



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
A PROGRAM OF LAND OF SKY

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Minutes from the Governing Board Meeting on October 28, 2021

Attendance:

Chair Larry Harris (Town of Black Mountain)
Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)
Emily Scott-Cruz (FBRMPO)
John Ridout (FBRMPO)
Nick Kronke (FBRMPO)
Troy Wilson (NCDOT Division 14)
Kim Roney (Asheville City Council)
Hannah Cook (NCDOT Division 13)
Jeff McKenna (Weaverville Town Council)
William Lapsley (Henderson Commission)
Steve Williams (NCDOT Division 14)
Tom Widmer (Montreat Board of Commissioners)
Michael Dawson (FHWA)
Brian Caskey (Mills River Town Council)
Anne Coletta (Flat Rock Village Council)
Daniel Cobb (Town of Mills River)
George Banta (Laurel Park Town Council)
Anthony Sutton (Waynesville Board of Aldermen)
Gwen Wisler (Asheville City Council)

Jennifer Hensely (Hendersonville City Council)
David Wasserman (NCDOT SPOT Unit)
Kevin Ensley (Haywood Commission)
Rebecca McCall (Henderson Commission)
Chuck McGrady (NCBOT for Division 14)
Parker Sloan (Buncombe Commission)
Bob Davy (Fletcher Town Council)
Daniel Sellers (NCDOT TPD)
Brownie Newman (Buncombe Commission)
Lucy Crown (City of Asheville)
Mark Gibbs (NCDOT Division 13)
Stephen Sparks (NCDOT Division 14)
Matt Manley (City of Hendersonville)
Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO)
Zia Rifkin (Minutes)
Jane Pies (LOSRC)
DK Wesley

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL

Chair Larry Harris called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He read the Ethics Statement and inquired if there were any conflicts of interest to note for today's meeting. No conflicts were noted with the business before the body. Quorum was announced to conduct the business of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Harris called for public comments. None were heard.

CONSENT AGENDA

Gwen Wisler moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of the September 2021 meeting minutes, and the Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP) Quarterly Report, and the Board agenda as presented. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion, which carried unanimously, upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

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 amendment delays allowing for additional time for right-of-way and construction, add delays for planning and design and construction, delays for additional time for preliminary engineering, delay construction, add utilities not previously programed, cost increases in excess of the \$2,000,000 threshold, In addition, there are amendments to expedite pavement reconstruction and/or to let projects under one contract., accelerate construction schedules. No new projects are being added to the TIP:

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

Discussion occurred regarding U-5783 project’s cost increase, which is due to right of way acquisition and construction.

Tristan Winkler noted that I-25 13A has always been one project, however, discussion is underway with NCDOT to split this project into three sections (AA, AB, AC), which may provide cost savings as some of the project sections are more maintenance in nature. This would allow the use of Statewide Mobility funding to support the segments that are construction and free up some funding in the Regional Impacts pot for the MPO region. Hannah Cook shared that it should be possible to ask the consultants to put something together on the segments for the project and she also noted that once everything is formally segmented, the project website could be updated to reflect the changes.

Tristan Winkler recommended proceeding with the vote on the amendments as proposed and offered that additional details on the segmented project would be shared with the Board when available. In addition, he noted that many of the cost changes to projects in the TIP are due to the express designs that were completed over the summer, when NCDOT was updating projects in the STIP. He noted that not all these costs are being incorporated into the TIP at this time. David Wasserman shared that the Divisions are reviewing the costs for the estimates that were done this year to assure these are necessary.

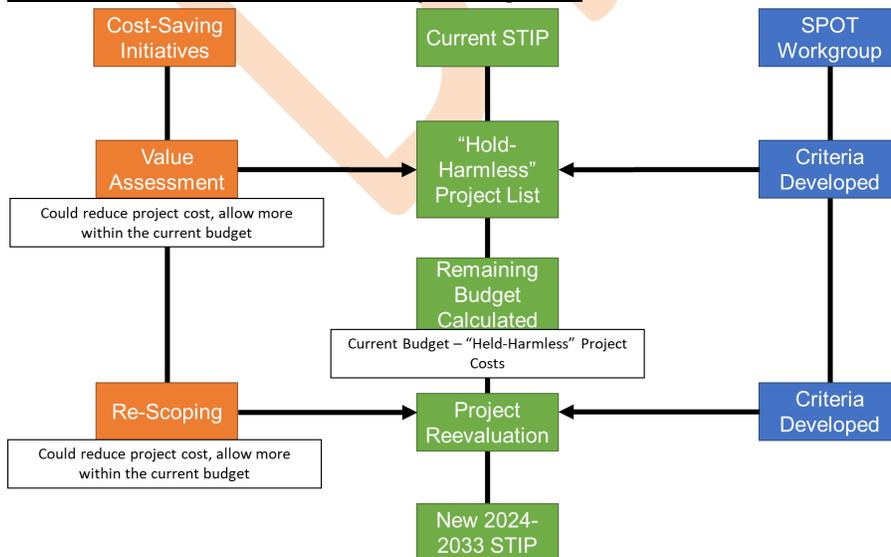
George Banta moved to approve the eighth round of amendments to the 2020-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as proposed. Tom Widmer seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

