



French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Minutes from the TCC Hybrid Meeting on June 12th, 2025

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

In-person and remote via Zoom:

Steve Williams	NCDOT Division 14
Vicki Eastland	Land of Sky RPO
William High (Chair)	Buncombe County
Chloe Donohoe	Buncombe Co Transit
Mike Malecek	Town of Mills River
Daniel Sellers	NCDOT TPD
Hannah Smith	NCDOT Div 13
Lucy Crown	City of Asheville
Noah Taylor	Town of Maggie Valley
Harry Buckner	Town of Biltmore Forest
Matthew Manley	Hendersonville
Eric Rufa	Fletcher
Janna Bianculli	Apple Country Public Transit
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT
Jodie Fergusun	Haywood County
Anna Sexton	City of Asheville
John Hunter	NCDOT
Janna Bianculli	Apple Country Transit
Troy Wilson	NCDOT
Nathan Moneyham	NCDOT
Jessica Morriss	ART
Cody	NCDOT
Doug Phillips	NCDOT Div 13

Members Without Representation Present:

Town of Black Mountain
Town of Clyde
Town of Canton
Village of Flat Rock
Town of Laurel Park
Madison County
Town of Mars Hill
Town of Waynesville

Town of Woodfin
Town of Weaverville
Henderson County
Haywood County Transit
Town of Montreat

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler	Sandy Broadwill	Hannah Bagli
Daisy O'Connor	Joel Strickland	Asha Rado (Minutes)
Olen Daelhousen	Mary Drew Atkins	Liz Greene

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair William High called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone at 11:05AM. A quorum was established to conduct the business before the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

William High opened the floor for public comment. No comments were heard.

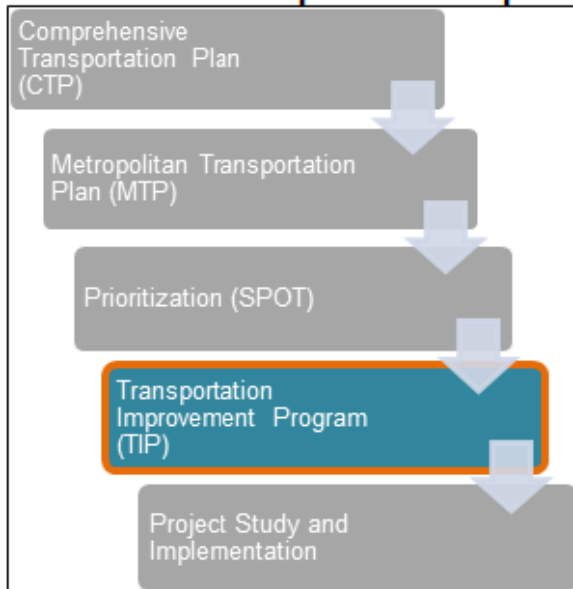
Consent Agenda:

3A: May 2025 Meeting Minutes:

https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025_05_08_DRAFT.MPO_TCC_Minutes.pdf

3B. Amendments to the 2024-2033 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

What is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?



of NCDOT

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.

Amendment Summary:

Amendments this month include:

- HL-0014 (White Fawn Drive Intersection) - Addition of engineering funds in 2025
- TA-5229 (Replacement Transit Vehicles for Apple Country Transit) - Addition of FY27 funding
- TU-0020 (AOPP – Areas of Persistent Poverty Planning Survey and Engagement) - TIP ID changed from TU-0019 to TU-0020 at the request

TIP Amendment Summaries can be found here: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/June2025_Amendments_FBRMPO_TIP.pdf

3C. FY 2025 FTA Section 5307 Suballocations

The Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program is a federal funding program administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in the United States. It provides grants to public transit systems in urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations of 50,000 or more.

Section 5307 funds are distributed based on formulas set in federal law (currently under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), 2021–2026).

FBRMPO uses a suballocation formula approved by the MPO Board in 2023 to allot the 5307 funding received among transit operators within the UZA. Under this formula, Asheville (who serves as the designated recipient) receives 46.9% of the total FTA 5307 allocation, Buncombe County receives 31.9%, and Henderson County receives 21.2%.

