

September, 2020 Minutes

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Minutes from the TCC Virtual Meeting via Zoom on September 10, 2020

ATTENDANCE:

In-Person:

Tristan Winkler Zia Rifkin

Remote:

Josh O'Conner	Nick Kroncke	Vicki Eastland	Tyler Morrow
Troy Wilson	John Fargher	Eric Rufa	Chris Medlin
Jamie Smolar	William High	Daniel Sellers	Marshall Williams
Emily Scott-Cruz	John Ridout	Jessica Trotman	Autumn Radcliff
Ed Evans	Daniel Cobb	Daniel Heyman	Lori Boyer
Janna Peterson	Lonnie Watkins	Michael Dawson	Stephen Sparks
Nathan Bennet	Jessica Morriss	Cole Sutton	Si Simmons
Harry Buckner	Zach Shuler	Bernard Clark	Dan Baechtold
Laura Reid	Pat Christie		

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair O'Conner called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and roll call followed. A quorum was announced for conducting the business of the TCC.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chair O'Conner indicated that the Consent Agenda included the August 13, 2020 minutes and the 2020-2029 TIP Amendments. He requested approval for the Agenda at this time, as well.

Autumn Radcliff moved to approve the consent agenda and the agenda, as presented. Janna Peterson seconded and the motion was affirmed upon a roll call vote of the member governments present.

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair O'Connor called for public comments. No public comments were made.

BUSINESS

SPOT Prioritization for Division 13 Projects

The prioritization process allows the customization of weights for scoring components if every MPO, RPO, and the Division(s) can come to an agreement on what is being changed. For a change to Regional Impact scoring, that would require every MPO, RPO, and Divisions 13 and 14 to agree. For Division Needs, that just requires an agreement between each respective Division and the MPOs and RPOs within that Division.

For this round of prioritization, modernization projects are scored differently from “mobility” projects with a focus on safety, lane width, shoulder width, freight, and pavement condition. So projects submitted as “modernizations” are scored using these datasets while other improvement types have a greater emphasis on congestion.

Division 13 staff recommended a change to improve the scoring of modernization projects that would be scored at the Division 13 Division Needs tier.

Funding Tier	Statewide Mobility	Regional Impact	Division Needs
Eligible Projects	Interstate & Strategic Highway Facilities, Major Airports (AVL)	US & NC Routes + Anything “Cascaded” from Statewide Mobility	Secondary Road, Bike/Ped, Transit + Anything “Cascaded from Statewide Mobility, Regional Impact
How Projects Compete	Statewide Competition	FBRMPO Projects Compete in Region G (all counties in Divisions 13 & 14)	Within Divisions (Division 13 Projects Compete Against Each Other, Division 14 Projects Compete Against Each Other)

The changes recommended and agreed to by staff from the Land of Sky RPO, French Broad River MPO, Hickory MPO, Isothermal RPO, and High Country RPO would remove pavement condition as a criteria and shift its points to lane widths. The reasoning is that modernization projects are primarily trying to expand lane widths and shoulder widths to NCDOT standards so scoring a project based on pavement condition does not reflect the primary intent of those projects.

Measure	Default Weight	Alternative Weight	Change
Safety	20%	20%	-
Lane Width	5%	15%	+10%
Paved Shoulder	10%	10%	-
Freight	5%	5%	-
Pavement Condition	10%	0%	(10%)

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Congestion	0%	0%	-
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Making this change is expected to boost the score for many modernization projects being submitted in Division 13, including projects in the FBRMPO as well as those outside of the FBRMPO.

Jessica Morriss moved to approve the change in criteria to improve the scoring of modernization projects scored at the Division Needs tier for Division 13 projects. William High seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

MTP 2045 Adoption

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a federally required planning document that MPOs are required to update and maintain to reflect planned transportation investments in the region over the next twenty-five years. The MTP is required to be fiscally constrained, meaning that projects in the MTP have to be reasonably expected to work within projected revenues. The French Broad River MPO is required to update its MTP every five years with the next update due September 2020.

The Draft MTP was made available for public comment through the summer and two virtual public meetings were held on Tuesday, August 18, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. MPO staff also provided a survey for public comment, which had 95 respondents.

Approval from the TCC and Board is required in September 2020 to keep the region in compliance with federal requirements.

