

**MINUTES
GASTON URBAN AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (GUAMPO)
TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE (TCC)
REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12, 2007**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) was held **Wednesday, September 12, 2007**, at the Market Street Buffet and Bakery, 2525 S. York Street, Gastonia, NC.

Members Present:

Ben Blackburn	City of Lowell, TCC Chair
Kevin Krouse	City of Bessemer City, Planning Dir., TCC Vice-Chair
Joe Gates	City of Lowell, Planning Director
Michael Peoples	Town of Cramerton, City Manager
Steve Baucom	Town of Cramerton, Planning Director
Greg Beal	City of Mt. Holly, Senior Planner
Barry Webb	City of Belmont, City Manager
Chuck Webb	Town of Ranlo, Town Administrator
Jack Kiser	City of Gastonia, Director of Planning
Debby Key	City of Gastonia, Director of Fleet Services
Marc Bolick	Gaston EDC, Project Administrator
Margaret Taylor	Gaston County Access, Transportation Coordinator
Shannon Ransom	NCDOT, Gaston MPO Coordinator
Byron Engle	NCDOT, Deputy Division Traffic Engineer
Loretta Barren	FHWA, NC Division, Community Planner

Staff Members 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

Guests:

Charles Harrison	Carolina Central Div., Ohio Valley Railroad
Bill Gray	Carolina Central Div., Ohio Valley Railroad
Rev. Pierre Crawford	Center Baptist Church, Senior Pastor

Members with absences in 2007:

Town of McAdenville	(Jan., Mar., May, July, Sept. - 5)
Town of Spencer Mountain	(Jan., Mar., May, July, Sept. - 5)

Town of Ranlo	(Jan., Mar., May, July – 4)
City of Mt. Holly	(Mar. – 1)
City of Bessemer City	(May – 1)
City of Belmont	(May – 1)

Mr. Blackburn turned the meeting over to Mr. Krouse, as there was a possibility that he may have to leave early.

1. Set Agenda, Presenter: Kevin Krouse, TCC Vice-Chair

Mr. Krouse asked if there was any new business or any additions to add to the agenda? There were none.

2. Determination of Quorum, Presenter: Kevin Krouse, TCC Vice-Chair

It was determined that there was a quorum present.

3. Approval of Minutes, Presenter: Kevin Krouse, TCC Vice-Chair

Mr. Krouse entertained a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2007 as presented.

Mr. Blackburn made a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2007 as presented with Mr. Barry Webb seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Introduction of Guests, Presenter: Kevin Krouse, TCC Vice-Chair

Mr. Krouse asked that guests introduce themselves. Mr. Bill Gray, President of the Carolina Central Division of the Ohio Valley Railroad, introduced himself and stated that his company was interested in establishing rail service on the Piedmont Northern between Gastonia and Charlotte. Mr. Charles Harrison, Vice President of Marketing of the Carolina Central Division of the Ohio Valley Railroad, was also present.

5. Public Comment Period, Presenter: Kevin Krouse, TCC Vice-Chair

There were no public comments.

6. Thoroughfare Plan Map Amendment for the Southridge Parkway Extension, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that this item was tabled at a previous meeting for further discussion. He stated that MPO staff met with Bessemer City staff to address some detailed issues regarding this Thoroughfare Plan Map amendment. Included in the agenda package is the map amendment for the Southridge Parkway Extension in Bessemer City that is agreeable and preferred by Bessemer City staff. The map

amendment includes an alignment connecting Crowder's Mountain Road to NC274/Bessemer City Highway. This amendment will also serve industrial development in western Gaston County by way of the Southridge Parkway.

Mr. Barry Webb made a motion to approve the Thoroughfare Plan Map Amendment for the Southridge Parkway Extension as presented. Mr. Blackburn seconded the motion and the motion carried.

7. Bessemer City's Request to Use Gaston Urban Area MPO's Transportation Planning (PL) Funds, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that the City of Bessemer City has requested the use of MPO Planning (PL) Funds, mainly the use of some of our unobligated fund balance, to hire a Civil Engineering firm to complete a functional design for the further extension of the Southridge Parkway. The MPO staff is supporting Bessemer City's request.

Mr. Blackburn asked how much money will this cost? Mr. Graham estimated it would cost between \$10,000 - \$15,000. Mr. Krouse stated that this request is not just for Bessemer City's benefit but for all of Gaston County with regards to jobs and economic development because it will invite access to a large amount of industrial land along the I-85 corridor.

Mr. Graham stated that Bessemer City would be responsible for the local match for the use of these funds. Mr. Peoples asked what is our fund balance at this time? Mr. Graham estimated that it probably was now around \$400,000.

Mr. Blackburn made a motion to recommend to the TAC approval of Bessemer City's request to use Gaston Urban Area MPO's Transportation Planning (PL) Funds to hire a Civil Engineering firm to complete a functional design for the further extension of the Southridge Parkway. Mr. Peoples seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

8. Resolution Requesting Governor Easley to call a Special Session of the General Assembly to Discuss Local, Regional and Statewide Transportation Funding Issues, Presenter: Randi P. Gates, Transportation Planner I

Mrs. Gates stated that this Resolution originated from the NC Association of MPOs and they have requested our support. The North Carolina Department of Transportation has experienced a significant funding shortfall over the past several years and it is expected to continue. Additional funding sources are needed to construct important local, regional and statewide transportation projects.

