

MINUTES
GASTON URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY (TAC) COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 27, 2007

The meeting of the Gaston Urban Area MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was held Tuesday, November 27, 2007, 6:30 pm until 7:50 pm in the Community Room of the Gastonia Police Department located at 200 East Long Avenue, Gastonia, NC.

Members Present:

Jim Long	City of Bessemer City, Councilman, TAC Chair
Ronald Murphy	Town of Cramerton, Mayor, TAC Vice Chair
Rick Coleman	Town of Dallas, Mayor
Dave Kirlin	City of Gastonia, Councilman
John Howren	City of Gastonia, Councilman
Joe Carpenter	Gaston County, Commissioner
Judith Johnson	Town of Stanley, Mayor
Irl Dixon	City of Belmont, Councilman
Phyllis Harris	City of Mt. Holly, Councilperson
Lynn Black	Town of Ranlo, Commissioner
Rickie Bush	City of Lowell, Councilman
Robert Collier	NCDOT Board of Transportation Member

Others Present:

Jack Kiser	City of Gastonia, Director of Planning
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
Loretta Barren	FHWA – NC, Planner
Bill Gary	Gaston Chamber, Sr. VP, Dir. Public Policy

Members with absences in 2007:

Town of Spencer Mountain	(Jan., Mar., May-June, July, Sept., Nov. - 6)
City of Lowell	(Jan., Mar., Sept. – 3)
Town of Dallas	(Jan. - 1)
Town of McAdenville	(Jan., Mar., May-June, July, Sept., Nov. - 6)
Gaston County	(Jan., Sept. - 2)
Town of Ranlo	(Mar., May-June – 2)

1. Set Agenda, Presenter: Jim Long, TAC Chair

Mr. Long asked for any new business or any additions to be added to the agenda.

Mr. Long stated that there will be a Presentation tonight and he asked that it be added to the Agenda. Mr. Long entertained a motion to set the agenda as presented with the addition of a Presentation.

Mr. Kirlin made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Dixon seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Determination of a Quorum

It was determined that a quorum was present.

3. Approval of Minutes, Presenter: Jim Long, TAC Chair

Mr. Long asked if there were any changes, additions, or deletions to the minutes of the scheduled meeting of September 25, 2007. There were none. Mr. Long entertained a motion to approve the minutes as presented.

Mr. Howren made a motion to approve the minutes of September 25, 2007 as presented. Mr. Kirlin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Introduction of Guests, Presenter: Jim Long, TAC Chair

Mr. Long asked that guests introduce themselves. Mr. Bill Gary, Sr. VP, Director of Public Policy, of the Gaston Chamber, introduced himself. Mr. Gary stated that he has been with the Chamber less than two months and along with his administrative duties, he is a business advocate at local, state, and federal levels.

4A. Presentation

Mr. Long stated that there are three distinguished members of the TAC who will not be joining us next year and that the TAC wished to present Councilman Irl Dixon, Councilperson Phyllis Harris, and Mayor Judith Johnson with a commemorative framed appreciation certificate in recognition of their outstanding service to the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization as Transportation Advisory Committee members.

Mr. Dixon's TAC service from January 25, 2000 to December 31, 2007 (7 years).

Ms. Johnson's TAC service from November 28, 2005 to December 31, 2007 (2 years).

Ms. Harris' TAC service from January 23, 1996 until December 31, 2007 (11 years).

5. Public Comment Period, Presenter: Jim Long, TAC Chair

Judge Collier stated that his comments were not a part of a Public Comment Period but he wanted the TAC to know that he has a report of projects across the state for the next twelve months for anyone to review at the meeting.

