections as needed.

At the statewide level, final scores are based 100% on the quantitative score. Local input points are not a factor at the statewide level. For regional projects, the quantitative score will comprise 70% of the final score while 30% comes from local input points. At the Division Needs level final projects scores will be 50% based on the quantitative score and 50% by local input points. The MPO methodology on assigning local points has already gone through public review and been approved by the TAC. The next step will be determining which projects at the regional and local needs levels to assign local points to increase their chances of being funded.

There are six projects in the Greensboro MPO on the list of Draft Funded Statewide Projects. These are expected to end up in the STIP but since this is a draft it is subject to change. These projects include: improve the I-40 interchange with Elm-Eugene Street; three Piedmont Triad International Airport projects; and a grade separation at Hilltop Road. Something different NCDOT is doing this year is to partially fund projects. One project in particular, I-40 (I-5965), which is to widen I-40 through Greensboro between Elm-Eugene Street and Randleman Road, is estimated to cost \$116 million but was only partially funded at \$64 million. McIntyre noted she will speak with NCDOT about whether the MPO should put points on the

project at the Regional Tier to complete the funding package, or if that's something NCDOT will take care of later on in any case.

McIntyre went on to discuss the proposed statewide projects that have not been selected for funding at the Statewide Tier. Per NCDOT methodology the table lists the scores these projects would receive when considered at the regional and division needs tiers as well. Per the MPO's one-step down rule, these statewide projects that will not be funded under the Statewide tier may be considered for funding at the regional needs level. McIntyre noted that she was not immediately aware of the details for the US 29 Bypass project that would extend to NC 150 in Guilford County that was submitted by the Piedmont Triad Regional Council. McIntyre said the MPO will need to keep this project in mind, although it did not receive very good scores through this process.

Among the Regional Tier projects, the NC 68 project for access management and safety improvements in Oak Ridge scored the best. It was noted that the final scope and design concept for the project needs to be further hashed out with NCDOT. The costs of the transit projects that were submitted are showing just what NCDOT would pay as its share, which is 10-20%, and does not reflect the full cost of the project. Jamal Fox asked if there was more information about a project in the Regional Tier to purchase new bi-level passenger rail cars for future Piedmont service between Raleigh and Charlotte. McIntyre noted that this project is not specific to the MPO and she will need to do more research to get details about the project. Cheryl McQueary explained that the plan is to purchase more rail cars once the Piedmont Improvement Project is completed in 2017.

McIntyre went on to the Division Tier projects. The resubmitted Lindell / Friendly intersection project at Wendover Avenue scored the best out of the highway projects. One project toward the bottom of the list is the proposed interchange with Cone Boulevard and I-840.

Cheryl McQueary pointed out that the bicycle and pedestrian projects scored very well, and six of them scored better than the best-scoring highway project at the Division level. Tyler Meyer noted that staff had analyzed all the potential bicycle and pedestrian project submissions to determine which projects would be the most competitive in P4.0. The Wendover Avenue sidewalk project scored as the best project in the division and the best pedestrian project in the state. McIntyre noted that these projects have not been funded yet and still require local input points to be placed on them before the final scores are determined.

McIntyre went over the next steps for P4.0. NCDOT has provided additional time for the submittal of regional need local input points because of the delay with releasing the draft quantitative scores and statewide funding results. Regional needs points can be assigned until the end of July, and it is optional to assign division needs points at this time. McIntyre noted that the MPO plans to wait until after the Regional Tier projects are programmed before finalizing the Division Tier points.

2. Bike Month Update

Daniel Amstutz noted that May is Bike Month and calendars of the events have been printed for distribution. He encouraged TAC members to take a copy to display in their offices or other public place. The main events for Bike Month are the First Friday Open Streets on May 6, Bike to Work Week May 16-20, Bike to Work Day May 20 and the Ride with the City, and the Ride of Silence May 18.

First Friday Open Streets on May 6 will be the second time that the City has worked with Bicycling in Greensboro (BIG) to kick off Bike Month with this event. It will be very similar to last year's event, with bicycle-themed vendors, live music, and food. The location will be downtown Greensboro on Elm Street between Washington Street and Market Street and will run from 5-9 pm. One block on Elm Street between Market Street and Friendly Avenue will also be closed off to vehicle traffic, but Market Street and Friendly Avenue will be kept open. A temporary bike lane may also be included in the street closure, and Amstutz is working with BIG to determine how this will take shape.

