

Meeting Agenda

RPO Technical Advisory Committee

October 19th, 2023 – 11:30 – Land of Sky Regional Council and Zoom Platform

Join LOSRPO TAC meeting

Meeting ID: 818 5583 9069 Passcode: 581527

or call in: (646) 558-8656

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

- A. Welcome and Introductions
- B. Ethics Statement

Matt Wechtel
Matt Wechtel

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

3. Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes from the RPO TAC August 2023, Meeting
- B. LOSRPO PWP Amendment
- C. LOSRPO Public Involvement Plan Edits

Matt Wechtel

4. LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS Items

- A. LOSRPO P 7.0 FINAL Submittal list and updates
- B. Wildlife Crossings Identified Needs
- C. New FBRMPO LOSRPO Planning Boundary

Vicki Eastland
Tristan Winkler
Tristan Winkler

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

6. REGULAR UPDATES

- A. NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates
Most Recent Updates <http://landofskyrpo.org/>
- B. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division
- C. NCDOT Integrated mobility Division
- D. Staff Updates and Housekeeping

Tim Anderson/Wanda Austin
(or designee)
Daniel Sellers, PE
Alexius Farris
Vicki Eastland

7. ADJOURN LOSRPO MEETING

Matt Wechtel

Upcoming Meeting

Land of Sky RPO TCC – Meeting on Thursday January 11th, 2024 – 10:00AM LOSRC Offices and Zoom

Land of Sky RPO TAC – Meeting on January 18, 2024 – 11:30 AM Land of Sky Regional Council and Zoom

Meeting Agenda

Item 1B: Ethics Statement

ETHICS AWARENESS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST REMINDER

(To be read by the Chair or his or her designee at the beginning of each meeting)

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every Board member to avoid conflicts of interest. Does any Board member have any known conflict of interest with respect to any matters coming before the Board today? If so, please identify the conflict and refrain from any participation in the particular matter involved.

Consent Agenda

Technical Advisory Committee
Hybrid Meeting with the Zoom Platform
August 17th, 2023 – 11:30 A.M.
Minutes

Attendance in Person:

Chair Matt Wechtel (Madison Commission)	Vicki Eastland (RPO Coordinator)
Daniel Sellers (NCDOT, TPD)	Asha Rado (LOSRC Minutes)
Jon Barsanti (LOSRC TDM)	

Attendance Remote via Zoom:

Troy Wilson (NCDOT Div 14)	Alexius Farris (NCDOT, IMD)
Steve Williams (NCDOT Div 14)	Kevin Ensley (Haywood Commission)
Hannah Cook (NCDOT Div13)	Stephan Sparks (NCDOT Div 13)
Larry Chapman (Transylvania Commission)	

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair, Matt Wechtel called the meeting to order at 11:33AM 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.

Meeting Agenda

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Wechtel opened the floor for 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 June 2023 minutes, the TAC agenda and the Letter of Support for the NCDOT Div 13. Project Grant and the addition and approval of the Letter of Support for Multimodal Transportation.

Letter of Support for NCDOT Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Application

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg

Secretary

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: Letter of Support for North Carolina Department of Transportation Multimodal Project Rural Discretionary Grant Application, I-26 Interchange Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Land of Sky RPO would like to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant application for the subject project. This project includes a new interchange on I-26 (future Exit 35) and connecting road to NC 191, approximately six miles south of Asheville. This transportation investment capitalizes on private investments and will fulfill priority regional priorities: access to long-term, high-quality jobs, access to federal, state and county recreational resources, and reduced congestion and commuting times within the Asheville/Hendersonville corridor.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has shown that this project is crucial. By supporting the investment by Pratt & Whitney, a division of Raytheon, Inc, in southern Buncombe County, the USDOT Rural Grant would contribute to the creation of 800 jobs with an average salary of \$68,000, \$39,000 higher than the current median income. Further, Pratt & Whitney is partnering with Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College to train the highly skilled workforce. A new 20,000-square-foot educational facility near the manufacturing plant will increase the region's educational capacity and technical knowledge. This education partnership will eliminate barriers to opportunities and continue to enhance racial equity in the region.

The interchange project on I-26, HE-0001, is critical to help alleviate the projected impacts of the new development along the corridor, enable freight access, and provide improved connectivity to our region.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for considering this strategic investment. It demonstrates how a federal-state-local partnership can greatly impact a region's economic vibrancy and transportation mobility. USDOT staff should feel free to contact me to discuss our support for the project.

