

LAND OF SKY

RURAL PLANNING RURAL ORGANIZATION

RPO Technical Coordinating Committee

Virtual Meeting via the Zoom Platform

March 11, 2021 – 10:00 A.M.

Minutes

Remote Attendance:

Chair William High	Vicki Eastland	Stephen Sparks	Amna Cameron
James Voso	Jodie Ferguson	Aaron Bland	Forrest Gilliam
April Alm	Allen McNeill	Brendan Merithew	Daniel Sellers
Lonnie Watkins	Daniel Metcalf	Chris Lee	Troy Wilson
Wanda Austin	Steve Williams	Chris Medlin	

In-Person Attendance at Land of Sky Office:

Zia Rifkin

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Chair High called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00am, welcomed everyone attending remotely and in-person, and roll was called, A quorum was announced to conduct business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were made.

CONSENT AGENDA

Forrest Gilliam moved to approve the consent agenda, consisting of the agenda and the October 8, 2020 TCC minutes. Steve Williams seconded, and the motion passed upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

RPO BUSINESS

Presentation: NC First Commission- Final Report:

The NC First Commission was established in March 2019. Comprised of 13 members of diverse backgrounds, with expertise in finance, business, and public policy; one of which was Henderson County Commissioner and former FBRMPO Chair William Lapsley, P.E.

The committee was tasked with evaluating North Carolina's current and future transportation investment needs and advising the Secretary of Transportation of new or better options to ensure financial resources are available in the future. With increased fuel efficiency and the projected increase in electric and hybrid vehicles, the committee looked for solutions to declines in the fuel tax and other transportation revenues. This included researching emerging trends, the impacts of new technologies and how changing demographics would have on NC's current funding model.

The final report was released on January 8th, 2021 and includes an identified need for an additional \$20 billion needed over the next ten years to maintain and improve existing infrastructure. To address this funding short fall, the report includes long-range transportation funding recommendations to provide more sustainable transportation funding to North Carolina in the future.

The final report and summary presentation are available here:

<https://www.ncdot.gov/about-us/how-we-operate/finance-budget/nc-first/Pages/final-report.aspx>

Amna Cameron, Deputy Director of NCDOT's Office of Strategic Initiatives and Program Support provided a presentation to the RPO TCC on the report's recommendations and key considerations moving forward.

Amna Cameron shared information about the NC First Commission, which was formed in March 2019 to develop recommendations for sustainable transportation revenue sources. Their final report was released in January 2021. She shared that a CRAFTS tool has been included on the NC First Commission's website: www.ncdot.gov/ncfirst. Key findings from the study include the finding that NCDOT is underfunded and costs for transportation projects have seen incredible increases. Currently, the State would need to invest an additional \$7.4 billion per year to bring its spending to the national per-mile average. Currently, 29 years is the average between resurfacings for NCDOT supported roadways. Other Commission findings include that residents of the State pay \$3.4 Billion in higher vehicle operating costs annually due to poor transportation conditions; this includes additional vehicle operating costs, and costs due to congestion and safety. In Asheville, that cost breaks down to \$1,280 annually. By increasing the gas tax, these conditions might be alleviated.

Ms. Cameron noted that revenues are higher, but the tax base is going down due in part to increasing numbers of hybrid vehicles and increased vehicle fuel efficiency of gas-powered vehicles. The Commission also found that fuel economy standards will continue to erode the tax base. The only way vehicle manufacturers can further increase fuel economy is to focus on the production of electric and hybrid vehicles. The Commission also found through a survey of residents in the State that roads and infrastructure are a high priority, including that transportation is a higher priority in the Eastern and Western regions of the State. Investment recommendations to achieve a good infrastructure rating in the immediate term include increasing the level of investment by at least \$20 billion over the next ten years through an increase in the Highway Use Tax (HUT) from 3% to 5%; eliminating the net-of-trade exemption, and by recapturing proceeds from alternative HUT on short-term vehicle rentals, vehicle subscription services, and car sharing. Estimated revenues for transportation over the next ten years is more than \$7.6 Billion.

The study also proposes increasing the sales tax rate by 0.5% to 0.75%; increasing DMV fees, increasing the electric vehicle fee, and adopting a new plug-in hybrid fee, among other options. Another option for consideration includes a mileage-based user fee to fully replace the Motor Fuels Tax by 2030; however, this option would lead to no net change in estimated revenues for transportation over the next 10 years. Other options

include expanding broadband, increasing debt capacity for NCDOT and appointing a Chief Innovation Officer.

The Commission found that this is an opportune moment. Next steps include spreading the word by increasing public outreach and education, meeting with the region's legislative delegations, participating in a mileage-based user fee pilot in Fall 2021, and joining the NC Chamber's Destination 2030.

Discussion occurred regarding concerns about any effort to put the responsibility for road building/maintenance on local governments, especially in rural areas, as this could widen the urban/rural divide across the State. Staff with local municipalities suggested talking with elected officials in their counties. Anna Cameron shared that local tax increases have usually been utilized for public transit. She also shared that local responsibility should focus on county-owned roads only. Additionally, she noted that the State should move more towards regional transit options.

Information only. No action requested.

