

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization
 Minutes from the Governing Board Meeting on September 19th, 2024

Attendance:

In-Person and Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Anthony Sutton	Town of Waynesville
Jennifer Hensley	City of Hendersonville
Steve Williams	NCDOT Div 14
Larry Harris	Urban Transit
Anne Coletta	Village of Flat Rock
Kim Roney	City of Asheville
Betsy Ervin	Town of Woodfin
Tom Widmer	Town of Montreat
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT
Archie Pertiller	Town of Black Mountain
Brandon Merithew	NCDOT Div 13
Suzette Morales	FHWA
Hannah Smith	NCDOT Div 13
Shanon Gonc	Mills River
Matt Wechtel	Madison County
George Banta	Town of Laurel Park
Daniel Sellers	NCDOT
Catherine Cordell	Town of Weaverville
Dr. Ralph Hamlett	Town of Canton
Troy Wilson	NCDOT
Billy Clarke	BOT Div 13

Members without Representation present:

Town of Biltmore Forest
Buncombe County
Town of Clyde
Rural Transit
Town of Mars Hill
BOT Div 14
Haywood County
Henderson County
Maggie Valley
Town of Fletcher

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO) Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO) Asha Rado (LOSRC, Minutes)
Daisy O'Connor (FBRMPO) Ada Sloop (FBRMPO)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL

Anthony Sutton called the meeting to order at 1:01PM and welcomed everyone. He read the Ethics Statement and inquired if there were any conflicts of interest to note for today's meeting. No conflict's were had.

Quorum was announced to conduct the business of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anthony Sutton opened the floor for public comment. No comment was heard in room. Comments were given prior to meeting to staff on Merrimon Ave road diet.

CONSENT AGENDA

3A. August 2024 Board Minutes: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_8_15_MPO.DRAFT_Board_Minutes.pdf

3B. Letter of Support-NCDOT Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program Grant Application

As standard practice, letters of support that did not have time to go through the MPO TCC and Board for approval are provided as consent agenda items for information.

MPO staff was requested to provide a letter of support in for an NCDOT grant application that included two wildlife crossing improvements- one in Haywood County, one in Madison County. This project was supported by the Wildlife Crossings Recommendations approved by the MPO Board in September, 2023.

The letter of support that was provided is below.

FHWA WILDLIFE CROSSINGS PILOT PROGRAM
2024 GRANT APPLICATION
NCDOT WILDLIFE CROSSING APPLICATION

This letter is provided to showcase support for NCDOT's application to the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program. The [Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program | FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#) is a competitive grant program that awards grants to eligible entities for projects with the goal of reducing Wildlife Vehicle Collisions (WVC) while improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.

The goals of the Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program fits neatly with the goals of the French Broad River MPO, including "Ensuring Changes Don't Negatively Impact our Region's Unique Environments" and "Improve Roadway Safety." Western North Carolina is home to one of the most diverse biospheres in the country and our mountains and natural areas serve as some of the biggest recreational destinations as well as home to numerous wildlife and biodiversity. Our region has also struggled to meet roadway safety targets-reducing wildlife collisions, especially with the large mammals in our region, may help to improve safety and reduce crashes on our roadways.

In September, 2023 the French Broad River MPO approved a series of recommendations for proposed wildlife crossing areas throughout the MPO and Land of Sky RPO planning areas in order to improve roadway safety for our residents, visitors, and travelers, as well as promote a transportation system that reduces barriers for our natural resources.

We believe that the following proposed projects are in-line with the vision and goals of the MPO as well as the recommendations adopted by the Board in September, 2023:

1-26 Madison County: Wildlife Fence Installation for Wildlife Crossings and Roadway Safety - This project proposes to install 6.5 miles of appropriately designed wildlife fencing to direct species, especially large mammals, to the existing wildlife crossing structures. The fencing would minimize highway access while directing wildlife to the underpasses and the Big Laurel Creek bridge.

1-40 Haywood County: Groundhog Creek Area Wildlife Passage Structures - This project seeks to install wildlife underpasses at Groundhog Creek as well as 2.2 miles of wildlife fencing to bracket the multiple hydraulic structures under I-40 near and Groundhog Creek. The fence will extend to the I-40 westbound tunnel, thereby incorporating the proposed passage improvements with an existing overpass that is used by wildlife. This will create a mix of wildlife crossing opportunities within a section of the Pigeon River Gorge.

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Staff Report & Recommendations

The French Broad River MPO offers its full support for the project as submitted by NCDOT to help improve our region, the safety of our roadways' users, and to improve conditions for the wildlife and natural resources.