Meeting Agenda

Sincerely,

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

Letter of Support for NCDOT Div. 13 Protect Grant Application

The Protect Program was established in 2021 by the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, IIJA. IIJA established the **P**romoting **R**esilient **O**perations for **T**ransformative, **E**fficient, and **C**ost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) It is a Formula Program to help make surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, including climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk costal infrastructure.

NCDOT Division 13 proposed project is BLUE RIDGE (**B**ridge **L**ongevity **U**pgrades to **E**nhance **R**esiliency, **I**ncrease **D**ependability, and **G**row **E**quity). BLUE RIDGE Proposes replacement of (3) bridges in Buncombe County, replacement of (1) bridge in Madison County, and lining (3) culverts in Madison County. Details are provided in the included materials.

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg Secretary

U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Land of Sky RPO would like to express our strong support for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT's) Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program Grant application titled BLUE RIDGE (Bridge Longevity Upgrades to Enhance Resiliency, Increase Dependability, and Grow Equity) for the rehabilitation or replacement of five structures in Buncombe and Madison Counties.

These structures serve as critical connections for rural communities and residents to vital services such as employment hubs, educational institutions, and medical centers. Each structure is in critical need of rehabilitation or replacement due to reoccurring natural hazards such as flooding caused by climate change. Major structure improvements are necessary to increase the resiliency of the region, restore the natural environment, and ensure necessary accessibility to vital community services.

Should any bridge need to be closed due to its structural deficiencies or impacts from flood events, there are very few viable detour options to ensure continued access. The detours for these bridges are not all suitable for truck traffic, contain functionally obsolete bridges, and increase travel distance by an average 17 miles. This would significantly impact the nearby communities due to increased travel times and decreased access to vital services. The mountainous terrain in Western North Carolina and the Land of Sky RPO present many challenges and limitations. The Appalachian Mountains and numerous rivers and streams that make Western North Carolina a unique and desirable location, also constrain the transportation network and limit system redundancy and connectivity. Throughout the region

Meeting Agenda

several communities rely on single or limited access points. Due to the increase of extreme weather events impacting our region, communities are at an elevated risk of being isolated due to potential transportation network failures in extreme weather events. Providing more resilient infrastructure is key to adapting our region to increasing natural challenges.

As a statewide transportation priority, the improvements to the five structures will provide reliable connectivity and increase the resiliency of the surrounding communities and the region, while repairing the surrounding natural environments. Thank you for your favorable consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

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

** Amendment to consent agenda by adding in the Letter of Support for the Multimodal Project I-26. Added by Vicki Eastland

Larry Chapman moved to approve the Consent Agenda including the June 2023 Minutes, TAC Agenda and the Letter of Support for the NCDOT Div 13. Project Grant, plus addition of Letter of Support for Multimodal Transportation Project. Kevin Ensley seconded the motion which passed unanimously upon a roll call vote.

LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS

LOSRPO FY 2024 PWP Amendment

NCDOT Transportation Planning Division, the division that administers the Rural Planning Organizations, (RPO's) provided each RPO with a 15% funding increase to take effect July 1, 2023, SFY 2024. This amendment to the PWP reflects this increase in funding.

[LOSRPO FY 2024 PWP Amendment](#)

Vicki Eastland presented (including the PWPW-SPR Expense Report Revision, information but not voted on) Information Only. Discussion occurred in regard to if there would be a change in the local match. Vicki Eastland explained that yes, that anytime there is a change in funding there will be a change in local match. State passed a law in their budget that the SPR is what funds the RPOs. If an RPO applied for special study in the RPO funding, the state was going to assist the rural counties if you have at least one tier 1 county, state provide 15%, local 5%, federal 80%. If you have tier 2 match would be 80/10/10. TPD also said that it could be carried over.

Information only, it will come back for approval.

LOSRPO Prioritization 7.0 DRAFT Submittal List

Prioritization the process that NCDOT follows to determine most capital improvement projects utilizing both NCDOT state funds and NCDOT's allotted federal funds in the

Meeting Agenda

development of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The prioritization process is governed by the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) Law of 2013. STI provides the framework for a more transparent data driven process utilizing local input from MPO's, RPO's and NCDOT Divisions. Prioritization 7.0, P7.0 (aka SPOT 7.0) indicates it is the seventh iteration of the prioritization process.

