

RURAL PLANNING RURAL ORGANIZATION

Technical Advisory Committee

Hybrid Meeting with the Zoom Platform

October 20, 2022 – 11:30 A.M.

Minutes

Remote Attendance:

Chair Matt Wechtel (Madison Commission)
Jane Pies (minutes)
Mac Morrow (Brevard Council)
Steve Williams (NCDOT Division 14)
Hannah Cook (NCDOT Division 13
Commission)

Vicki Eastland (RPO Coordinator)
Nathan Moneyham (NCODT Division 13)
Stephen Sparks (NCDOT Division 13)
Kevin Ensley (Haywood Commission)
Larry Chapman (Transylvania)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Matt Wechtel called the meeting to order at 11:30am and welcomed attendees. He read the Ethics Statement, and inquired if there were any conflicts, which could preclude TAC members from participating in and voting on any business items, to state such for the record, and to refrain from participation in the matter. No conflicts were heard from the TAC members.

Vicki Eastland called the roll and quorum was announced.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Chair, Matt Wechtel requested approval of the agenda and the consent agenda, which included the August 25, 2022 minutes, the Letter of Support for the Above the Mud Reconnecting Communities Planning Grant, and the Letter of Support for the Ecusta Trail NSFLTP Grant Application. **Mac Morrow moved to approve the consent agenda. Larry Chapman seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.**

A letter of support has been provided from the Land of Sky RPO TAC Chair

October 10, 2022
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC, 20590

To Whom it May Concern:

Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (LOSRPO) offers support for the City of Hendersonville's application for a Planning Grant being submitted to the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program. We support this grant application and the focus of this plan to improve the safety and mobility of residents and travelers in Western North Carolina. LOSRPO understands the need to improve the connectivity of the region by removing barriers that have disconnected parts of Hendersonville from the rest of the City. The construction of US 64, like many arterials around the region and country, were built to improve the travel times of commuters and travelers but while many residents have enjoyed the benefits of these arterials, others have been disconnected, isolated, and left behind.

The Above the Mud project helps to reconnect a growing part of Hendersonville, 7th Avenue, that is becoming a destination for many, by building safe and resilient infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians and transforming 7th Avenue to be a more pedestrian-friendly corridor. The connection between the Oklawaha Greenway and the Ecusta Trail will connect two major greenways that would open up access to destinations throughout Henderson County and enable more residents to travel in a healthier and more sustainable way.

LOSRPO supports the City of Hendersonville's request for federal funding for a Planning Grant through the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program. This plan will have significant benefits by helping to build a more resilient and equitable transportation network.

Sincerely,

Matthew Wechtel, Commissioner, Madison County, NC
Chair, Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization

Letter of Support – Ecusta Trail NSFLTP Grant Application

The City of Brevard has been working with Henderson County and NCDOT as well as the Land of Sky RPO and French Broad River MPO on a grant application for the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Program (NSFLTP) to provide construction funding for the Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County and parts of Henderson County.

A letter of support will be provided by the Land of Sky RPO TAC Chair

October 10, 2022
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC, 20590

RE: FY2022 NSFLTP Grant Application – Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization, (LOSRPO) strongly supports the NSFLTP grant application for the Ecusta Rail Trail: A Multimodal Gateway to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is the result of a collaboration between the City of Brevard, Henderson County, City of Hendersonville, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Conserving Carolina, and other local stakeholders.

The Ecusta Rail Trail will be an active transportation and recreation corridor that improves access to jobs and public resources. The Ecusta Rail Trail will provide opportunities for low-income communities, and new connections to the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway. As part of a statewide and regional greenway spine identified in the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan, this project will connect to the recreational hiking and mountain biking epicenter of the Pisgah National Forest, bringing economic development, tourism, and equitable access to the region and its residents.

