

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting
Minutes from the Governing Board Meeting on August 25, 2022

Attendance:

In-Person and Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Chair Larry Harris (Black Mountain Council)	Jennifer Hensley (Hendersonville Council)
Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)	Scott Adams (FBRMPO)
Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO)	Gwen Wisler (Asheville Council)
Jane Pies (LOSRC – Minutes)	Hannah Cook (NCDOT Division 13)
Kim Roney (Asheville Council)	Logan DiGiacomo (FBRMPO)
Anne Colletta (Flat Rock Council)	Tom Widmer (Montreat Commission)
Bill Lapsley (Henderson Commission)	Teresa Robinson (NCDOT)
Bob Davy (Fletcher Council)	Tim Anderson (NCDOT Division 13)
Rebecca McCall (Henderson Commission)	Anthony Sutton (Town of Waynesville)
Matt Wechtel (Madison Commission)	David Wasserman (NCDOT STIP Manager)
Daniel Sellers (NCDOT TPD)	Troy Wilson (NCDOT Division 14)
Steve Williams (NCDOT Division 14)	Stephen Sparks (NCDOT Division 14)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL

Chair, Larry Harris called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM and welcomed everyone. 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 opened the floor for public comment. No comments were heard.

CONSENT AGENDA

Matt Wechtel moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of the May 2022 meeting minutes, the Modification to the 2020-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Amendments to the FY 2023 United Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the TAC agenda as presented. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion which carried unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan Grant Application

What is Safe Streets for All?

[Safe Streets for All](#) is a new grant program offered through USDOT that was created as part of the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law aiming at achieving zero roadway death and serious injuries. It is a discretionary grant, meaning eligible entities may apply directly to USDOT for funding and USDOT makes awards based on the merits of proposals and other factors to ensure some level of geographic equity. \$5 billion is expected to be made available over the next five years for this program.

The Safe Streets for All program makes different types of funding available to help improve safety.

- Develop or update a comprehensive safety action plan (Action Plan).
- Conduct planning, design, and development activities in support of an Action Plan.
- Carry out projects and strategies identified in an Action Plan.

However, jurisdictions may not apply for implementation funding unless there is an Action Plan in place. A couple of jurisdictions have plans that have some parts of an Action Plan, but as of this writing, none have enough to be eligible to apply for implementation funds.

Proposed Application for the Region

The French Broad River MPO staff recommends submitting a joint application for an Action Plan with the Land of Sky RPO. This would create a five-county Action Plan for Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties, enabling jurisdictions in those areas to apply for implementation funds.

This plan would include the following general elements:

- Community & Stakeholder Engagement
- Crash and Risk-Based Analysis
- Safety Hot-Spot Identification
- Project Recommendations
- Programmatic Recommendations

The current draft budget is for \$400,000 total. \$320,000 would be covered by the federal share (if successful) and \$80,000 would be required to come from non-federal sources. The NCDOT Safety Unit plans to make some State funding available for local match and MPO staff has been in discussions with other organizations to potentially alleviate or fully provide the local match as well.

Information from the FHWA Fact Sheet:

Program Purpose

BIL establishes the new Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary grant program, which supports local initiatives to prevent death and serious injury on roads and streets, commonly referred to as "Vision Zero" or "Toward Zero Deaths" initiatives. The SS4A program supports the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) and a goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on our nation's roadways.

Statutory Citations

- § 24112; Division J, Title VIII, Safe Streets and Roads for All Grants heading

Funding Features

Type of Budget Authority or Authorization of Appropriations

- Advance appropriations from the General Fund; not subject to any limitation on obligations. [Division J, Title VIII]
- Authorization, subject to appropriation, from the General Fund. [§ 24112(f)(1)]

Set-asides

- For each of FY22-26, DOT may retain and use for administrative expenses up to 2% of the amounts made available for the SS4A program. [§ 24112(f)(2)]

Distribution of Funds

- Not more than 15% of the funds made available to carry out the program for a fiscal year may be awarded to eligible projects in a single State during that fiscal year.
- For each of FY22-26, DOT must award not less than 40% of SS4A funds made available for that fiscal year to projects to develop comprehensive safety action plans. [§ 24112(c)(2)]

Availability of Funds

- Amounts made available under a grant under the program shall remain available for use by the grant recipient until the date that is 5 years after the date on which the grant is provided. [§ 24112(f)(3)]

Federal Share

- The Federal share of the cost of an SS4A project shall not exceed 80% [§ 24112(e)]

Eligible Activities

SS4A funds may be used to:

