

September, 2020 Minutes

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

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

September 24, 2020: Remote Attendance via Zoom

Julie Mayfield (City of Asheville)	Nick Kroncke (FBRMPO Senior Planner)
Bob Davy (Town of Fletcher)	Mike Dawson (FHWA)
Rebecca McCall (County of Henderson)	Daniel Sellers (NCDOT Transportation Planning Division)
Jennifer Hensely (City of Hendersonville)	Anne Coletta (Village of Flat Rock)
Matt Wechtel (County of Madison)	Brownie Newman (County of Buncombe)
Tom Widmer (Town of Montreat)	Emily Scott-Cruz (FBRMPO Planner)
David White (WCCA-Urban Transit)	Amanda Edwards (County of Buncombe)
Brian Caskey (Town of Mills River)	Mike Eveland (Town of Maggie Valley)
Larry Harris (Town of Black Mountain)	Gwen wisler (City of Asheville)
Anthony Sutton (Town of Canton)	Daniel Cobb (Town of Mills River)
Troy Wilson (NCDOT Division 14)	Tom Carpenter (Village of Flat Rock)
Mark Gibbs (NCDOT Division 13)	Marshall Williams (NCDOT Division 13)
Joel Setzer (Vaughn & Melton)	John Fargher

September 24, 2020: In-Person Attendance at the Land of Sky Office

Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO Director)	Zia Rifkin (Staff to the FBRMPO)
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Meeting recessed until Friday, September 25, 2020 at 1:15pm.

September 25, 2020: Remote Attendance via Zoom

Tristan Winkler(FBRMPO Director)	Julie Mayfield (City of Asheville)
Troy Wilson (NCDOT Division 14)	Nick Kroncke (FBRMPO Senior Planner)

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

Gwen Wisler (City of Asheville)
Rebecca McCall (County of Henderson)
Brownie Newman (County of Buncombe)
Mike Eveland (Town of Maggie Valley)
Amanda Edwards (County of Buncombe)
Tom Widmer (Town of Montreat)
Larry Harris (Town of Black Mountain)
Tom Carpenter (Village of Flat Rock)
Stephen Sparks (NCDOT Division 13)
Emily Scott-Cruz (FBRMPO Planner)

Amanda Edwards (County of Buncombe)
Drew Finley (City of Hendersonville)
Michael Dawson (FHWA)
Jerry Vehaun (Town of Woodfin)
Anne Coletta (Village of Flat Rock)
Anthony Sutton (Town of Canton)
Bob Davy (Town of Fletcher)
Jennifer Hensley (City of Hendersonville)
Steve Williams (NCDOT Division 14)
Brian Burch (NCDOT Division 14)

September 25, 2020: In-Person Attendance at the Land of Sky Office

Zia Rifkin (Staff to the FBRMPO)

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS, APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice Chair Mayfield called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Tristan Winkler called the roll and announced quorum for the Board to conduct business.

Vice Chair Mayfield read the Ethics Statement and inquired if there were any conflicts of interest to note for today's meeting. No conflicts were noted; however, Vice Chair Mayfield communicated that she is a staff member of Mountain True, which has a lot of interest in the Hellbender Trail Regional Plan. She continued that she would not be an elected official for the City of Asheville when financial considerations by Mountain True become apparent for the regional trail. Larry Harris noted that he has an interest in the plan through participation on the Fonta-Flora Board.

Discussion occurred on the conflict of interest requirements and Anne Coletta shared information from the NCSU School of Government, that unless the perceived conflict results in a direct financial interest, there is no need to refrain from participation in a business item before the Board, once the Board member's affiliation has been disclosed for the record.

PUBLIC COMMENT – PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2045 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP) ADOPTION

Vice Chair Mayfield opened the public hearing for the 2045 MTP Adoption. No members of the public made any comments during the hearing on the 2045 MTP.

Hearing no public comments, Vice Chair Mayfield closed the public hearing at 1:15pm.