RPO staff has met with TCC and TAC reps from each county, along with MPO staff and NCDOT division. Carryover projects were reviewed as were projects lists from previous rounds. Based on input from these meetings, the LOSRPO DRAFT P7.0 Project was developed. There are still a few non-Highway projects to be added to the list, but the list will be complete before it is advertised for public comment.

https://landofskyrpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/LOSRPO_SPOT7.0-DRAFT-Project-List.pdf

Prioritization Task	Estimated Date
Prioritization Workgroup meets Done	October 2022 - June, 2023
NC Board of Transportation Adopts Methodology Done	June, 2023
SPOT Online Go-live Project submittal window opens	July 2023 – September, 2023
NCDOT Data Review and Scoring (Partner Rev. Feb 2024)	October 2023 – March, 2024
Project Prioritization Public Survey	Winter - Spring 2024
Alternate Criteria Deadline/LOSRPO Local Input Point Methodology Due	April, 2024
DRAFT Statewide Programmed Projects and SPOT Scores Released	End of April 2024
Regional Impact Local Input Points Window	May - July, 2024
DRAFT Regional Impact Programmed Projects Released	August, 2024
Division Needs Local Input Points Window	September – November, 2024
Program Division Needs Projects	December 2024 – January, 2025
DRAFT 2026-2035 STIP Released	End of January, 2025

Vicki Eastland presented.

Meeting Agenda

Travel Demand TDM Update Presentation on Park & Ride, Park & Pool

Process of Selecting Potential Park and Ride Locations

1. Plan Review
2. Literature Review
3. Examined the Data
4. Developed a Ranking System
5. Applied the Ranking System

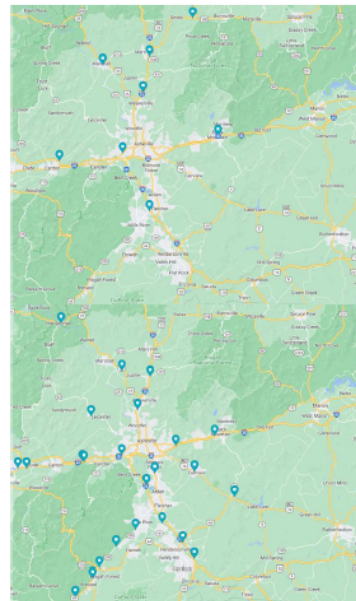
- Reviewed the Congestion Management Plan (2018)
- Reviewed the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2020)
- Researched documents from multiple sources including Virginia DOT and Florida DOT
- Collected Data from multiple sources
 - Environmental Justice Data
 - Census on the Map Data (Home to Work, Work to Home, Outflow)
 - Housing and Employment Data (Housing Units, Employees.)
 - Combined data into one spreadsheet
 - Analyzed the data

Currently have Park & Ride and Park & Pool Locations

Looking for More of the same plus Park and Bike

Park and Ride Possibilities

- Park and Pool locations at Waynesville, Canton, Weaverville, and Mars Hill.
- Park and Rides for Black Mountain, South Asheville, and Rosman.
- Unofficial Park and Charge and Ride at Asheville Outlet Mall
- Looking to add more locations to:
 - Reduce Congestion
 - Encourage Carpooling
 - Support Transit



See link for full presentation: <https://landofskyrpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/August-RPO-Presentation-PNR-Possibilities-20230919.pdf>

Meeting Agenda

Jon Barsanti Jr. presented.

Discussion occurred around who would maintain the locations and how we can best market and share the ride sharing information.

Information only. No action required.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Matt Wechtel opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were received

REGULAR UPDATES NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14 updates were presented and at www.landofskyrpo.org

NCDOT Transportation Planning Division updates given;

NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division updates given;

LOSRPO Staff provided updates

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Matt Wechtel called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12: 37PM.

Matt Wechtel moved to adjourn. Larry Chapman seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

4. LAND OF SKY RPO TAC BUSINESS

Item 4A: LOSRPO Prioritization 7.0 DRAFT Submittal list

Prioritization the process that NCDOT follows to determine most capital improvement projects utilizing both NCDOT state funds and NCDOT's allotted federal funds in the development of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The prioritization process is governed by the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) Law of 2013. STI provides the framework for a more transparent data driven process utilizing local input from MPO's, RPO's and NCDOT Divisions. Prioritization 7.0, P7.0 (aka SPOT 7.0) indicates it is the seventh iteration of the prioritization process.