6. Bessemer City's Request to Use Gaston Urban Area MPO's Transportation Planning (PL) Funds, Presenter: Bernie Yacobucci, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Yacobucci stated that the City of Bessemer City has requested the use of MPO Planning (PL) Funds, mainly the use of some of the unobligated fund balance, to hire a Civil Engineering firm to complete a functional design for the further extension of the Southridge Parkway. Mr. Yacobucci stated that US Infrastructure of Carolina, Inc. of Charlotte, NC, submitted a proposal to provide engineering services for the functional design for the further extension of the Southridge Parkway in the amount of \$20,115. The quote for this project and supporting documentation is included in the agenda package.

Mr. Carpenter made a motion to approve Bessemer City's request to use Gaston Urban Area MPO's Transportation Planning (PL) Funds in the amount of \$20,115 for engineering services for the functional design for the further extension of the Southridge Parkway. Ms. Harris seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

7. Socioeconomic (SE) Data Update, Presenter: Bernie Yacobucci, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Yacobucci stated that it was time to revise population and employment projections for the Gaston Urban Area. He added that staff took the data in 2000-2002 from the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and extrapolated this data to the year 2009, with the percent of increase being 2% to 2½ % a year. In the agenda package, there is an Extrapolated 2009 Projections Information Sheet with population, households, and employment data.

Mr. Yacobucci asked that the TAC consider approving this SE Data Update so that these numbers will become official numbers.

Mr. Carpenter asked when would this data be done on an actual basis versus a percent of increase? Mr. Graham stated that the Census will occur in 2010, however, the actual numbers we are going with are what the state demographer has given us in 2005, which is our new base year.

There being no other questions or comments, Mr. Long entertained a motion to adopt.

Mr. Dixon made a motion to adopt the Socioeconomic (SE) Data Update as presented. Mr. Kirlin seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

8. EPA Proposed Strengthening of the 8-hour Ozone Standard, Presenter: Bernie Yacobucci, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Long stated that on June 20, 2007, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to strengthen the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ground-Level Ozone. The proposal would strengthen standards for both the primary and secondary standards.

Mr. Yacobucci stated that the change to the ozone standards would be a detriment to the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Metrolina region. The Metrolina region including Gaston County, adjacent to Mecklenburg County, is projected to potentially violate the current standard. In lowering the standard, it will be very difficult for the Metrolina region to pass conformity, the region would be placed into a conformity lapse, federal dollars would be stopped, and there would ultimately be more congestion and ground level ozone.

Mr. Yacobucci stated that the draft Resolution, *Resolution Strongly Urging EPA to Retain the Existing National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone*, was originally written by the American Manufacturers Association, so if the TAC wishes to alter it in any way, he encouraged them to do so.

Mr. Long stated that he has already sent a letter to James Palmer, Regional Administrator of the US EPA, Region 4, expressing our concern over lowering the 8-hour ozone standard as it applies to transportation. This is a very serious situation in that we are in jeopardy of losing our federal funds if we don't meet these standards and since we are in the Charlotte region, it makes our requirements more difficult to attain. He added that as a solution, some major cities have limited certain times of the day when trucks can make deliveries and these times would not be during peak morning and afternoon rush hours. This may not be a solution for us but he invited the TAC members to think of other creative ways to address the issue of ozone.

Mr. Kirlin suggested that perhaps the weigh station on I-85 by the Catawba River could be moved from western Mecklenburg County. All the trucks are idling at the weigh station waiting their turn and there is also an increase in the amount of traffic with the trucks coming into and pulling out of the weigh station. Perhaps, the TAC, as a body, could make a recommendation to Mecklenburg County that the weigh station be moved further westward towards Kings Mountain to get it away from the urban area. He questioned why it is located right in the middle of the urban area – what purpose does it serve being located there? Ms. Harris stated that she liked the idea of moving the weigh station because the weigh station causes traffic buildup and that is reason enough to move it.

Mr. Kirlin asked Mr. Graham to begin research on the process to move the weigh station.

Judge Collier stated that in the relatively near future, the predictions are that sophisticated equipment will be used where trucks will not have to stop at weigh stations. Ms. Barren added that the technology is available but all trucks will be required to be outfitted with a reader so they can be scanned. All trucking companies must purchase this equipment for their trucks and this is the delay, as it will take time for all trucks to be outfitted.

