

**French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
 Minutes from the Governing Board Meeting on February 20th 2025

**Attendance:**

In-Person and Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Drew Stephens	Biltmore Forest
Jennifer Hensley	City of Hendersonville
Steve Williams	NCDOT Div 14
Larry Harris	Urban Transit
Kim Roney	City of Asheville
Jim McAllister	Town of Woodfin
Charles McGrady	BOT Div 14
Tom Widmer	Town of Montreat
Jim Player	Town of Fletcher
Parker Sloan	Buncombe County
George Banta	Town of Laurel Park
Brandon Rodgers	Haywood County
Chris Deyton	NCDOT Div 13
Catherine Cordell	Town of Weaverville
Dr Ralph Hamlet	Town of Canton
Tim Anderson	NCDOT Div 13
Jeff Moore	Mills River
David White	Rural Transit
Daniel Sellers	NCDOT TPD
Hannah Smith	NCDOT Div 13
Vicki Eastland	LOSRPO
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT
Kevin Hensley	Haywood County
Nathan Moneyham	NCDOT Div 13
Anthony Sutton	Town of Waynesville

Members without Representation present:

Madison County
Town of Clyde
Town of Mars Hill
Maggie Valley
Henderson County
Town of Black Mountain
BOT Div 13
Village of Flat Rock

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)	Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO)	Daisy O'Connor (FBRMPO)
Asha Rado (LOSRC, Minutes)	Ada Sloop (FBRMPO)	Micah Rogers (Public)
Evelyn Johnson (Public)	Felicia Sonmez(Public)	Lauren Blackburn(VHP)
Haley Mahoney (Public)	Joe Minicozzi(Public)	David Wasserman
Kim Levi (Public)	Shea Bruer (Public)	Emily Whitmire

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL**

**Anthony Sutton called the meeting to order at 1:00 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 conflict's were had.**

Quorum was announced to conduct the business of the Board.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Anthony Sutton opened the floor for public comment.

Joe Minicozzi- "Can we comment on an agenda item?" Before and after meeting are public comments. His comment involved speaking on the I-26 connector and how the original plan from 2010 was different than what is currently proposed. How the design on record differs and why the highway is going over the bridge. He mentions the EIS and NEPA Compliance. He was concerned that the people over seeing this are all engineers and there are no architects or designers. Doesn't think that the new design is in line with the original plans that he was apart of creating.

## CONSENT AGENDA

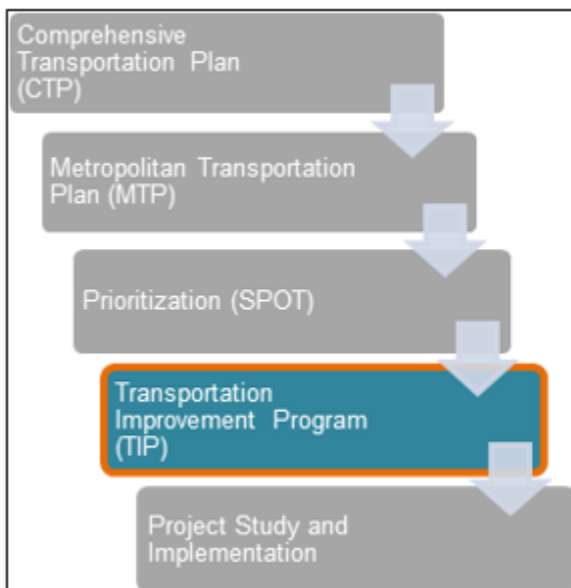
### 3A. January 2025 Meeting Minutes:

[https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025\\_1\\_16\\_MPO.DRAFT\\_Board\\_Minutes.pdf](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025_1_16_MPO.DRAFT_Board_Minutes.pdf)

*Jennifer Hensley moved to approve the consent agenda including the January 2025 meeting minutes and the TAC agenda. Chuck McGrady seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.*

## 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. Some changes include:

- The segmentation of A-0010AA into A-0010AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AJ, and AK. After the segmentation, the original A-0010AA project will be deleted.
- Multiple transit amendments including programming funds for 5311 and 5310 capital projects, replacement vehicles, and transit routine maintenance.
- U-5019B is being reopened after previously being closed out in 2022. This is the French Broad River West Greenway managed by the City of Asheville. This would allow Asheville to invoice the MPO for \$700,000 of previously unobligated funds.

