



**French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
Minutes from the TCC Virtual Meeting via Zoom on August 12, 2021

**ATTENDANCE:**

Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Chair Autumn Radcliff	Nick Kroncke	Troy Wilson	Stephen Sparks
Ed Evans	Eric Rufa	Erica Anderson	Jodie Ferguson
Brendan Merithew	Daniel Metcalf	David White	Eric Hardy
Steve Williams	Daniel Sellers	Dan Baechtold	Jessica Trotman
Marshall Williams	Janna Bianculli	Jared Merrill	Michael Dawson
Adrienne Isenhower	McCray Coates	William High	Peyton O’Conner
Daniel Cobb	Kim Roney	Pat Christie	

In-Person at Land of Sky Regional Council:

Tristan Winkler	Emily Scott-Cruz	John Ridout	Zia Rifkin (minutes)
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**WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING**

Chair Radcliff called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and roll call followed. Quorum was established for conducting the business of the TCC.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Radcliff called for public comments. No public comments were made.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Chair Radcliff indicated that the Consent Agenda included the June 2021 minutes, and the LAPP Quarterly Report. She requested approval of the agenda, at this time, as well.

***Janna Bianculli moved to approve the consent agenda and the agenda as presented. Peyton O’Conner seconded the motion, which was affirmed upon a roll call vote of the member governments present.***

**BUSINESS**

Regional Transit Plan Recommendation

The MPO approved a Regional Transit Feasibility Study for its FY 2021 UPWP, and Regional Transit has been an identified need since the 2000 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The study looks at adding regionally focused transit routes (ex. Asheville to Hendersonville, Waynesville to Black Mountain, etc.) to provide our region with express bus options in the MPO planning area (Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Madison counties.) The study’s recommendations regarding how to address the existing need for regional transit, which was catalyzed by changing demographics and subsequent changes in commute patterns coupled with population growth projections, touched on service recommendations, governance, and funding.

- Service Recommendations:

- The map to the right shows the four recommended regional express routes and their midpoints.
- Governance:
  - The study recommended utilizing existing legislation (Article 25) to establish a Regional Transit Authority, a separate entity that can provide regional service and have additional funding opportunities based on its structure.
- Funding:
  - The recommended funding package included utilizing existing NCDOT and FTA funds, adding a vehicle registration and vehicle rental fee, and introducing a ¼ cent sales tax to pay for a new regional entity and service. It is important to note that the recommended funding package would bring in more revenue than the Regional Transit Authority would require, leaving additional funds available to our region for other efforts.

This study helps to provide a roadmap for our region on how to implement a regional transit system.

The Regional Transit Feasibility Study's final report is complete and goes before the FBRMPO's TCC and Board this month. The project has been on-going since last fall with a steering committee made up of Buncombe County, City of Asheville, Henderson County, Haywood County, and Madison County staff, as well as MPO and RPO staff. Two (virtual) public input sessions were held throughout the course of the study- one in December 2020 and another that was held over March and April, 2021.

#### General Recommendations:

- Pursue a Regional Transit Authority that would focus on regional transit service while preserving local control of existing systems. The Regional Transit Authority service would provide express routes to connect Asheville, Hendersonville, Black Mountain, Mars Hill, Weaverville, Canton, and Waynesville, and it would take on responsibilities to provide those more effectively at a regional level such as mobility management, employee training, maintenance, and funding administration. Lastly, the study included recommendations for funding and for implementation of the aforementioned Regional Transit Authority.

Emily Scott-Cruz provided a presentation on the final findings and recommendations of the study.

***Janna Bianculli moved to accept the Plan, with the recommendation that the Board consider acceptance of the Plan, as well.***

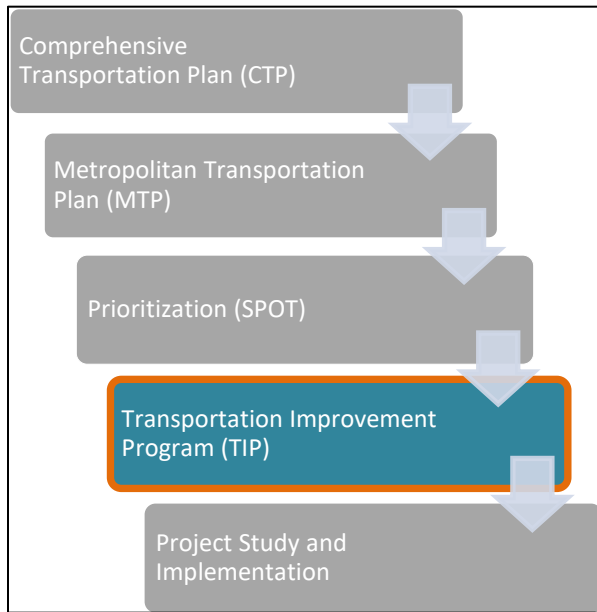
Discussion occurred regarding next steps, to move the process forward, to establish a regional transit authority.