Thank you,



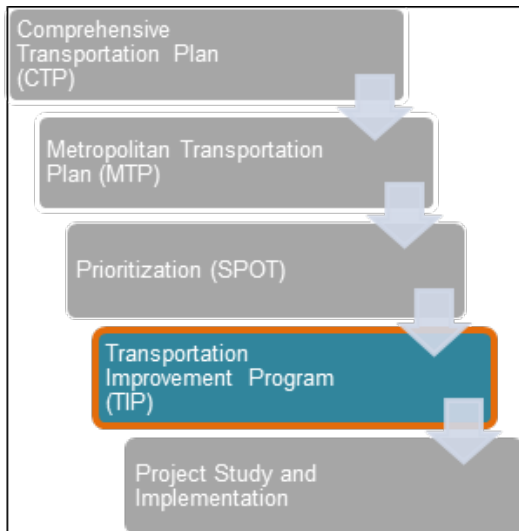
Tristan Winkler
French Broad River MPO
Director tristan@landofsky.org
(828)251-6622

Larry Harris moved to approve the consent agenda including the August 2024 meeting minutes, the Letter of Support for NCDOT Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program Grant Application and the TAC agenda. Shanon Gonce seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

Staff Report & Recommendations

Business

4A. Amendments to the 2024-2033 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)



What is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is our region's document that reflects planned transportation investments over a ten-year period. The TIP describes each project, a schedule for implementation, funding sources, and estimated costs. Current items are for modification of existing projects.

Amendments Summary

We have a significant number of amendments this month. A Some changes to highlight include the segmentation of HE- 0001 (I-26 Pratt and Whitney Interchange) into HE-0001A

and HE-0001B. There was a significant cost increase, roughly \$34 million, to I-2513AA (I-40 from Monta Vista Road to Sand Hill Road). FY25 and FY26 construction funding was added to HB-0004 (Bridge replacement over Champion Drive). There are a few safety projects including four in Division and two in Division 14. These improvements include installing guardrails, crosswalks, and rapid flashing beacons.

*(See agenda for charts on projects : https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_09_19_Board-Agenda-Packet.pdf)

No discussion occurred

Larry Harris moved to approve amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP. Billy Clarke seconded, and the motion unanimously passed upon a roll call vote.

Staff Report & Recommendations

4B. Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a formal agreement between various governmental entities and stakeholders involved in metropolitan transportation planning.

What an MOU for an MPO Includes

1. Governance Structure:

- **Organizational Framework:** Details the structure of the MPO, including decision-making processes and membership.
- **Decision-Making Processes:** Describes how decisions will be made, including voting rights and procedures.

2. Funding and Resources:

- **Financial Contributions:** Specifies how funds will be provided to the MPO for operations and planning

3. Responsibilities and Obligations:

- **Planning Duties:** Outlines planning duties and deliverables, such as transportation plans and studies.
- **Compliance:** Addresses compliance with federal, state, and local regulations and requirements.

4. Termination:

- **Termination Conditions:** Defines conditions under which the MOU can be terminated by any party.

Summary of Changes to the MOU

- Formatted changes to meet with the approved MOU template from NCDOT
- MPO Board membership changes
- Transylvania County removed as a non-voting member
- Urban Transit Representative clarified
- Rural Transit Representative clarified
- FTA Representative added as a non-voting member
- MPO TCC membership changes
- Transylvania County removed as a non-voting member
- NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (in-place of "NCDOT Transit" previously in the MOU) added as a non-voting member

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-FTA Representative, NCDOT Freight Representative, NCDOT Rail Representative, Regional Housing Representative, and Vulnerable Road Users Representatives added as a non-voting members

-A section on dues-paying members and local dues responsibilities was added

Steps Following Board Approval

-every jurisdiction in the MPO would be required to provide a resolution

***See full Memorandum of Understanding via the agenda pages 58-80: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_09_19_Board-Agenda-Packet.pdf**

Discussion around what a vulnerable road user was and how someone would be appointed to the At-Large Vulnerable Road user position.

Matt Wechtel moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding. Betsy Ervin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

5A. Haywood Road Improvement Project (HL-0003)

-Presented by Brendan Merithew of NCDOT Div 13. Information Only.

What is the Haywood Road Improvement Project?