**TIP Amendment Summaries can be found here:** <https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FebruaryTIPAmendments.pdf>

Discussion occurred around the 700B, and if we can reopen a project several years after it closed.

***Dr Ralph Hamlett moved to adopt the Amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP. Larry Harris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.***

#### **4B. Safety Targets**

Since 2016, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established five highway safety performance measures in accord with regulations set forth in the Federal MAP-21 and FAST Act transportation funding bills. These performance measures are:

- 1. Number of fatalities;*
- 2. Rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled;*
- 3. Number of serious injuries;*
- 4. Rate of serious injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled; and*
- 5. Number of combined non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries.*

These targets are established annually, are based on five-year rolling averages, and are for calendar years. North Carolina state targets are set in agreement with our Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) goals. The SHSP goals are developed through collaborative efforts of a diverse group of stakeholders including state, regional, and local partners (including MPOs). The goal of the most recent (2019) SHSP is to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by half by 2035, moving towards zero by 2050.

State safety performance targets for 2025 were submitted to FHWA on August 31st, as required, with the submission of the annual Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) report. These targets reflect the 2019 SHSP goal to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by half by 2035, moving towards zero by 2050. The calculated targets are shown in the table below.

The following table from NCDOT shows the MPO Planning Area's past safety record compared to CY 2022 Targets:

Table 2: French Broad River MPO Safety Performance Target Achievement Determination Summary for CY 2022

Performance Measures	5-year Rolling Averages			Target Achieved?	(Actual) Better than Baseline?	Met or Made Significant Progress?
	Target	Actual	Baseline			
	2018 - 2022	2018 - 2022	2016 - 2020			
Fatalities (5 Year Average)	45.4	51.0	49.8	No	No	No
Fatality Rate (5 Year Average)	0.912	1.030	1.008	No	No	
Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)	108.3	138.0	129.4	No	No	
Serious Injury Rate (5 Year Average)	2.151	2.786	2.613	No	No	
Non-motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)	15.7	19.8	19.6	No	No	

The next table from NCDOT shows the proposed target for CY 2025 with the MPO Planning Area's past safety record for reference:

