

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Minutes from the TCC Hybrid Meeting on January 15th, 2026

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
Daniel Sellers	NCDOT TPD
Lucy Crown	City of Asheville
Janna Bianculli	Apple Country Public Transit
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT
Troy Wilson	NCDOT
Doug Phillips	NCDOT Div 13
Pat Christie	Village of Flat Rock
James Eller	Weaverville
Cole Sutton	Haywood Transit
Elizabeth Teague	Waynesville
Mike Malecek	Mills River
Noah Taylor	Town of Maggie Valley
Autumn Radcliff	Henderson County
Jessica Morriss	ART
Matt Manley	Hendersonville
Chris Medlin	Div 13
Wesley Grindstaff	NCDOT
Harry Buckner	Biltmore Forest
Brendan Merithew	NCDOT
Sarah Tolman	NCDOT Div 13
Matt Albee	NCDOT
James Hollingsworth	NCDOT
Brian Murphy	NCDOT
Gabriel Johnson	NCDOT
Jeremy Chapman	NCDOT
John Hunter	NCDOT TPD
Matt Albee	NCDOT
Mike Malecheck	Mills River
Nathan Bennet	Mars Hill

Members Without Representation Present:

Town of Black Mountain
Town of Canton
Town of Clyde
Town of Laurel Park
Madison County
Town of Montreat

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler Sandy Broadwill Hannah Bagli
Daisy O'Connor Asha Rado (Minutes) Ada McGovern
Olin Daelhousen (Public)

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair William High called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone at 11:06AM. A quorum was established to conduct the business before the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

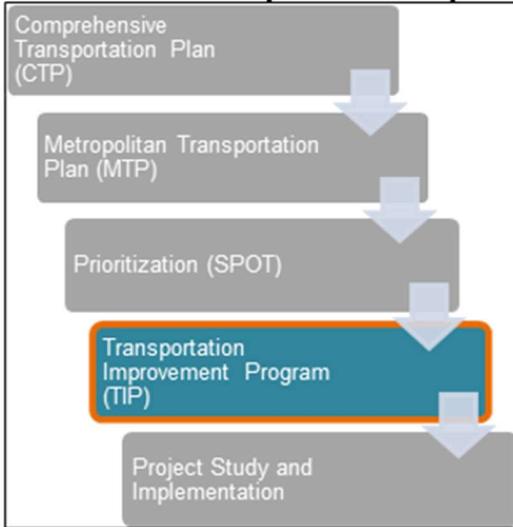
William High opened the floor for public comment. No comment was heard.

Consent Agenda:

3A: Joint TAC/TCC November 2025 Meeting Minutes: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2025_11_20_MPO_TCC-TAC-Combined-Meeting-Minutes.pdf

3B. Amendments to the 2024-2033 and 2026-2035 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.

Amendment Highlights:

Amendments this month include:

- RX-2413E: Accelerating construction of the Blue Ridge Southern Railroad crossing improvements on Louisiana Ave from FY31 to FY26
- RX-2413D: Accelerating construction of the Norfolk Southern railroad crossing improvements on Black Mountain Ave from FY31 to FY26
- EB-5965: Modify scope from a sidewalk to a multiuse path along Deaverview Rd
- BL-0008: Move construction funds for the Clear Creek Greenway from FY25 to FY26

All TIP Amendment Summaries can be found here:

https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/FBRMPO_January2026_TIP_Amendments_26_35_Updated.pdf

Vicki Eastland moved to accept the consent agenda including the minutes from the Joint TAC/TCC November 2025 Meeting and the amendments to the 2024-2033 and 2026-2035 TIP. Noah Taylor seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

Business:

4A. Black Bear Drive (Canton) Safety:

NCDOT has requested a letter of support from the French Broad River MPO for a proposed safety project in Canton to provide sidewalks on Black Bear Drive from Substation Drive through a short section of Pisgah School Drive to provide a safer pedestrian connection between Pisgah High School and the surrounding neighborhood.

Information from NCDOT:

