

**French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
Minutes from the Governing Board Meeting on June 19th 2025

**Attendance:**

In-Person and Remote via the Zoom Platform:

Drew Stephens	Biltmore Forest
Jennifer Hensley	City of Hendersonville
Steve Williams	NCDOT Div 14
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
Brandon Rodgers	Haywood County
Catherine Cordell	Town of Weaverville
Matt Wechtel	Madison County
Jeff Moore	Mills River
Daniel Sellers	NCDOT TPD
Brendan Merithew	NCDOT Div 13
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT
Larry Harris	Urban Transit
Sheila Franklin	Henderson County
George Banta	Town of Laurel Park
Drew Ball	Buncombe County
Billy Clarke	BOT Div 13
Dr Ralph Hamlett	Town of Canton
Anthony Sutton	Town of Waynesville
Archie Pertiller	Town of Black Mountain
Doug Phillips	NCDOT Div 13
Sage Turner	City of Asheville
Nathan Moneyham	NCDOT
Kevin Ensley	Haywood County

Members without Representation present:

Rural Transit
Town of Clyde
Village of Flat Rock
Town of Mars Hill
Town of Maggie Valley

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)     Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO)     Daisy O'Connor (FBRMPO)  
Asha Rado (LOSRC, Minutes)     Sandy Broadwill( FBRMPO)     Sonia Marcus (Public)  
Joel Strickland (McAdams)     Joe Minicozzi(public)

**WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & ROLL CALL**

Anthony Sutton called the meeting to order at 1:02 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. Received a written comment, "Generally supportive of a standard rail and trail policy, to encourage preserving rail lines including trails adjacent to the rail lines."

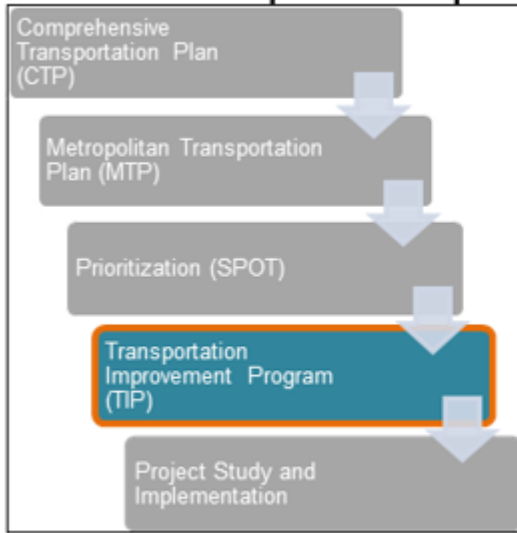
**CONSENT AGENDA**

**3A. May 2025 Meeting Minutes:**

[https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025\\_5\\_15\\_MPO.DRAFT\\_Board\\_Minutes.pdf](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025_5_15_MPO.DRAFT_Board_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](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/June2025_Amendments_FBRMPO_TIP.pdf)

**Action Required:** Consider Adoption of the Amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP

**TCC & Staff Recommendation:** Approve the Amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP

### 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

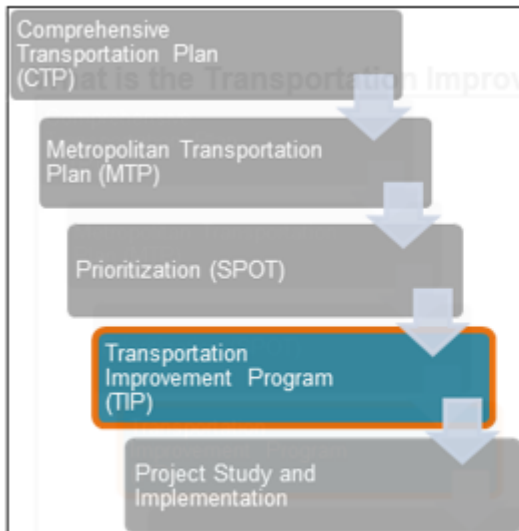
**Action Required:** Consider approval of the FY2025 suballocation of FTA Section 5307 funds.

**TCC & Staff Recommendation:** Approve the FY2025 suballocation of FTA Section 5307 funds.

**Jim Player moved to approve the TAC Agenda, consent agenda including the May minutes, the amendments to the 2024-2033 TIP and the FY 2025 FTA Section 5307 Suballocations. Billy Clarke seconded the motion which passed 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	<del>2028</del> 2029
U-6049	NC 225 (South Main Street)	Henderson	2027	<del>2028</del> 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.

***Billy Clarke motioned to approve opening the Public Comment Period for the Draft 2026-2035 TIP on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Chuck McGrady seconded and it 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:

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



### Final Fiscally Constrained Project List Recommendation:

The Prioritization Subcommittee recommended a fiscally constrained project list on June 4, 2025. This project list reflects priorities in the region, decommitted STIP projects, projects submitted to P7.0, high-scoring projects through Elevate 2050 methodology, and comments received on the draft project list. **It is important to note that not all projects can be funded.** The FBRMPO staff recognizes the nature of fiscally constrained projects list as limiting. The project list recommended seeks to still meet regional needs, align with priorities, and incorporate projects throughout the region.