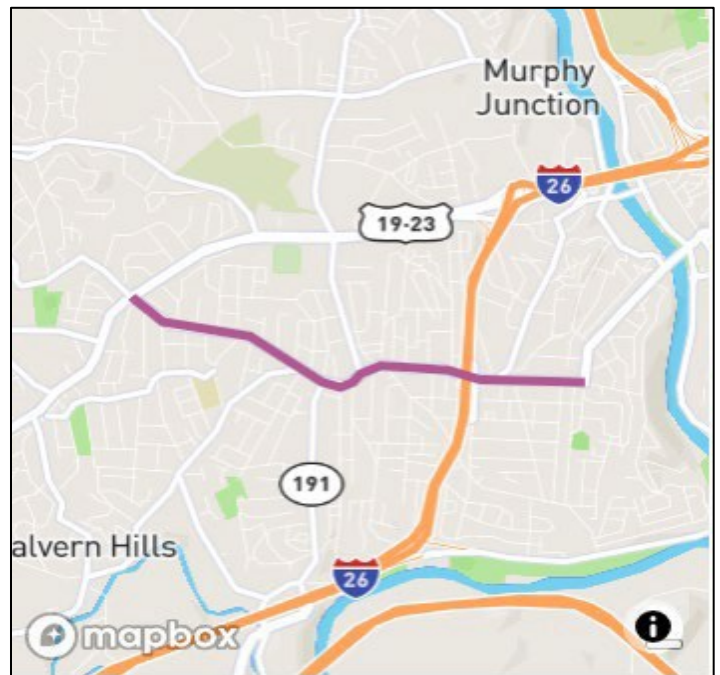
The Haywood Road Improvement Project is a relatively unique project funded through the MPO's Locally Administered Project Program. The project goes from US 19/23 (Patton Avenue) to Ridgeland Road and is generally scoped to resurface the road and include bicycle and pedestrian improvements as well.

What Makes This Project Unique?

-No local funds are being used as match for this project, instead NCDOT is using resurfacing and other funds to provide match.

-The project was developed out of meetings between the West Asheville Business Association (WABA), NCDOT Division 13, City of Asheville Planning, and the MPO.

-The project allows for the planned resurfacing to include additional improvements that would not be provided under a resurfacing project.



Discussion occurred around where the details are for the plans on the NCDOT website. Intersection at Sulphur

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Springs leaving Lucy Herring , crosswalk is on wrong side. Wanting to know if signaling will be addressed in the plans. Typically there is not a timing change plan drawn up ahead of this.

6A. Division Project Updates

Division 13: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Div13_September_Updates.pdf

Division 14: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Div14_September_Updates.pdf

6B. TPD Updates

6C. FHWA/FTA Updates given by Suzette Morales

FHWA Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Website: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/>

FTA Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Website: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/BIL>

6D.

Committee & Workgroup Updates

Prioritization Subcommittee— met on September 4th, next meeting October 10th

-P7 Regional Impact Local Input Point Assignment

-Existing TIP/STIP Project Rankings

-2050 Socio-Economic Growth Scenarios

5307 Subrecipient Workgroup- met on August 20th, next meeting November. Points of Business/Discussion:

- TIP/STIP Updates Needed
- Potential Changes to the 5307 Subrecipient Formula

Hellbender Trail Stakeholder Group/Regional Trail Forum Updates- met on April 23rd; next meeting TBD.

(*See Agenda for Locally Administered Projects (https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024_08_15_Board-Agenda-Packet.pdf))

Legislative Updates:

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MPO Studies Status

Study	Managing Entity	Year Programmed	Status
2050 Socio-Economic Projections	FBRMPO	2024	Underway
CTP/MTP Update	FBRMPO	2024	Underway
Safe Streets for All Regional Action Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Underway
Patton Avenue Corridor Study	City of Asheville	2023	Underway
Ridgecrest Connector Greenway Feasibility Study	Town of Black Mountain	2023	Completed
Cane Creek Greenway Study	Town of Fletcher	2024	Not Started
Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study	Town of Woodfin	2025	Consultant <u>Selected</u> : Contracting in Progress
Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan	Buncombe County	2025	RFLOI Drafted
Hellbender Implementation Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Regional ITS Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Travel Survey/Model Upgrades	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Staffing & Compensation Study	LOSRC	2024	Not Started

*See Agenda for Locally Administered Projects (pg 75-77): https://frenchbroadrivempo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/2024_09_19_Board-Agenda-Packet.pdf

6E: Legislative Updates: TBD

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Anthony Sutton opened the floor again for public comment. No comments were heard.

ADJOURNMENT

Anthony Sutton adjourned the meeting at 2:10PM as there was no further business before the Board.