Under the FY 2025 Section 5307 allocation, the UZA received \$3,786,583.50. According to the formula:

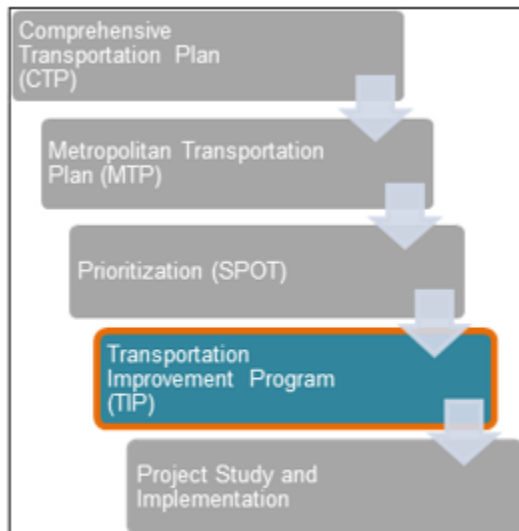
- Asheville would receive \$1,775,907.66
- Buncombe County would receive \$1,207,920.14

- Henderson County would receive \$802,755.70

Steve Williams moved to accept the consent agenda including the minutes from the May 2025 Meeting, the amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP and the FY 2025 FTA Section 5307 Suballocations. Lucy Crown seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

Business:

4A. Draft 2026-2035 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Public Comment Period



What is the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is North Carolina's federally-required 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 MPOs' TIPs as well as programs for RPOs.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the MPO's subset of the STIP. In order for federal actions to be approved or for federal

funds to be obligated, projects are required to be reflected in both the TIP and STIP.

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 Decommitted

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 2029
U-6049	NC 225 (South Main Street)	Henderson	2027	2028 2029

Next Steps

Action	Date
Draft TIP Released for Public Comment	June 27, 2025
NCDOT Board of Transportation Adoption of the 2026-2035 STIP	July 2, 2025
TCC Adoption of the 2026-2035 TIP	August 14, 2025
Public Comment Period Ends	August 20, 2025
Board Adoption of the 2026-2035 TIP	August 21, 2025
FBRMPO Adoption	August, 2025

Discussion did not occur

Steve Williams moved to recommend the DRAFT 2026-2035 TIP for public comment. Hannah Smith seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

4B.Elevate 2050 Project List

Elevate 2050 Update:

Elevate 2050, or the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update, is a federally required planning document that MPOs are required to update and maintain to reflect planned transportation investments in the region over the next twenty-five years. The MTP is required to be fiscally constrained, meaning that projects in the MTP have to be reasonably expected to work within projected revenues. The French Broad River MPO is required to update its MTP every five years with the last update completed in September 2020 (not including amendments).

Items for Today:

- Fiscally Constrained Project List
- Phase 4 Public Meetings
- Timeline Update

Phase 4 Public Engagement:

The fourth phase of Public Engagement kicks off in July. There will be three public meetings held. This phase will provide an opportunity for comment on the fiscally constrained project list and the draft Elevate 2050 plan. The following dates/times are set for the public meetings:

- **Monday, July 7th from 4-8PM** at the Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center (285 Livingston St., Asheville, NC 28801)
- **Tuesday, July 8th from 4-8PM** at the Mills River Town Hall (124 Town Center Drive, Mills River, NC 28759)

- **Wednesday, July 9th from 4-8PM** at Waynesville Town Hall (16 S Main St, Waynesville, NC 28786)

Timeline Update:

- **June 27 – July 18, 2025:** Draft Elevate 2050 Plan available for Public Comment
- **July 28 – August 25, 2025:** Final Elevate 2050 Plan available for Public Comment
- **September 3, 2025:** Prioritization Subcommittee recommends Elevate 2050 for adoption by FBRMPO Board
- **September 18, 2025:** FBRMPO Board adopts Elevate 2050

*See agenda for detailed charts

Prioritization Subcommittee Recommendation: Recommend Approval of the Fiscally-Constrained Project List for the 2050 MTP/Elevate 2050

Discussion occurred around a mistake in the Roadway Division 13 slide with a wrong county. Discussion about railroad improvement on Riverside Dr and what 400K would do for that road. DOT rail division is still being looked at, improving the crossing signals for the train that drifts into intersection on Wednesdays. Improvements should also address bicycle crashes in that area. Discussion occurred around the bike ped/greenway projects, particularly Saluda Grade. No we were not able to get Saluda Grade on the fiscally-constrained project list as it did not rank high enough to make the list. Wanting to look at next section from Saluda to Hendersonville for future on that trail.