Pisgah High School Safety Concern

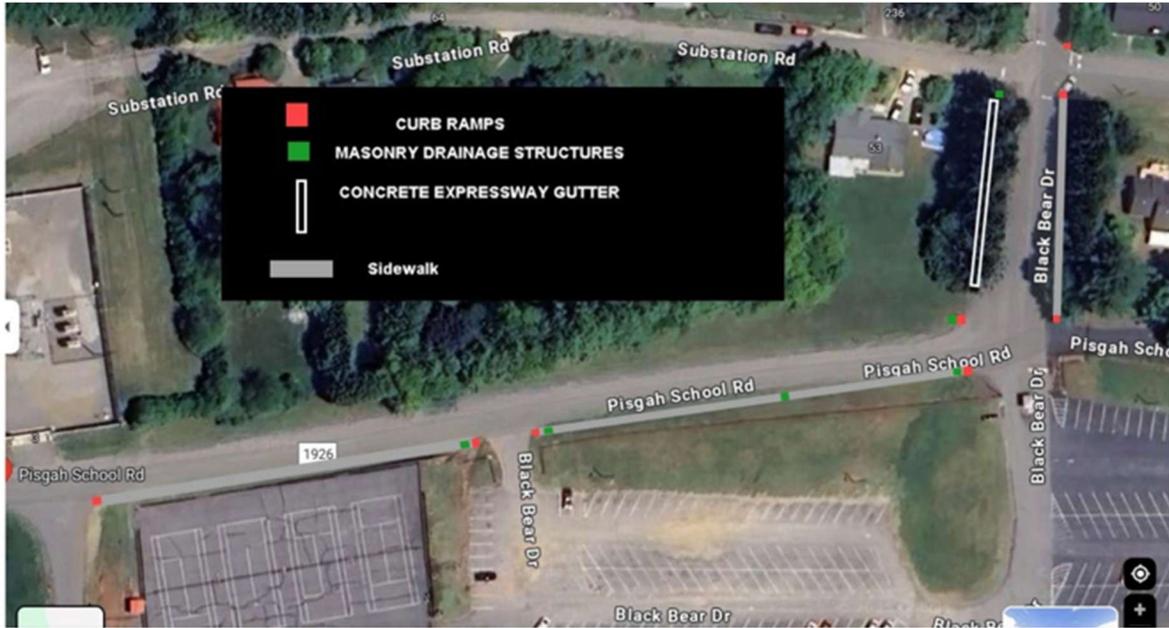
- School staff, students, and parents are walking on Black Bear Drive and Pisgah School Road regularly to and from the school and athletic facilities across Substation Road with traffic present.

Improvement

- Build a sidewalk to designate a pedestrian route inside existing ROW.

Preliminary Estimate

□ +/- \$400k



January 22, 2026

North Carolina Department of Transportation

Division 14

RE: Letter of Support – Proposed Safety Improvements on Black Bear Drive, Town of Canton

Dear Wesley Grindstaff,

On behalf of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO), I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed NCDOT safety project on Black Bear Drive in the Town of Canton to construct a sidewalk connection between Pisgah High School and the surrounding residential neighborhood.

This project addresses a clear and longstanding safety and connectivity need. Black Bear Drive serves as a key access route to Pisgah High School, yet currently lacks continuous pedestrian infrastructure. As a result, students, families, and nearby residents are required to walk along or cross roadways without adequate separation from vehicular traffic. The proposed sidewalk connection would significantly improve pedestrian safety, particularly for school-aged users, while strengthening connections between the school campus and adjacent neighborhoods.

Improving safe walking access to schools is a priority for the FBRMPO and is consistent with our adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan, regional safety goals, and the principles of our Safe Streets planning efforts. Investments such as this help reduce crash risk, encourage walking, support healthier travel choices, and enhance overall quality of life in our communities. The proposed improvements—including sidewalk construction, curb ramps, and associated drainage elements—represent a practical, targeted approach to addressing these concerns.

The FBRMPO Board has reviewed the proposed project and appreciates NCDOT's continued partnership in advancing safety-focused transportation investments, particularly in smaller communities where relatively modest infrastructure improvements can yield substantial public benefit. We believe the Black Bear Drive sidewalk project is well-justified and would provide meaningful safety, mobility, and community connectivity benefits.

Thank you for your consideration of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if additional information or coordination with the FBRMPO would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Anthony Sutton

Chair, French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization Board

Discussion did not occur.

Elizabeth Teague moved to recommend the Letter of Support for the Proposed Safety Project to the Board. Vicki Eastland seconded the motion which passed upon a unanimous roll call vote.

4B. FY 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): What is the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)?

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization's annual planning work plan and budget. It describes what transportation planning activities the MPO and its partners will undertake during the fiscal year, how those activities support federal and regional goals, and how federal, state, and local planning funds will be used.

The UPWP is required under federal law to ensure that metropolitan transportation planning activities are:

- Continuing
- Comprehensive
- Cooperative

In practice, the UPWP functions as both:

- a scope of work for MPO staff and planning studies, and
- a financial plan that documents the use of federal planning funds.

No MPO planning activity using federal funds may occur unless it is included in an adopted UPWP.

Why is the UPWP Important for Federal Funding?

