

Prioritization Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2023

9:30 AM

ATTENDANCE

Voting Members

Elizabeth Teague, Town of Waynesville
Anthony Sutton, Town of Waynesville
William High, Buncombe County
Jessica Morriss, City of Asheville
Autumn Radcliff, Henderson County

Non-Voting Members

Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO	Lucy Crown, City of Asheville
Scott Adams, FBRMPO	Steve Williams, NCDOT Div 14
Hannah Bagli, FBRMPO	Logan DiGiacomo, FBRMPO
Jane Pies, LOSRC (Minutes)	Stephen Sparks, NCDOT Div 13
Janna Bianculli, Apple Country	Hannah Cook, NCDOT Div 13
Daniel Cobb, Town of Mills River	Troy Wilson, NCDOT Div 14

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair, Elizabeth Teague started the meeting at 9:32 AM with introductions. A quorum was announced, and roll was called.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Elizabeth Teague opened the floor for public comments. No comments were heard.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 2022 MINUTES AND AGENDA

Autumn Radcliff moved to approve the agenda and the November 2022 minutes. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

BUSINESS

5310 Project Selection

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310

What is this program?

This program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Some of these funds are suballocated to urbanized areas and are programmed through MPOs and FTA Direct Recipients.

What are eligible projects under this program?

Traditional Section 5310 project examples include:

- buses and vans
- wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices
- transit-related information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems
- mobility management programs
- acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement

Nontraditional Section 5310 project examples include:

- travel training
- volunteer driver programs
- building an accessible path to a bus stop, including curb-cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features
- improving signage, or way-finding technology
- incremental cost of providing same day service or door-to-door service
- purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, rides sharing and/or vanpooling programs
- mobility management programs

What is an example of a recent local 5310 project?

Haywood Public Transit/Mountain Projects has used 5310 funding to provide transportation for human service agencies, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the general public of Haywood County. Specific services have included expanded Nutrition Access and paratransit with the service area.

5310 Funding Available

FY 2022's Section 5310 Allocation	
FY 2022 FTA Section 5310 Funds Available to Asheville UZA	\$511,257
Section 5310 Admin at 10%	\$51,125
Remaining Section 5310 after Admin	\$460,132
55% of 5310 Funds (Traditional)	\$253,072
35% of 5310 Funds (Other)	\$161,045

5310 Matching Requirements

Project Type	Federal Funds	Local Funds
Capital Projects	80%	20%
Operating Projects	50%	50%
ADA (equipment on vehicles)	90%	10%

5310 Current Project Descriptions

Current project submittals are summarized below.

	Project Description
Buncombe County, RIDE (Other)	Ridership Independence for the Disabled and Elderly (RIDE) Program, is a curb-to-curb, user-side subsidy transportation alternative for eligible County residents (individuals who are elderly and/or who have disabilities) that increases independence, freedom of choice, and transportation options. The program is intended to offer same-day trips, unforeseen trips, and trips unavailable through public transit. Service hours in Buncombe County are, 24/7/365.
Buncombe County, SEDTAP (Traditional)	Door-to-door service for seniors/disabled on ADA compliant vans. Provides funds to support medical trips for elderly adults; demand response for customers with disabilities. 5310 funds allow more state and local funds to extend across all programs to cover transportation needs. Service hours in Buncombe County are M - Sa, 5:30 to 7:30, plus holidays.
City of Asheville, Paratransit (Traditional)	ADA complementary paratransit service that allows COA to offer service citywide in Asheville and within 1 mile on routes traveling outside of the City of Asheville. Service hours in the City of Asheville and some areas of Buncombe County are M-Sa, 5:26 to 11:55; Su, 7:30 to 6:35, plus holidays.
LOSRC Senior Companions (Other)	The Senior Companion Program provides transportation and other needed services at no charge to keep frail and elderly senior adults living independently at home. Senior adult volunteers are paired with clients who may not meet the income criteria of traditional transportation providers and seniors who lack a diagnosis/illness that makes them eligible for service. Service hours in Buncombe and Henderson Counties are M-Su, 8 to 5, plus holidays.

Madison County Transportation Authority (Other)	Expand transportation services for elderly and disabled residents of Madison County within the FBRMPO planning area to meal sites, medical appointments, etc. Funds cover the cost of driver and operations. Service hours in Madison County, with connecting service to Buncombe County (medical, etc.) are M-F 8 to 4:30, no current County holiday service.
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5310 Current Funding Requests

There are currently more funds being requested than are available. Assuming a 55/35% split, there's a \$14,647 shortfall for Traditional Projects and \$51,469 for Other Projects, shown below.

The 55% allotment for Traditional Projects is a “floor”, not a “ceiling”, so if the two Traditional Projects (Buncombe County SEDTAP and City of Asheville Paratransit) are funded at 100% of their funding requests, this requires a 58/32% split. Current funding availability is shown as a percentage of current funding requests (94.53% capacity for Traditional Requests, 75.78% capacity for Other Requests under the 55/35% scenario; 100% and 68.89% under the 58/32% scenario).