Steve Williams moved to recommend approving of the Fiscally-Constrained Project List for the 2050 MTP/Elevate 2050 to the board. Lucy Crown seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

4C. Amendment to the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan

Staff is proposing an amendment to the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan to include the Saluda Grade Trail as part of the Hellbender Regional Trail moving forward. The amendment would be in an appendix in the written plan and state that moving forward, the Saluda Grade Trail is part of the Hellbender Network. The Saluda Grade would be added into the GIS files as well as added onto the subway map and other maps.

Background on the Hellbender Regional Trail:

The Hellbender Regional Trail is a regional trail plan to connect existing multimodal plans in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties in Western North Carolina. The goal of the plan is to knit together existing and planned infrastructure in the five-county region rather than plan new connections not previously documented. The Hellbender Regional Trail aims to form a bicycle and pedestrian network that is greater than the sum of its parts and allows residents and visitors to explore our region safely on foot or bike. Currently, there are fifteen miles on the ground with thirty-four miles funded and moving forward.

Background on the Saluda Grade Trail:

The Saluda Grade Trail is a proposed 31-mile rail trail that will stretch from Zirconia, North Carolina to Inman, South Carolina. The alignment of the trail would be on the existing and unused Saluda Grade Rail Line. Three non-profits are working together to create the Saluda Grade Trail: Conserving Carolina, PAL: Play, Advocate, Live Well, and Upstate Forever. The feasibility study for the trail was completed in August of 2024. Also, in August 2024 the Saluda Grade Coalition, made up of the three leading non-profits, signed a contract with Norfolk Southern to purchase the rail line for \$31.5 million. As of June 2025, construction has not started on the trail.

The full amendment can be read here: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/HellbenderAmendment_SaludaGrade.pdf

Discussion around changing narrative that the Saluda Grade goes from Hendersonville to Inman. We don't know how exactly how that connection would take place but it would be an important regional connection. Discussion that it needs to be connected to Hendersonville because otherwise it doesn't fit narrative that it is part of our regional importance but more foot hills and SC.

Matthew Manley moved to recommend adopting the amendment to the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan. Janna Bianculli seconded and it passed upon a roll call vote.

5A. State of Transit

The State of Transit report examines the Federal Transit Administration's National Transportation Database data for the following transit systems:

- Asheville Rides Transit
- Mountain Mobility - Buncombe County
- Apple Country Public Transit - Henderson County
- Apple Country Transportation – Western Carolina Community Action
- Haywood Public Transit - Mountain Projects
- Madison County Transportation Authority
- Transylvania County Transportation

The purpose of the report is to provide a snapshot of transit cost and performance data from 2019 to 2023. An overview of various sources of transit funding is provided within the report. The report also examines studies and plans relevant to local transit efforts.

Overall, the report finds the transit landscape across the FBRMPO region reflects both the resilience and the evolving challenges of public transportation in a growing, diverse, and increasingly multimodal community. Analysis of five years of National Transit Database (NTD) data reveals ongoing recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, with steady gains in ridership, especially among demand-response services and smaller rural systems. Despite funding constraints, local transit agencies have continued to provide essential mobility options, particularly for transit-dependent populations, and have invested in technology and infrastructure upgrades.

The report highlights critical areas where regional collaboration and continued investment are needed to support sustainable growth and equitable access to transportation. This includes addressing rising operating costs, ensuring long-term capital planning, and leveraging grant opportunities to expand service coverage and efficiency. Efforts like the Regional Transit Feasibility Study and Coordinated Regional Transit Plan demonstrate a strong commitment to integrated planning and innovation, setting the foundation for a more connected and accessible regional transit system.

Full report can be found here: <https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/June-2025-State-of-Transit-Report.pdf>

Information Only.

Discussion occurred around mixed route and fare transit, it was said to be cautious with what is shown before it is presented to the Board meeting to breakdown where the data is from and which data sources were used.