The LOSRPO recognizes the need for a safe non-highway network for residents and visitors of Western North Carolina to access natural resources like the Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Once completed, the Ecusta Rail Trail will connect to the existing City of Brevard path entering the Pisgah National Forest on the Estatoe Trail. The Estatoe Trail connects to several miles of trails and forest roads in the Pisgah National Forest connecting to the Blue Ridge Parkway. There are many recreation destinations located nearby. By providing non-motorized access to this area, it will help reduce the number of vehicles entering the area and the need for additional parking at key destinations and the strain on natural resources.

LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS

LOSRPO 2023 meeting calendar

LOSRPO TCC Meetings 2023	LOSRPO TAC Meetings 2023
February 9 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	February 16 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
March 9 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	March 16 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
May 11 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	May 18 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
August 10 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	August 17 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
September 7 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	September 14 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM
October 12 th 10AM LOSRC and ZOOM	October 19 th 11:30AM LOSRC and ZOOM

Meetings will be held at the
Land of Sky Regional Council Office,
339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806

Meeting Schedule subject to change based on required deadlines for RPO business

Information only. No action required.

I-4700 Presentation: Blue Ridge Parkway Bridge/I-26

The I-4700 project is the widening of I-26 from I-40 to NC 280 (Airport Road). A big part of the project is the removal and replacement of the Blue Ridge parkway Bridge. Nathan Moneyham, Division Construction Engineer, NCDOT Division 13 provided a presentation on the planned process of the bridge replacement.

Information only. No action required.

Upcoming potential funding opportunities Carbon Reduction Program CRP/State Planning and Research SPR

There are a couple of funding sources that will be available this winter. The Carbon Reduction Program, established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law BIL, and the State Planning and Research program funding. Below is some information on both programs.

FHWA CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM Program purpose

The Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) establishes the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), which provides funds for projects

designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from on-road highway sources. *Statutory citation:* § 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175

Funding features

Apportionment of funds

As under the FAST Act, the BIL directs FHWA to apportion funding as a lump sum for each state, which is then subdivided among apportioned programs.

Each state's CRP apportionment is calculated based on a percentage specified in law. [23 U.S.C. 104(b)(7)] (See "Apportionment" fact sheet for a description of this calculation.)

States with low population density will have a reduced set-aside under certain conditions (more below). [23 U.S.C. 149(k)]

Transferability to Other Federal-aid Apportioned Programs

A state may transfer up to 50% of CRP funds made available each fiscal year to any other apportioned program within the state, including the National Highway Performance Program, Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, National Highway Freight Program, and [NEW] Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Formula Program. Conversely, subject to certain limitations, a state may transfer up to 50% of funds made available each fiscal year from each other apportioned program in the State to CRP. [23 U.S.C. 126(a)] (See other program-specific fact sheets for additional details.)

Suballocation

65% of a state's CRP apportionment is to be obligated in the following areas in proportion to their relative shares of the state's population. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)] Funds attributed to an urbanized area may be obligated in the metropolitan area established under 23 U.S.C. 134 that encompassed the urbanized area [23 U.S.C. 175(e)(2)]:

- *Urbanized areas with an urbanized area population greater than 200,000:* This portion is to be divided among those areas based on their relative share of population, unless the Secretary approves a joint request from the state and relevant MPO(s) to use other factors. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(i) and (e)(3)]
- *Urbanized areas with an urbanized area population of at least 50,000 but no more than 200,000:* This portion is to be divided among those areas based on their relative share of population, unless the Secretary approves a joint request from the state and relevant MPO(s) to use other factors. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(ii) and (e)(3)]
- *Urban areas with population at least 5,000 and no more than 49,999.* [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(iii)]
- *Areas with population of less than 5,000.* [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(A)(iv)]

The remaining 35% of the state's CRP apportionment may be obligated in any area of the state. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(1)(B)]

Over the period of FY22-26, states are required to make available to each urbanized area with a population of at least 50,000 obligation authority for the suballocated CRP funding. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(6)]