Mr. Graham stated that staff would like to modify the attached Resolution significantly to make it appropriate for the Gaston Urban Area MPO for Mr. Long's signature before we submit it.

Mr. Carpenter made a motion to approve the adoption of a draft Resolution opposing the EPA's proposed strengthening of the 8-hour Ozone Standard for the Gaston Urban Area MPO and that before its submission to the EPA, the draft Resolution would be returned to the TAC for their final approval. Mr. Coleman seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Draft 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Program, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that staff received the draft 2009-2015 STIP from NCDOT on October 31, 2007. One of the newly funded projects is the I-85/US 321 Interchange with actual construction occurring in 2015, with right of way acquisition in 2013. Some of the other projects include a Feasibility Study slated for the US29/74 Catawba River Bridge that has been funded for 2008 and the South Fork Catawba River Bridge Replacement slated for 2012. He asked the TAC members to bring their concerns and questions to staff and that all comments and concerns will be transmitted to Judge Collier and other NCDOT representatives during our meeting in Raleigh in January.

Mr. Kirlin asked that the key to the acronyms on the Draft TIP should be printed and included in the Draft TIP copy for the TAC members to decipher the various codes. Mr. Graham stated that the key is in the original TIP and he will provide it to the TAC.

10. Carolina Thread Trail Resolution in Support, Presenter: Randi Gates, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Long stated that Gaston County has been selected as one of two pilot sites for the Carolina Thread Trail Grant program. The Planning Grant process, the first step that Gaston will participate in, will yield a trail master plan, the identification of the CTT corridors, and an action plan to implement the Thread Trail segments.

Ms. Gates stated that a Resolution is needed from the Gaston Urban Area MPO to show support of the program and the connecting of the fifteen counties in North and South Carolina for the Carolina Thread Trail. The Cities of Gastonia, Belmont and Mt. Holly have already adopted this Resolution as well as the Connect Gaston group, which is a non-profit organization working on the Greenway in Gastonia.

Ms. Gates stated that since Gaston County has also been selected as one of the pilot sites, the County will receive a non-monetary grant worth \$50,000, which would provide the use of the Trust for Public Lands staff to help in the development of this countywide Master Greenway Plan. This Plan will show the corridors that would be designated as the Carolina Thread Trail Corridors along with corridors from each municipalities' Greenway Plan as well.

Mr. Kirlin made a motion to approve the Carolina Thread Trail Resolution as presented. Mr. Howren seconded the motion and the motion was carried unanimously.

11. NCDOT Div. of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Planning Grant Applications - Resolutions in Support, Presenter: Randi Gates, Transportation Planner I

Ms. Gates stated that the TAC is being asked to adopt two Resolutions in support of the Pedestrian Planning Grant applications for the City of Belmont and the City of Bessemer City. The deadline for these applications along with the corresponding Resolution from the MPO is December 3, 2007. The local match for the Cities of Belmont and Bessemer City is 20%.

Mr. Carpenter made a motion to adopt the Resolutions in support for Pedestrian Planning Grant applications for the Cities of Belmont and Bessemer City as presented. Ms. Harris seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

12. Safe Routes to School Updated Information and Resolutions in Support, Presenter: Randi Gates, Transportation Planner I

Ms. Gates stated that NCDOT's Safe Routes to School Program held an Informational Workshop in October to give a new program overview. The TAC is being asked to adopt Resolutions in support of the Action Plan Service Award Grant Applications for the Cities of Belmont and Lowell.

This year, there is \$200,000 in funding available for each division and no grant application is necessary, just provide a letter to our Division 12 Engineer, Mike Holder, from the interested municipality requesting spot improvements such as repairing gaps in sidewalks and crossing improvements. These areas for improvements must be located within a two-mile radius of an elementary or middle school and the area must be located

on a state maintained road, not a local street. Each project cost ranges from \$10,000 to \$50,000 per project.

