

Transportation Matters: FBRMPO Quarterly Update

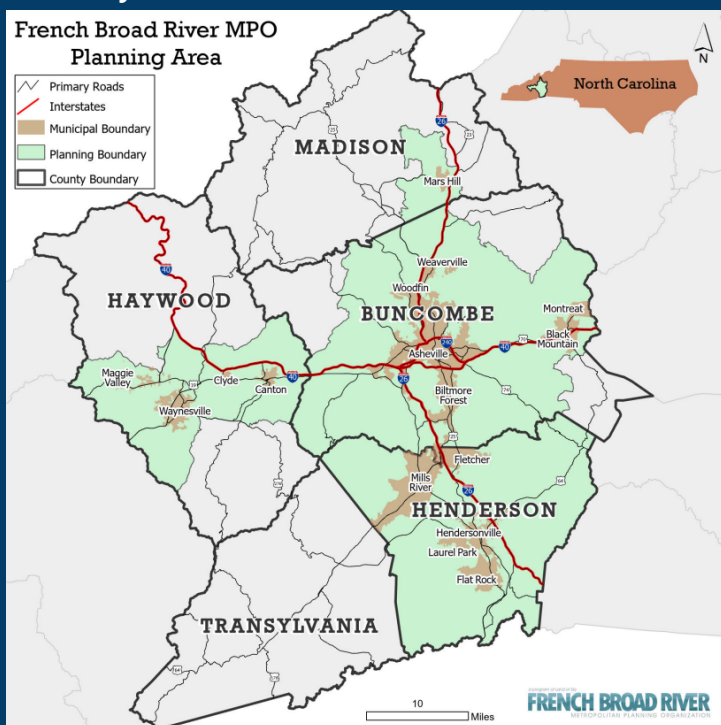
Ecusta Trail Groundbreaking

The long-awaited groundbreaking of the Ecusta Trail took place on a warm and sunny Saturday, October 28th, celebrated by hundreds in the community including the Henderson County Commissioners, Friends of the Ecusta Trail, and partners that have helped bring the trail to this point. The Ecusta Trail, a planned 19.4 mile rail-trail that connects Hendersonville to Brevard, has been worked on for more than a decade. In 2012, an economic impact study was completed that provided an overview of project implementation and potential benefits if Ecusta were to move forward. In 2020, the French Broad River MPO awarded Henderson County engineering and construction funding, eventually totalling more than \$7 million in federal funding from the MPO for the section from Kanuga Road to US 64 in Henderson County. In 2021, the rail line was officially acquired by Conserving Carolina with funds provided through NCDOT. With the groundbreaking, the first section of the Ecusta Trail is set to begin construction. The first section of Ecusta will- by itself- be the longest continuous multi-use path in the region when completed. The remaining sections from US 64 to Brevard plan to be implemented with local funds, more than \$40 million from the USDOT RAISE and NSFLTP programs, and additional funds from the MPO.



Updates to the MPO Planning Area

With the release of the new 2020 Census Urbanized Area Boundaries, the MPO has drafted new planning area boundaries. These boundaries were developed by speaking with all towns and counties about their needs and taking into account all the areas expected to urbanize within the next 10 years. There was also significant collaboration with the Land of Sky RPO to draft these boundaries. The new MPO planning area includes the Asheville, Canton, and Waynesville Urban Areas. These boundaries were adopted by the MPO Board and will go before all jurisdictions during the update of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2024. Below is a map of the new MPO planning boundary.



I-26 Construction Update



I-4400BB and I-4400C : from .05 miles N of US-64 to NC-280 (exit 40)

74% Complete -- 2/28/25 Completion



I-4700 : from NC-280 (exit 40) to I-40

71.4% Complete -- 6/11/26 Completion

Around the Region

Asheville Airport Master Plan

Asheville Regional Airport is currently in the process of updating its master plan, a strategic document that delineates the airport's development trajectory spanning 5, 10, and 20-year horizons. The plan was last updated in 2013, and is updated every 10 years. On October 26th, the Greater Asheville Regional Airport Authority (GARAA) extended an invitation to the public for a comprehensive introduction to the plan update during a public open house. Notable enhancements within the updated plan include the construction of a new terminal slated for completion in 2027, the introduction of a roundabout along Airport Road, and the provision of additional parking facilities including a second parking garage that will be completed within the next 5 years. The result of this plan update will yield two key documents: a Master Plan report and an Airport Layout Plan (ALP), which serves as a visual representation illustrating the airport's future property development plans.

P 7.0 Next Steps

MPO staff recently submitted regional SPOT projects to NCDOT for consideration for the 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Many steps lie ahead before the adoption of the Final TIP/STIP in August of 2025. Below you can find estimated dates for the release of data scores and project lists. The MPO will provide updates on the P 7.0 schedule as it is released at MPO Board Meetings. We encourage anyone interested to attend, agendas and meeting links can be found here: frenchbroadrivermpo.org/agendas-minutes/ and more information about the P 7.0 process can be found here: frenchbroadrivermpo.org/spot-7-0/

Milestone	Dates*
Data scores and Statewide Mobility funded project list released	Spring 2024
Public comment period on Regional Impact projects & release of Regional Impact funded project list	Summer 2024
Public comment on Division Needs projects	Fall 2024
2026-2035 draft STIP released	Early 2025
2026-2035 STIP adoption by N.C. Board of Transportation	Summer 2025
Federal Highway Administration approval of 2026-2035 STIP	Fall 2025

*Future dates are preliminary and subject to change

Pedestrian Count

The pedestrian counter program is performed within the five-county region to assess trail usage and sidewalk usage. Recent sidewalk surveys have been performed in Brevard and in Hot Springs. A trail survey was done in Asheville along the Reed Creek Parkway. The Hot Springs sidewalk survey along Bridge Street revealed more activity west of the creek Sunday through Wednesday and more activity Thursday through Saturday toward the railroad tracks. The peak day to the west was Sunday, across from the churches, and Saturday closer to the tracks and the restaurants. The trail survey updated data from prior studies along the Reed Creek. More counters and samples can provide better insights into how our region is benefiting from multi-modal transportation opportunities. If you ever see our ped counter on your greenway adventures, snap a selfie and tag us @StriveBeyondDrive!

Park and Ride Lots

We have seven park and ride locations within our region. New park and ride locations are being proposed based upon density of households, density of employment, and average annual daily trips. Issues of Equity, specifically zero vehicle household, minority populations, and low income populations are also being measured and used to prioritize new locations. Some sites were close to transit, for park and ride locations, while others were identified for carpool opportunities and were called park and pool sites. The goal was to incorporate future park and ride locations into future transportation projects.

Upcoming Meetings

- **Prioritization Subcommittee:** January 3rd, February 7th, March 6th 9:30am - 11:30am
- **MPO TCC:** November 16th, January 11th, February 8th, March 14th 11am - 1pm
- **MPO Board:** November 16th, January 18th, February 15th, March 21st 1pm - 3pm

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