

RURAL PLANNING RURAL ORGANIZATION

RPO Technical Coordinating Committee

September 12, 2019 – 10:00 A.M., Land of Sky Regional Council

Minutes

Attendance:

Forrest Gilliam	Vicki Eastland	Zia Rifkin	Steve Williams
Stephen Sparks	Tristan Winkler	Hannah Cook	Jodie Ferguson
Troy Wilson	Daniel Sellers	Erica Anderson	Matt Cable
Nick Kroncke	Nancy Allen	Emily Scott-Cruz	April Alm

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Vice Chair Forrest Gilliam called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00am, welcomed everyone in attendance, and requested introductions. He communicated that the agenda was presented for approval with no modifications requested.

Jodie Ferguson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Nancy Allen seconded and the motion carried as all were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made.

ADOPTION OF THE PREVIOUS TCC MINUTES

Steve Williams moved to approve the May 9, 2019 TCC minutes as presented. Matt Cable seconded and as all were in favor, the motion carried.

RPO BUSINESS

LOSRPO Letters of Support for Rural Transit Providers FTA: Vicki Eastland shared that NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (formerly Public Transit Division) requires public transit providers to reach out to their MPO/RPO planning partners for letters of support for their applications for Federal Transit Agency (FTA) Section 5310 Funds. The (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals With Disabilities provides funds for programs and projects aiming to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding mobility options. She noted that there were three applicants this year: Land of Sky's Senior Companion Program, Haywood County Public Transit, and Transylvania County Public Transit. Many times these funds are utilized to provide transportation services that could cross county lines.

Matt Cable moved to recommend the letters of support for Rural Transit Providers go to the LOSRPO TAC for approval. Jodie Ferguson seconded and the motion carried without further discussion.

Regional Trail Update: Tristan Winkler, MPO Director, provided a brief presentation on a regional trail concept being developed through a Regional Trail Workgroup made up of representatives from local governments and non-profits from across the state. The Regional Trail Plan is anticipated to document a vision of a connected trail system, based on local plans, as well as a brand.

Tristan Winkler communicated that the Regional Trail Workgroup has been working to stitch together the regional connectivity, which is very important to an initiative such as this. He presented a conceptual map from the workgroup that includes trails that cross county lines and shows the concept of the regional trail through alignments. The regional trail connects all five counties in the LOSRPO region. These sections of the regional trail are all conceptualized in plans; for those areas that are not in a plan, jurisdictions are looking at ways to include the missing pieces in upcoming plans. Tristan Winkler noted that this is a big concept and is something that could be more than the sum of its parts. He informed the TCC that an online map is under development and there are hopes to fundraise and brand the trail. The brand is imagined to have a local flair and highlight the region. Tristan Winkler noted that the Hellbender Trail is the recommended name from the workgroup.

Discussion occurred about the regional trail plan and whether there were other trails, noted in plans, which were not shown on the map. Vicki Eastland shared that already existing facilities are being looked at as destinations.

Informational only- no action required.

NCDOT I-26 Communication Plan: Vicki Eastland shared that, currently, there are several projects programmed to widen I-26 from Hendersonville to Weaverville. Disruptions from construction are expected as with any major transportation improvement project.

Wanda Austin explained the plan to communicate upcoming construction activities on the I-26 Corridor and efforts to mitigate traffic disruptions. She noted that the NCDOT construction website would be utilized as a communications platform with up-to-date information. She informed the TCC that the Buncombe County portion of the project has been let and the Henderson County portion should be let soon. Wanda Austin shared that there is an upcoming question and answer session with local media in the region. WLOS plans to use their "State of the Road" segment to communicate mitigation plans for traffic disruptions. She noted that the Mountain TMC is up and running and would coordinate with NCDOT and Emergency Management. Coordination of alternate routes is under development. She also noted that US 25 is the main (alternate) corridor and 191 and 280 are also involved, among other routes. The I-26 project requires a massive shift to move traffic to alternate routes.