- Develop a comprehensive safety action plan;
- Conduct planning, design, and development activities for projects and strategies identified in a comprehensive safety action plan; or
- Carry out projects and strategies identified in a comprehensive safety action plan [§ 24112(a)(3)]

Program Features

This is a new program established under the BIL.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are:

- A metropolitan planning organization;
- A political subdivision of a State;
- A federally recognized Tribal government; and

- A multijurisdictional group of entities described above. [§ 24112(a)(2)]

Selection Considerations

When awarding SS4A grants, the BIL requires DOT to consider the extent to which an eligible applicant, and each eligible project proposed to be carried out by the eligible applicant, as applicable:

- Is likely to significantly reduce or eliminate transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries involving various road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists, and commercial operators, within a timeframe proposed by the eligible entity;
- Demonstrates engagement with a variety of public and private stakeholders;
- Seeks to adopt innovative technologies or strategies to promote safety;
- Employs low-cost, high-impact strategies that can improve safety over a wider geographical area;
- Ensures, or will ensure, equitable investment in the safety needs of underserved communities in preventing transportation-related fatalities and injuries;
- Includes evidence-based projects or strategies; and
- Achieves such other conditions as the Secretary considers necessary. [§ 24112(d)(3)]

Tristan Winkler presented that crash data for the five-county region is trending in the wrong direction. Roadway, pedestrian, bicycle, and motorcycle serious injuries and fatalities are on the rise, as well as truck crashes. These incidents are terrible in that they can result in loss of life, a decrease in quality of life, high medical bills, and loss of employment, among other things. Also, they place an even larger burden on our already stretched thin hospitals. Tristan Winkler shared that safer is possible. This is the purpose of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grants – to move toward “Vision Zero” or Toward Zero Deaths.”.

USDOT has stated that they prefer a regional-led planning initiatives (vs. jurisdiction by jurisdiction) to enable all parts of the region to be eligible for and take advantage of the grant. Funding will be provided 80% Federally with a 20% local match. Conversations with Dogwood Health Trust and NCDOT Safety Unit reflect that we do not need to request local match monies from our member governments at this time.

Jen Hensley moved for approval of the Safe Streets for All Action Plan Grant Application. Kim Roney seconded the motion which carried unanimously upon a roll call vote.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The Prioritization process for the development of the 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) has had a number of changes take place over the last month.

Financial Changes: the State budget includes a provision to begin transferring a percentage of State sales tax revenues to transportation funds. This is projected to generate \$7.8 billion over the next ten years to be included in the Draft STIP. This additional enabled some projects to come back into the 2024-2033 STIP that were initially removed, however, this influx of funding was still not sufficient to bring back all of the removed projects.

Projects That Made It Back Into the Revised 2024-2033 STIP Buncombe

County

- U-5832 – Modernization of NC 81 (Swannanoa River Road) from Biltmore Avenue to US 74A (South Tunnel Road)
- U-2801A – Widening of US 25A (Sweeten Creek Road) from US 25/NC 280 to Rock Hill Road
- A-0010AA – Widening and Modernization of Future I-26 from Broadway to Weaver Boulevard

Haywood County

- U-4712 – Widening of South Main Street from US 276 to Hyatt Creek Road

- U-6158 – Intersection Improvements to US 276/Crymes Cove Road/Raccoon Road
- U-6159 – Access Management to US 276 (Russ Avenue) from US 23/74 to US 19 (Dellwood Road)

Buncombe/Haywood County

- U-6048 – Modernization of US 19/23 from Chestnut Mountain Road (Haywood County) to Wiggins Road

Schedule Changes: due to the new funds being made available, the Prioritization Workgroup has recommended the deadline for proposing swaps be delayed until March 17, 2023. MPOs that are required to do air-quality conformity analyses as part of the TIP development process will have swaps prepared at an earlier date.

General Schedule Moving Forward:

Revised Draft 2024-2033 STIP Released: next few weeks Project Swaps

Due: March 17, 2023

State Considers 2024-2033 STIP for Adoption: May, 2023

FBRMPO Considers 2024-2033 STIP for Adoption: June/August, 2023

Information only. No action required.

Carbon Reduction Program

What is the Carbon Reduction Program?

