



# Technical Coordinating Committee

Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021

2:00 PM, Greensboro, NC

WebEx Online Virtual Meeting

## Attendance

Tyler Meyer	<i>TCC Chair</i>	George Linney	<i>GTA</i>
Craig McKinney	<i>MPO Staff</i>	Mark Kirstner	<i>PART</i>
Lydia McIntyre	<i>MPO Staff</i>	Michael Abuya	<i>NCDOT TPB</i>
Tram Truong	<i>MPO Staff</i>	Scott Whitaker	<i>Town of Summerfield</i>
Yuan Zhou	<i>MPO Staff</i>	Sean Taylor	<i>Town of Oak Ridge</i>
Hanna Cockburn	<i>GDOT Director</i>	Susette Morales	<i>FHWA</i>
Chris Spencer	<i>GDOT/Engineering</i>	Elizabeth Jernigan	<i>GSO Parks &amp; Rec</i>

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**Tyler Meyer called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 PM.**

## Introductory Items

### 1. Orientation to WebEx Software

Lydia McIntyre welcomed everyone to the June virtual meeting and reviewed how to use the WebEx software.

### 2. Opening Remarks and Roll Call

Lydia McIntyre took roll call for the public record.

## Action Items:

### 1. May 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes

*Scott Whitaker moved to approve the minutes of May 11, 2021. Michael Abuya seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

### 2. MTIP: PTI Aviation Projects

Tyler Meyer presented an adjustment to the schedule of three aviation projects at the Piedmont Triad Airport. The projects will extend the parallel runway, complete the taxiway connections to the bridge over I-73, and improve a taxiway between the parallel runway and the main runway for high-

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speed operations. The recommended change is to shift those projects from fiscal year 2021 to 2023 with no change to project funding amounts. STI rules cap the NCDOT funding at \$500,000 per project. This means the airport is responsible for assembling the rest of the funding packages shown for these projects. They typically do that with a mix of FAA funds as well as airport revenues. The recommendation is to modify the MTIP to make the schedule changes.

*Hanna Cockburn moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Sean Taylor seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

### **3. MTIP: Statewide Roadway Projects**

Tyler Meyer stated this action would amend/ modify a batch of statewide nineteen roadway projects. Five types of projects are included.

- Statewide CMAQ projects: adds \$20.4 million in FY 2022 split evenly between two projects. The first programs CMAQ funds for allocation to projects on the statewide tier. Examples of eligible projects include passenger rail improvements on major railroads or the North Carolina or freeway operational improvements like ramp metering. The second provides for projects with system wide benefits located in air quality management areas such as citywide signal system projects.
- NCDOT project development and delivery activities: Six projects to support project development and environmental analysis activities for a total of \$18 million spread evenly between fiscal year 2021 and 2029.
- NCDOT roadway design training: Six projects totaling \$1.58 million in FY 2022 and 2023.
- NCDOT project delivery process: for additional IT services and integrated project delivery.
- NCDOT mitigation services: Adds three projects in fiscal year 2022 and 2023 for a total of \$50 million. Mitigation services includes wetland or stream restoration projects to offset impacts of roadway construction and facilitate permitting.

The recommended action will maintain MTIP and STIP consistency and make the MPO area potentially eligible for the statewide CMAQ projects and mitigation services projects. The recommendation is to approve the items.

*Chris Spencer moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Mark Kirstner seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

### **4. MTIP: Statewide Transit Projects**

Tyler Meyer presented the item, noting it addresses two statewide transit projects. TM-0027 provides funding for rural transit operations across the state. This includes heavily urbanized counties like Guilford County, where TAMS receives these funds for operations outside the City of Greensboro. The action increases FY 22 funding from \$17 million to \$23 million by increasing the local matching funds. TU-0005 sets up \$3.3 million in federal Section 5303 transit planning grant funds for FY 2022. This project accounts for funds allocated to the various MPOs in the state for transit planning activities under the Unified Planning Work Program. As you might remember from your own recently adopted UPWP, the transit planning grant funds for this MPO is about \$195,000 for the year.

*Mark Kirstner moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Sean Taylor seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

## 5. MPO Endorsement: GTA Request for NCDOT Matching Funds

Tyler Meyer presented the recommended endorsement of a GTA request to NCDOT for state matching funds for two projects programmed with federal and local matching funds. GTA will proceed with the projects regardless, but securing state participation would be helpful. NCDOT requires an MPO endorsement for such requests.

