

# Item 3A:

## May, 2021 Minutes

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Virtual Meeting via the Zoom Platform  
Minutes from the Governing Board meeting on May 27, 2021

### May 27, 2021: Remote Attendance via Zoom

Chair Larry Haris (Black Mountain Council)  
Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)  
Emily Scott-Cruz (FBRMPO)  
John Ridout (FBRMPO)  
Nick Kronke (FBRMPO)  
Bernard Clark  
Chuck McGrady (NC Board of Transportation-Div. 14)  
Anne Coletta (Village of Flat Rock Council)  
Anthony Sutton (Waynesville Town Council)  
Bob Davy (Fletcher Town Council)  
Brian Caskey (Mills River Town Council)  
Brendan Merithew (NCDOT Division 13)  
Daniel Sellers (NCDOT Transportation Planning Division)  
David Wasserman (NCDOT)  
David White (Urban Transit Representative)  
Erica Anderson (LOSRC)  
George Banta (Laurel Park Town Council)  
Kevin Ensley (Haywood Commission)  
James Voso

Gwen Wisler (Asheville City Council)  
Jeff Hunter (National Parks Conservation Association)  
Jeff McKenna (Town of Weaverville)  
Jen Hensley (Hendersonville City Council)  
John Ridout (FBRMPO)  
Kim Roney (Asheville City Council)  
Liz Hillard (Wildlands Network)  
Matt Wechtel (Madison Commission)  
Michael Dawson (FHWA)  
Nikki Robinson (Wildlands Network)  
Parker Sloan (Buncombe Commission)  
Rebecca McCall (Henderson Commission)  
Stephen Sparks (NCDOT Division 14)  
Steve Williams (NCDOT Division 14)  
Troy Wilson (NCDOT Division 14)  
Brownie Newman (Buncombe Commission)  
Autumn Radcliff (Henderson County)  
Dan Baechtold (City of Asheville)

### May 27, 2021: In-Person Attendance at the Land of Sky Office

Zia Rifkin (Minutes)

#### **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS, ROLL CALL, APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Larry Harris called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Chair Harris read the Ethics Statement and inquired if there were any conflicts of interest to note for today's meeting. No voting members of the Board registered any conflicts with the business before the body. The roll was called and quorum established.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments received.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA (including agenda approval)**

***Chuck McGrady moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of the April 2021 meeting minutes, the Resolution of Support for Hendersonville Pedestrian Planning Grant Application, the TDM Funding Letter and the agenda as presented. Gwen Wisler seconded, and the motion carried unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

## NEW 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 the 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 the 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   |

MPO Staff is requesting the Board to approve the exclusion of the 10% JARC set-aside for ARPA funds and to provide approval that additional modifications to funding distribution be determined by the direct recipient and subrecipient after mutual agreement.

***Gwen Wisler moved to approve the resolution for the distribution of ARPA Transit Funds without the 10% JARC Set-aside and approval that additional modifications to distribution of funding be determined by the direct recipient and subrecipient after mutual agreement. Anthony Sutton seconded and the motion carried 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.

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;

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- 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 is currently posted for public review and comment on the [TIP page](#) of the MPO website. No public comments were received on these proposed TIP Amendments and the TCC recommends approval of the amendments.

***Bob Davy moved to approve the proposed TIP Amendments as presented. Ann Coletta 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.

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 widenings 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 and 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 a presentation 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

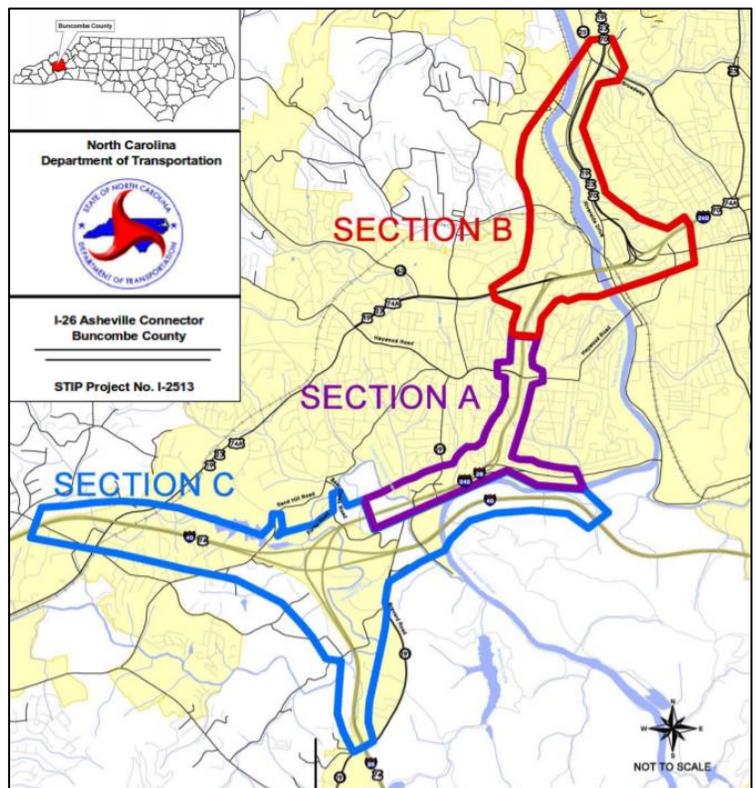


Figure 1 I-2513 Sections from NCDOT- Note the termini of Sections A & C have been modified to increase the scope of Section A and decrease the scope of Section C

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

Jeffrey Hunter with the National Parks Conservation Association and 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

- Divisions 13 and 14 provided updates.
- A Transportation Planning Division Update was provided.
- A FHWA/FTA Update was provided
- FBRMPO Committee & Workgroup Updates:
  - Prioritization - Met May 4; next meeting June 1.
  - Transit Operators Workgroup - Last meeting May 25.
  - Citizens' Advisory Committee - Next meeting July 14.
  - Regional Transit Study - Drafting final materials.
  - Corridor Studies - Final documents for Hendersonville Road and Tunnel Road studies have been received; to be reviewed by Buncombe County and the City of Asheville.
- Tristan Winkler provided legislative updates including the US Senate Bill that was released for the STI is about status quo, there are few differences in the programs and maybe a bit more funding overall. At the state level, there are many bills that have been proposed, which are all in committee. Lastly, essentially, the congressional discretionary funding that has come back, was released earlier this month and included no projects in the MPO region.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, FUTURE TOPICS AND SPECIAL UPDATES

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments received.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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