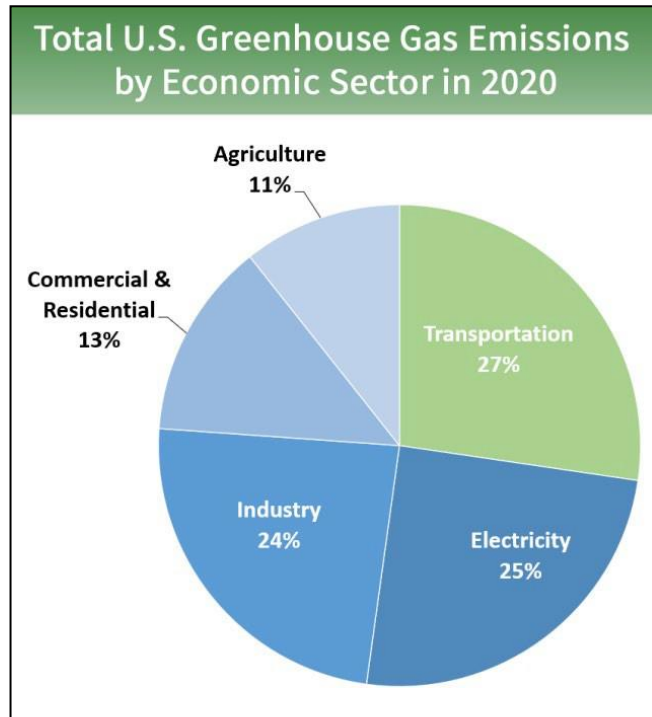
The [Carbon Reduction Program](#) is a new funding source through USDOT that was created as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law whose primary purpose is to reduce the carbon emissions from the transportation sector which is now the largest contributor of greenhouse gases in the United States.

The Carbon Reduction Program is function very similarly to the Surface

Block Grant (STBG)

Transportation Alternatives Program that funds are allocated to States and required to make sub-allocations to urban, small urban, and rural areas. Broad River MPO’s annual allocation **\$628,563/year** between FY 2022 and **Eligible Projects**

- CRP funds may be for projects that support reduction of transportation including, but not limited as noted, § 11403; 23 175(c)(1)]
- a project described in 23 149(b)(4) to establish or traffic monitoring, management, and control facility or program, including advanced truck stop electrification systems;
- a public transportation project eligible under 23 U.S.C. 142;
- a transportation alternative (as defined under the Moving Ahead for Progress under the 21st Century Act [23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29), as in effect on July 5, 2012]), including, but not limited to, the construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation;
- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 503(c)(4)(E) for advanced transportation and congestion management technologies;



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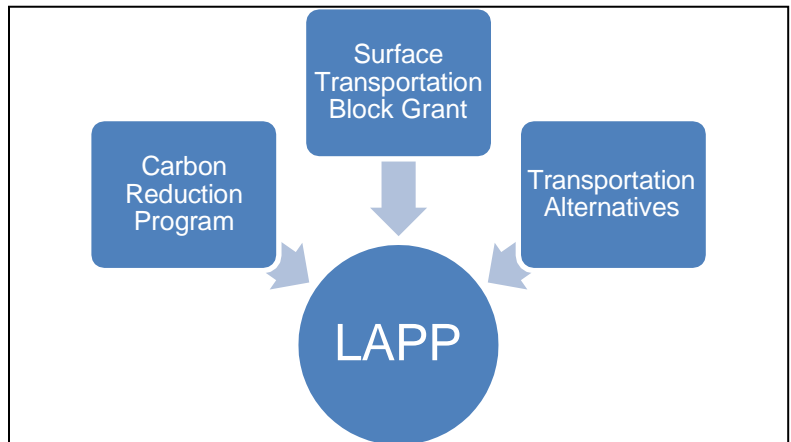
- deployment of infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements and the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure communications equipment;
- a project to replace street lighting and traffic control devices with energy-efficient alternatives;
- development of a carbon reduction strategy developed by a State per requirements in 23 U.S.C. 175(d);
- a project or strategy designed to support congestion pricing, shifting transportation demand to nonpeak hours or other transportation modes, increasing vehicle occupancy rates, or otherwise reducing demand for roads, including electronic toll collection, and travel demand management strategies and programs;
- efforts to reduce the environmental and community impacts of freight movement;
- a project that supports deployment of alternative fuel vehicles, including—
- acquisition, installation, or operation of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure or hydrogen, natural gas, or propane vehicle fueling infrastructure; and
- purchase or lease of zero-emission construction equipment and vehicles, including the acquisition, construction, or leasing of required supporting facilities;
- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(8) for a diesel engine retrofit;
- certain types of projects to improve traffic flow that are eligible under the CMAQ program, and that do not involve construction of new capacity; [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(5); and 175(c)(1)(L)]
- a project that reduces transportation emissions at port facilities, including through the advancement of port electrification; and
- any other STBG-eligible project, if the Secretary certifies that the State has demonstrated a reduction in transportation emissions, as estimated on a per capita and per unit of economic output basis. (Note: FHWA will issue guidance on how the Secretary will make such certifications.) [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 133(b) and 175(c)(2)]

The federal share for projects in this program is “generally” 80%.