***Dan Baechtold seconded the motion, which was approved upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### Amendments to the 2020-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is our region's document that reflects planned transportation investments over a ten-year period and is required to be in conformity with North Carolina's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The TIP describes each project, a schedule for implementation, funding sources, and estimated costs.

## TIP Amendments Overview



This round includes several amendments and modifications to highway, bicycle/pedestrian, transit and aviation projects. Some highlights include:

- Delay of U-5783, improvements to US 64, to allow more time for planning and design;
- Delay U-5019A, the Town Branch/Nasty Branch Greenway, construction to FY 22;
- Redefine project limits for EB-5547 (A&B), the Black Mountain Riverwalk Greenway project- now two segments;
- Add TU-0010 for 5307 Planning and Program Support for Henderson County;
- Add language to the TIP to reflect PTASP performance measure and target requirements.

The full list of TIP amendments is currently posted for public review and comment on the [TIP page](#) of the MPO website.

Jessica Trotman noted corrections for EB-5547 (A & B), the Black Mountain Riverwalk Greenway project- now two segments. MPO staff responded that those changes would be made to the proposed amendments and put forth the changes as part of the request to approve the amendments.

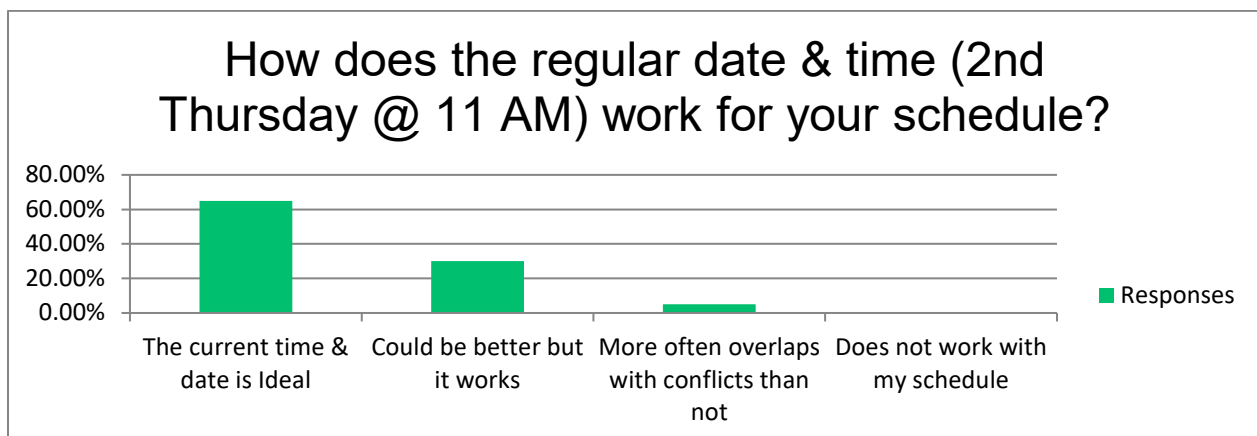
***Peyton O’Conner moved to recommend the proposed TIP Amendments, with the corrections noted, to the MPO Board for consideration of approval. Dan Baechtold seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