LOSRPO and SWRPO FY 2022 CMAQ (Air Quality) Funding Allocation:

In prior years, the Land of Sky and Southwestern RPOs LOSRPO and SWRPO have been allocated \$100,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds from the NCDOT (\$50,000 each year). In this round, NCDOT has made a total of \$200,000 available, \$100,000 for each RPO. Land of Sky RPO staff, working with LOSRC Regional Clean Air Campaign and Land of Sky Clean Vehicles and Clean City's staff has consulted with staff of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Southwestern Commission about the availability and potential uses of these funds. The National Park is requesting \$100,000 to continue its air quality education and outreach work within the Park for three years. These funds will account for SWRPO's \$100,000. The Land of Sky Regional Council is requesting \$100,000 to continue the work of its Regional Clean Air Campaign and Land of Sky Clean Vehicles Coalition for two years. Land of Sky's work includes public education and outreach on reducing emissions from mobile sources, technical assistance to fleets in the region on alternative fueled and advanced technology vehicle options, and assistance securing grant funding for green fleet projects. These funds will account for LOSRPO's \$100,000. Applications to the NCDOT are due March 15, 2021.

Land-of-Sky RPO Resolution Endorsing Candidate CMAQ Project Proposals

WHEREAS the FAST Act of 2015 continues the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ); and

WHEREAS CMAQ is a Federal program that funds transportation projects and programs in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas to help achieve and maintain national standards for pollutants; and

WHEREAS the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) administers the CMAQ program on behalf of non-attainment and maintenance areas within North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Land-of-Sky Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) has administered a CMAQ project selection process among the area jurisdictions in air quality non-attainment and maintenance counties; and

WHEREAS, NCDOT has allocated a total of \$100,000 of CMAQ funds to the Land of Sky region for FY 2022-2023; and

WHEREAS the following candidate projects have been prioritized and allocation amounts have been approved recognizing the local entities are responsible for a 20% match and

WHEREAS the following candidate project proposals meet the requirements of CMAQ and the guidelines established by NCDOT to administer the program; and

CMAQ Allocation FY 2022-2023					
	Prioritized Project	CMAQ Funding FY 2022	CMAQ Funding FY 2023		Total Cost
1	LOSRC Air Quality Outreach & Education	\$50,000 (\$12,500 local match)	\$50,000 (\$12,500 local match)	\$125,000.00	\$100,000 (\$25,000 local match)

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Land-of-Sky RPO endorses the attached listing of proposed CMAQ candidate projects provided here on this, the 25th day of March 2021.

ADOPTED: This the 25th day of March 2021.

Commissioner Matthew Wechtel, Chairman, Land-of-Sky RPO TAC

ATTEST:

Vicki L. Eastland, Land-of-Sky RPO

Aaron Bland moved to recommend the LOSRPO TAC adopt the resolution for the CMAQ Funding Allocation for FY 2022 for the LOSRPO region at their March 25, 2021 meeting. Forrest Gilliam seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

LOSRPO Draft FY 2022 Planning Work Program (PWP):

LOSRPO staff has developed the Draft LOSRPO Planning Work Program, (PWP) and submitted the FY 2021-2022 Draft PWP to NCDOT TPD for review. Due to COVID 19 and NCDOT financial uncertainty, some ongoing work products are still underway, like SPOT6.0, for example. Like most years, the PWP is a continuation of ongoing RPO projects. The FBRMPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) update as well as the Transylvania County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) are still underway, so funding is still allocated to the CTP category. LOSRPO staff serve on a few statewide work groups and committees, as well as ones with more regional significance therefore, there is a sizable percentage of the planning funds in the General Transportation category. SPOT 6.0 is ongoing so there is a significant amount of funding in Prioritization. Data Collection, Project Development and Administration make up the bulk of the remaining funding except for RPO Direct Charges, Travel, and Indirect Funds.

Steve Williams moved to recommend the Draft FY 2022 Planning Work Program (PWP) and forward that to the LOSRPO TAC for approval at their March 25, 2021 meeting. Forrest Gilliam seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

SPOT6.0 Update:

Vicki Eastland provided an update on potential changes to the SPOT6.0 timeline to the TCC members.

Prioritization Task	Estimated Date
Final Project List Approved by LOS TAC	March 2020
SPOT Online Closes for submitting projects	July 31, 2020
DRAFT Identified Needs Due for Hwy Projects	September 11, 2020
Area Specific Weights due	October 23, 2020
Final Identified Needs and Complete Streets Project sheets due for all projects (Hwy and Non-Hwy)	April 23, 2021
Quantitative Scoring completed	July, 2021
Local Input Point Assignment Methodologies Due	July 30, 2021
Prioritization Workgroup meeting	August, 2021
The remaining dates are TBD pending Prioritization Workgroup meeting outcome after quantitative scoring is complete. ***	***Summer/Fall 2021
DRAFT Programmed Statewide Mobility Projects and Quantitative Scores for all projects released	End of August, 2021
Local Input Points for Regional Impact Projects Due	November 30 th , 2022
DRAFT list of Programmed Regional Impact Projects	End of January, 2022
Local Input Points for Division Needs Projects Due	May 1, 2022
DRAFT 2023 – 2032 STIP Released	August 2022

Vicki Eastland shared that the RPO has 1200 points for Regional Impact project prioritization and 1200 points for Division Needs project prioritization. She also reviewed carryover projects. Sometime in April/May, all of the RPOs should receive a spreadsheet with quantitative scoring for all projects submitted. Vicki Eastland also shared that many of the estimated dates from summer 2021 forward are TBD and subject to change. Right now, the prioritization process for P6.0 is still in the submittal phase. Due to funding constraints in the last round of prioritization, the state workgroup is recommending that the first six-years of the TIP represent committed projects and the final four years are developmental.

Information only. No action requested.

REGULAR UPDATES

NCDOT Division 13 and Division 14 provided updates.
The TPD provided an update.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

ADJOURNMENT-

Chair High adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.