	Total Funds Available	Total Funds Requested	Total Funds DIFF	Percent of Funds Available out of Funds Requested
55% of 5310 Funds (Traditional)	\$253,072	\$267,720	(\$14,648)	94.53%
58% of 5310 Funds (Trad), Transfer of \$14,648 for 100% funding	\$267,720	\$267,720		100.00%
35% of 5310 Funds (Other)	\$161,046	\$212,516	(\$51,470)	75.78%
32% of 5310 Funds (Other), Reduced by \$14,648	\$146,398	\$212,516	(\$66,118)	68.89%

				All projects 100% funded, with exception of LOSRC Senior Companions at \$70,502 (51.60% of original \$136,620 request)
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Five separate projects are currently requesting more funds than are currently available in their respective categories (i.e. Traditional vs. Other), noted in **Alt. 1**. If all of the top-scoring projects are funded at 100% of their funding request, the lowest-scoring project (LOSRC Senior Companions) could still receive \$70,501 (51.60% of their original funding request of \$136,620).

If each project took a proportional funding reduction based on funding capacity (i.e. 94.53% for Traditional and 75.78% for Other), **Alt. 2** shows resulting funding amounts for each project, along with a **Funding Reduction from Original Request**.

		Buncombe County RIDE (Other)	Buncombe County SEDTAP (Trad)	City of Asheville Paratransit (Trad)	LOSRC Senior Companions (Other)	Madison County Transportation Authority (Other)
	Score (out of 100 points)	90	95	95	83	85
Alt. 1 - All or Slightly Less	Requested Amount	\$42,482	\$57,720	\$210,000	\$136,620	\$33,414
	Funded Amount	\$42,482	\$57,720	\$210,000	\$70,501	\$33,414
	Funded Amount, Percent of Total Funding Available	29.02%	21.56%	78.44%	48.16%	18.66%
	Funding Reduction from Original Request				(\$66,119)	
Alt. 2 - Uniformly Less (with 94.53% for Trad and 75.78% for Other)	Funded Amount, if Proportionately Split	\$32,193.13	\$54,561.96	\$198,510.25	\$103,531.49	\$25,321.34
	Funded Amount, Percent of Total Funding Available	19.99%	21.56%	78.44%	64.29%	15.72%
	Funding Reduction from Original Request	(\$10,288.87)	(\$3,158.04)	(\$11,489.75)	(\$33,088.51)	(\$8,092.66)

MPO Staff presented on 5310 funding and projects. Discussion occurred about projects and the alternatives, and whether it would be possible to fully fund the 5310 projects and make up the difference with money left over from JARC. The group decided to table the discussion for now and refer the matter to the 5307 Transit Group.

Jessica Morriss moved to refer the 5310 Project Selection to the 5307 Transit Group. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

JARC Project Selection

Urbanized Area Formula Grants (JARC) – Section 5307

What is this program?

The Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes federal resources available to urbanized areas for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation-related planning. Specifically, the **Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC)** grant program is intended to fund the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment. The FBRMPO has a local resolution to use 10% of Section 5307 funds for **Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC)** eligible projects.

What are eligible projects under this program?

JARC funds may be used for planning, capital or operating costs of providing access to jobs and employment training for low-income individuals. The City of Asheville, as the Designated Recipient of 5307 and JARC funds in our region, reserves the right to use up to 10 percent of the JARC funding to support program administrative costs. Eligible projects could include:

- Late-night and weekend service;
- Guaranteed ride home service;
- Shuttle service;
- Expanding fixed route public transit routes, including hours of service or coverage;
- Demand-responsive van service;
- Ridesharing and carpooling activities;
- Transit-related aspects of bicycling (e.g., adding bicycle racks to vehicles, providing secure bicycle parking at transit stations, or support for bicycle sharing programs in the vicinity of transit stations).

What is an example of a recent local JARC project?

Asheville Rides Transit (ART), the City of Asheville's bus transit system, has used JARC funding for Route 170 which connects downtown Black Mountain to downtown Asheville. The service provides 8 trips per day, Mon. - Sat., 5:30 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. The route offers service to the general public, and also connects to the Black Mountain Trailblazer deviated fixed route service provided by Buncombe County and operated by Mountain Mobility.

5307 (JARC) Funding Available

FY 2022's Section 5307 (JARC) Allocation
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Regional JARC - FY 2022 at 10% of FTA 5307 Amount allocated to Asheville Urbanized Area	\$408,394
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5307 (JARC) Matching Requirements

Project Type	Federal Funds	Local Funds
Capital Projects	80%	20%
Operating Projects	50%	50%

City of Asheville (COA) Request

The City is requesting continued funding of Asheville Rides Transit (ART) Bus Route 170, which connects downtown Black Mountain to downtown Asheville. The service provides 8 trips per day, Mon. - Sat., 5:30 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. The route offers service to the general public, and also connects to the Black Mountain Trailblazer deviated fixed route service provided by Buncombe County and operated by Mountain Mobility.

This is an Operating Project, so the City is providing 50% matching Local Funds (\$254,720 total; \$205,720 from City of Asheville, \$49,000 from Town of Black Mountain) for a total project cost of \$509,440.