Bike to Work Week is May 16-20, and three coffee shops have offered to give discounts to people that ride to their shops during this week: People's Perk, Urban Grinders, and Coffeeology. The Ride with the City has been moved to Bike to Work Day on May 20, and it will be a lunchtime ride to Deep Roots Market for

lunch and back. Space is limited and participants must register with Amstutz ahead of the ride so he knows how many people are coming. City employees can receive wellness points for participating in the ride.

The Ride of Silence will take place on Wednesday, May 18 from 6-8 pm. Participants can begin registering at 6 pm and the ride will begin promptly at 7 pm. This ride memorializes those cyclists that have been killed or injured on public roadways. The ride is about 6 to 7 miles and will take about an hour to complete because it is a slow ride. After the ride BIG is planning to have an after-event called “Time for Triumph” to counterbalance the somber tone of the Ride of Silence by having a celebration of bicycling. It will take place at Preyer Brewing at the corner of Eugene Street and Battleground Avenue directly after the ride.

3. Division Engineer Updates

Mike Mills noted that NCDOT is working on changes to its traffic noise policy. Local officials including Adam Fischer, Tyler Meyer, and Mark McDonald from High Point were consulted for feedback on the proposal. The potential changes would include allowing textured or decorative patterns on noise walls on both sides of the wall. These changes will be presented to the Board of Transportation next week. Work is continuing on the I-73 Connector, Urban Loop, and US 220, among other projects. The I-73 Connector from NC 68 to US 220 should be open to traffic by December of this year. The PTIA taxiway bridge is more than 50% complete. Similarly, the eastern Urban Loop (US 70 to US 29) and western Urban Loop (Bryan Boulevard to Battleground Avenue) projects that are currently underway are more than 50% complete. Right-of-way acquisition between Battleground Avenue and Lawndale Drive is 99% complete, and this portion of the Urban Loop should begin construction by the end of the year. Right-of-way acquisition for last part of the Urban Loop from Lawndale Drive to US 29 should start around June of this year.

Alan Branson asked what future projects Mills anticipates after the Urban Loop and other major projects currently under construction are completed around 2020. Mills noted that there are many needed projects in the area, such as upgrading US 220 from Summerfield north through Rockingham County to interstate standards. US 29 also needs to be upgraded to interstate standards sooner or later. There will need to be transportation improvements around the megasite in Randolph County if a tenant is secured. Maintenance of existing infrastructure is also a continual need, with resurfacing and bridge replacements.

Marikay Abuzuaiter inquired about state spot safety projects. Mills explained that this is funding for specific locations that are high-crash locations and need some type of safety improvement.

4. Project Updates

Craig McKinney noted that there was a public workshop on April 21 for R-4707, Reedy Fork Parkway Interchange. Three alternatives and an interim project were presented. The interim project would build part of the interchange and replace the existing bridge since the bridge replacement is a critical short term need. Around 80 people came to the meeting. Staff shared information with the public about the need for this project including plans for the construction of many new homes and additional commercial and industrial development in this area. The final interchange configuration is still under consideration, but it may well be a diverging diamond interchange.

5. Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer noted that the 2015 BiPed Plan Update will be taken to the Greensboro City Council for their approval in May. This will dovetail with Bike Month and reinforce the city’s commitment to the BiPed Plan recommendations. Staff are also working on an executive summary of the plan which will touch on the highlights of the plan and be a much quicker read.

The City of Greensboro is hosting the 2016 Conference of the North Carolina Association of MPOs from May 11-13 in downtown Greensboro. Hundreds of transportation professionals, land use planners, and others are expected to attend. Registration is still open for the conference.

Adam Fischer commended staff for their work on organizing the NCAMPO conference and for putting together the Bike Month activities. He encouraged TAC members to drop in on the conference if they have

the time. Jeff Phillips asked if there was an agenda that they could review. Fischer noted that staff would follow up and email TAC members the website address with the agenda.

Other Items

1. Board Member Update

Cheryl McQueary noted that local concerns about noise walls are being heard by NCDOT and it is something the state is sensitive to. She commended staff from NCDOT and the City of Greensboro for working together and working quickly on making safety improvements to the trail crossing on North Church Street where a runner was recently killed in a roadway crossing crash. The Board has been concerned about delays in NCDOT project delivery and is exploring changes to expedite the right-of-way process and utility relocation process. They may also explore changes to contracting, such as increasing incentives for early project completion or penalties for unnecessary project delays.