CONSENT AGENDA

Anthony Sutton moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of the A. August 27, 2020 minutes and B. the 2020-2029 Transportation Improvement Program Amendments. Bob Davy seconded, and the motion carried unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

SPOT Prioritization Weights 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. Therefore, 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 those 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%)
Congestion	0%	0%	-

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.

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

Larry Harris moved to approve the change in criteria to improve the scoring of modernization projects scored at the Division Needs tier for Division 13 projects. Anne Coletta seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, 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.

The workgroup developed, vetted and approved the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan, a plan that is primarily based off 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 Trails provides regional connections from Mars Hill to Blue Ridge Community College (Flat Rock, just south of Hendersonville), from Hendersonville to Brevard, from Westfeldt Park to Rosman, and from Waynesville to Black Mountain.

The Hellbender Regional Trail Plan gives the FBRMPO planning area 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 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 was noted that the Hellbender is a long-term vision. Currently, 12 miles of the estimated 150-mile system are on the ground. In addition, 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/>

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

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

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, providing an overview of the plan, discussion about segments that make up the plan, and review of implementation aspects of the plan, plus 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's Facebook page.

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

Discussion occurred about jurisdictions tying their greenway systems into the Hellbender Regional Trail.

Tristan Winkler noted that next steps include seeking approval from the LOSRPO, and moving forward, regularly convening the workgroup to talk about partnerships for the trail effort on a regional level. Some trail networks are set up around a non-profit. In the FBRMPO region, there are many existing partnerships, but no one entity that

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

serves as the fundraising arm for all of the local governments. MPO staff noted that most of the funding for greenway projects comes through federal STBG-DA funding, passing through NCDOT, and then to the MPO.

Bob Davy moved to adopt the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan as presented. Gwen Wisler seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

2045 MTP Presentation

Tristan Winkler shared key elements of the 2045 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
 - 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.

Since the Draft 2045 MTP was presented in June, many grammatical changes have been made, as well as some text 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
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FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

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/>

MPO staff provided an overview on the 2045 MTP and the public input received as part of this effort.

Tristan Winkler communicated that once the 2045 MTP is approved by the FBRMPO, it becomes the plan for the region. Julie Mayfield clarified that the MTP is the long-range planning document, which feeds into the STIP, through the prioritization process. Tristan Winkler noted that the 2045 MTP is the long-range planning document, which provides the roadmap to the projects that would be coming up in the next 25 years. He noted that other MPOs, as part of their prioritization methodology, have more projects that do not come out of their MTP.

Information item. Action required on Friday, September 25, 2020 at 1:15pm, to allow for the required 24-hour public comment period, as per S.L. 2020-3, SB. 704.

REGULAR UPDATES

- Division 14 provided an update.
- A Transportation Planning Division Updates was provided.
- An FHWA/FTA Updates was provided
- FBRMPO Committee & Workgroup Updates:
 - Prioritization – Met September 1; next meeting on October 6.
 - Transit Operators Workgroup – Met on September 14.
 - Citizens’ Advisory Committee – Met on July 15. Next meeting in October.
- Legislative Updates – NC House Bill 1105 signed by the governor earlier this month provides some funding for monitoring wastewater.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, AND SPECIAL UPDATES

Vice Chair Mayfield announced that Chuck McGrady has been appointed to the NC Board of Transportation representing the western region of the state.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chair Mayfield called for any public comments. No public comments were heard.

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

Vice Chair Mayfield requested a motion to recess the meeting until the call to order at 1:15pm on Friday, September 25, 2020.

Gwen Wisler moved to recess the meeting until Friday, September 25, 2020 at 1:15pm, which received a second and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

Vice Chair Mayfield called the meeting to order at 1:15pm, Friday, September 25, 2020 and welcomed everyone in attendance. Tristan Winkler announced a quorum was present to conduct the Board's business.

BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION

2045 MTP Adoption

Tristan Winkler shared that no additional public comments have been received during the 24-hour period since the public hearing.

Bob Davy moved to approve the 2045 MTP. Anne Coletta seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chair Mayfield called for any public comments. No public comments were heard.

ADJOURNMENT

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