French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Minutes from the TCC Hybrid Meeting on October 8th , 2026

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

In-person and remote via Zoom:

Anna Sexton	City of Asheville
Harry Buckner	Town of Biltmore Forest
William High (Chair)	Buncombe County
Daniel Sellers	TPO
Chloe Donohoe	Buncombe Transit
Pat Christie	Village of Flat Rock
Tyler Morrow	Town of Fletcher
Jodie Ferguson	Haywood County
Janna Bianculli	Apple Transit Country Public Transit
Matthew Manley	City of Hendersonville
Noah Taylor	Town of Maggie Valley
Michael Malecek	Town of Mills River
Vicki Eastland	LOSRPO
Ricky Hurley	Town of Woodfin
Doug Phillips	NCDOT Div 13
Steve Williams	NCDOT Div 14
Stephen Sparks	NCDOT Div 13
John Hunter	TPO
Troy Wilson	NCDOT
Jessica Morriss	ART
Alex Mumby	Town of Waynesville
Christina Harris	City of Asheville
Jeremy Chapman	NCDOT
Kevin Bridges	NCDOT
Cody Weddle	NCDOT
Chris Lee	NCDOT
Carrie Simpson	NCDOT
Boris Goenaga	NCDOT
Alan Shapiro	NCDOT

Members Without Representation Present:

Town of Black Mountain

Town of Canton
Town of Clyde
Haywood Transit
Madison County
Town of Laurel Park
Town of Mars Hill
Town of Montreat
Town of Weaverville

Additional Attendees:

Tristan Winkler (FBRMPO)
Hannah Bagli (FBRMPO)
Lauren Lehman (FBRMPO)
Greg Schuyler (HDR)
Alan Young (Public)
Sandy Broadwill(FBRMPO)
Daisy O'Connor (FBRMPO)
Asha Rado (LOSRC,Minutes)
Hayley Burton

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING
Chair William High called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone at 11:00AM. A quorum was established to conduct the business before the meeting.

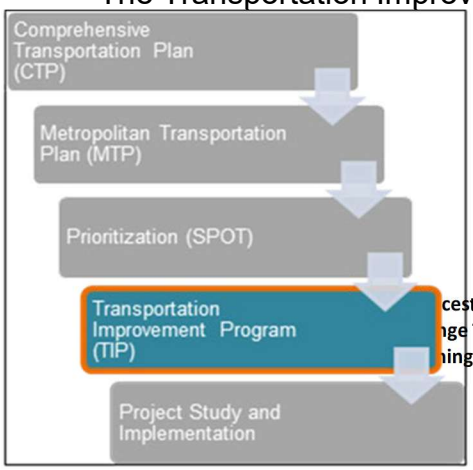
PUBLIC COMMENT
William High opened the floor for public comment. No comment was heard.

Consent Agenda:

3A: September 2026 TCC Meeting Minutes:
https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/2026_09_10_DRAFT.MPO_.TCC_.Minutes.pdf

3B. Amendments to the 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 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:

- EB-5774AA – moving $50,000 from construction into utilities
- Adding Capital Expenses for Apple Country Public Transit

All TIP Amendment Summaries can be found here:
https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wpcontent/uploads/2026/09/October2026_TIPAmendments_FBRMPO_R1.pdf

Action Required: Consider Recommending Adoption of the Amendments to the 2026-2035 TIP.

TCC Recommendation: Recommend Approval of the Amendments to the 2026-2035 TIP.

3C. Letter of Support- NCDOT PROTECT Grant Application for Howard Gap Road:
The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation 1200
New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

On behalf of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO), I am writing to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's **Howard Gap Road: Resilience After Landslides Project** and its application for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program.

Howard Gap Road provides an important connection between communities in Polk County and the surrounding region. A section of the roadway has remained closed following recurring slope and roadway failures in 2018 and 2019, requiring affected travelers to use a 16-mile detour that adds approximately 30 minutes to some trips. The closure has also reduced access to homes, emergency services, utilities, businesses, and other essential destinations.

The need to restore this connection has become even more significant following Hurricane Helene, which caused widespread damage throughout Western North Carolina in September 2024, including extensive damage to U.S. 176 between Saluda and Tryon. With U.S. 176 closed during reconstruction, I-26 is currently serving as the primary regional connection between these communities. In this context, restoring Howard Gap Road would provide valuable network redundancy and an additional route within a transportation system that has experienced significant disruptions from extreme weather events.