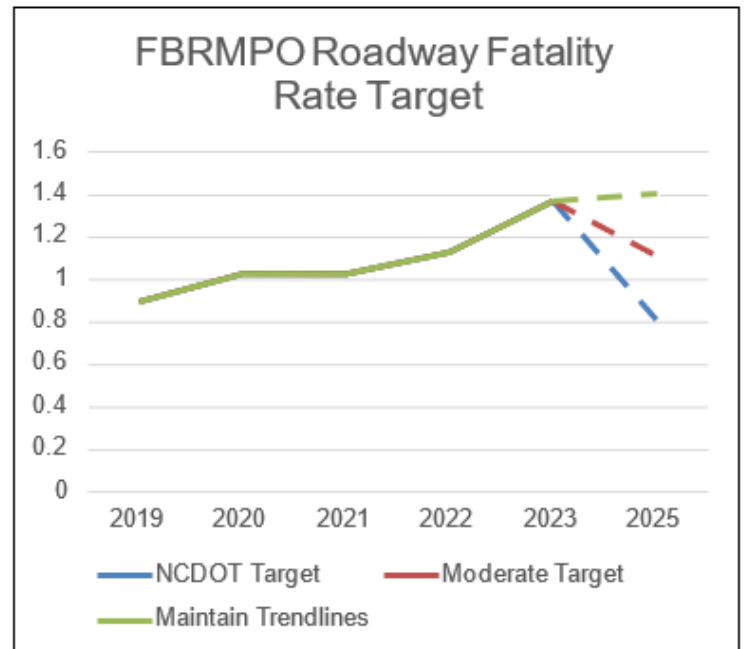
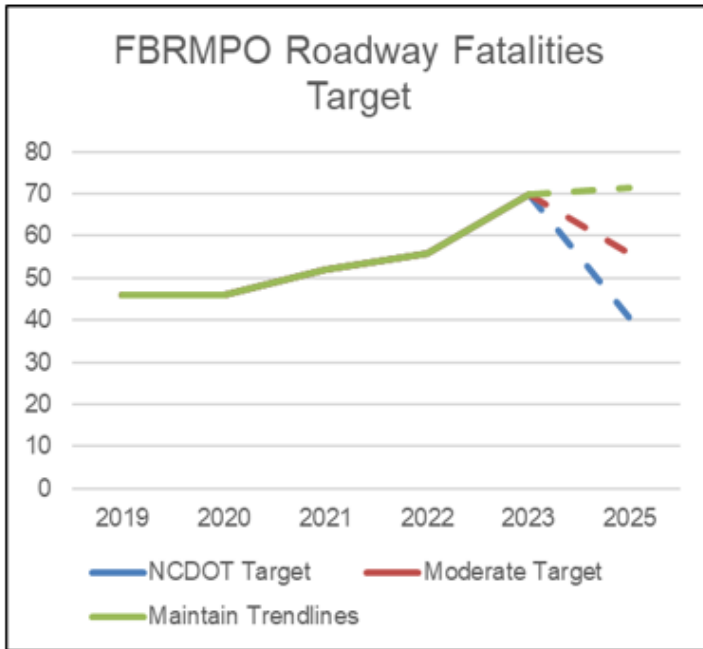
Table 4: French Broad River MPO Specific Safety Performance Targets