### TCC Time & Date

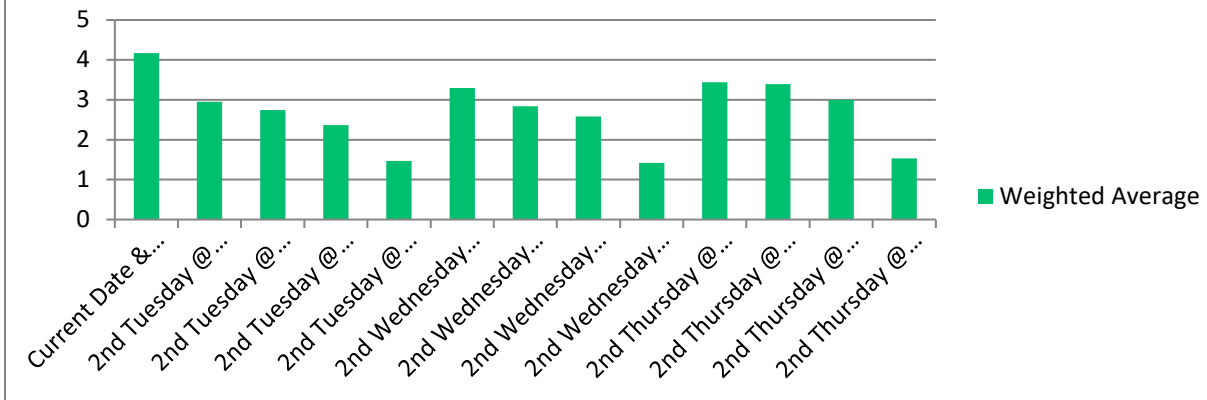
Tristan Winkler shared that staff recently conducted a poll of TCC members to look for a potentially better time and/or date to better suit committee members. Overall, 20 TCC members took the poll.

The general results are as follows:

- current date/time works for most (65% say current is ideal, 30% say could be better but it works)
- closest runner-up was 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays at 9:00 AM (4 said was “ideal” vs. 9 for current date/time)
- all the 5:30 PM options were the least popular, including a comment



## Please rate how the proposed times & dates would work for your schedule



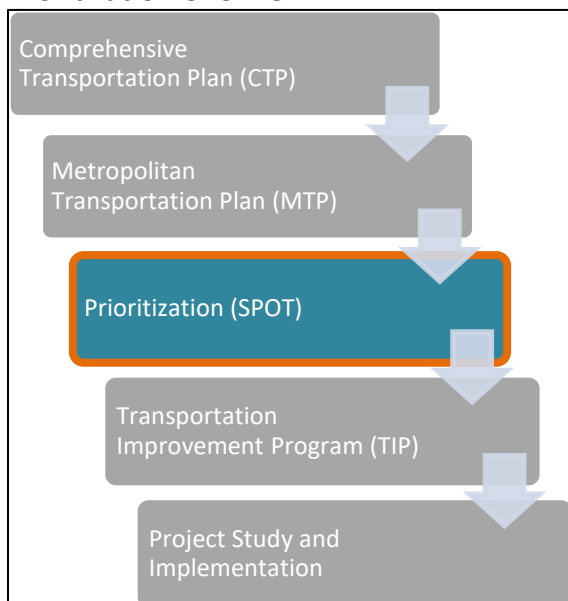
Discussion occurred regarding the probability of virtual meetings and how the current meeting time of eleven o'clock works in the virtual format. It was suggested that further discussion may be warranted if/when meetings return to in-person. Additionally, it was noted that there may be several smaller jurisdictions that meet in the morning, and that pushing the TCC meeting time out might be a good idea. Tristan Winkler shared that MPO staff would follow up on suggestions.

**No action required. Information item only.**

### Prioritization (P 6.0) Updates

Prioritization/P 6.0/SPOT is the process that largely determines what major transportation projects move from long-range plans to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP.) The process is governed by the Strategic Transportation Investments Act of 2012, which mandates the framework for transportation decision-making for North Carolina that involves NCDOT, MPOs, and RPOs.

### **Prioritization Overview**



This update will go over the recent decision from the Prioritization Workgroup at the state that determined that new projects should not be programmed through this round of Prioritization, known as P 6.0. This decision was largely determined based on the limited amount of funding projected to be available for funding in this round of prioritization, largely due to increases in costs to committed transportation projects.

While new projects will not be programmed through P 6.0, the Prioritization Workgroup will continue to meet because a new State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is still required to be developed. The Workgroup will help to determine any processes to be used to develop project schedules and other STIP programming considerations.