The proposed project would improve the long-term resilience and reliability of Howard Gap Road through roadway reconstruction, slope stabilization, retaining infrastructure, and drainage improvements designed to address the conditions that contributed to previous failures. Reopening the roadway would restore an existing transportation connection that has been unavailable since 2019, reduce travel burdens associated with the current detour, improve access for emergency and utility services, and provide greater flexibility within the regional transportation network.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for coordinating transportation planning and investment across the French Broad River region, FBRMPO recognizes the importance of transportation system resilience and network redundancy, particularly in a region that has experienced significant impacts from flooding, landslides, and other extreme weather events. Projects such as the Howard Gap Road improvements demonstrate how targeted investments in existing infrastructure can strengthen the reliability of the broader transportation network and improve the ability of communities to maintain access during and following disruptive events.

For these reasons, the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization strongly supports the **Howard Gap Road: Resilience After Landslides Project** and NCDOT's application for federal PROTECT Resilience Improvement Grant funding. We respectfully encourage the U.S. Department of Transportation to support this important investment in transportation resilience and connectivity in Western North Carolina.

Respectfully,

Tristan Winkler
Director
French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

3D. Letter of Support-NCDOT PROTECT Grant Application for Flood Warning System:
The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

October 1, 2026

Dear Secretary Duffy:

On behalf of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO), I am pleased to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's application for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program to advance statewide transportation flood resilience.

Flooding is one of the most significant hazards affecting the reliability and continuity of transportation systems in Western North Carolina. Recent flooding events, including the impacts of Hurricane Helene in September 2024, demonstrated how quickly flooding and associated hazards can disrupt roads, bridges, transit services, and other critical transportation infrastructure. These disruptions can limit access to homes, businesses, healthcare, emergency services, and other essential destinations while placing additional demands on already constrained transportation networks.

FBRMPO supports NCDOT's efforts to advance and integrate a suite of flood warning, monitoring, and transportation resilience tools—including FIMAN, T-SAPP, BridgeWatch, DriveNC, and related systems. Integrating these resources can strengthen the ability of transportation agencies and

regional partners to identify and communicate flood-related risks, monitor conditions, anticipate transportation disruptions, and make informed decisions before, during, and following severe weather events.

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization, FBRMPO has a direct interest in improving the resilience of the transportation system and incorporating better information about hazards and vulnerabilities into transportation planning and investment decisions. Tools that provide timely information about flooding, bridge conditions, roadway impacts, and potential disruptions can support more informed planning, emergency response, incident management, and coordination among transportation and emergency management agencies.

The proposed initiative also provides an important opportunity to improve coordination and interoperability among existing tools and data sources. A more integrated statewide approach can help ensure that information developed through flood monitoring and transportation systems is useful not only to NCDOT, but also to MPOs, local governments, emergency responders, and other partners responsible for maintaining mobility and community access during disruptive events.

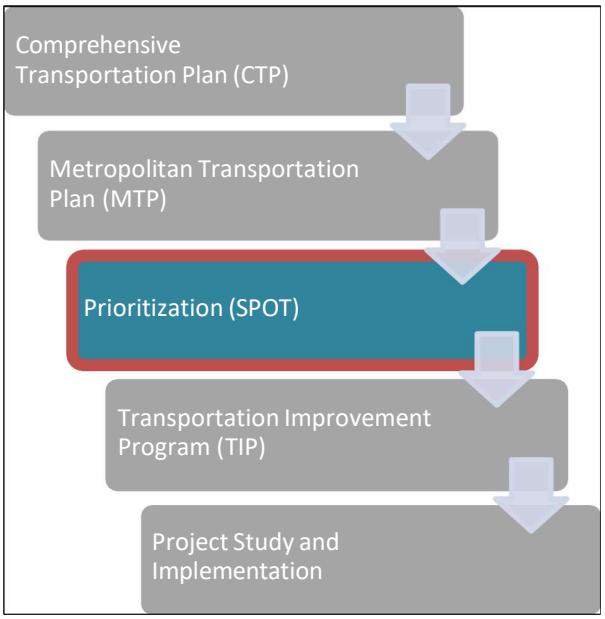
FBRMPO recognizes that transportation resilience depends not only on investments in physical infrastructure, but also on the data, technology, coordination, and decision-support capabilities necessary to understand risks and respond effectively. Continued investment in statewide flood warning and transportation resilience tools will help strengthen the reliability of North Carolina's transportation network, improve emergency preparedness, reduce the impacts of transportation disruptions, and support economic continuity for communities throughout the state.