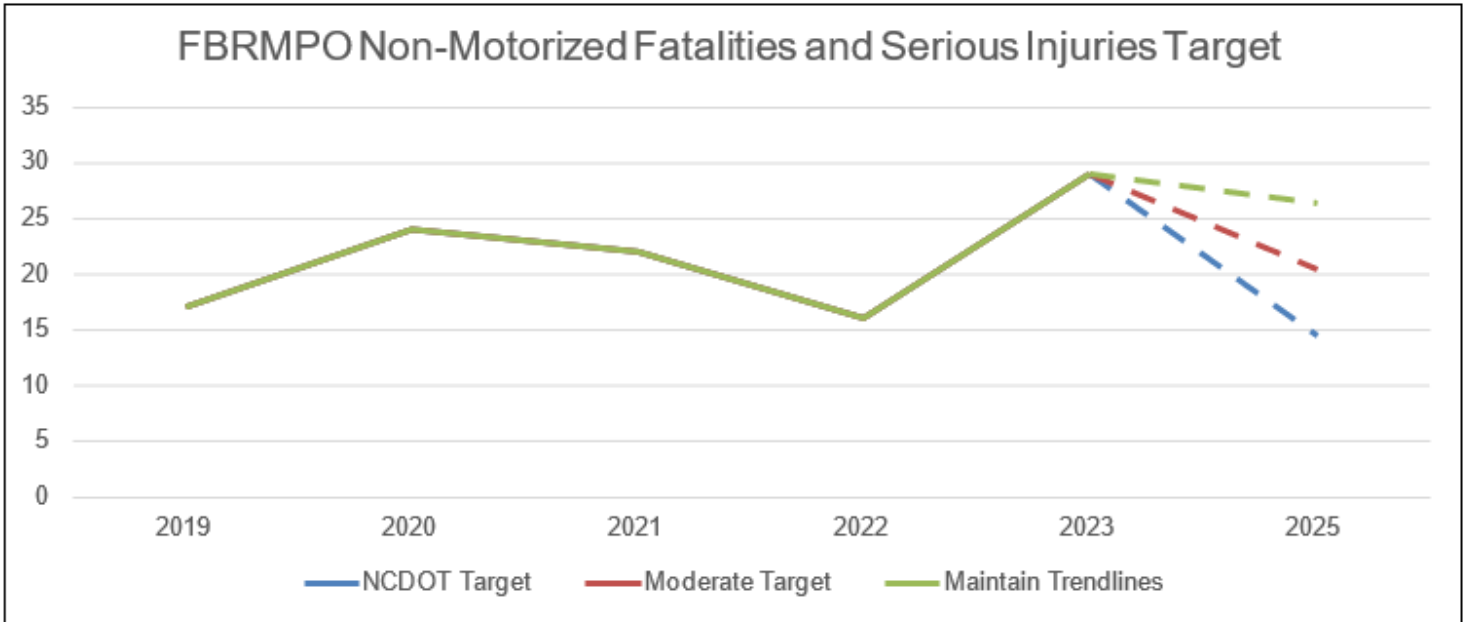
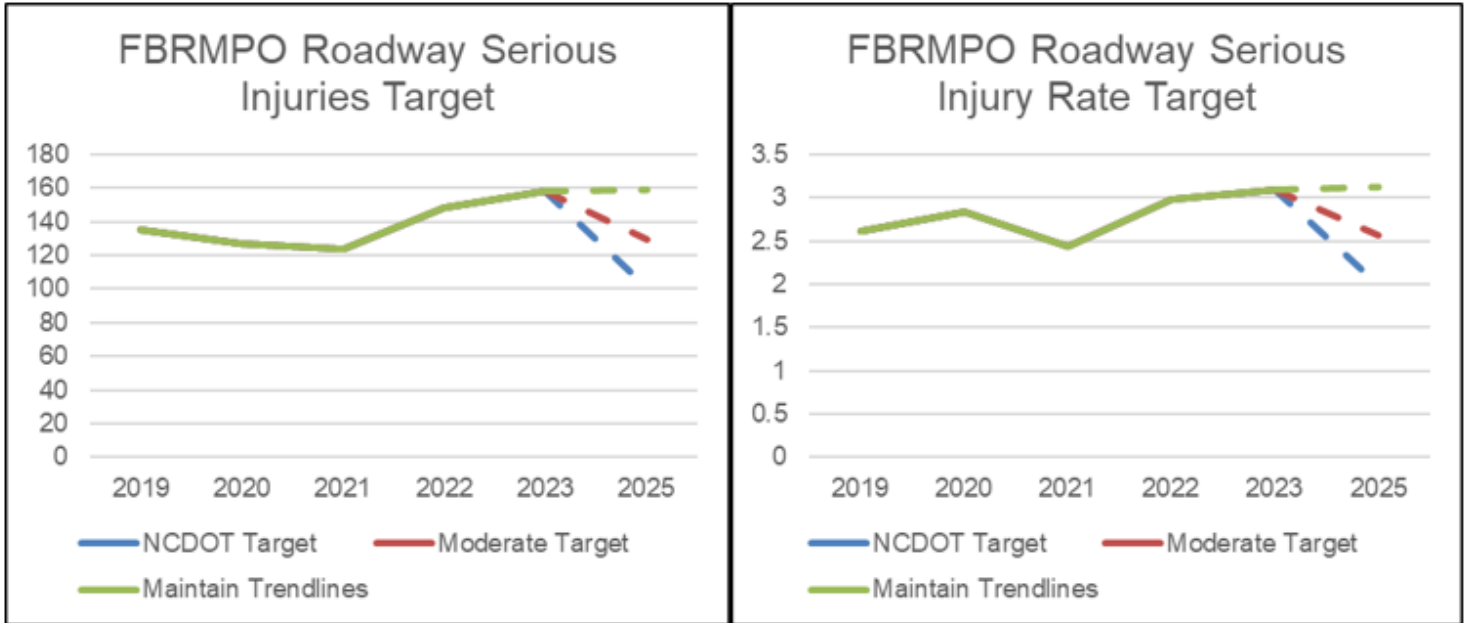
Year	Fatalities (5 Year Average)	Fatality Rate (5 Year Average)	Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)	Serious Injury Rate (5 Year Average)	Non-motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)
2008 - 2012	44.0	1.000	113.4	2.578	16.4
2009 - 2013	45.0	1.012	101.6	2.289	15.6
2010 - 2014	46.8	1.042	89.4	1.999	15.6
2011 - 2015	46.8	1.030	81.6	1.805	15.6
2012 - 2016	46.2	0.997	74.2	1.602	16.2
2013 - 2017	50.2	1.056	84.6	1.755	15.4
2014 - 2018	52.4	1.080	102.2	2.071	17.6
2015 - 2019	51.2	1.033	117.6	2.343	18.2
2016 - 2020	49.8	1.008	129.4	2.613	19.6
2017 - 2021	50.8	1.018	137.6	2.759	20.4
2018 - 2022	51.0	1.030	138.0	2.786	19.8
2019 - 2023	54.0	1.088	138.4	2.793	21.6
<b>2025 Target*</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>0.810</b>	<b>100.8</b>	<b>1.997</b>	<b>14.5</b>

