

**MINUTES
GASTON URBAN AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (GUAMPO)
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE (TCC)
REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
MARCH 12, 2008**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) was held **Wednesday, March 12, 2008**, at the Market Street Buffet and Bakery, 2525 S. York Street, Gastonia, NC.

Members Present:

Ben Blackburn	City of Lowell, City Manager, TCC Chair
Joe Gates	City of Lowell, Planning Director
Adrian Miller	City of Belmont, Senior Planner
Danny Jackson	City of Mt. Holly, Assistant City Manager
Steve Baucom	Town of Cramerton, Planner
Debby Key	City of Gastonia, Director of Fleet Services
Don Lowe	City of Gastonia, Traffic Engineer
Jack Kiser	City of Gastonia, Planning Director
David Kahler	Town of Dallas , Community Dev. Administrator
Margaret Taylor	Gaston County ACCESS, Director
Anne Wilkes	Gaston County ACCESS, Assistant Director
Sam Nichols	NCDOT, Division Traffic Engineer
Shannon Ransom	NCDOT, Gaston MPO Coordinator

Staff present:

Hank Graham	Gaston MPO, Principal Transportation Planner
Randi Gates	Gaston MPO, Transportation Planner I
Bernie Yacobucci	Gaston MPO, Transportation Planner I
Cass Roberts	Gaston MPO, Administrative Assistant III
Kim Wallis	Gaston MPO, Planning & GIS Specialist III

Others present:

Lynn Purnell	Parsons Brinckerhoff, Senior Supervising Planner
Charles Harrison	Carolina Central Railroad, Vice President

Members with absences in 2008:

Town of McAdenville	(Jan., Mar. - 2)
Town of Spencer Mountain	(Jan., Mar. - 2)
Town of Ranlo	(Jan., Mar. - 2)

Town of Stanley
Town of Dallas

(Jan., Mar. - 2)
(Jan. – 1)

1. Set Agenda, Presenter: Ben Blackburn, TCC Chair

Mr. Blackburn asked if there were any new business items or any additions to include in the agenda? There were none. Mr. Blackburn asked for a show of hands to accept the agenda as presented. All members were in favor of accepting the agenda as presented.

2. Determination of Quorum, Presenter: Ben Blackburn, TCC Chair

It was determined that there was a quorum present.

3. Approval of Minutes, Presenter: Ben Blackburn, TCC Chair

Mr. Blackburn entertained a motion to approve the minutes of January 9, 2008 as presented. Mr. Miller asked that the City of Belmont's absence be changed for the January meeting. Elson Baldwin, the Director of Planning for Belmont, served as an alternate at the January meeting. Mr. Jackson stated that he was not noted on the list of attendees for the January meeting and he was present. Mrs. Roberts stated that she would make the corrections to the January 9, 2008 minutes.

Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve the minutes of January 9, 2008 as amended with Mr. Miller seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Introduction of Guests, Presenter: Ben Blackburn, TCC Chair

Mr. Blackburn asked that guests and others introduce themselves. Mr. Lynn Purnell of Parsons Brinckerhoff was in attendance to give a presentation on the **Fast Lanes, Charlotte Region Fast Lanes Study**.

5. Public Comment Period, Presenter: Ben Blackburn, TCC Chair

There were no public comments at this time.

6. Charlotte Region Fast Lanes Study, Presenter: Lynn Purnell, Senior Supervising Planner, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Mr. Purnell began his presentation by stating that he is with Parson Brinckerhoff, which is the consulting firm that is assisting transportation planning agencies in the Charlotte Region to embark upon a region-wide study to determine which highways should be considered for managed lanes such as High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), High Occupancy Toll (HOT), or Truck Only Toll (TOT) facilities. Presently, Parsons Brinckerhoff is studying corridors that make up about 350 miles and that encompass a seven county region in order to see the potential for managed lanes on these roadways.