Mr. Graham added that the City of Gastonia City Council is going to adopt a similar Resolution at their next meeting.

Mr. Barry Webb stated that the Resolution should be worded to address the specifics of the session at which this Resolution would be heard. Mrs. Gates stated that she has worded the Resolution so that at the session, it would be the goal to discuss local, regional and statewide transportation funding issues.

Mr. Barry Webb made a motion to approve the Resolution as presented requesting Gov. Easley to call a Special Session of the General Assembly to discuss Local, Regional and Statewide Transportation Funding Issues. Mr. Peoples seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Transportation Planning and Funding in North Carolina, Presenter: Bernie Yacobucci, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Yacobucci stated that his presentation shows the roles of planning organizations and the process by which transportation funding is distributed throughout the region.

Some of the highlights of his presentation were as follows:

1. There are 17 MPOs and 20 RPOs within the state of North Carolina. In our immediate Metrolina region, there are 4 MPOs: Gaston, Mecklenburg, Union, Cabarrus-Rowan, and Rock Hill. There are 2 RPOs: Lake Norman and Rocky River.
2. The method of how transportation project decisions are made:
 - Staff and/or elected officials submit eligible projects for consideration.
 - TCC ranks and prioritizes projects.
 - TAC approves list of projects.
 - The Project list is prepared and submitted to NCDOT.
 - Projects are selected for inclusion in the NCTIP.
 - The MPOs and RPOs comment.
 - Seek Joint MPO/BOT approval.
3. North Carolina Long-Range Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan recommended investment scenarios:
 - Emphasize greater investment in the State's highest use facilities.
 - Increase investment in highway modernization, maintenance and preservation.
 - Support increased investment on non-highway modes.
4. Federal Aid for Transportation Planning for the 2006 NCDOT Budget amounts to \$890 million and this money comes from gas tax. The State Highway Trust Fund has been reduced by the General Fund from \$250 million to \$170 million and is restricted by approval of projects mandated by the Legislature. There is also a Highway Fund of 7.5% state tax on gas.
5. The Distribution Formula is as follows:
 - 25% on the estimated number of miles to complete the intrastate system
 - 50% based on population
 - 25% based on the fraction 1/7
6. The Equity Formula Distribution is region specific.

7. Current Funds subject to the Equity Formula are as follows:
- 2007-2013 State TIP has \$6.743 billion in the budget.
 - For our region, the budget is \$790 million and for our Division (12), \$420 million.

Mr. Yacobucci stated that there is inadequate funding for significant, non-municipal suburban or sub-regional routes which are the major statewide backbone. With the increase in urban growth and much of the state funding going toward maintenance of existing roads, new projects will be extremely hard to fund.

A brief discussion ensued. Mr. Graham stated that the purpose of this presentation was to provide information to the TCC on the transportation planning process and transportation funding through the State and in our immediate area.

10. Priority List of 2009-2015 TIP Projects and Updated List of Unmet Needs, Presenter: Randi P. Gates, Transportation Planner I

Mrs. Gates stated that at the July TCC meeting and by a reminder on August 17, 2007, MPO staff made a request for any and all projects in the MPO jurisdiction that should to be on our Unmet Needs List or projects that needed to be pushed forward in the upcoming 2009-2015 TIP. She said that she heard from Cramerton, Lowell, and Dallas so far and she asked if there were any projects to be ranked to please give them to her before the TAC meeting on September 25, 2007.

Mrs. Gates pointed out that she just received a cost projection spreadsheet from CDOT and this will be used in the analysis and the ranking methodology for these projects. She pointed out that on the Unmet Needs List, the top three rankings will stay the same ranking no matter what the methodology shows and they are as follows: 1.) Garden Parkway, NC 160 to I-85, 2.) Garden Parkway, I-85 and US 321, and 3.) I-85/US 321 Interchange Improvement.

In addition to the Highway projects on the Unmet Needs List, Bicycle and Pedestrian projects, Bridge projects, and Enhancement projects are also a part of the Unmet Needs List for the MPO. Enhancement projects are not ranked as they are just part of the application process.

Mrs. Gates asked for any comments, additions or corrections. Mr. Kiser asked that the physical location of the projects and the cross section of the project should be clarified on the Unmet Needs List. Mr. Chuck Webb asked that number 27, *Mitchem Road Extension, New Alignment*, be removed from the list as the Town of Ranlo is doing that project with a developer. Mr. Kiser wondered whether the Hudson Boulevard Connector to Hwy. 74 was on the list? There was a functional design done years ago on this. Mr. Graham stated that we probably should add it to the list and that he would check on it. There were no other corrections or additions at this time.