For these reasons, the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization strongly supports NCDOT's application for PROTECT funding to advance statewide transportation flood resilience and the continued development and integration of FIMAN, T-SAPP, BridgeWatch, DriveNC, and related tools. We appreciate NCDOT's leadership in pursuing this initiative and encourage the U.S. Department of Transportation to support this important investment in the resilience and reliability of North Carolina's transportation system.

Tristan Winkler
Director
French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization

Noah Taylor moved to accept the consent agenda including the minutes from the September 2026 Meeting, the Amendments to the 2026-2035 TIP and the Letters of Support for the NCDOT PROTECT Grant Application for Howard Gap Rd and also for Flood Warning System. Vicki Eastland seconded and it passed upon a unanimous roll call vote.

Business:
4A. Draft Priority Projects for Division Needs:
Background
The Prioritization Process (AKA SPOT, AKA P 8) is the process in North Carolina that helps determine the majority of transportation improvements across the State. The process is dictated by the Strategic Transportation Investments Act (STI) of 2012 and is generally designed to be a data-driven, transparent process to determine what transportation projects are funded or not. MPOs are engaged throughout the process to submit projects for consideration (along with Divisions and RPOs) as well as local input points that are used to boost the scores of projects competing for Regional Impact or Division Needs funding.



Funding Tiers
The STI Law breaks up funds for this process into three different funding tiers. Each tier has different eligibilities, as shown below:
Statewide Mobility- Freeway projects and Asheville Airport
Regional Impact- US/NC Highways, Passenger Rail
Division Needs- Secondary Roads, Bike/Ped, Transit

Action Items for Today
- Review Outcomes of the Regional Impact funding tier
- Discuss DRAFT local input points for Division Needs projects

Statewide Mobility Projects
Statewide Mobility projects are programmed solely based on the quantitative score. Only one project in the MPO scored well enough for programming with available funding in P8:
- I-40 Express Lanes from Exit 44 to Exit 27 (Haywood, Buncombe counties)

Regional Impact Projects
Regional Impact projects are programmed 70% based on quantitative score, 30% based on local input from planning organizations and NCDOT Divisions. Five projects in the MPO scored well enough for programming with available funding in P8:
- WNC Passenger Rail (Salisbury to Asheville)
- US 25B (Asheville Highway) from North Main Street to NC 191 (Haywood Road)- Improve Intersections
- NC 63 (New Leicester Highway) from Newfound Road to Gouges Branch Road- Improve Intersections
- US 19/23 (Smokey Park Highway) from I-40 to NC 151 (Pisgah Highway)- Access Management

- NC 191 (Brevard Road), Glenn Bridge Road, Avery Creek Road- Improve Intersection

All of these projects are expected to be programmed in the 2028-2037 STIP/TIP, but it is unclear whether or not those projects will be fully funded or funded just for engineering.

Division Needs Projects

Below is a list of all Division Needs projects in (or partially in) the MPO, sorted by their Quantitative Score.

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Church Street and King Street	US 176	North Main Street	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 1,569,200	40.79

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Bent Creek Greenway (Hominy Creek/WNC Farmer's Market Segment)	Hominy Creek Greenway	French Broad River Greenway	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 7,555,952	**37.78**
Public Transit	Transit Multimodal Facility	City of Asheville Service Area and routes provided by ART	N/A	5 - Facility - Passenger Station	$ 50,000,000	**35.41**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Lake Julian Greenway	French Broad River	Lake Julian	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 7,880,800	**35.31**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Patton Avenue	Old Haywood Road	Johnston Blvd	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 6,086,400	**35.16**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Tunnel Road Sidewalks	New Haw Creek Road	Blue Ridge Parkway	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 6,186,800	**33.43**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	US 19 (Smokey Park Hwy)	Rutherford Road	NC 151	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 3,632,800	**31.57**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Old Haywood Road Sidewalks	US 19/23/74 (Patton Avenue)	US 19/23/74 (Smokey Park Highway)	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 3,499,200	**30.07**