## P 6.0 Update

- The Prioritization Workgroup reached a consensus that new transportation projects would not be programmed through P 6.0 due to limited funding projected to be available in the 2024-2033 timeframe
  - Quantitative scores for projects will be released to help evaluate criteria and weights, but Local Input Points will not be applied in this round of prioritization
- NCDOT developed new cost estimates for committed projects- the updated cost estimates reflect a net increase of \$7.5 billion in project expenses across the State
- The Prioritization Workgroup will continue to meet to determine processes to develop the 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which will largely help to determine schedules and prioritization of currently committed projects, potentially some “non-committed” projects already programmed in the STIP

## What Do the Changes to P 6.0 Mean for Our Region?

- The [projects submitted for P 6.0](#) will not be considered for funding at this time
- The funding tiers that are available to our region are in generally worse financial condition than similar funding sources in other parts of the state
  - No funding is projected to be available through 2033 in the Statewide Mobility Tier
  - No funding is projected to be available through 2033 in the Region G Regional Impact Tier
  - No funding is projected to be available through 2033 in either Divisions 13 or 14 Division Needs Tiers

## Updated Cost Estimates

- NCDOT updated cost estimates in July for a vast majority of projects in the STIP to develop the funding projections for the 2024-2033 STIP
  - Cost estimates were updated through express designs
  - The North Carolina Association of MPOs has expressed concern that little to no input from MPOs and local agencies were incorporated as part of the express design process

## Funding Projections 2024-2033 (Committed Projects Only)

Statewide Mobility		Regional Impact			Division Needs		
Available Funding	Programming Status	Region	Available Funding	Programming Status	Division	Available Funding	Programming Status
\$9.4 B	\$2.22 B Over	A (D1 & D4)	\$588.8M	\$181.8M Over	1	\$506M	\$52.1M Over
		B (D2 & D3)	\$855.1M	\$348.2M Over	2	\$506M	\$113.7M Over
		C (D5 & D6)	\$1.56B	\$32.3M Over	3	\$506M	\$101.5M Under
		D (D7 & D9)	\$1.17B	\$392.4M Over	4	\$506M	\$192.0M Under
		E (D8 & D10)	\$1.46B	\$490.1M Over	5	\$506M	\$131.2M Over
		F (D11 & D12)	\$784M	\$268.5M Over	6	\$506M	\$121.7M Under

<b>G (D13 &amp; D 14)</b>	<b>\$609.2M</b>	<b>\$929.9M Over</b>	7	\$506M	\$91.7M Under
			8	\$506M	\$22.1M Over
			9	\$506M	\$49.8M Under
			10	\$506M	\$38.6M Over
			11	\$506M	\$22.3M Under
			12	\$506M	\$207.7M Over
			<b>13</b>	<b>\$506M</b>	<b>\$165.4M Over</b>
			<b>14</b>	<b>\$506M</b>	<b>\$80.1M Over</b>

Current as of 7/12/21, from NCDOT.

MPO staff provided information and potential next steps for P6.0.

**Information only. No action required.**

Update on the Proposed Amendment to the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/New I-26 Interchange

- At this time, it has been recommended that a vote by the Board take place, once more is known about the funding for this project
- NCDOT has confirmed that a vote by the MPO Board in September or (potentially) later would not delay the project; engineering and environmental assessments are on-going
- TCC Recommendation in June: no specific recommendation for the MPO Board
- Board Discussion in June: item to be discussed further, especially regarding the funding and other impacts of the project

Information Provided at the June 2021 MPO Board Meeting

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 must be reasonably expected to work within projected revenues. The French Broad River MPO is required to update its MTP every five years with the last update completed in September 2020.

Amendment Summary

- Add a new interchange to I-26 in Buncombe County near mile marker 35, between Exit 33 (NC 191/Brevard Road) and Exit 37 (NC 146/Long Shoals Road), to connect to an access road to the Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus and NC 191.
- Remove the MTP Access Management project on NC 280 between I-26 and the French Broad River in order to maintain projects within the MTP's financial plan. The project on NC 280 is not currently funded or being considered for funding.