Key Elements of the MTP

- Growth projections for the five-county area over the next 25 years.
 - Based on the “Land Use Study” that was completed and approved by the MPO in January, 2020
 - Projects more than 189,000 new residents, economic changes, and increased wealth
 - Projections for each jurisdiction and within jurisdictions is available
- Goals and Objectives for the MPO and the regional transportation network
 - Most goals are the same as the MTP 2040 with two additional goals:
 - Maintenance
 - Equity
- Overview of federally-required planning factors and recommendations for planning staff to pursue at the planning or implementation levels
- Financial Plan that lays out anticipated revenues over the next 25 years and how those funds are required to be allocated
 - The financial plan is largely based on STI/SPOT with roadway funding broken out into Statewide Mobility, Regional Impact, and Division Needs tiers
 - Anticipates more than \$4,000,000,000 in transportation improvements
 - Bike/Ped funding is primarily based on the MPO’s Locally Administered Projects funding as well as some funding from SPOT and local contributions
 - Transit funding is based on federal, state, and local contributions to transit operators in the region
- List of projects that meet the financial plan’s projected revenues

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- The MTP is required to list projects in the TIP (funded projects) but also includes projects being submitted to SPOT and a few additional long-term priorities
- Environmental Justice analysis to examine the distribution of benefits and burdens of planned transportation projects

NOTE: this plan and the project list were developed before the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts to transportation funding were understood.

Changes to the MTP included making many grammatical changes as well as some text edits to address resiliency and stormwater issues, but the biggest change was a shift in roadway projects to accommodate I-2513D, the modernization of Riverside Drive in Buncombe County that is a fully funded project in the TIP. Moving I-2513D into the MTP kicks out two long-term priority projects on Old County Home Road and Ben Lippen/Emma Road.

MTP ID	TIP ID	Route	From	To	Cost	Improvement	County
HD134531	I-2513D	SR 1477 (Riverside Drive)	Hill Street	Broadway Avenue	\$9,500,000	Widening	Buncombe
HD134529	-	Old County Home Road	NC-63 (New Leicester Highway)	NC-63 (New Leicester Highway)	\$6,931,000	Modernization	Buncombe
HD134530	-	Ben Lippen/Emma Road	Old County Home Road	Gorman Bridge Road	\$4,277,000	Modernization	Buncombe

The Draft 2045 MTP and associated documents are available here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/mtp/>

Tristan Winkler provided an overview of the MTP and Nick Kroncke provided a brief analysis of the public input received as part of this effort.

William High moved to recommend the MTP 2045 for approval by the MPO Board. Dan Baechtold provided the second and the motion carried upon a roll call vote of the member governments present, and without further discussion.

Hellbender Regional Trail Plan Adoption

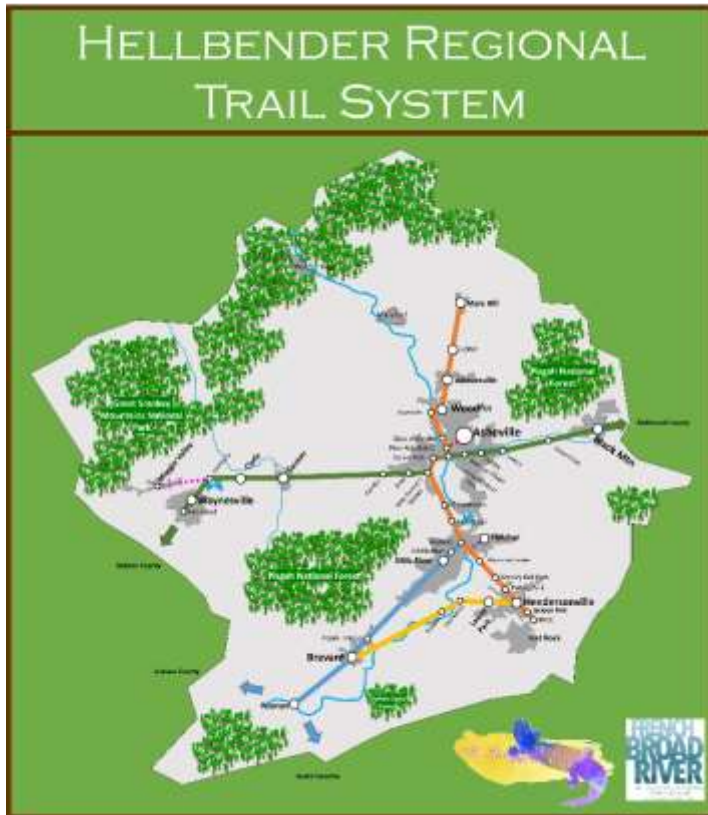
The Regional Trail Workgroup has been working on a Regional Trail Plan since 2019. This group has included the MPO's Prioritization Subcommittee as well as advocates appointed to represent Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood, Transylvania, and Madison counties. Additional local staff that have played a major role in trail development in the region were invited to attend these meetings as well.