	Total Funds Available	Total Funds Requested (COA)	Total Funds DIFF
Total 5307/JARC Funds	\$408,394	\$254,720	\$153,674

Jessica Morriss moved to refer the JARC Project Selection to the 5307 Transit Group. Anthony Sutton seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

FY 2024 Planning Project Selection

The MPO held a call for planning projects from November 1st to December 21st. This is done on an annual basis to determine potential funding allotments for local planning activities eligible for MPO planning funds. \$200,000 in federal funding has typically been made available through the MPO's funds with a 20% local match required.

Local Planning Projects

The MPO received two applications for local planning studies from local governments.

Sponsor	Project	Scope	Funding Requested
Town of Woodfin	Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study	Determine potential connections between the Woodfin Greenway project and the planned Reems Creek Greenway in Weaverville	\$96,000
Town of Fletcher	Cane Creek Greenway Study	Determine a preferred alignment and cost estimates from the Bill Moore Community Park to the French Broad River	\$56,000

Both projects are identified in the Hellbender Regional Trail plan and are requesting \$152,000 total.

Discussion occurred about the \$48K left over. Tristan Winkler shared that it is up to the Subcommittee to program it, if they wish. Elizabeth Teague noted that if any projects needing funding come forward, they will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Jessica Morriss moved to program the Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study and the Cane Creek Greenway Study in the Draft FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Autumn Radcliff seconded the motion which carried unanimously upon a roll call vote.

2020 Urbanized Area

After every decennial census, the US Census Bureau releases data that determines Urbanized and Non-Urbanized areas in the country. This data plays a role in determining a number of things, but to keep it to transportation:

MPO Boundaries- the urbanized area is used as a base for what is part of the MPO and what is not. The MPO Boundary is required to consist of the urbanized area as well as the area that is expected to urbanize in the next 20 years.

Transit Funding- several FTA funding grants determine eligibility and distribution amounts based on the Urbanized Area population. These include 5303, 5307, 5310, 5311, 5339, and 5340. More information from FTA is available here: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/census>

MPO Planning Funds- The MPO’s planning funds are distributed through North Carolina by a base amount of \$130,000 per MPO with the remainder distributed based on the pro-rata share of Urbanized Area Population per the most recent census.

Direct Allotment Funds- Urbanized Areas with a population greater than 200,000 receive Direct Allotment (DA) funds. These include Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP.)

Changes to the Urbanized Area Criteria Between 2010 and 2020

The US Census Bureau has adopted a number of changes to determine urban areas in 2020. Some of these include:

	2010	2020
Identification of Urban Cores	Census tract and block population density, count, and size thresholds. Use of National Land Cover Database to identify territory with a high degree of impervious land cover.	Aggregation of census blocks with a housing unit density of 425. Use of land cover data to identify territory with a high degree of imperviousness; An area will qualify as urban if it contains at least 2,000 housing units or has a population of at least 5,000.
Inclusion of Non-Contiguous Urbanized Area via Jumps or Hops	Maximum hop distance 0.5 miles, maximum jump distance 2.5 miles, and no hops after jumps.	Maximum hop distance 0.5 miles, maximum jump distance 1.5 miles, and no hops after jumps. Intervening, low density blocks are not included in the urban area.
Additional Nonresidential Urban Territory	Inclusion of groups of census blocks with a high degree of impervious surface and are within 0.25 miles of an urban area.	Inclusion of groups of census blocks with a high degree of imperviousness and that are within 0.5 miles of an urban area, and have a total area of at least 0.15 square miles. Inclusion of groups of census blocks with at least 1,000 jobs (per Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) data) and that are within 0.5 miles of an urban area.
Low-Density Fill	-	Contiguous census blocks added to already qualifying territory with a housing unit density of 200.

Other criteria have changed as well, but what's shown are the items most likely to impact the "Asheville Urbanized Area" and its boundaries.

Some of the initial information on urbanized areas was released on December 29th but, unfortunately, did not include maps. All the information released so far can be found here: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>

What we know so far:

-the country's urbanized population was reduced from 80.7% to 80.0% of the population, largely as a result of the change in UZA criteria

-4.2 million US residents formerly classified as "urban" are now "rural"

-Waynesville, NC is a new urbanized area in the region (though not large enough to require its own MPO- that would require an urbanized population of 50,000)

Urbanized Area	Population (2020)	Population (2010)	Square Miles (2020)	Square Miles (2010)
Asheville, NC	285,776	280,648	248.58	264.88
Brevard, NC	13,059	13,121	13.82	12.03
Waynesville, NC	24,285	-	27.60	-

Maps are expected to be released in January 2023.

Tristan Winkler shared that two of the major changes between the 2010 and 2020 Census is the inclusion of housing units and the change in maximum "jump" distance from 2.5 miles to 1.5 miles. Discussion occurred as to if we had to accept the 2020 Census findings regarding the changes. Tristan Winkler noted that there is an appeal process. It would be up to the member governments to decide whether to appeal.

Information only. No action required.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Elizabeth Teague opened the floor for Public Comment. No comment was heard.

ADJOURNMENT

Elizabeth Teague adjourned the meeting at 10:39 AM.