Based on the discussion with the MPO Board in January, MPO staff is providing three scenarios for the TCC & Board to choose from:

1. Adopt NCDOT Targets
2. Moderate Targets (Median between NCDOT Targets & Maintaining Trendlines)
3. Maintain Trendlines

	Fatalities	Fatality Rate	Serious Injuries	Serious Injury Rate	Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries
<b>NCDOT Target</b>	40.6	0.81	100.8	1.997	14.5
<b>Moderate Target</b>	56	1.108	129.7	2.561	20.5
<b>Maintain Trendlines</b>	71.4	1.406	158.5	3.124	26.4





Discussion occurred around that the state isn't willing to have a conversation around the fatalities. The state's target is to reduce fatalities to zero by 2050. Clarity was given. On the maintain trend lines for fatalities, how did that get that number, it is based on five year trends from 2019 to 2023, it was a considerable jump. 2020-2021 had lower numbers because less people were on road. TCC recommends State safety plan. Clarity given on consequences of not meeting targets and why TCC recommended the state option. Why do we choose if there are no consequences and nothing happens. NCDOT gave some clarity. Setting unattainable goals it seems irrational, but setting attainable goals is more realistic. Lots of discussion occurred around feeling like the goal of zero is unattainable.

***Larry Harris moved to approve the state safety targets. Chuck McGrady seconded the motion and it failed upon a roll call vote.***

***Jennifer Hensley moved to adopt the moderate targets. No second was given, motion fails.***

***Jennifer Hensley moves to not adopt any targets until the state has a real conversation, Jim McAllister seconded and it passed upon a roll call vote.***

***Kim Roney proposed a friendly amendment to specifically include that we need state funding to meet the standards. Amendment fails as it is implied already.***

### **5A. Safe Streets for WNC Plan Update**

Safe Streets for WNC is a safety action plan funded through the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) discretionary grant program through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The SS4A grant program supports USDOT and their goal of zero roadway deaths using the Safe Systems Approach. The French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO hired VHB and began the plan in 2024. We held stakeholder engagement in the Summer of 2024. Due to Hurricane Helene, we encountered project delays in public engagement but are proceeding with an abbreviated public engagement as we continue the plan. Lauren Blackburn from VHB is here to provide the TAC with an update on the Safe Streets for WNC plan and milestones moving forward.

Information Only, discussion around how it would have been helpful to hear this before we voted. Discussion around how the smaller rural areas don't have the budget to make the roads safer by design. Struggles of these areas to maintain them but we don't have the funding. Is the intervention matching the crashes that we are seeing?