5B. 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)

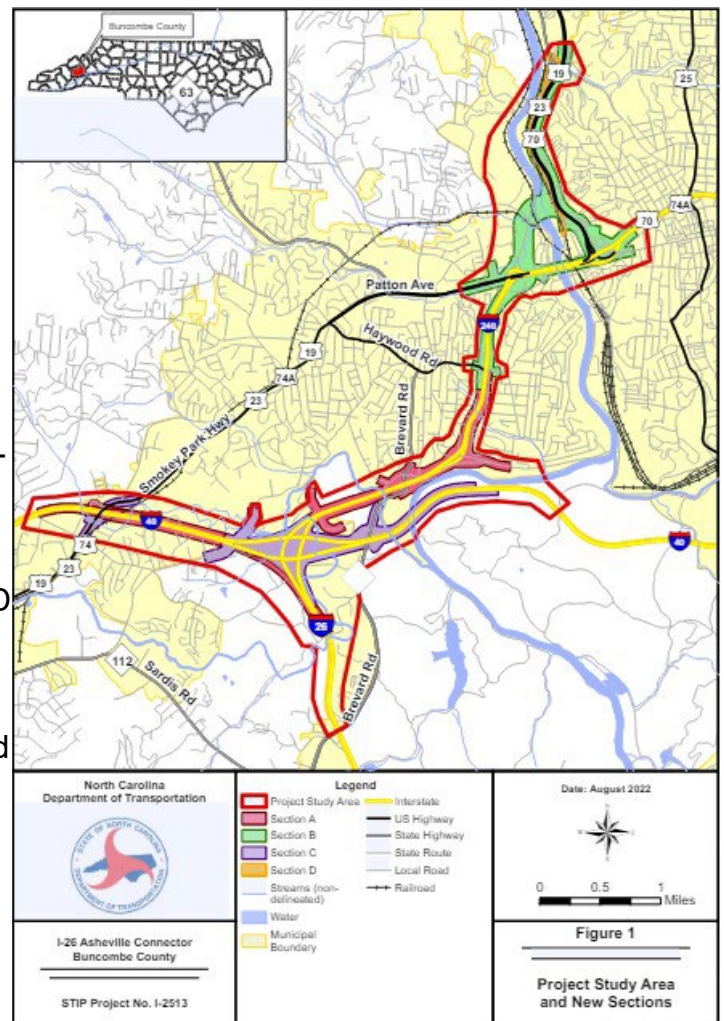
Section AB- I-26/I-40 AND I-40/US 19/23 (SMOKEY PARK HIGHWAY) INTERCHANGES. CONSTRUCT THE FOLLOWING IMPROVEMENTS: WIDEN I-40 EASTBOUND TO I-26 EASTBOUND RAMP, WIDEN I-26 WESTBOUND BETWEEN I-40 RAMPs, CONSTRUCT NEW I-40 WESTBOUND TO US 19/23 (SMOKEY PARK HIGHWAY) NORTHBOUND RAMP. (STIP Status: Funded)

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

Nathan Moneyham, NCDOT Division 13 Construction Engineer, will provide an update.

Information Only.

Discussion did not occur.

6A. Division Project Updates

Division 13: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Division13_JuneUpdates.pdf

Division 14: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Division14_June2025Updates.pdf

6B. TPD Updates:

6C. FHWA/FTA Updates :

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

Committee & Workgroup Updates

Prioritization Subcommittee— met on May 7th, next meeting June 4th.

- P8 Updates
- Elevate 2050 Updates

5307 Subrecipient Workgroup- met on February 18th; next meeting May 20th.

Points of Business/Discussion:

- Helene lessons-learned
- Transit-specific training and learning opportunities for workgroup
- Grant reporting updates and future detailed reporting needs
- Knowledge-sharing opportunities within current group composition

Hellbender Trail Stakeholder Group/Regional Trail Forum Updates- met on April 3rd; next meeting TBD (Late summer)

- What the group would like to see in the Hellbender Plan Update
- Addition/Acknowledgement of the Saluda Grade Trail on the Hellbender Subway Map
 - Will present the updated map to the Board/TCC in June
- Will revisit The Hellbender Gathering Event later in the year

± MPO Studies Status

Study	Managing Entity	Year Programmed	Status
2050 Socio-Economic Projections	FBRMPO	2024	Completed
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	Contracting Underway
Hellbender Implementation Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Regional ITS Plan	FBRMPO	2024	RFLOI Drafted
Travel Survey/Model Upgrades	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Staffing & Compensation Study	LOSRC	2024	Not Started

** See agenda for more Locally Administered Projects.

6E. Legislative Updates

To be updated

PUBLIC COMMENT

William High opened the floor for public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

William High adjourned the meeting at 12: 40PM as there was no further business.