### Recommended Project List Description

- **Statewide Mobility:** Mix of I-26, I-40, and Four Seasons Interchange and funds a railroad crossing on Riverside Dr.
- **Regional Impact:** Funds priorities including portions of Sweeten Creek, Asheville Highway, NC 215, US 19/23, US 176. Other Regional Impact projects are funded via cascading projects (Swannanoa River Road, US 64, US 19/23 in Haywood) through Division Needs.
- **Division Needs Roadway:** Funds cascaded Regional Impact projects (Swannanoa River Road, US 64, US 19/23 in Haywood)
- **Division Needs + Discretionary Bike/Ped:** and prioritizes P7 projects and key regional connections for bike/ped infrastructure

2029-2035			
	Total Available	Total Programmed	Difference
Discretionary (Bike Ped)	\$ 31,115,026	\$31,750,000	\$ (634,974)
2036-2050			
Statewide Mobility	\$ 1,031,348,624	\$ 982,769,000	\$ 48,579,624
Region G	\$ 457,991,652	\$ 455,856,000	\$ 2,135,652
Division 13 (bike/ped, 10%)	\$ 41,119,171	\$ 42,000,000	\$ (880,829)
Division 13 (roadway, 90%)	\$ 370,072,541	\$ 369,716,070	\$ 356,471
Division 14 (bike/ped 10%)	\$ 36,087,009	\$ 35,571,000	\$ 516,009
Division 14 (roadway, 90%)	\$ 324,783,088	\$ 323,021,000	\$ 1,762,088
Discretionary	\$ 95,395,104	\$ 94,841,000	\$ 554,104
Maintenance	\$ 322,333,953	\$ 322,333,953	\$ -

\*See [Agenda](#) for full list of projects.

#### 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 7<sup>th</sup> from 4-8PM** at the Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center (285 Livingston St., Asheville, NC 28801)
- **Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> from 4-8PM** at the Mills River Town Hall (124 Town Center Drive, Mills River, NC 28759)
- **Wednesday, July 9<sup>th</sup> 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

Joel Strickland with McAdams presented.

Discussion occurred. Appreciation was given around effort to redesign scenario where the train and road intersect in River Arts District to make it safer for all. Also changes to Louisiana Ave.

***Billy Clarke moved to approve the Fiscally-Constrained Project List for the 2050 MTP/Elevate 2050 plan. Jim Player seconded the motion and it passed on 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](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/HellbenderAmendment_SaludaGrade.pdf)

Discussion around funding occurred briefly. Discussion also occurred around info mentioned at the week's prior TCC meeting.

***Chuck McGrady motioned to adopt the amendment to include the Saluda Grade Trail in the Hellbender Regional Trail Plan. Billy Clarke 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

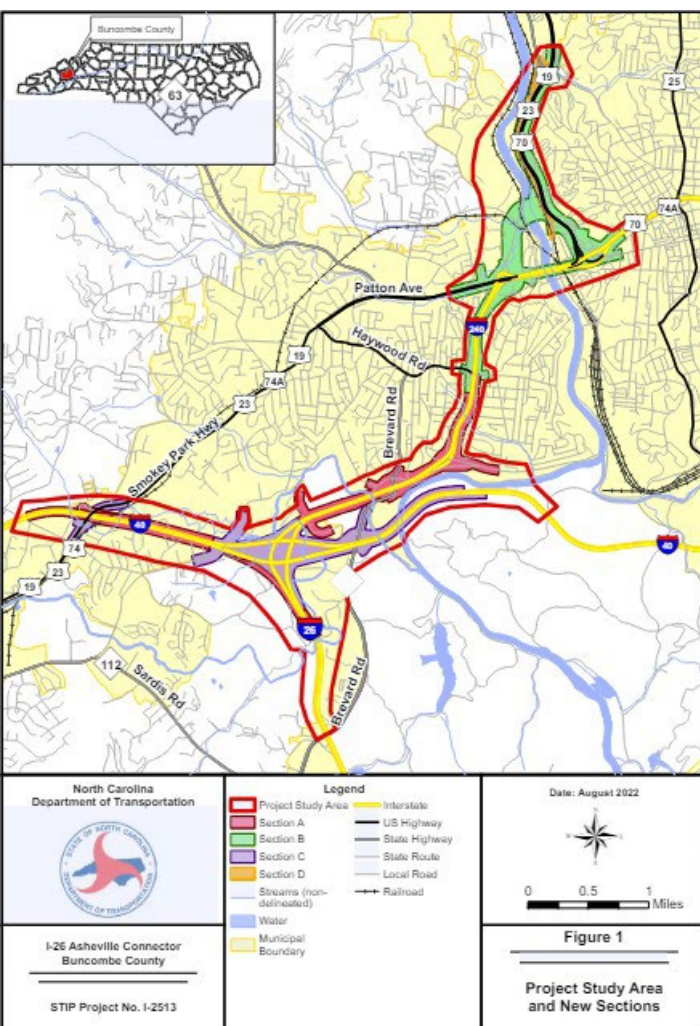
The purpose of the report is to provide a snapshot of transit cost and performance data from 2019 to 2023. An overview of various sources of transit funding is provided within the report. The report also examines studies and plans relevant to local transit efforts.