## 5B. I-26 Connector Optimization and Refinement Update/I-26 Connector (I-2513) Update

### What is the I-26 Connector?

The I-26 Connector (I-2513) is a highway project in Buncombe County that aims to provide improvements to I-26, I-240, and parts of I-40. The project is split into several different sections (generally described below):

**Section AA-** Pavement rehabilitation on I-40 from roughly Sand Hill Road to Monte Vista Road. (STIP Status: Funded)

**Section AB-** I-26/I-40 AND I-40/US 19/23 (SMOKEY PARK HIGHWAY) INTERCHANGES. CONSTRUCT THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS: WIDEN I-40 EASTBOUND TO I-26 EASTBOUND RAMP, WIDEN I-26 WESTBOUND BETWEEN I-40 RAMPS, CONSTRUCT NEW I-40 WESTBOUND TO US 19/23 (SMOKEY PARK HIGHWAY) NORTHBOUND RAMP. (STIP Status: Funded)

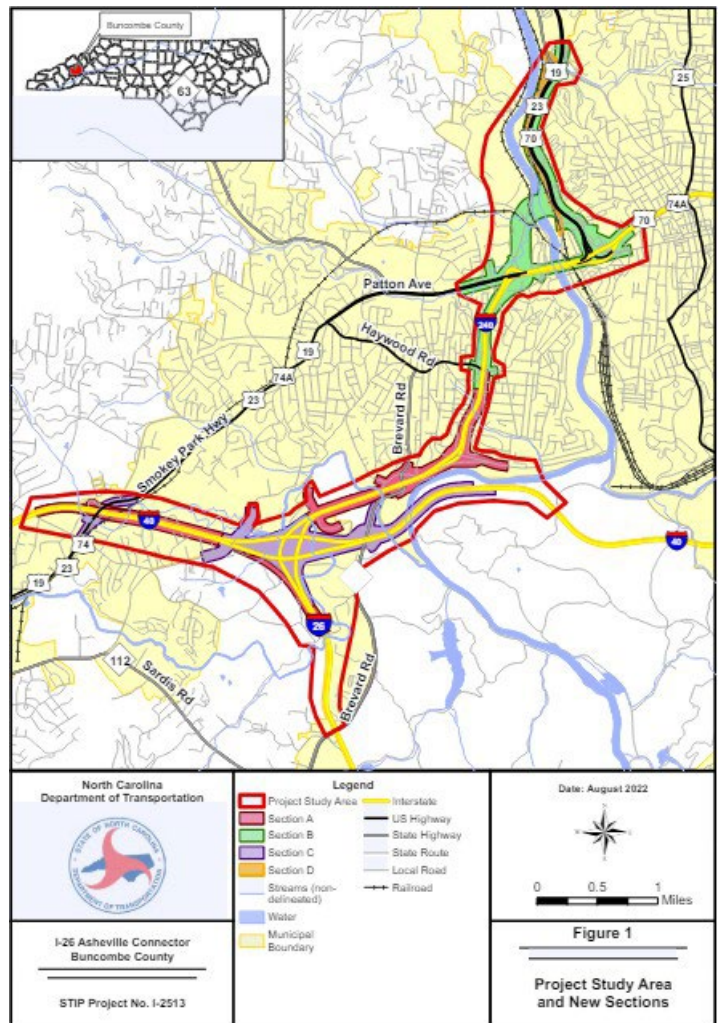
**Section AC-** Widen I-26/I-240 from I-40 to Haywood Road (STIP Status: Funded) **Section B-** Highway Widening and New Bridge Construction over the French Broad River from Haywood Road to Broadway Avenue. (STIP Status: Funded)

**Section C-** Final Improvements to the I-26/I-40/I-240 interchange. (STIP Status: NOT Funded)  
**Section D-** modernization and complete streets improvements to Riverside Drive (STIP Status: Funded)

The project also includes additional improvements that have been requested by the City of Asheville, including multimodal infrastructure and aesthetic enhancements.