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The workgroup developed, vetted and approved the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan, a plan that is primarily based off of locally adopted plans for greenway, multi-use path, and other bike/ped facilities that is focused on paved trails but with exceptions for other infrastructure, where necessary. Sections of the Hellbender that do not currently exist in a locally adopted plan include the link from Weaverville to Mars Hill, a short section through Downtown Canton along Park Street, and a section from the Pigeon River to Lake Junaluska in Haywood County.



The Hellbender consists of four “lines” that connect the region:

The Orange Line- Mars Hill to Blue Ridge Community College (just south of Hendersonville)

The Gold Line- Hendersonville to Brevard

The Blue Line- Westfeldt Park to Rosman

The Green Line- Waynesville to Black Mountain

The Hellbender Regional Trail Plan gives our region a clear document that connects local plans into a regional system, highlights planned trails that would have a regional significance, and provides a vision for what a regional trail system could look like for the transportation planning region. A regional trail could help to provide residents and visitors with more options to get outside for enjoyment and exercise, provide opportunities for stormwater mitigation efforts, reduce

emissions from trips that would otherwise require a car, provide economic development opportunities, and could provide transportation options between communities in our region.

It should be noted that the Hellbender is a long-term vision. Currently, 12 miles of the estimated 150 mile system are on the ground. And while momentum is picking up for additional trail projects with 18 miles of additional trails listed as “potentially funded” and eight more miles underway or programmed for engineering, this is still a major infrastructure project with at least a 50-year timeframe based on current funding policies and investment levels.

Adopting the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan is a first step towards envisioning a regional trail network. MPO staff would continue to work with the Regional Trail Workgroup to monitor and raise awareness of on-going activities and consider further work on marketing materials, partnerships, and other items that may assist local and regional efforts for advancing the Hellbender Trail.

The Hellbender Regional Trail Plan is available here: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/multimodal/>

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Nick Kroncke provided a summary of public comments received on the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan. He noted that typically, the MPO holds in-person public meetings, open houses and information workshops when presenting draft plans. Given the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 situation, non-traditional methods of outreach and engagement methods were utilized. The following summarizes the outreach that took place and results from those efforts.

In addition, various stakeholder groups in the region were sent email notification(s) of the public comment period including to media outlets, MPO Boards, committees and interested citizens lists maintained by the MPO. These groups were asked to share the plan with their own networks to increase distribution. Comments were collected on the MPO website via a Google Form, in addition to offering the option for comments to be emailed to the MPO.

A total of 363 comments were received via the Google Forms feedback and MPO email.

A majority of comments, 349 (96%) out of the 363 total were expressing support for the plan.

Common themes in support of the plan included: Health/wellness, community benefit, economic opportunities, tourism benefits, safety of users, environmental protection, congestion mitigation, and increased connectivity/accessibility

Four of the emails received included letters of support from Connect Buncombe, Friends of Oklawaha Greenway, Haywood Greenways Advisory Council and Mountain True

Five (1.3%) out of the 363 total comments expressed disapproval or raised concerns with the plan.

Concerns or reasons for disapproval include right-of-way impacts, concerns about crime, degradation of environment, and issues with the name.

Nine comments (2.5%) out of the 363 total comments had questions or comments that expressed neither support nor disapproval of the plan. These included statements related to: questions about timeline/implementation, inclusion of local trail networks, preference for impervious surface, rails-to-trails questions, and inclusion of broadband connectivity

A Facebook Live event was held on July 24th that gave an overview of the plan, talked about segments that make it up, covered implementation aspects, and in addition to a Q&A session. Multiple participants watched in live time, a few questions were asked during the Q&A and the video has over 200 views. The video can be viewed on the MPO Facebook page, [here](#).

The plan document and comment form were posted on the Bike/Pedestrian page of the MPO website (link: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/multimodal/>).

Website: The document and comment form were posted on the Bike/Pedestrian page of the MPO website (link: <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/multimodal/>).

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Discussion occurred regarding potentially setting up a non-profit for the Hellbender Trail to provide assistance to local government efforts to develop the regional trail.

Jessica Morriss moved to recommend the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan for adoption by the MPO Board, which was seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote of the member governments present.

REGULAR UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

Regular updates included NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates, TPD updates and FHWA/FTA updates. MPO Subcommittees, Legislative, and Staff updates were also presented.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, SPECIAL UPDATES

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair O'Conner opened the second public comment period. No public comments received.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair O'Conner adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.