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>

Discussion occurred around significant drop off from city of Asheville in 2021 and why it never bounced back. Drop in ridership was due to covid pandemic from 2020-2021. Systems are slowly returning to pre pandemic rate. Is there a timeframe for when the ridership counts would need to increase without effecting funding? Discussion also occurred around how important public transit is for our area especially after Helene.



## 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-  
**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.  
40/I-240 interchange. (STIP Status: NOT Funded)

Discussion occurred around it that historically agreements were made with the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, dot etc. that didn't get passed on to the contractor. Neepa omission and sound studies, confusion around where we are in the process today. Discussion around design choices and changes and how it was approved without public input. It was explained in more detail how it all works and how the changes to the overpass from an underpass occurred. Design Build projects are a process governed by DOT policies. It was brought up about how there aren't many citizen groups who are for this design. Discussion also occurred around that there might be some potential updates on the Aesthetic Committee that NCDOT met with. Knowing more about these conversations is helpful for the MPO. Some areas were identified about some possible potential changes that were brought up at these meetings. Evaluations are being worked through at this time. Where can folks give additional concerns about this project? MPO board, NCDOT directly using contact us link.

## **6A. Division Project Updates**

Division 13: : [https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Division13\\_JuneUpdates.pdf](https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Division13_JuneUpdates.pdf)

Division 14: [https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Division14\\_June2025Updates.pdf](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**

**Prioritization Subcommittee**— met on June 4<sup>th</sup>, next meeting July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- P8 Updates
- Elevate 2050 Updates

**5307 Subrecipient Workgroup**- met on May 20<sup>th</sup>; next meeting August 18<sup>th</sup>.

Points of Business/Discussion:

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

**Hellbender Trail Stakeholder Group/Regional Trail Forum Updates**- met on April 3<sup>rd</sup>; 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
  - o Will present the updated map to the Board/TCC in June
- Will revisit The Hellbender Gathering Event later in the year

(\*See Agenda for Locally Administered Projects and MPO Studies Status)

## **Legislative Updates:**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Anthony Sutton opened the floor again for public comment. Sonia Marcus lives in City of Asheville, she is a member of I26 Advocacy Council. She thanked Nathan Moneyham and DOT. She spoke on the community conversation with DOT. Developing recommendations to submit back to NCDOT. She thanked all of these people that contributed to this effort. Her group has a proposed design concept that was given to NCDOT. The ATC says that there would be no expense changes from switching from overpass to the underpass. She mentioned that there shouldn't be any assumptions made about cost impacts. How are we enabling a citizen to board conversation. Mentioned a lawsuit might be in future, legal council is being sought by citizens. She would like the public comment period to be expanded and made longer.

Joe Minnacozi emailed a comment: "I do think that y'all should be privy to how they made the decision and what criteria determined how their decision was "equal to or better" than keeping the highway under. I think they only looked at it from their perspective of building the project faster. Which, is a benefit. However, how does that stack up to the impact to real estate, aesthetics, economic development, sound, the costs to the city of Asheville for nuisance policing under the bridge, etc. I don't think any other consideration was really weighed. Also, the city and the county paid pretty significant sums of money to hire Figg-Lochner (nationally renowned engineering companies) because the Design Center wasn't treated seriously by NCDOT. The ADC and Figg-Lochner worked with NCDOT to keep the highway under Patton. That was an agreement, and we paid significant sums locally to have proper consultants at the table (not to mention several years of time in city staff and local professionals volunteering their time). It would be interesting to know if this agreement was ever

passed on to the contractor, and it would also be interesting to know if that goes against the ATC Law, because that was worked out and agreed upon for the creation of Alternative 4B.

The City adopted the NACTO standards for local roads in the community, and Patton Ave, as proposed in the design, appears to NOT be designed to those standards. Also, there was a lot of work that local working committees put in for designs to minimize impacts, and the contractor appears to be ignoring them, or not incorporating them. At a more marco level, when we have Resolutions, ideas, and input on the design, who is responsible for incorporating them and who is held accountable for ignoring City Resolutions and design agreements that are endorsed by public officials? Is it NCDOT or the Contractor?"

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Anthony Sutton adjourned the meeting at 3:18 PM as there was no further business before the Board.**