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Ecusta Rail Trail	Existing Estatoe Trail Cherry St Brevard	SR 1211 (Battle Creek Rd) Henderson Co.	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 12,000,000	**29.33**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Above The Mud Greenway Connector	Ecusta Trail	Oklawaha Greenway	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 4,236,000	**28.95**
Highway	SR 1006 (Howard Gap Road)	SR 1734 (Sugarloaf Road)	N/A	10 - Improve Intersection	$ 13,000,000	**27.01**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Greenway-Jackson Park to Blue Ridge CC	Jackson Park	Blue Ridge Community College	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 7,243,600	**26.49**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	North Louisiana Avenue Sidewalks	Mallard Drive	Adams Hill Road	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 714,000	**26.30**
Public Transit	Transit Maintenance Facility	Facility location - 224 Louisiana Ave, Asheville, NC 28806 City of Asheville Service Area.	N/A	9 - Facility - Maintenance	$ 59,000,000	**25.57**

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Highway	SR 1511 (Berkeley Road), SR 1509 (Thompson Street), SR 1508 (Berkeley Road/Signal Hill Road)	US 64 (Four Seasons Boulevard)	US 25 BUS (Asheville Highway)	16 - Modernize Roadway	$ 31,700,000	**23.93**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	US 70 Sidewalks	Franklin Street	Warren Wilson Road	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 4,278,400	**23.64**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Richland Creek Greenway-North	Recreation Park	Haywood High Tech Center	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 5,461,600	**23.25**
Highway	SR 1332 (North Louisiana Avenue)	US 19/23 (Patton Avenue)	SR 1338 (Emma Road)	16 - Modernize Roadway	$ 28,100,000	**22.92**

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Public Transit	Haywood County Transfer Station	The site is located on 50 Armory Drive in Clyde NC. This location houses Haywood Public Transit operated by Mountain Projects Inc. This land was deeded from Haywood County Government to Mountain Projects on December 21, 2007	N/A	5 - Facility - Passenger Station	$ 1,065,000	**22.38**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	N Main Street/Clear Creek Road Sidewalks	Nix Road	Baldwin Avenue	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 3,539,600	**20.86**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	SR 2500 (North Blue Ridge Road)	US 70	Cragmont Street	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 1,589,600	**20.65**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Fairview Road	Swannanoa River Road	Liberty Street	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 3,967,600	**20.30**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Reems Creek Greenway	Quarry Road	Karpen Soccer Field	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 9,831,000	**18.56**

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Bicycle & Pedestrian	NC 251 (Riverside Drive)	Future 1-26	Woodfin Ave	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 3,321,200	**18.27**
Highway	SR 1003 (Reems Creek Road)	US 19, US 23 BUS (Weaverville Highway)	SR 2109 (Ox Creek Road)	16 - Modernize Roadway	$ 116,000,000	**16.13**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Mills River Valley Trail	NC 191 (Old Haywood Rd)	NC 191 (Haywood Rd)	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 5,464,000	**16.05**
Highway	SR 3548 (Clingman Avenue)	Patton Avenue	Hilliard Avenue	25 - Improve Multiple Intersections along Corridor	$ 18,300,000	**15.67**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Merrimon Ave	Lake Louise Drive	Brown Street	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 1,374,000	**15.25**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Old Balsam Road	Hyatt Creek Rd	Piney Mountain Rd	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 1,112,800	**13.73**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Park Drive	NC 213	Mars Hill Recreation Park	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 2,262,800	**12.99**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	NC 215 (Champion Drive)	SR 1589 (North Canton Road)	SR 1513 (Thickety Road)	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 2,843,000	**10.72**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	Saluda Grade Rail Trail	SR 1105 (Greenville Street)	Bell Park (Near SR 1852/US 176)	2 - Off-Road/Separated Linear Bicycle Facility (Bicycle)	$ 4,304,200	**10.13**

Mode	Route / Facility / Project Name	From / Cross Street / Location	To / Cross Street	Specific Improvement Type	Cost to NCDOT	Division Needs Quantitative Score (Out of 50)
Highway	SR 1358 (Fanning Bridge Road)	US 25 (Hendersonville Road)	NC 280 (Airport Road)	16 - Modernize Roadway	$ 75,000,000	**8.78**
Bicycle & Pedestrian	SR 1147 (Allens Creek Road)	SR 1149 (Piney Mountain Road)	Knothead Drive (Private Drive)	7 - Protected Linear Pedestrian Facility (Pedestrian)	$ 1,613,400	**7.34**
Public Transit	Haywood County Expansion Vehicles	Two expansion vehicles would allow for new fixed-route service that would provide transit service to Maggie Valley and tie-in to the existing fixed-route between Waynesville and Canton.	N/A	1 - Mobility (route-specific) - New Service	$ 185,197	**7.14**
Highway	SR 1674 (Elkwood Avenue/Old Burnsville Hill Road)	NC 251 (Riverside Drive)	US 25 (Merrimon Avenue)	16 - Modernize Roadway	$ 49,700,000	**6.03**