### Update

Sections B & D went to bid in early, 2024 for design-build, however, all the bids came in over the cost estimate of the project. NCDOT has been working on a process known as Optimization & Refinement with the contractor to reduce costs of the project. The Optimization & Refinement



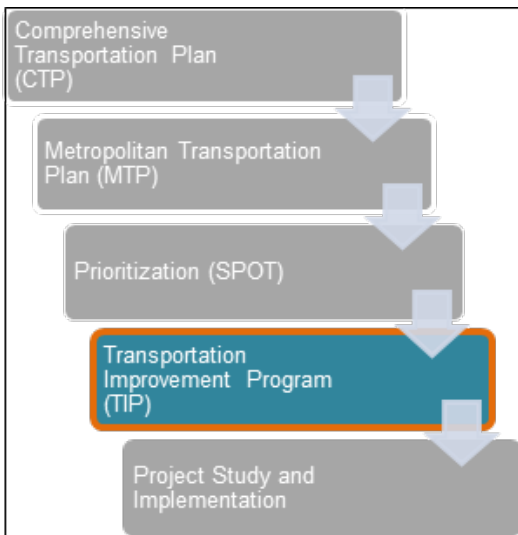
process has completed and has reduced costs enough to move the project forward.

To present on the changes made as part of the Optimization & Refinement process, Nathan Moneyham, NCDOT Division 13 Construction Engineer, will provide an update.

Information Only.

Discussion occurred around significant concern about greenways and pedestrian traffic in that area. Clarity was given on greenway connections. Provides connections weren't there before. Riverside drive connections from a pedestrian stand point, those have been maintained from the original process. Questions about the fly over concept. Have you identified other benefits than cost in regards to the fly over plan. This design all design exceptions as opposed to the older design, from a safety perspective it is safer. Operational improvements also played a part. How high is the bridge going to be over Patton ave. Pretty standard overpass height. Reduced the profile of all bridges. 20-25ft at most. Does this trigger a new sound study, yes this does require a new sound study. Now that all the O&R changes have occurred, the sound study will happen. Are there reduced impacts to businesses? Will there be less taking of land? No specific impacts at this time. We are compliant with NEPA.

**5C. Draft 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**



**What is the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)?**

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is North Carolina's document that reflects planned transportation investments over a ten-year period. The STIP describes each project, a schedule for implementation, funding sources, and estimated costs. The STIP includes all of the MPO's TIPs as well as programs for RPOs.

**Development of the 2026-2035 State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The cycle to update the STIP for 2026-2035 began in fall 2023. Due to rising costs for existing projects funded in the currently adopted 2024-2033 STIP, little to no funding was projected to be available for new projects in the 2026-2035

STIP. While P 7.0 was completed, few projects across the State were funded and none in the French Broad River MPO. Instead, the primary focus was on right-sizing NCDOT's budget and delaying or cutting existing projects due to cost increases.

### Projects Being Decommited

Project	Route	County	Funding Tier	Revised Cost
U-4712	US 23B (South Main Street) Widening	Haywood	Division 14	\$57,400,000
U-6159	US 276 (Russ Avenue) Access Management	Haywood	Division 14	\$39,000,000
U-6158	US 276 @ Crymes Cove Intersection Improvements	Haywood	Division 14	\$6,700,000
U-2801AB	US 25A (Sweeten Creek Road) Widening	Buncombe	Region G	\$215,000,000
U-5832	NC 81 (Swannanoa River Road) Widening	Buncombe	Division 13	\$145,000,000
U-6047	NC 112 (Sand Hill/Sardis Road) Widening	Buncombe	Division 13	\$175,800,000
I-4400BA	I-26 @ US 64 Interchange Improvements	Henderson	Division 14	\$143,600,000

\*A-0010AA decommitted (officially) but previously brought before the MPO Board

**Project Delays & Construction Schedules**

Project	Route	County	Previous CST Year	Updated CST Year
A-0010AE	Future I-26 (near New Stock Road)	Buncombe	2031	2031
I-2513AC	I-26/I-240	Buncombe	2025	2027
I-2513B & I-2513D	I-26/I-240	Buncombe	2024	2024
I-4409	I-40 @ Blue Ridge Road	Buncombe	2025	2026
I-4759	I-40 @ Liberty Road	Buncombe	2027	2029
U-4739	Amboy/Meadow Road	Buncombe	2030	2030
U-5834	Mills Gap Road	Buncombe	2025	2026
U-6163	Mills Gap Road @ Cane Creek Road	Buncombe	2025	2025
R-5921	US 276 (Jonathan Creek Road)	Haywood	2024	2025
U-6048	US 19/23	Haywood	2030	2033
R-2588B	NC 191	Henderson	2026	2029
U-5783	US 64	Henderson	2025	2025
U-5886	White Street	Henderson	2027	2028
U-6049	NC 225 (South Main Street)	Henderson	2027	2028