HE-0001 Project Background

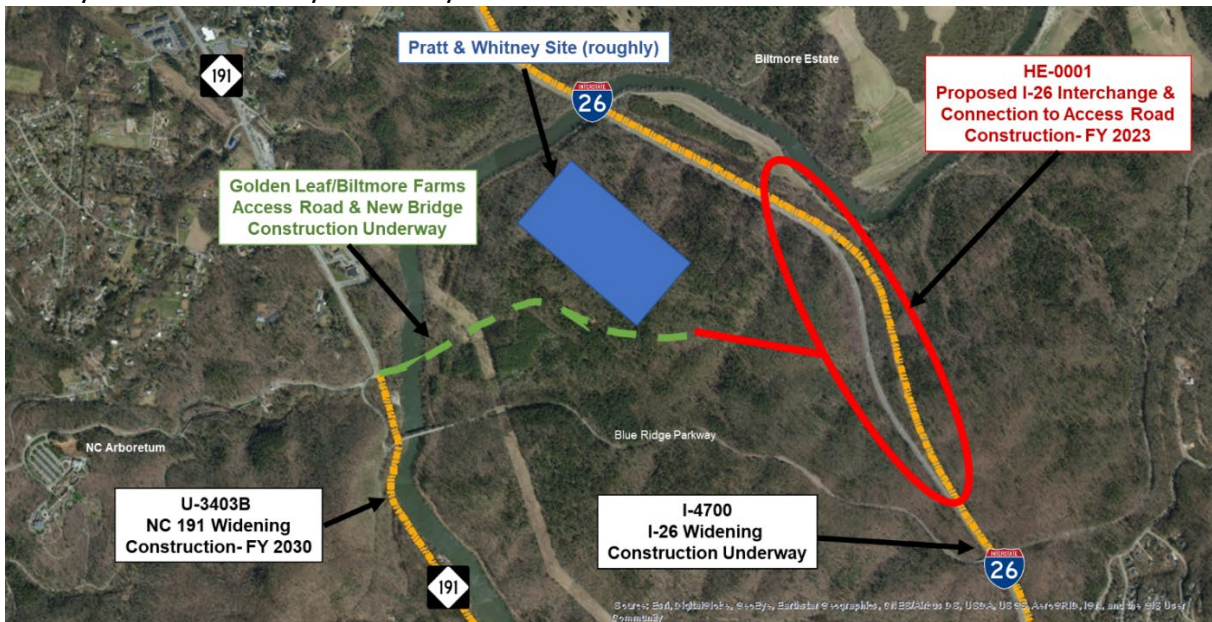
In January 2021, Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus announced that Pratt & Whitney would be building a new 1.2 million square foot manufacturing facility in southern Buncombe County that would employ roughly 800 people and include an investment of up to \$650 million. Overall, the economic impact of the new facility's employment and wages is projected to be roughly \$72 million with several of Buncombe County's economic development goals being met. The County also agreed to up to \$27 million in economic incentives, to be provided over time, if goals are met.

At roughly the same time the development was announced, work began on an access road to the site that includes a new bridge over the French Broad River to NC 191, funded by the Golden Leaf Foundation and Biltmore Farms. This project would provide access between NC 191 and the Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus facility.

As part of the development of the Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus, NCDOT has programmed \$10 million in economic development funds towards building a new interchange on I-26 (**HE-0001**) to access the future industrial site. This interchange would connect to the access road that would connect across the French Broad River to NC 191. The project is currently estimated to cost approximately \$25 million but that cost may increase based on several factors to be determined during design, including potential impacts to the Biltmore Estate.

### Project Details

The new interchange at the Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus would provide a new interchange in the four mile stretch between Exit 37 (NC 146/Long Shoals Road) and Exit 33 (NC 191/Brevard Road), mostly on land currently owned by Biltmore Farms.



Several alternatives are currently being considered by NCDOT and the Merger Team for the interchange, but all alternatives include an interstate interchange that would provide a two-lane road, accessing development to the west of I-26, and connecting to the access road, that would allow travelers to access NC 191, improving east-west connectivity in the area.

The HE-0001 has a very aggressive timetable, with plans to let the project in fall/winter of 2022 and environmental documentation beginning to get underway. In order to maintain the current project schedule and follow federal requirements, the French Broad River MPO would need to amend its MTP to include the project.

### About the Funding

Based on the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) Act of North Carolina, funds that are applied towards economic development projects impact the respective Division Needs tier of funding. In this case, the \$10 million already committed to the new interchange on I-26 would impact the Division 13 Division Needs tier in the TIP/STIP, which includes the following projects in our region:

TIP ID	Route	From	To	Cost	County
I-2513D	Riverside Drive	Hill Street	Broadway	\$42,100,000	Buncombe
U-5834	Mills Gap Road	US 25	Weston Road	\$25,533,000	Buncombe
U-4739	Amboy/Meadow Road	I-240	Biltmore Avenue	\$49,300,000	Buncombe
U-5832	NC 81 (Swannanoa River Road)	Biltmore Avenue	S Tunnel Road	\$10,750,000	Buncombe
TIP ID	Route	From	To	Cost	County
U-6046	NC 81 (Swannanoa River Road)	US 70	US 74A	\$23,302,000	Buncombe
I-4409	I-40	Blue Ridge Road	-	\$32,799,000	Buncombe
U-6163	Mills Gap Road	Cane Creek Road	-	\$2,810,000	Buncombe
U-6162	N Louisiana Avenue	US 19/23	Emma Road	\$5,800,000	Buncombe
U-6047	NC 112 (Sand Hill/Sardis Road)	NC 191	US 19/23	\$40,300,000	Buncombe
U-5837	Riceville Road	US 70	Clear Vista Lane	\$2,000,000	Buncombe