Other Requirements

Each state is required to produce a Carbon Reduction Strategy in coordination with MPOs within two years with updates every four years.

Plan for Application to the FBRMPO Consolidate
Carbon Reduction Program, Transportation
Alternatives, and Surface Transportation Block
Grant funds into the Locally Administered Projects
Program



Tristan Winkler presented that the Carbon Reduction Program is a formula program. Federal funds are allocated to States and the States sub-allocate to urban, small urban and rural areas. French Broad River MPO 's annual allocation between FY 2022 and FY 2026 is \$628,563/year. Increased eligibilities for this program are the purchase new of vehicles and retrofitting local government fleets to be more energy efficient. Our region is well suited to take advantage of these funds.

Information only. No action required.

NC Clean Transportation Plan

Jen Weiss, Senior Advisor for Climate Change Policy with NCDOT presented on the NC Clean Transportation Plan and National EV charging Infrastructure. Scott Cross joined.

From the [project website](#):

In January 2022, Gov. Roy Cooper signed [Executive Order 246 \(EO 246\)](#), “North Carolina’s Transformation to a Clean, Equitable Economy,” setting the course for North Carolina’s continued work to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions, advance environmental justice and create good paying jobs throughout the state. This executive order builds upon 2018’s [Executive Order 80](#), which established a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent and increase zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) adoption to 80,000 vehicles by 2025.

EO 246 Goals

- Reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions to at least 50 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions no later than 2050.
- Increase the total number of registered, zero-emission vehicles to at least 1,250,000 by 2030 and increase the sale of ZEVs so that 50 percent of in-state sales of new vehicles are zero-emission by 2030.

Clean Transportation Plan

As part of EO 246, the N.C. Department of Transportation is tasked with developing a Clean Transportation Plan (NCCTP) within 15 months of the order. The NCCTP will recommend actionable strategies for decarbonizing the transportation sector and shall address:

1. Availability, sales and usage of zero-emission vehicles to levels beyond current market projections, including a focus on medium- and heavy-duty ZEVs.
2. Reductions in vehicle miles traveled.
3. Investment in clean transportation infrastructure.
4. Equitable access to clean mobility options.
5. Increased availability of non-vehicle transportation modes.
6. A transition to zero- and low-emission fuels.
7. Other relevant topics.

To create the NCCTP, NCDOT will be collaborating with stakeholders to create plans for the rapid decarbonization of North Carolina's transportation sector. This process will take into consideration the diverse viewpoints of all stakeholders and the potential impacts of each recommendation.

Jen Weiss, Senior Advisor for Climate Change Policy with NCDOT presented on the NC Clean Transportation Plan and National EV charging Infrastructure. Discussion occurred about the fact that some of NC sales tax will be moved to the highway fund and that there is an opportunity for a vehicle miles traveled tax. Also touched on were the increase in energy consumption, equity and the need for more EV charging stations in Western North Carolina.

Information only. No action required.

REGULAR UPDATES AND INFORMATION ITEMS

- Division 13 Updates: <https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/D13-Construction-August-2022-combined.pdf>
- Division 14 Updates: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/082022_Div14_FBRMPO-Const_Update-combined-3.pdf
- TPD Updates: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/FBRMPO_LOSRPO_Newletter_2022_5_August.pdf
- FHWH/FTA Updates:
- FBRMPO Committee & Workgroup Updates:
 - Prioritization Subcommittee – Met August 3rd, next meeting September 7th
 - Transit Operators Workgroup – next meeting TBD
 - 5307 Subrecipient – next meeting TBD
 - Citizen’s Advisory Committee – met June 24th, next meeting TBD
 - Hellbender Trail Stakeholder Group – last meeting May 24th, next meeting TBD
- Legislative updates provided by MPO Staff

Tristan Winkler introduced and welcomed Scott Adams and Logan DiGiacomo to the MPO Staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Larry Harris opened the floor for public comment. No comments were received.

ADJOURNMENT

Larry Harris adjourned the meeting at 2:43 PM as there was no further business.