Ms. Johnson made a motion to approve the Resolutions in support of the Action Plan Service Award Grant Applications for the Cities of Belmont and Lowell. Mr. Dixon seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

13. New Business

14. Other Business

a. NCDOT Board Member Report

Mr. Collier gave a brief report on transportation projects and the status of these projects throughout the state and in the Gaston Urban Area. The following is a synopsis of local activities:

1. The “Band-Aid” repair project of 321/I-85 of widening of the turning lanes and the curb and gutter have been completed.
2. There will be a 321 resurfacing project toward Lincolnton sometime in the spring.
3. There will be I-85 resurfacing between Gastonia and the South Carolina state line sometime in the spring.
4. On December 11, 2007, in Charlotte, there will be the second Fast Lane Study Report (re: HOV lanes) and all elected officials will be invited to this event.
5. The first segment of the Garden Parkway is proceeding with \$3.5 million being committed to the Turnpike Authority. He wasn’t sure where the “gap” money is coming from for this project and there will be challenges to see it built.
6. The TIP will be approved sometime in February or March of 2008.

b. Blue Ribbon Transportation Committee

Mr. Long stated that the purpose of this committee as formed by Governor Easley and others is to examine the condition and needs of North Carolina’s transportation system and to make recommendations to the General Assembly.

Mr. Gary stated that the following dates and locations are for the next upcoming meetings and invited TAC members to ride with him if they wished to attend:

December 12, 2007 – Raleigh
January 16, 2008 – Charlotte
February 13, 2008 – Wilmington

c. 2008 MPO Meeting Calendar

Mr. Long stated that the 2008 MPO meeting schedule is provided in the agenda package and asked members if there were any conflicts with meeting dates in their schedules. Mr. Carpenter stated that there are conflicts for the Gaston County Commissioners meetings and work sessions except for the May and November TAC meetings. He added he might be able to get out of some of these meetings but some

he cannot. Mr. Howren stated that City Council is on November 18 and that is a conflict as the proposed calendar stands now.

Mr. Long asked members to consider November 25, 2008 as a suitable date instead of November 18, 2008 for the TAC meeting.

Mr. Coleman made a motion to approve the 2008 Gaston MPO Monthly Meeting Planner with the recommendation that the November 18, 2008 meeting date be changed to November 25, 2008. Mr. Howren seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

d. Elections, January 2008

Ms. Gates stated that according to the bylaws of the GUAMPO, the Chair and Vice Chair will be elected by the members of the TAC annually at the first scheduled meeting in a calendar year. Also, the Chair and Vice Chair may not serve more than four consecutive one-year terms unless the majority vote of the TAC agrees that the Chair or Vice Chair may continue their office for one additional, one-year term, as seen as necessary.

Ms. Gates stated that Mr. Long is completing his additional one-year term and he has served five consecutive one-year terms. She added that Mr. Murphy is completing his second one-year term.

Mr. Kirlin asked Mr. Long if he was interested in continuing as TAC Chair. Mr. Long stated that that he has served five terms and in that time, he has learned quite a lot and would still like to continue to serve for everyone's benefit, if the members choose to reappoint him.

Mr. Kiser suggested that if the TAC members wish to review the TAC Bylaws and make changes to them at the next meeting, a motion should be made to consider changing the TAC Bylaws during the next meeting to possibly remove the term limits.

Mr. Howren suggested that a copy of the Bylaws be sent to all members before the meeting so TAC members can review them.

Ms. Harris made a motion that a possible changing of the Bylaws to remove the term limits will be considered and possibly adopted at the next TAC meeting on January 22, 2008 and that the TAC Bylaws be mailed in advance of the January meeting to the TAC members for their review. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

e. Gastonia Express 85-X Ridership Report

Ms. Gates stated that ridership still continues to increase.

15. Adjournment

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

Mr. Dixon made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Ms. Harris seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.