*\*Costs to be updated*

For reference, this section of the STI law provides the types of funds that would be accounted for in the Division Needs tier:

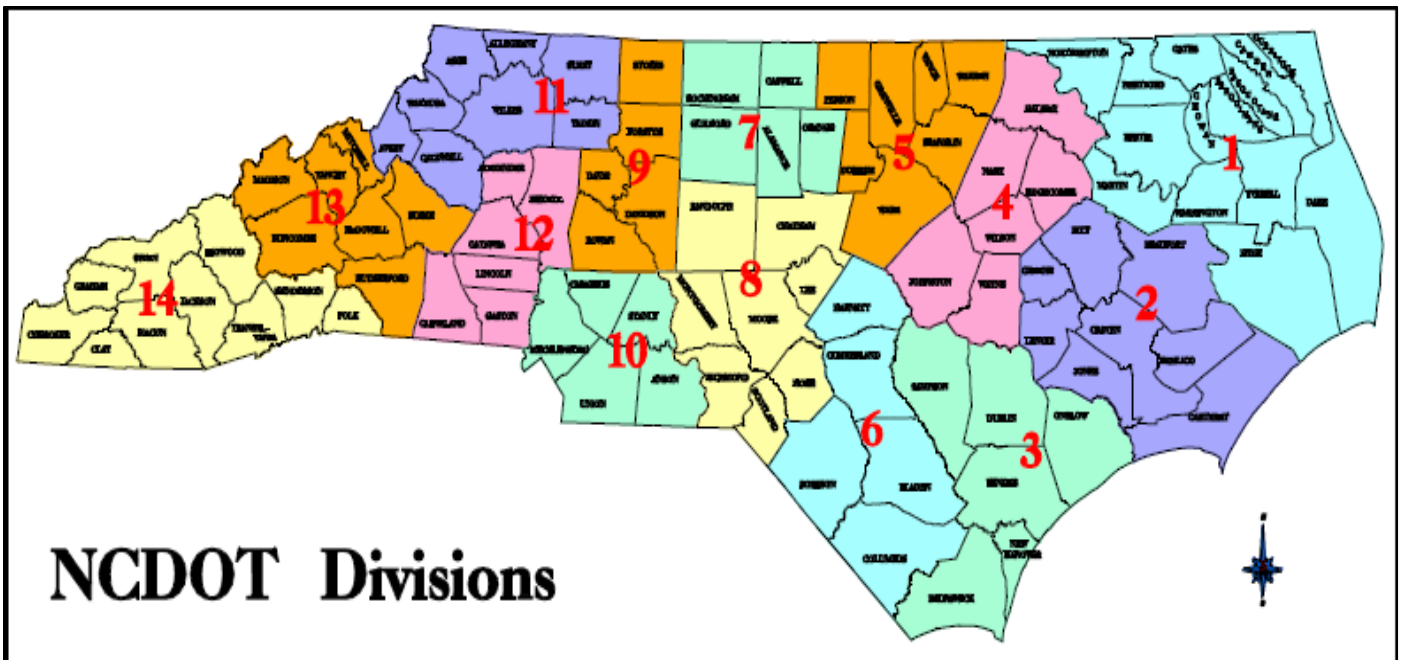
*§ 136-189.11.D.4: Projects requested from the Department in support of a time-critical job creation opportunity, when the opportunity would be classified as transformative under the Job Development Investment Grant program established pursuant to G.S. 143B-437.52, provided that the State investment for all projects funded under this sub-sub-subdivision in any five-year period shall not exceed one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) in the aggregate and ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) per project. Upon the release of a State Transportation Improvement Program, the Department shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee detailing the projects funded under this sub-sub-subdivision.*

At this time NCDOT is unable to just apply more state funding to the project since the project has not been submitted to prioritization/SPOT for consideration. Additional funds from the State would either require legislative action or the project would need to be submitted to the next round of prioritization- the latter would not fit within NCDOT's current timetable.

