

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Staff Report & Recommendations

May, 2021 Minutes

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Minutes from the TCC Virtual Meeting via Zoom on May 13, 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Chair Autumn Radcliff	Tristan Winkler	Nick Kroncke	Emily Scott-Cruz
Steve Williams	Stephen Sparks	Troy Wilson	Hannah Cook
Jeff Hunter	Steven Goodman	Peyton O'Conner	Chris Medlin
Daniel Metcalf	Elizabeth Teague	Janna Bianculli	Jessica Morriss
Kenny Busey	Troy Wilson	Dan Baechtold	John Ridout
Kenny Armstrong	Harry Buckner	Jodie Ferguson	Kim Roney
Jeff Moore	William High	Liz Hillard	Brendan Merithew
Jared Merrill	Nathan Bennett	Jon Neumann	Michael Dawson
Jessica Trotman	Hannah Bagli	David Wasserman	Marshall Williams
Erica Anderson	James Upchurch	Lori Boyer	Teresa Robinson
Joel Setzer	Linda Giltz	Pat Christie	

In-Person at Land of Sky Regional Council:

Zia Rifkin (minutes)

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair Radcliff called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and roll call followed. Quorum was announced 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 April 2021 minutes, the Resolution of Support for Hendersonville Pedestrian Planning Grant Application, and the TDM Funding Letter. She requested approval for the Agenda at this time, as well.

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

BUSINESS

FTA ARPA Funding Distribution

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law. Through ARPA, the Asheville Urbanized Area received \$4.25 million in 5307 Urban Transit Formula funds. These funds are intended to be used to help transit agencies in the wake of COVID-19.

Section 5307 Urban Transit Formula Funds make federal resources available to urbanized areas for transit capital and operating assistance. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more.

In 2017, the French Broad River MPO completed a 5307 Sub-Allocation Study to determine how funds should be divided amongst operators in the region. The Board approved a continuation of the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) set-aside and a three year formula phase-in period, as well as approving the City of Asheville to act as the Designated Recipient for 5307 funds.

ARPA funding is essentially supplemental 5307 funding and is being apportioned with the same formula; however, just as the Board approved CARES Act distribution, it is recommended that the Board approve the exclusion of the 10% JARC set-aside for ARPA funds.

The 10% JARC set-aside was adopted with the intention of providing a competitive pot of funds to help spur regional connectivity. In order to program these funds, MPO Staff holds a call for projects, evaluates projects, and takes recommendations from TCC and Board before the designated recipient can begin contracting. This is a process that works in non-emergency situations, but takes a considerable amount of time. Thus, it is recommended that the Board approve the distribution of ARPA 5307 funds to exclude the 10% JARC set-aside.

Year of FTA 5307 Funding Apportionment	City of Asheville/ Asheville Transit Services	% of Total*	Buncombe County/ Mountain Mobility	% of Total*	Haywood County/ Mountain Projects	% of Total*	Henderson County/ Apple Country Public Transit	% of Total*	Total 5307 Apportionment to Asheville Urbanized Area
American Rescue Plan	\$1,812,935	42.6%	\$1,217,130	28.6%	\$354,689	8.3%	\$867,774	20.4%	\$ 4,252,528

Jessica Morriss moved to recommend the Board to approve the resolution, including the exclusion of the 10% JARC set-aside for ARPA funds and that additional modifications to funding distribution be determined by the direct recipient and subrecipient after mutual agreement, which received a second and the motion was approved upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.

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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.

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

- I-2513B (I-26) and I-2513D (Riverside Drive) delaying ROW from FY 22 to FY 24 to align with construction schedule
- U-5548, Brown Avenue, removal of project from TIP
- EB-5547, Black Mountain Riverwalk Greenway, split into two segments and construction delayed from FY 22 to FY 23
- EB-5945, Champion Drive, change scope from sidewalk to multi-use path
- Remove inactive transit projects from TIP
- AO-0001, Asheville Regional Airport, add project to TIP to reflect federal funding received

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

Jessica Morriss moved to recommend the FBRMPO Board approve the TIP Amendments. Vicki Eastland seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.

I-2513 (I-26 Connector) Update

The I-2513 project (aka The I-26 Connector) is a major interstate project through the City of Asheville that includes building new interstate bridges across the French Broad River to remove interstate traffic from the Jeff Bowen Bridge, a widening of this section of I-26/I-240, and upgrades to the I-26/I-240/I-40 interchange, but numerous other improvements to the local network as well.