McQueary observed that the City is considering a bond referendum in the fall which would include funding for transportation improvements. She noted that it is important for the City to communicate to the public what projects are currently underway and requested that staff provide a monthly project status report for the TAC similar to the NCDOT Active Projects Report. This will be helpful for the TAC to be aware of the current projects and allow them to provide information to the public as well. Adam Fischer noted that this information is readily available and is already provided for the Greensboro City Council in a format for them. A draft of this information can be provided at the June MPO meeting for TAC review. He also noted that there was significant public outreach in identifying projects for the 2008 transportation bond and expected that a similarly intensive public input would be expected for this potential new bond. Marikay Abuzuaiter noted that there used to be more media attention on transportation projects by the MPO but that does not seem to be as common any more. Fischer said that he would like to do more public communication such as an annual report but it has been challenging with all the other priorities staff are working on. The Transportation Project Update Newsletter is one of the better reports that staff does a few times a year. Jeff Phillips asked for more clarification on what McQueary is looking for. She noted that the newsletter is a good information tool, however she would like a succinct list of current projects that the TAC can refer to during the meeting.

2. Regional Updates

There were none.

3. Electric Bus Update

Adam Fischer explained that GTA has been exploring the potential for purchasing electric buses for more than a year. Battery life and recharging for electric buses has been a concern from the maintenance and operations side of GTA. However with this new technology, it has become more economical and can save GTA money over the course of the life cycle of the vehicles. Proterra came to Greensboro the evening before and gave a presentation and test ride for the GTA Board as well.

Fischer introduced Eric Reynolds from Proterra, an electric bus manufacturing company. Fischer noted that Proterra has a bus outside the building that TAC members can take a test ride on after the meeting.

Reynolds explained that Proterra began delivering buses to customers about four years ago. They specialize in manufacturing electric buses. They have an east coast manufacturing facility that employs about 150 people in Greenville, SC. There is also a battery Research & Development facility in Silicon Valley in California and another manufacturing facility will be opening outside Los Angeles. They have buses in 15 transit systems in the U.S. and currently 63 buses in revenue service. The buses are located around the U.S. in all types of climates and terrains. Another 84 buses are on backorder with another 53 buses that have recently been ordered. The company is familiar with the FTA Low and No Emission grant and has partnered with a number of agencies to work together in order to apply for the grant. One of the most recent customers is SEPTA in Philadelphia, which is adding 25 electric buses to its fleet. In a short time Proterra will have vehicles in more than 20 transit systems.

Reynolds noted that the Proterra electric buses are economical for transit systems as well. The buses help save transit systems money over the course of a vehicle life. The buses get on average 18 miles per gallon (in diesel fuel equivalency) whereas most buses get about three to five miles per gallon. A 40-foot Proterra bus costs about \$749,000, which is almost \$500,000 lower than it was five years ago. The charging infrastructure has similarly come down in price. The simplicity of the motor also saves maintenance funds and hassle for transit systems. Lithium-ion battery prices are getting less expensive as the technology becomes mainstream. Since this is a third-generation bus model, it is a tried and tested vehicle in the field.

The construction of the bus body is of a composite material that is lightweight, durable, and strong. As opposed to retrofitting an existing bus chassis, the Proterra electric bus has been designed from the ground up to be a highly efficient electric bus. The batteries are placed in the safest place possible -- the undercarriage -- and in such a way as to keep the weight evenly distributed.

Proterra tries to be as transparent as possible with its customers, and organizes quarterly calls with all their customers and takes feedback on issues that customers have run into. They also provide an on-site technician in the first several months of the life of the buses to train maintenance staff on the new vehicles. There is a regional support staff as well to assist with questions and provide information for customers.

He noted that Proterra has analyzed GTA Routes 7 and 9 to determine if these routes would be good candidates for electric buses. The analysis considered average speed, accelerating, braking, temperature, and grade changes, among other factors. Temperature can affect the speed of the charging infrastructure, but only on extremely hot or cold days. The fast charge technology allows for a bus to be charged in less than ten minutes, even on extreme weather days.

Marikay Abuzuaiter thanked Reynolds for his presentation. Reynolds encouraged TAC members to see the test bus outside the building and to take a test ride.

4. Wrap-Up

The meeting was adjourned by Marikay Abuzuaiter at 3:30 pm.