- TA-4771 provides for purchase of clean diesel buses for GTA under a FY 2021 CMAQ grant added to the MTIP in January. The federal funding amount is \$1.7 million on this \$2 million project. GTA requested \$145,000 state match.
- TA-4767 provides for purchase of two paratransit vans. The Federal funding is \$149,000 on this \$170,000 project. GTA requested a \$12,000 match from NCDOT.

*Scott Whitaker moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Mark Kirstner seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

## 6. MTIP: MPO Area Transit Projects

Tyler Meyer presented the amendment/ modification to the MTIP transit listings. The action adjusts overall federal and matching fund levels to reflect final FY 2021 FTA appropriations. Funding levels are slightly higher than estimated. The action also shifts funding between projects to optimize grants before the end of the federal fiscal year. This includes shifting \$948,000 in GTA Section 5307 funds to purchase a CAD/AVL system for the fixed route fleet. CAD/AVL is a computer-aided dispatch and automatic vehicle locating system. The purpose is to upgrade GTA's capacities to collect data about system performance, including accurate bus stop boardings and alightings and on time performance at the stop level. This system will provide many benefits and improve operational performance. Another change is to shift excess Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities funds from the Depot renovation project to purchasing bus shelters and replacing seven GTA paratransit vehicles.

Changes for PART (1) adjust routine capital and operating assistance projects to add funds left over left over from prior years; and (2) removes the FY 2021 bus and bus facilities funds used for van purchases. PART requested the change because the COVID pandemic led to a steep drop in vanpool program ridership. PART had to dispose of much the vanpool fleet that would otherwise have been idle, and it is going to take a while to build it back. PART therefore determined to wait for a future time to use those funds when they are in a position to add vans again.

*Mark Kirstner moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Hanna Cockburn seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

## 7. Transit Program of Projects FY 2021

Tram Truong presented the 2021 Program of Projects, an annually updated and publicly reviewed document accounting for formula and discretionary funds for GTA, PART and TAMS for the current fiscal federal year October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. This document provides more detailed information than the MTIP. A public comment period ran from May 14 to June 13. No comments were received. Interested persons may also speak at the public hearing for this document in the TAC meeting today.

*Sean Taylor moved to approve recommendation to TAC. Chris Spencer seconded. The TCC voted unanimously to approve.*

## **Business Items / Potential Action Item(s):**

### **1. Division Engineer Updates**

Stephen Robinson noted the schedule adjustments in the project handout.

### **2. Project Updates**

Craig McKinney presented updates for

- EL-5101-DM: Lowdermilk Street repaving is finished and project work is nearly complete. Holts Chapel Road railroad crossing improvement expected in July with paving to follow shortly thereafter.
- U-5306, Battleground at Westridge: NCDOT is reviewing estimates for extra milling work needed before paving can occur. Once approved, approximately six weeks of work remain.
- U-5326, Market/College intersection: Norfolk Southern will close the railroad crossing June 24 - July 1 to make needed crossing improvements. A detour is in place for roadway traffic. The contractor says final paving will occur once the railroad crossing work is complete. A question was asked about a detour and Hanna Cockburn stated that Burnt Poplar Road to Swing Road to Market Street would be the detour.
- In addition, from last month, Steven Robinson told us that they awarded a contract for R-4707. The contractor has mobilized and work has started.

### **3. Strategic Reports**

Yuan Zhou presented a quick overview of the travel demand model to refresh the committee's memory about the model. Travel demand models are necessary to satisfy the metropolitan planning requirements in the code of the federal regulations. Such as the MTP shall include the projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the MPO area, over the period of the transportation plan. The regional model we are using now is the Piedmont Triad Regional Model, also called PTRM. The travel demand model is an analytical tool used to support the transportation planning process by developing traffic forecasts for alternative transportation scenarios as well as evaluating transportation systems and policies. For our region, PART manages the regional modeling program in partnership with NCDOT, Greensboro, and the other Triad MPOs.