P 6.0 (Prioritization) Update

The SPOT workgroup is continuing to meet to determine processes to rebalance the STIP and there is generally a lot to discuss.

How Different Initiatives Generally Fit Together



Active Efforts to Reduce Project Costs at NCDOT

Value Assessments/Value Engineering- an effort that evaluates some TIP projects to help determine potential steps to reduce costs while maintaining a project’s overall purpose and need.

Re-Scoping of Projects- NCDOT Divisions have been given a deadline of the end of the year to look at ways to re-scope, segment, or otherwise modify projects to reduce costs and make projects more likely to achieve something rather than potentially getting defunded.

-Haywood County: a meeting will be held in mid/late October with Division 14 and local government staff to discuss potential re-scoping or segmenting of projects

-Henderson County: the subject will be discussed with the Henderson TAC

-Buncombe County: Division 13 will organize project-by-project meetings over the next few months

SPOT Workgroup

The SPOT Workgroup is made up of representatives from MPOs, RPOs, NCDOT, and various other stakeholders from around the State (League of Municipalities, NC Rural Center, Metro Mayors, others.) The group is generally charged with setting the parameters of the prioritization process that are not strictly defined by the Strategic Transportation Initiatives Law and providing those recommendations to the Board of Transportation.

Items the SPOT Workgroup is working on:

“Hold-Harmless List”: a list of projects that would remain on the STIP and not be re-evaluated to maintain a relatively efficient and predictable project delivery program for NCDOT. Most discussions for a hold-harmless list are based on current project delivery schedules.

Re-Evaluation Criteria: because this is considered a “reprogramming” effort rather than “normal” prioritization, the criteria being considered are more flexible than usual. These criteria would be applied to projects not “held-harmless” with successful projects remaining in the STIP and unsuccessful projects being de-committed.

General Schedule

-December, 2021: re-scoping of projects deadline, SPOT Workgroup work deadline (“held-harmless” and project re-evaluation criteria.)

-January-August,2022: project re-evaluation

-December, 2022: Draft 2024-2033 STIP released

-August, 2023: deadline for NCDOT and MPO approvals of the 2024-2033 STIP/TIP

As a reminder, below are the funding projections for every available tier in prioritization through 2033 (only “committed” projects included, current as of July 2021):

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

G (D13 & D 14)	\$609.2M	\$929.9M Over	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
			13	\$506M	\$165.4M Over
			14	\$506M	\$80.1M Over

Tristan Winkler provided a presentation regarding the P6.0 update. He noted that currently, the STIP and P6.0 budgets are exceeded in both Committed and Non-Committed projects for all funding tiers (Statewide, Regional Impact and Division Needs). The budget overrun for Region G exceeds \$1 Billion. Currently, there are a few efforts underway, as noted by the graphic above describing how different initiatives generally fit together.

The P6.0 workgroup is discussing a ‘hold harmless’ list, which would allow projects to remain in the STIP and not undergo re-evaluation and consensus has been reached regarding the list.

Tristan Winkler noted that there are projects very far along in the STIP, which would harm NCDOT’s ability to deliver projects if those were reevaluated. These projects would not be reevaluated and would remain in the STIP with a recommendation that all projects scheduled to let by FY 2026 and/or are already acquiring right of way would continue. However, at this point, there is no consensus from the workgroup on the process to use going forward with regards to the criterion for re-evaluation. He noted that projects in the STIP with lower priority may be removed.