Approval of the UPWP is required in order for the MPO and its partners to access key federal planning funds, including:

- FHWA Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds
- FHWA Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) used for planning
- FTA Section 5303 Metropolitan Planning funds
- FTA Section 5307 Urban Formula Funds used for planning Of particular importance for FY 2027:
- FTA Section 5303 funds must be programmed in an approved UPWP in order for the City of Asheville (the region's 5303 Direct Recipient) to program planning funds- due in January.
- Without an approved or draft UPWP in place, transit planning activities supported by 5303 funds could be delayed.

As a result, the UPWP must be reviewed and acted on early in the calendar year to maintain uninterrupted funding.

What Does the FY 2027 UPWP Emphasize?

FY 2027 follows several recent years of major plan development, including the completion of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), safety planning efforts, and multiple special studies. As a result, the FY 2027 UPWP is intentionally structured as a lower-intensity year focused on preparing for future work.

Key themes of the FY 2027 UPWP include:

- Maintaining federally required MPO functions, including the TIP, performance measures, public involvement, and coordination with NCDOT and FHWA
- Strategic and organizational planning, including development of an MPO Strategic Plan
- Staffing and compensation analysis, coordinated with the Land of Sky Regional Council

- Prioritization 8.0
- Background and preparatory work for the next MTP, including data review and development
- Continued coordination on transit, freight, safety, and multimodal priorities
- Updating the Locally Coordinated Plan This approach allows the MPO to:
- Develop a Strategic Plan for the MPO
- Providing support for new special studies, including the Buncombe County Transit Plan and US 64 (Four Seasons Boulevard) Corridor Study

Call for Planning Projects:

- MPO staff received five applications from the Call for Planning Projects:
 - [Buncombe County: Public Transportation Plan](#)
 - [City of Hendersonville: Corridor Study/Circulation Plan for Four Seasons Blvd \(US 64\)](#)
 - [Town of Weaverville: Update to the Reems Creek Greenway Feasibility Study](#)
 - [City of Asheville: Hilliard Avenue Corridor Feasibility Study](#)
 - [Town of Waynesville: Frog Level Small Area Plan](#)
- MPO staff is recommending the Buncombe County Public Transportation Plan & Four Seasons Boulevard Corridor Study for the FY 2027 UPWP

UPWP Approval Process and Schedule

The UPWP is approved in two steps to meet federal funding timelines while allowing additional refinement.

January 2026 – Draft UPWP Approval

- The TCC and MPO Board are asked to recommend/approve a Draft FY 2027 UPWP
 - Draft approval allows:
 - programming of FTA Section 5303 funds beginning in January
 - Minor revisions may still occur following draft approval March 2026 – Final UPWP Adoption
 - The MPO Board considers and adopts the Final FY 2027 UPWP
 - The final document incorporates:
 - any comments from NCDOT, FHWA, or FTA
 - any refinements identified during the draft period
 - Final adoption formally authorizes all FY 2027 planning activities
- This two-step process is standard practice and ensures compliance with federal funding requirements while allowing sufficient time for review and coordination.

The Draft FY 2027 UPWP is available here: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/DraftUPWP_FY2027.pdf

Discussion occurred around the transit plan/ buncombe county transportation plan and if they are the same project. Is any 5307 money being used, no not at this time. Discussion around conversation at the prioritization committee and why a recommendation was not given as there was some concern on understanding why only two studies were recommended for funding even though they came in under the budget. There wasn't enough of a compelling reasons to not recommend at least one or two more. If the money and staff are available at those jurisdictions that are leading those projects they should be funded. Whether local gov or MPO staff manage these projects, it doesn't change the required. Federal funds tend to mean additional things required to get the studies done.

Matt Manley moved to approve the Draft FY2027 UPWP. Noah Taylor seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

4C. 2026 Safety Targets:

Safety Targets Background

Effective April 14, 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 2026 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 document available here:

https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/SafetyPerformanceMeasures_2026Targets_Memo_FrenchBroadRiverMPO.pdf

Table 2: French Broad River MPO Safety Performance Target Achievement Determination Summary for CY 2023.

Performance Measures	5-Year Rolling Averages			Target Achieved?	(Actual) Better than Baseline?	Met or Made Significant Progress?
	Target	Actual	Baseline			
	2019 - 2023	2019 - 2023	2017 - 2021			
Fatalities (5 Year Average)	43.7	52.8	51.0	No	No	No
Fatality Rate (5 Year Average)	0.876	1.099	1.047	No	No	
Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)	105.6	133.0	133.0	No	No	
Serious Injury Rate (5 Year Average)	2.096	2.773	2.731	No	No	
Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries (5 Year Average)	15.1	21.4	20.0	No	No	

In 2025, the French Broad River MPO voted to become the first MPO in North Carolina to not go

along with the State’s targets. Instead, the MPO adopted its own safety goal of “achieving a 10% reduction of fatalities and serious injury crashes by 2035, an additional 45% reduction by 2045, and moving towards zero serious injuries and fatalities by 2050.”