Actions Needed

1. Recommend Approval of Requests for Cascading of Regional Impact Projects
   a. US 19 (Dellwood Road)- Access Management (Haywood County)
   b. US 276 (Pigeon Road), Crymes Cove Road- Intersection Improvement (Haywood County)
2. Recommend Approval of Assignment of Draft Local Input Points for Division Needs Projects (MORE DETAILS PROVIDED AFTER THE PRIORITIZATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ON 10/7)

Discussion occurred around match. Also around RPO/MPO boundaries in regards to Ecusta Trail. Discussion around Fanning Bridge and the score that seems to keep going down and if it was understood as to why.

Matt Manley moved to approve recommending approval of Requests for Cascading of Regional Impact Projects including US 19 (Dellwood Rd) and US 276 (Pigeon Rd), Crymes Cove Rd intersection, adding Above the Mud and the remaining unbuilt section of the Ecusta Trail, as well as the assignment of Draft Local input Points for Division Needs Projects to the board . Alex Mumby seconded and it passed upon a unanimous roll call vote.

5A. I-40 Express Lanes Update:
Background
NCDOT will provide an update on the proposed I-40 Express Lanes project between Exit 27 in Haywood County and Exit 44 in Buncombe County. Previously proposed as a conventional widening project, I-6054 was submitted to Prioritization 8.0 (P8) as an express lane project and scored well enough to be programmed in the Statewide Mobility Tier. The project is expected to advance into engineering, with construction funding still uncertain.
The MPO has considered managed lanes along this corridor for several years, and the Board requested a feasibility study in January 2024. This update will give the Board and TCC an opportunity to discuss NCDOT's approach to project development, tolling, and financing, including how lessons from the I-77 Express Lanes project could inform the process.

Kevin Bridges with NCDOT will provide an update on the project.

Information Only.

5B. Merrimon Avenue Road Diet Report:

The Merrimon Avenue road diet converted the section between W.T. Weaver Boulevard and Midland Road from four lanes to three, adding a center turn lane and bicycle lanes. NCDOT's August 2026 report compares conditions before construction with 18 months following completion.

Findings include 24% fewer total crashes, increased bicycle use, and longer vehicle travel times-approximately 47–51 seconds during weekday afternoons. Pedestrian and bicycle crashes increased slightly. The report also notes that Hurricane Helene affected travel during the study period.

Carrie Simpson with NCDOT will provide a summary of the report.

Information Only.

6A. FY 2028 Unified Planning Work Program:
The Draft FY 2028 Unified Planning Work Program is due in January, 2027. MPO staff will provide a presentation on policy recommendations that may impact planning considerations for FY 2028, but want to hear from members about what potential initiatives would be important to them. Some items that have been discussed in the past:

- Express Design Fund
- Regional ADA Assessment and Prioritization Tool
- More Planning Studies
- Permanent Bike/Ped Counting Stations
- Resurfacing Opportunity Program
- Local Technical Assistance Program
- Transit Access Assessment Program
- Regional Transportation Data Program

- Others

Any discussion and inputs are helpful to help form the FY 2028 Unified Planning Work Program.

7A. Division Project Updates

Division 13: https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Division13_October2026_Updates.pdf

Division 14:

7B. 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

7C. Committee & Workgroup Updates

Prioritization Subcommittee— met on October 7th, next meeting October 28th

- Division Needs Priority Projects
- MPO Awarded Projects

5307 Subrecipient Workgroup- met on August 18th, next meeting November 17th. Points of Business/Discussion:

- Grant management update by the City of Asheville including discussion of funds at risk of lapsing
- Triennial review update
- 5310/JARC call for projects
- Knowledge-sharing opportunities within current group composition

***Please see the October Agenda for MPO-Awarded Projects and MPO Studies Status :**
https://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/2026_10_08_TCC_AgendaPacket.pdf

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

ADJOURNMENT

William High adjourned the meeting at 12: 45PM as there was no further business.