NCDOT staff and others are working on applying for additional funds from outside/exempt funding sources for the remainder of the project costs.

To note: projects that may be impacted don't just include projects in Buncombe County, but projects elsewhere in Division 13 at the Division Needs tier, i.e. projects in Madison, Yancey, Mitchell, McDowell, Burke, and Rutherford funded at the same tier could be impacted as well or instead of (or in addition to) projects in Buncombe.





**Division 13 Needs Highway Projects Not in the FBRMPO region:**

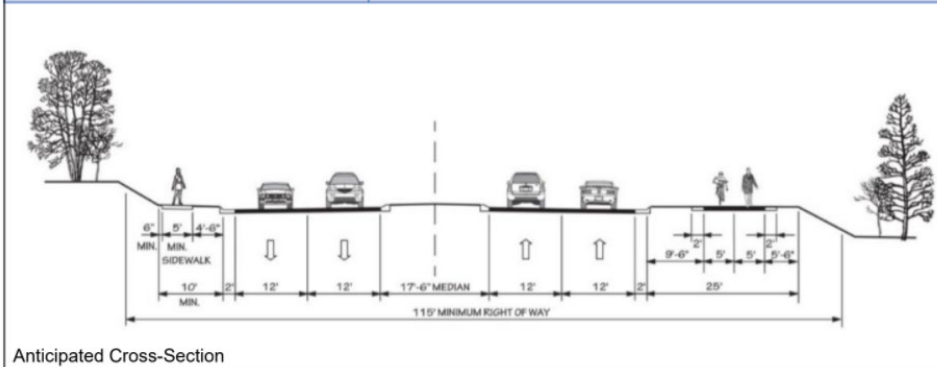
TIP ID	Route	Cost	County	Construction Starts
R-2233B	US 221	\$134,645,000	Rutherford	2022
R-2233BA	US 221	\$113,150,000	Rutherford	2028
R-0204A	US 221	\$39,900,000	McDowell	2029
U-5835	US 221B	\$13,570,000	McDowell	2025
U-6164	NC 126	\$31,300,000	Burke	Future Years
I-6058	I-40 Interchange	\$5,805,000	Burke	Future Years
R-5917	US 64	\$2,600,000	Rutherford	Future Years
R-5916	NC 108	\$3,500,000	Rutherford	Future Years
R-5918	US 221A	\$5,350,000	Rutherford	Future Years

To work within the financial plan of the MTP (funding projected to be available over 25 years), a project (or projects) would need to be removed to accommodate HE-0001.

Staff recommends the removal of an access management project on NC 280 (Airport Road) between I-26 and the French Broad River. The project, HD134528, is currently considered a “long-term priority,” i.e., the project is not currently funded or in the prioritization process to be considered for funding. The project scored relatively low during the MTP project selection process, held last spring, and is estimated to cost more than \$27,000,000, if programmed.

## HD134528 – Airport Road Access Management (I-26 to FBR)

<b>Jurisdictions Impacted</b>	<b>Buncombe County, City of Asheville</b>
Current Status	Unfunded, Long-Term Priority
AADT	22,000-31,000
Complete Streets Reference	Blue Ridge Bike Plan
Current Sidewalks	Some
Current Bike Facilities	No



If the MPO Board approves the MTP amendments, work would continue on the approved project. The MPO would need to amend the TIP at a later point to program the funds for the project.

If the MPO does not include HE-0001 in its MTP, the project would not move forward. FHWA would require any new interstate interchange to be adopted in the region's MTP and would not authorize work to move forward without MPO approval.

**Information item. No action required.**

### REGULAR UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

Regular updates from NCDOT Division 13 and 14 were provided by NCDOT staff and available on the <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org> website.

Division 13 Updates: [http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/div13\\_Updates\\_August.pdf](http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/div13_Updates_August.pdf)

Division 14 Updates: Uploaded when available.

Updates by TPD and FHWA/FTA were provided. Additionally, committee and legislative updates were provided by MPO staff.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, SPECIAL UPDATES

MPO staff has been working on a better mobile experience for the website.

A newsletter has been developed at the request of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), which is like the periodic emails previously distributed.

MPO staff are working on building the existing regional land use database, which is part of the 25-year plan. They plan to reach out to local jurisdictions to review the study and clarify data. Staff are hoping to roll-out a virtual, user-friendly way to receive data.

## **TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Radcliff opened the second public comment period. No public comments received.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Radcliff adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.