Mr. Blackburn made a motion to recommend the Unmet Needs List for Gaston Urban Area MPO to the TAC and to authorize staff to rank the projects before the TAC meeting along with any additions from other municipalities forthcoming in the next week. Mr. Barry Webb seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

11. Socioeconomic (SE) Data Process, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that the major technical items necessary to begin the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan update include updating our base year population and employment data to the year 2005. The updated housing data will assist with population and vehicular miles traveled throughout our region. The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Division of Air Quality has also released new motor vehicle emission budgets for each non-attainment county within the state. Mr. Graham stated that the tables for the *Metrolina Region Population Estimates and Projections for SIP 2006 model, Metrolina Regional Model 2006 and 2030/2035 Population Projections and Employment Projections, Population Growth by County 2002 – 2006, Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill Building Permits, Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord MSA Employment, and Population Data* provided by the US Census Bureau are in the agenda package.

Mr. Graham stated that in our area, Gaston County is experiencing an average 8.5% annual growth rate for the 30-year plan period. This increase in growth patterns is reflected in an increase in our residential building permit applications. Gaston County is becoming a more highly selective area for residential bedroom communities outside the Charlotte region.

He asked the TCC members if they wished to go through a series of meetings on the same process that the MPO did 3 years ago by going down to the task level and re-interpolating 2000 census data - (new 2010 census data is not available). MPO staff invites feedback from the TCC to see if the process should be opened again to tweak or fine tune our population data and employment projection numbers and from this data, form projection numbers.

Mr. Graham added we could use the existing numbers we already have, and print out GIS maps, obtain building permit data from the Gaston County Appraisers office, review capacities for assumptions based on projected population and then we could work with the EDC to come up with projected employment.

Mr. Krouse stated that after all that, we probably would come up with about the same numbers as we did the last time. Mr. Graham said that those numbers were very accurate and good numbers. Mr. Krouse stated that we should work with the numbers we have.

Mr. Krouse made a motion to use the *Socioeconomic (SE) Data Process* numbers that are already in place. Motion died for of a lack of a second.

Mr. Krouse suggested that this matter be brought back to the next meeting and Mr. Graham agreed.

12. Charlotte Region HOT/HOV/Managed Lanes Study – Update, Presenter: Hank Graham, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner

Mr. Graham stated that this item is for information only. He hopes to get the consultants that have worked on this study to come and do a more detailed presentation for the TCC at a later date. This study shows that Charlotte DOT has thoroughly identified the region's key mobility and congestion management issues and the opportunities and deficiencies.

13. EPA Proposed New Ozone Standards, Presenter: Bernie Yacobucci, Transportation Planner I

Mr. Yacobucci stated the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sent out a map on June 27, 2007 showing the potential counties in North Carolina that could be affected by proposed changes to the ozone standard. The EPA is proposing lowering the 8-hour ozone standard from .084 to .075 or .70 parts per million. The proposed revision would strengthen the ground-level ozone standards that are associated with public health concerns.

Mr. Graham added that it is very significant that the EPA continues to raise the standard for ozone. It will be more difficult for our metropolitan region to pass conformity standards, especially as we continue to grow with people, more cars on the road, and more traffic. It will cause the MPO to put more money into transit projects and other projects that were not anticipated.

Mr. Graham stated that staff will compose a letter on behalf of the MPO for signature of our TAC Chairman, Jim Long, addressing our concerns and issues regarding the difficulty of complying with the increased EPA standards for our region.

14. New Business

There was no new business to report.

15. Other Business

- a) Charlotte Regional Alliance For Transportation (CRAFT) – Mr. Yacobucci stated that the CRAFT meeting was held on August 22, 2007 in Gastonia City Hall. There was a presentation from Global Insight regarding freight data. He stated that there is nothing to report regarding the Garden Parkway other than the Environmental Impact Statement will be completed in 2008. The Pennies for

Progress tax program in York County for road projects was discussed and comments for new projects were invited. Other meetings scheduled were for the next Technical meeting to occur on November 8, 2007 at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. The next Executive Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for January or February of 2008 in Cabarrus County. The NCAMPO conference will be held in Greensboro, October 24 thru October 26, 2007.

- b) NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative – 2008 Call for Proposals. Mrs. Gates stated that as of September 5, 2007, the Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) is accepting applications for the NCDOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative. All NC municipalities are eligible and are encouraged to apply. It is a matching grant program with a sliding scale formula – municipalities with populations less than 10,000 pay a 20% match; populations between 10,000 and 50,000 pay 30% and Gastonia would have a 40% match. The deadline is December 3, 2007 and any interested municipality will need a Resolution from the MPO to submit their application.
- c) Gastonia Express 85-X Ridership Report – Mrs. Gates stated that the ridership numbers are still on the rise from last year.
- d) Air Quality Report – Mrs. Gates stated that there were 58 yellow days, 17 orange days and 1 purple day. She added that the City of Gastonia's Traffic Unit fabricated twenty-five 3 x 3 metal signs with changeable Air Quality ozone color designations that would hang on the sign with Velcro®. The signs would be placed on a post or a wall. Mr. Graham added that we will have extra signs if any municipality is interested in one.

16. Adjournment

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.