He noted that VE/VA is an effort to modify projects in a way that reduces costs while maintaining purpose and need. He also noted that projects may be re-scoped (i.e., reducing lanes or segmenting projects), this would maintain a project in the STIP but lessen delivery expectations. NCDOT is also considering adjusting the projected inflation rate (currently calculated at 1%). At this point, NCDOT and BOT have different recommendations for this adjustment to the STIP. Tristan Winkler noted that increasing the inflation rate would reduce the amount of revenue available in the 10-year STIP. He noted also that inflation is not the sole reason projects are going over budget- there is a lot to unpack with regards to how the STIP became this far over budget. He noted that additional work needs to be done.

The workgroup has a preliminary deadline of the end of the year to make recommendations. The presentation included a general schedule for P6.0, which is also provided above.

Discussion occurred regarding where projects could be reviewed in order to determine if scope could be reduced, and Tristan Winkler shared that the best thing to do is contact MPO staff who can share detailed project maps.

Tristan Winkler shared the MPO’s appreciation for local partners (Henderson TAC, Haywood, Buncombe, etc.) for their input in ongoing discussions.

Chair Harris noted that as time progresses and more projects are considered for reevaluation, it is important to gather as much information on the projects as possible, since some are very far out in the STIP, without design, etc. Tristan Winkler shared that it’s not an easy conversation to have, but when a budget is this far over, it is going to be necessary to consider eliminating projects.

Discussion occurred regarding whether there may be additional sources of revenue, and Tristan Winkler noted that NCDOT is in about a \$7 Billion hole. Division 14 BOT member Chuck McGrady shared that he has met recently with NC’s congressional delegation and others in Congress, and the infrastructure bill would help, but not solve the problem. He shared that there are still the recommendations from the NC First Commission, which

the General Assembly is planning to review next year. He shared there is going to be some rollbacks on projects and cost estimations on projects are coming in higher than what is currently estimated for projects' cost. He shared that the General Assembly may elect to use some of the surplus available but would not be willing to take funding from the General Fund. When federal funding comes down, there may be a willingness to spend some of that funding, if it could be justified. Nothing specific is known at this time.

Discussion occurred regarding whether MPO members would be willing to sign onto a letter of support for the federal infrastructure plan. Additionally, discussion occurred regarding the consideration of the needs of all the people in the region when discussion on which projects should be eliminated happens. Tristan Winkler noted that local bodies should have significant input into the process to eliminate projects in the STIP. This is a difficult discussion since jurisdictions have promoted projects in the TIP due to genuine need. Right sizing the STIP could lead to innovation.

Discussion occurred regarding how the MPO region became so overbudget in both the Regional Impact and Division Needs tiers and Tristan Winkler noted that this region is the second smallest and receives the second smallest allocation. Additionally, NCDOT generally applies additional funding during estimations because the projects are in the mountain and construction is more expensive. However, those estimates were too low. Tristan Winkler noted that fundamentally, we have a process where projects are submitted before design is undertaken, leaving many specifics of the projects undetermined. This is partly where projects are problematic, and it may change how projects are developed and reviewed before funding is committed. What is most frustrating is that this is not a problem that most states are facing. This is a problem that has come about through problematic processes, and this points to there being room for improvement and the more voices that join in this process the better the outcome may be.

Discussion occurred regarding whether every project should be analyzed, and when costs increase, a determination on why that is happening should be undertaken. This might allow the process to become 'smarter' and same money.

Informational Item. No action requested.

REGULAR UPDATES

- Divisions 13 and 14 updates available on website: http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Div13_Sept_Updates.pdf and http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Div14-Updates_October.pdf and provided at the meeting.
- Transportation Planning Division staff provided an update.
- FHWA/FTA provided an update.
- FBRMPO Committee & Workgroup Updates:
 - Prioritization – Met October 5, Next meeting is November 7.
 - Transit Operators Workgroup – Met September 16.
 - 5307 Subrecipient Workgroup – Next meeting December 6.
 - Citizens' Advisory Committee – Last meeting was October 13.
 - Hellbender Trail Stakeholder Group – Met October 21.
 - Corridor Studies – Asheville City Council considers the studies at their meeting on November 9, 2021. Presentation to MPO TCC/Board postponed.
 - MPO Newsletter - http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/October_Transpo_Matters_Newsletter.pdf
- Legislative updates included that the federal infrastructure bill may have movement soon and that a State budget, approved and signed by the governor, should soon be in place.

Tristan Winkler gave a shout out to MPO staff for covering during his recent paternity leave.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments received.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, SPECIAL UPDATES

TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING

Proposed New I-26 Interchange

ADJOURNMENT

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

DRAFT