Wanda Austin shared that NCDOT would also be working with Social Media sites to disseminate information. Additionally, two-lanes along project routes would be open at all times and much of the constructions may be done during off-peak hours.

Informational only- no action required.

NCDOT Complete Streets Policy Update: Vicki Eastland shared that the NC Board of Transportation recently passed an update to its Complete Streets Policy. She noted that the complete policy documentation is available and shared that one of the most exciting aspects of the new policy is the inclusion of alternate modes with the construction of highway projects and the updated cost share. She shared that under the updated policy, it is especially important for jurisdictions to include non-highway projects in local plans. When that occurs, under the updated policy, when a highway project is funded, non-highway projects along the route could be funded without a match as long as the project is in a local plan. Also, transit projects along highway corridors could be funded with no match, too. Ongoing projects in the STIP, which have adjacent project modes could be funded without a cost share with highway projects.

Information item only- no action required.

2020-2029 STIP and SPOT6.0 Timeline Updates: Vicki Eastland shared that the 2020-2029 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) was developed between 2017-2019 through NCDOT's prioritization process, SPOT 5 or P5.0. The STIP is made up of highway and non-highway projects that use state or federal transportation funds. Some projects are carried over from the previous STIP and others are a result of P5.0. The entire LOSRPO STIP is available on the LOSRPO website: http://www.landofsky.org/pdf/LGS/RPO/LOSRPO_2019STIP.pdf. The full statewide document may be viewed on the NCDOT website: <https://www.ncdot.gov/initiatives-policies/Transportation/stip/Documents/2020-2029-final-stip.pdf>. Vicki Eastland noted that while project timelines may have changed, if a project was in the STIP previously, it has carried over.

Vicki Eastland communicated that NCDOT has released an updated schedule for P6.0 that moves several key dates for the process. Vicki Eastland shared key dates with the TCC including that local meetings to select project submittals would occur September 2019 thru January 2020.

Other updates to the SPOT6 timeline include draft project submittal lists are due by February 2020; final project list approved by LOSRPO TAC in March 2020; project prioritization public survey released winter/spring 2019/2020; draft statewide programmed projects and SPOT scores released end of February 2021; LOSRPO local input points methodology due March 1, 2021; Local input projects due May 28, 2021; local input points for Division Needs projects due October 29, 2021; and, the draft 2023-2032 STIP released February 2022.

Informational item only- no action required.

Elect New TCC Chair and Vice Chair: Vicki Eastland shared that Chair Daniel Cobb is no longer with the City of Brevard. Due to this, the TCC needs to elect officers. Forrest Gilliam is the current Vice Chair. The term is two years with the ability to serve two consecutive terms. Vicki Eastland opened the floor for officer nominations.

Nancy Allen moved to elect Forrest Gilliam as Chair and Jodie Ferguson as Vice Chair. Matt Cable seconded the motion, which carried as all were in favor.

NCDOT Preliminary Engineering Project Suspension List: Vicki Eastland shared that NCDOT has suspended work on a number of projects due to concerns of maintaining a minimum cash balance. More than 900 projects across the state are impacted. She reviewed a list of the impacted projects in the LOSRPO region.

Steve Williams communicated that the memo directing NCDOT to suspend projects came out August 30. He reminded TCC members that it was only a couple of years ago that NCDOT accelerated projects in order to spend down funding. During that time, NCDOT was hit with enormous expenses for storm damage and other expenses, which were not in the budget. Therefore, the decision was made to suspend projects. At this time, the length of suspension is not known. He noted that funds would be coming in and the cash balance would get built back up.

Discussion occurred regarding the projects that were suspended in Madison County. Hannah Cook was able to confirm that the Crossroads project was not suspended. NCDOT staff also shared that as far as an indication of when suspensions would be lifted is partially determined by how quickly the cash balance could be built back up.

Informational item only- no action required.

REGULAR UPDATES

NCDOT Division 13 and Division 14 Updates
TPB Updates
Legislative Updates
Staff Updates

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Jodie Ferguson moved to adjourn the meeting. Matt Cable seconded and the meeting adjourned.