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Overall, I-2513 is a large part of the overall effort to upgrade I-26 in the French Broad River MPO region, including the on-going widening south of I-40 that are part of the I-4700 and I-4400 projects as well as the widening associated with A-0010AA, which is a funded and committed project north of I-2513 to Weaverville.

I-2513 is currently considered funded and committed with Sections A & B set to begin in FY 24 but Section C has been delayed until FY 30 (a decision made as part of the TIP delays approved in February, 2021.)

Brendan Merithew provided information regarding the ongoing work that includes coordination with the I-26 Working Group, the City of Asheville's I-26 Aesthetics Committee, the Burton Street Community, and others, as well as current efforts in the design process.

Information item. No action requested.

Wildlife Crossings in Western North Carolina

The French Broad River MPO region is full of and surrounded by protected and natural lands that are home to a thousands of animals, including black bear, deer, elk, foxes, and many, many more. However, road networks can serve as barriers to wildlife trying to migrate, get to food, water, or anywhere else they need to go.

Where wildlife and roadway infrastructure meet, without accommodations, the risks to the wildlife are immense, but the risks to drivers are considerable as well. In 2019, there were 20,331 recorded crashes between cars and wildlife in North Carolina- a number that has generally increased over time.

Over the past few years, a group has been brought together to discuss how to improve wildlife and transportation infrastructure in Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee, with a focus on potential wildlife crossings along I-40 through the Pigeon River Gorge. These meetings have been largely facilitated by the National Parks Conservation Association and others, but have included MPO, NCDOT, and FHWA staff. More recently, a group was formed out of these discussions

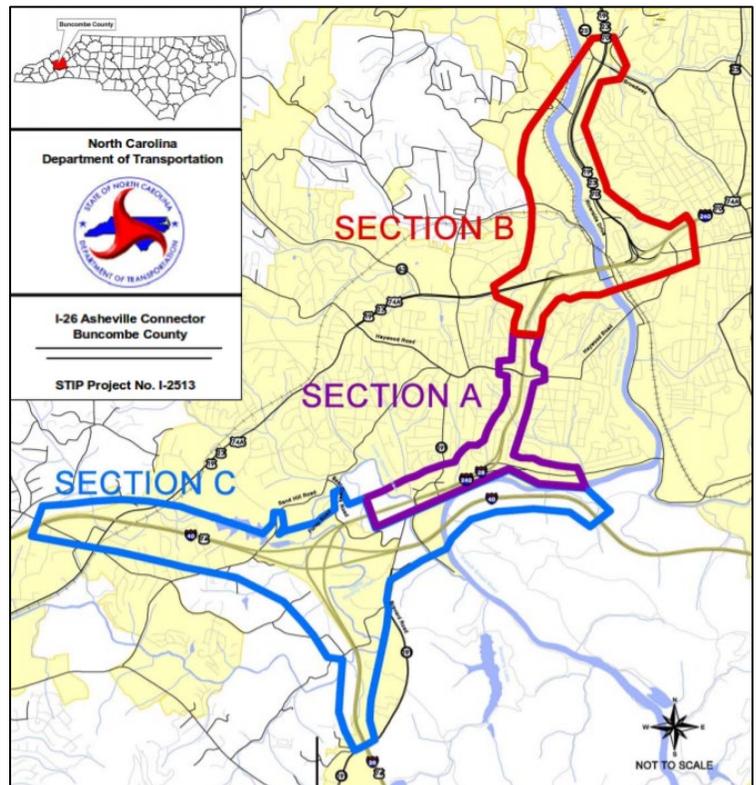


Figure 1 I-2513 Sections from NCDOT- Note the termini of Sections A & C have been modified to increase the scope of Section A and decrease the scope of Section C

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called "[Safe Passage](#)" to help promote safer wildlife crossings along I-40 but in other places in our region, including US 19.

To discuss these efforts, Jeffrey Hunter with the National Parks Conservation Association as well as Liz Hillard with the Wildlands Network provided a presentation on their work and the need for better wildlife crossings.

Information item. No action requested.

REGULAR UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, SPECIAL UPDATES

TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

<http://strivebeyond.org/>

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.