Mr. Purnell stated that the concept of *Fast Lanes* consists of a separate, dedicated lane system where one or more user groups may use the lane system to travel unimpeded during periods of peak demand. In the Charlotte area, there are *Fast Lanes*/HOV lanes currently in use on I-77 where there are “continuous access” lanes with a 10 inch painted buffer and “access is prohibited” lanes with a 6 inch painted buffer. He added that the use of these HOV lanes has increased in the Charlotte area by 20% between the years 2005 – 2007.

Mr. Purnell discussed the following screening criteria for *Fast Lanes*/HOV lanes: 1.) presence of congestion 2.) HOV demand 3.) HOT/TOT demand and 4.) Determining the physical attributes of a road to see how an HOT/HOV lane may work. In the Charlotte Mecklenburg area, the best areas for HOT/HOV demand are I-85, I-77, and US74. The Garden Parkway remains under study by the NC Turnpike Authority and has been eliminated for further consideration for this study.

Mr. Purnell stated that corridor segments moving to Phase Two of the study will be analyzed for lane treatments, operations strategy, revenue potential, and access and project phasing. The most congested corridors are recommended for Phase 2 study. HOV and HOT options are feasible on these corridors whereas TOT options are not. Corridors that do not move to Phase Two of the study will still need attention using other congestion management strategies.

Mr. Purnell stated that the *Fast Lanes* website is at <http://www.fastlanes.org> for further information.

Mr. Graham expressed his concern about the design exceptions along I-85 where there are some unsafe conditions with bridges and with grade separation crossings and connections. Mr. Purnell stated that studies have been done throughout the country where reducing the width of lanes and reducing the width of shoulders would allow another lane to be reconfigured or fit as additional space or as an additional lane. Mr. Purnell added that Parsons Brinckerhoff will solicit NCDOT’s perspective on design exceptions and if there is a problem on any design, no time will be wasted implementing design exceptions.

There were no other questions.

Mr. Blackburn thanked Mr. Purnell for his presentation.

**7. Gaston Urban Area MPO 2008-2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP),
Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner**

Mr. Graham stated that the proposed 2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for fiscal year 2008-2009 is included in the agenda packet. The purpose of this document is to outline the tasks to be undertaken by MPO staff in the fiscal year beginning July, 2008 and ending June, 2009 and the amount of funding it will take to complete those tasks.

Mr. Graham stated that some of the major projects are as follows:

- Update the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).
- Complete the 2009 Ozone Non-Attainment Air Quality demonstration.
- Continue to strengthen and improve our regional transportation involvement.
- Hire private engineering consultants to complete functional designs for necessary thoroughfares on the Thoroughfare Plan.
- Continue with Public Involvement and Environmental Justice efforts.
- Assist with planning and implementation of a countywide bicycle and pedestrian trail and greenway system.

Mr. Graham stated that MPO staff will be involved in the regional Carolina Thread Trail activities as well as the incremental or smaller trail segment expansions in Gastonia and other interested municipalities in the GUAMPO area.

Mr. Graham stated that the total UPWP budget for this fiscal year is \$367,687. Of that amount, \$75,000 from the unobligated fund balance will be used to conduct a site selection feasibility study and environmental design work for a multi-modal transportation facility in downtown Gastonia. This facility will combine the operating facilities of Amtrak, Trailways, Greyhound, 85X – CATS express bus route to Charlotte and back to Gastonia, the Gastonia Transit System, and some functions of Gaston County Access. For the Transit Planning Grant (5303), we are requesting \$36,450. The Planning Fund allocation request is \$256,237.

There being no questions or comments, Mr. Blackburn entertained a motion to recommend approval to the TAC of the Gaston Urban Area MPO 2008-2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as presented.

Mr. Miller made a motion to recommend approval to the TAC of the Gaston Urban Area MPO 2008-2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as presented. Mr. Kiser seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

8. DRAFT Conformity Determination Report for the 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that MPOs are required to make a conformity determination on any newly adopted or amended fiscally-constrained LRTP and TIP. The purpose of the Conformity Determination Report for the 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program is to document compliance with the provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and the Safe Accountable Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users – 2005. The conformity determination for the 2009-2015 TIP is based on a regional emissions analysis that utilizes the transportation networks in adopted and conforming 2030 Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and the emissions factors developed by the North Carolina Department of Environment and

Natural Resources (NCDENR). All regionally significant, federally funded projects in areas designated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas must come from a conforming LRTP and TIP.