**Next Steps**

Action	Date
Draft STIP Released	January 31, 2025
Division 13/14 Public Meetings	February 24-28 (Drop-In at Division HQ)
Public Comments Due	April 4, 2025
NC BOT Adoption	June, 2025
FBRMPO Adoption	August, 2025

**Information Only.**

Discussion occurred around funding and if Helene impacted this. Concerns about how I-26 was prioritized and the local corridors seem to be getting taken off the to do list. Fears around taking decades to get them back in. Upset on projects is prevalent. NCDOT states they are working on better estimating tools.

## 5D. 2050 Socio-Economic Projections Update

As part of the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the MPO develops what's referred to as the "Preferred Growth Scenario" that determines how much growth the region should be planning to accommodate in 2050, what kind of growth is expected (in terms of demographics and business type), and where that growth is expected to go. This information feeds into the region's Travel Demand Model, which is used to develop traffic projections to determine future transportation needs. Outputs from the model are used to build Purpose & Need Statements for future projects as well as a starting point for the development of traffic forecasts that NCDOT uses to determine roadway needs for projects.

The French Broad River MPO has hired Manhan Group to develop four different growth scenarios for the region for the Board to consider:

1. **Business as Usual**- growth would be dictated by a combination of comprehensive plans and market forces with the general intent that growth patterns would not change significantly based on current patterns and comprehensive plans. Growth total: NC OSBM
2. **Consolidated Growth**- growth would be more focused in more walkable areas (WalkUPs), areas with lower VMT/HH, and/or generally more developed areas. The intent would be to focus more growth in areas more conducive to shorter trips and densify urban areas beyond what is likely in current plans and UDOs. Growth Total: NC OSBM
3. **Dispersed Growth**- growth would be more focused in areas with lower densities in order to avoid densification of the region beyond what is currently in comprehensive plans. Growth Total: NC OSBM
4. **Accelerated Growth**- growth rates would exceed current projections with the hopes of accommodating additional housing and avoiding becoming a region being heavily-reliant on its working-age population being outside of the region as well as alleviating housing price pressures. Growth Total: Custom

MPO Staff will provide an overview of the study, why it's important, and what decision point is coming to the TCC and Board soon.

### Information Only

Discussion did not occur.

## 6A. Division Project Updates

Division 13: [https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Division13\\_February2025Updates.pdf](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Division13_February2025Updates.pdf)

Division 14: [https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Division14\\_February2025Updates.pdf](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Division14_February2025Updates.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 February 5<sup>th</sup>; next meeting March 5<sup>th</sup>.

-Draft STIP

-Elevate 2050 Updates

-2050 Socio-Economic Growth Scenarios

**5307 Subrecipient Workgroup**- met on November 13<sup>th</sup>; next meeting February 18<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup>; next meeting TBD.

## 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
Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study	Town of Woodfin	2025	Underway
Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan	Buncombe County	2025	Consultant Selected
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 )

Legislative Updates:

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Anthony Sutton opened the floor again for public comment. Joe M. commented a second time “it was frustrating hearing this presentation, as the community has been working on this project since 1989” He doesn’t agree with the impact on our tax base. “Engineers are not realtors, we are losing hundreds of millions of dollars of tax dollars.” Upset that a realtor or designer was never consulted on the new design and he feels the community was never given the proper information.

## ADJOURNMENT

Anthony Sutton adjourned the meeting at 3:49 PM as there was no further business before the Board.