Zhou then presented the basic workflow of the model, referring to the figures on her slides. She noted the three major inputs of the model, the highway and transit network, the socioeconomic data, and behavior and field observation data. There are three categories of the data input. Then, when all this data used to develop the mathematical equations for the model, after the validation and the calibration of the model process, the model will be able to provide the forecasted travel demands, such as daily traffic flow volume and the traffic volume by period on the roadway network, over the planning horizon years. Regular roadway and transit network edits are important for effective analysis and reliable outputs. This output is a very important reference for the long-range transportation planning and short-term programming perspectives. The MTP and MTIP development process relies on these output results in many ways.

Model updates occur every four or five years on a similar timeframe as the MTP. The version we applied for our 2045 MTP is PTRM version 5.2, adopted last year. Development of the PTRM version 6 started shortly after. As everyone knows, the more accurate the inputs to the model, the

more reliable and accurate the output will be. The CommunityViz planning tool and the Triad Household Travel Survey are two efforts to keep the inputs current.

CommunityViz is a scenario-planning tool that PART has been leading the effort to introduce and develop in our region. This tool has the ability improve the accuracy of forecasts of the distribution of future population and employment growth across a region. The tool can therefore provide a great portion of socioeconomic data of our region for PTRM updates. The slide shows the general timeline for that process. Updates to other portions of the SE data, like household auto ownership and income will be complete by the September 2023.

The purpose of the Triad Household Survey is to obtain accurate information on the travel behavior characteristics of households in the Triad region to develop and calibrate the PTRM model. The MPO is actively working with PART to kick off this survey project. We are planning to release the RFQ of this project probably in September 2021 and the project will start in fall of this year. We expect to complete this survey in spring of 2023. Mark Kirstner from PART is here and can help me answer any questions you may have.

Lydia McIntyre added that CommunityViz is one of the major inputs into the model. A considerable amount of discussions with PART as well as other jurisdictions in the triad region has occurred because our model is regional. The CommunityViz model the information is at the parcel level, which requires close coordination with land use planning officials. We will reach out to our local jurisdictions to coordinate on parcel level data inputs.

Mark Kirstner added that he is optimistic that NCDOT will officially confirm the SPR funding award for the household survey before July 1, 2021. Tyler Meyer stated that it is very advantageous grant for us to receive as a region. Without NCDOT's generous participation, it would be much harder for us to fund the project in this timeframe.

Lydia McIntyre said she would provide an update on the prioritization process. The process has its origins in 2009 under executive order. The Strategic Transportation Investments Act (House Bill 817) formalized and codified the process in 2013. That law also removed statutory limitations on State Highway Trust Fund usage, and tied the allocation of those funds, as well as much of the Federal Highway Funding to the competitive project selection process. It also formally established the prioritization workgroup Tyler sits on which advises NCDOT on the process and project scoring formulas.

- The process is performance-based and multi-modal. Results are based on quantitative evaluation and formalized priority setting rather than on MPO-Board Member-Program Development negotiation as was done in prior years. Over the years the criteria has evolved. We are on the sixth cycle: Prioritization 6.0.
- The transportation system divides into three tiers for evaluation and funding purposes: statewide, regional, and division. The system also divides into modes: aviation, rail, highway, bicycle, pedestrian and public transportation. Each mode has different evaluation formulas, and the weights between the variables vary by tier.
- Interstates, major US and NC routes, NS and NCRRA railroads and PTI are statewide. Other US and NC routes and PART are regional. All other roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and GTA are on the division tier. Quantitative analysis formulas, weights and evaluation procedures vary by tier and by mode