Eligible activities

CRP funds may be obligated for projects that support the reduction of transportation emissions, including, but not limited to– [except as noted, § 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(c)(1)]

- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(4) to establish or operate a traffic monitoring, management, and control facility or program, including advanced truck stop electrification systems;
- a public transportation project eligible under 23 U.S.C. 142;
- a transportation alternative (as defined under the Moving Ahead for Progress under the 21st Century Act [23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29), as in effect on July 5, 2012]), including, but not limited to, the construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation;
- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 503(c)(4)(E) for advanced transportation and congestion management technologies;
- deployment of infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements and the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure communications equipment;
- a project to replace street lighting and traffic control devices with energy-efficient alternatives;
- development of a carbon reduction strategy developed by a State per requirements in 23 U.S.C. 175(d);
- a project or strategy designed to support congestion pricing, shifting transportation demand to nonpeak hours or other transportation modes, increasing vehicle occupancy rates, or otherwise reducing demand for roads, including electronic toll collection, and travel demand management strategies and programs;
- efforts to reduce the environmental and community impacts of freight movement;
- a project that supports deployment of alternative fuel vehicles, including–
 - acquisition, installation, or operation of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure or hydrogen, natural gas, or propane vehicle fueling infrastructure; and
 - purchase or lease of zero-emission construction equipment and vehicles, including the acquisition, construction, or leasing of required supporting facilities;
- a project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(8) for a diesel engine retrofit;
- certain types of projects to improve traffic flow that are eligible under the CMAQ program, and that do not involve construction of new capacity; [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(5); and 175(c)(1)(L)]

- o a project that reduces transportation emissions at port facilities, including through the advancement of port electrification; and
- o any other STBG-eligible project, if the Secretary certifies that the State has demonstrated a reduction in transportation emissions, as estimated on a per capita and per unit of economic output basis. (Note: FHWA will issue guidance on how the Secretary will make such certifications.) [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 133(b) and 175(c)(2)]

Coordination in Urbanized Areas Other Than Transportation Management Areas

Before obligating CRP funds for an eligible project in an urbanized area that is not a transportation management area, a state shall coordinate with any MPO that represents the urbanized area prior to determining which activities should be carried out under the project. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(4)]

Consultation in Rural Areas

Before obligating CRP funds for an eligible project in a rural area, a state shall consult with any regional transportation planning organization or MPO that represents the rural area prior to determining which activities should be carried out under the project. [§ 11403; 23 U.S.C. 175(e)(5)]

Statewide Planning and Research SPR

Each year, NCDOT receives Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds from the Federal Highway Administration. NCDOT uses these funds primarily to fund the activities of the NCDOT Transportation Planning Division and NCDOT Research & Development Office, as well as the RPO program. However, any remaining funds left over are available for MPOs and RPOs to apply for. These competitive funds must be used for planning activities (not design or construction) and require a local match. The amount of local match varies based on the presence of Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties within each MPO or RPO—since LOSRPO includes at least one Tier 2 county, any SPR-funded project in our area would require a 10% local match (with the state picking up 10% and the federal funds paying 80%).

NCDOT typically opens the window for RPOs and MPOs to submit projects for SPR funding in the December/January timeframe and has told us the deadline will be at the end of February 2023. We do not yet know how much funding will be available.

If successfully awarded funding, any project would be administered by LOSRPO through an amendment to our annual Planning Work Program. The matching funds would be paid by the applicable local government(s).

LOSRPO would like to hear from any local governments that would like to apply before January 15th, 2023.

Information only no action requested

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

REGULAR UPDATES

NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14 updates: presented and on website www.landofsky.org

NCDOT Transportation Planning Division updates: presented and on website www.landofsky.org

LOSRPO Staff provided updates

ADJOURNMENT

Matt Wechtel called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:45 PM. **Larry Chapman moved to adjourn. Mac Morrow seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

DRAFT