In general, the MPO Board can either adopt 2026 safety targets in-line with the State or different targets. Last year the MPO Board became the first MPO in North Carolina to adopt targets not in-line with the State. Below are targets in-line with the goals of the Safe Streets for WNC Plan.

Performance Measure	NCDOT 2026 Target	MPO 2026 Target	2024 Data
Fatalities	39.1	67.3	78
Fatality Rate	0.792	1.363	1.524
Serious Injuries	97.0	149.6	145
Serious Injury Rate	1.95	3.01	2.834
Non-Motorized Fatalities & Serious Injuries	13.9	22.3	27

Discussion occurred around the disappointment in the whole program as we make targets but do nothing to emphasize their outcomes.

Discussion occurred around achieving a reasonable and rational target vs an ideal target. As of right now the targets aren’t attached to much of anything. If the state doesn’t meet it’s targets its required to use all its safety funds? Could be a useful policy tool to look into if this is useful.

The TAC is pushing not using the state’s targets as they are unrealistic, the TCC is behind the state’s more aggressive targets.

William High moved to recommend to the Board Setting 2026 Safety Targets In-Line with NCDOT Targets. Jessica Morriss seconded the motion and it passed upon a roll call vote.

4D: Non-Discrimination Statement:

FBRMPO passed an update to its Title VI Plan on October 16, 2025. During discussion of the Title VI Plan the MPO Board inquired about adding “sexual orientation” to the nondiscrimination policy in the Title VI plan. MPO staff was asked to review regulations and return with solutions relative to the addition of “sexual orientation” to the nondiscrimination policy in the Title VI plan.

MPO staff has reviewed the pertinent regulations regarding what a Title VI Plan can and should contain with respect to nondiscrimination statements. NCDOT informed MPO staff that the Title VI plan was not the appropriate venue for nondiscrimination policy involving sexual orientation as it does not fit within the legislative purview of Title VI.

MPO staff examined nondiscrimination statements from other MPOs and Council of Governments and found several to use stand-alone statements which are contained outside of their Title VI plans. MPO staff has gathered sample nondiscrimination statements to present to the MPO Board and presents the following statement as a recommendation for approval.

Staff Recommended Statement:

It is the policy of French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization, to ensure that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, Limited English Proficiency, sex, sexual orientation, age, income status, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be

otherwise subjected to discrimination under any of our programs and activities.

Discussion around why Title VI is the only title plan we must have.

Steve Williams moved to recommend to the Board the stand-alone Nondiscrimination Statement to be published on the MPO website and integrated into key documents. Lucy Crown seconded the motion and it passed upon a roll call vote.

5A. Locally Coordinated Plan Update :

A Locally Coordinated Plan (LCP), also known as a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan, is a strategy developed primarily for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income residents. LCPs are federally required under FTA Section 5310 and focus on improving transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with limited incomes. They are developed collaboratively among transit providers, human service agencies, and the public. FBRMPO last adopted an updated LCP in 2018. FTA recommends updates every 4–5 years. Previously scheduled efforts to update the LCP through NCDOT created delays to this update cycle. The LCP is in need of an update as regional demographics and service needs have evolved and shifted since the 2018 update. An update LCP will also align with upcoming Section 5310 grant cycles and the Elevate 2050 Plan (MTP).

An update to the LCP is currently underway. The Steering Committee for the LCP update held its kickoff meeting on January 5, 2026. MPO staff has begun data collection and outreach and will continue to provide regular updates to the Board as the plan progresses. The target adoption for the LCP update is early 2027.

Discussion occurred on how the local plan intersects with the states plan and also on timeline.

6A. Division Project Updates

Division 13: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Division13_January2026_Updates.pdf

Division 14: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Division14_January2026_Updates.pdf

6B. TPD Updates:

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>

6C.

Committee & Workgroup Updates

Prioritization Subcommittee— met on January 14th, next meeting February 4th

- Local Input Point Subcommittee

5307 Subrecipient Workgroup- met on August 19th:

Points of Business/Discussion:

- 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

MPO Studies Status

Study	Managing Entity	Year Programmed	Status
Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study	Town of Woodfin	2025	Underway
Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan	Buncombe County	2025	Underway
Hellbender Implementation Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Not Started
Regional ITS Plan	FBRMPO	2024	Contracting Underway
Travel Survey/Model Upgrades	FBRMPO	2024	RFLOI Drafted
Staffing & Compensation Study	LOSRC	2024	Not Started

*See [Agenda](#) for the MPO Studies and Locally Administered Projects Updates.

PUBLIC COMMENT

William High opened the floor for public comment. No comment was heard.

ADJOURNMENT

William High adjourned the meeting at 12:51 PM as there was no further business.