- Statewide funding competition results are determined by the quantitative needs score, while the regional and division funding competitions also factor in local input points applied by MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT Division Engineers. Project selection on the regional and division tier is based on quantitative scores plus local input points. Regional tier is 70% quantitative and 30% local input points while division tier is 50% quantitative and 50% local input points.
- MPOs, RPOs, and Division Engineers are responsible for identifying and submitting a limited set of candidate projects. The MPO coordinates closely with its member jurisdictions on identifying candidates.
- This MPO is able to submit up to 23 projects for each mode per round. Scoring includes newly submitted projects, non-committed projects listed in the TIP, and any additional carryover projects. The MPO is able to apply local input 1800 points on the regional tier and 1800 points to apply on the division tier, with no more than 100 points applied per project.
- Division 7 is able to submit 14 projects per mode per round and has an allocation of 2500 local input points. The MPO and Division work very closely together on the project identification, evaluation, and point assignment process.
- Specific improvement types (SITs) delineate project types on each mode. Evaluation procedures can vary per specific improvement type, though the evaluation criteria and weights are consistent across SITs. The highway category is a special case. Most highway SITs are considered mobility projects, with congestion being the dominant evaluation factor. The roadway modernization SIT though uses a modified set of criteria with an emphasis on safety and roadway conditions that do not meet current standards for lane and shoulder width as well as pavement condition. The primary intent of this P5.0 modification was to better support roadway improvement needs in rural areas.
- McIntyre then described aviation and rail criteria and weights. She noted the MPO works closely with PTI for aviation on with the NCDOT Rail Division on identifying projects and collective priorities. McIntyre then reviewed the bicycle and pedestrian criteria and weights, which put an emphasis on network connectivity, safety, and connecting populations to destinations.
- Projects not selected in their native tier can cascade down for funding consideration at the lower tiers. The MPO has instituted a one-step limit, meaning statewide projects not selected at the statewide tier can compete at the regional tier but not the division tier.
- Per a recent methodology change, the MPO now has the ability to flex up to 500 points between the regional and division tier.
- Finally, no less than 90% of funding is dedicated for highway projects, with 4% being committed to non-highway modes, and another 6% flexible funding able to go either way. This 6% relies on a process called normalization, which enables project scores across modes to compete on an even playing field.

McIntyre concluded with the anticipated schedule for the remainder of P6.0.

- NCDOT expects to release quantitative scores and statewide funding results in late August.
- The next step applies the MPO methodology to determine the recommended allocation of local input points at the regional tier. Once NCDOT releases the regional results, the process will repeat for the Division tier.
- NCDOT currently anticipates release of the final draft STIP in August 2022.

Tyler Meyer complemented McIntyre for her update and said NCDOT's cash flow situation is much better now than it was during the height of the pandemic. However, they still have financial issues,

specifically relating to project cost escalation. Cost escalation has been especially serious with the major projects at the statewide level. Some of this has been at the construction stage, but a good bit of it has been through the express design process they are using to go through the project listings, to try to get more realistic cost estimates.

The amount of funding available to add additional projects for this round of prioritization is under review, with the possibility of not adding any projects at all. The outlook should be more clear for our upcoming updates in the August-September timeframe. By that time NCDOT should have released a summary of the amount of funding available in each region across the state, as well as in each division for the regional and division needs competitions. P6.0 is going to be a highly constrained round at best.

Scott Whitaker asked about current trend towards cost escalation. Tyler Meyer said when we came into 2020 with the projects coming out of the deep freeze we were seeing favorable prices. Quite good prices, really. Then, more recently, prices have seemed to be going up quite a bit. However, it is unclear how long that will last. You might have read recently, talking about lumber prices. Just about a month ago, there was a lot of discussion about how they are an indicator of rising inflation and all that. However, just in the last week or so, those rises have started to moderate, and those prices have started to tick downwards. Therefore, I think it is a little too early to say. I think we probably just need to wait a little bit longer and see which direction the prices continue to go, because there are other variables as well that affect the prices in our region, such as the amount of work overall. When a great deal of work is available, contractors tend to raise their prices, because they can pick and choose. Whereas when fewer projects are available things become more competitive. A few years ago, we were clearly in a period where there was a saturation, and so that was driving our prices up. More recently, that moderated. However, because of the freeze in 2020, there are more projects coming available now. I think we might tend to see some cost escalation, but I do not necessarily expect we will see really extreme cost increases. However if we do, then the question will be one of duration. Will it last a long time or a short time? I think that is a discussion we should come back to, and try to keep you updated on what we are seeing over the next few months. Craig McKinney noted that the City anticipates several bid openings by August. This will be a bellwether of current trends. The fear that they currently have is that there will not be enough bidders, because as Tyler said, things have opened up, and there is more work available. However, workforce shortages are evidently also a factor.

## **Other Items**

### **1. Member Updates**

None.

### **2. Wrap-Up & Adjournment**

Tyler Meyer advised the TAC meeting will be August 10, 2021 at 2:00 PM and thanked everyone for attending.

**Tyler Meyer adjourned the meeting at 2:57 PM.**