Mr. Graham added that this document is not just an informational discussion item and it requires recommendation to the TAC to authorize the release of this document to the public for comment during the period of April 1, 2008 through May 2, 2008. The document will be placed at the resource desks of all regional and local libraries and also at respective City Halls as well. A public hearing will also be scheduled.

Mr. Blackburn entertained a motion to recommend to the TAC approval of the DRAFT Conformity Determination Report for the 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program as presented.

Mr. Jackson made a motion to recommend approval to the TAC of DRAFT Conformity Determination Report for the 2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program as presented. Mr. Baucom seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Socioeconomic (SE) Data Update, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that MPO staff has been working with the various municipalities in the county to develop population and employment projections for the Gaston Urban Area. Mr. Yacobucci plugged in those numbers regarding population, employment and household adjustments into the respective TAZs for the periods of 2015, 2025, and 2035.

Mr. Graham stated that our current Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is the 2030 LRTP and the new update will be the 2035 LRTP. The population in 2035 in the MPO area will grow to 299,202 and in the next 25 years, almost 100,000 people will be added to the area. The employment will not grow as much as the population will grow but the assumption is that Charlotte-Mecklenburg is still going to be the leader in providing major employment options and opportunities in the region.

Mr. Blackburn entertained a motion to recommend to the TAC the Socioeconomic (SE) Data Update as presented.

Mr. Miller made a motion to recommend to the TAC the Socioeconomic (SE) Data Update as presented. Mr. Jackson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

10. NCDOT Highway Division 12 FY 2007-2015 Funding Breakdown, Presenter: Randi Gates, Transportation Planner I

Ms. Gates stated that this request for a funding breakdown came from Jim Long, TAC Chair, who directed Gaston MPO staff to research how TIP funding in Division 12 is divided among the six counties in the division.

Ms. Gates pointed out that of the funding for Division 12 for the period 2007-2015, Gaston County receives 14% for funded projects, Cleveland County receives 21%, Catawba County receives 14%, Lincoln County receives 9%, Alexander County receives 0.24%, and Iredell County receives 42% of the funding.

Mr. Graham stated that he did not wish this item to be on the TAC agenda unless our Board member, Judge Collier, was aware of this funding breakdown report in advance. After contacting Judge Collier, Mr. Graham stated that Judge Collier told him that one of the reasons that Iredell County has the highest percentage of funding is because Iredell County has an interchange improvement project for which Judge Collier has authorized the bulk of Garvee Bond Funds. If Garvee Bond Funds were not involved in this project, then the funding percentage would be around 20-22% instead of 42%.

Mr. Graham felt that since Gaston County has the highest population within Division 12, the NCDOT Board Member should come from Gaston County. Since there is no formula nor formal way to distribute funds at this time, the method to distribute funds is at the discretion of the NCDOT Board member in the Division.

Mr. Blackburn asked who was the last Board member from Gaston County? Mr. Lowe thought it was Lanier Williams and that was over 20 years ago. Mr. Graham stated that Judge Collier was appointed this year for a 4-year term but with a new governor, this may change.

11. New Business

There was no new business to report.

12. Other Business

- a) Gastonia Express 85-X Ridership Report – Ms. Gates stated that there is a 9.4% increase in ridership in January, 2008 from last year's ridership totals. Ridership figures throughout the months are still on the increase.
- b) Carolina Thread Trail Community Meetings – Ms. Gates stated that the public meeting schedule is enclosed in the agenda package and she hoped that members would attend one of the scheduled meetings to show support.

13. Adjournment

There being no other business, Mr. Blackburn entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Baucom made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Mr. Jackson seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.