RPO staff has been working with NCDOT division staff on entering projects. The LOSRPO and FBRMPO combined to advertise our projects lists for public input. The LOSRPO DRAFT P7.0 Project can be viewed on the at www.landofskyrpo.org or by using the link below.

Meeting Agenda

[LOSRPO DRAFT SPOT7.0 Project List](#)

Current schedule for P7.0.

P7.0 Schedule.

Prioritization Task	Estimated Date
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NCDOT Data Review and Scoring (Partner Rev. Feb 2024)	November 2023 – April, 2024
Project Prioritization Public Survey	Winter - Spring 2024
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DRAFT Statewide Programmed Projects and SPOT Scores Released	End of May 2024
Regional Impact Local Input Points Window	June - August, 2024
DRAFT Regional Impact Programmed Projects Released	September, 2024
Division Needs Local Input Points Window	October – December, 2024
Program Division Needs Projects	January 2024 – February, 2025
DRAFT 2026-2035 STIP Released	End of February, 2025

Staff Recommendations:

Vote approve the LOSRPO Prioritization 7.0 Project list.

Item 4B: Wildlife Crossings Identified Needs

Tristan Winkler, FBRMPO Director, will present a brief overview of a draft report *Potential Wildlife Crossings for the French Broad River MPO & Land of Sky RPO Planning Areas* (August 30, 2023). This report was completed by former MPO staff members Scott Adams.

Excerpt from FBRMPO Board agenda, prepared by Scott Adams

Two recent studies (Pigeon River Gorge, June 2022; NC Statewide Study, Fall 2022) have identified a number of potential sites in the Land of Sky RPO and French Broad River

Meeting Agenda

MPO areas where additional infrastructure for Wildlife Crossings (i.e. retrofit of existing bridges, culverts, plus possible new structures and fencing) need to be considered.

What's in the report?

This report reflects an initial review of the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (RPO) planning areas for potential wildlife crossing locations along area roads and highways. The MPO/RPO's primary goals of this report are to begin identifying specific geographic areas and wildlife crossing typologies (eg. Deflection Fencing) that can be incorporated into the larger transportation planning process, notably the state's **Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation (SPOT)** project scoring process, and the **State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP)**.

These two processes identify specific projects, so the early identification of wildlife crossing needs, in addition to other design factors like bicycle/pedestrian accommodation and climate resilience, can reduce project scope and cost revisions later on. This effort stems from initial contact in December 2022 with members of Safe Passage: The I-40 Pigeon River Gorge Wildlife Crossing Project. This project is an outgrowth of a June 2022 study by Wildlands Network and the National Parks Conservation Association. The Pigeon River study and some early pilot projects stemming from it (e.g. A new replacement bridge at I-40, Exit 7 [Harmon Den] designed with flat wildlife paths underneath it.) may provide a template for future projects across the region and state.

The report introduces previous studies and research, provides an overview of the methodology used to identify recommendations, identifies Top Recommendations as well as additional recommendations by county.

The full report Can be reviewed on the RPO website
<https://landofskyrpo.org/documents-and-resources/>

Scott's Conclusion and Next Steps from the report

Smart and proactive planning best occurs when data, stakeholders, and site conditions are consulted early and often. As such, locations identified in this report should be studied further for possible incorporation into the larger transportation planning process, notably the state's **Strategic Prioritization Office of Transportation (SPOT)** project scoring process, which then leads local and statewide **Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP)**.

Meeting Agenda

These two processes identify specific projects, so the early identification of wildlife crossing needs, in addition to other design factors like bicycle/pedestrian accommodation and climate resilience, can reduce project scope and cost revisions later on.

The French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO can act as convening entities between wildlife crossing experts (eg. Wildlands Network, National Parks Conservation Association, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, and local land trusts) and

transportation experts (eg. staff from NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14, plus other construction and maintenance experts).

In addition to the existing Top Recommendations (noted previously in report and on next page), stakeholders should look for “right time, right place” opportunities for the incorporation of wildlife crossing features as part of the transportation network. NCDOT’s existing Complete Streets Policy looks for opportunities for “routine accommodation” in both new construction and maintenance projects, so with the incorporation of data like Wildlife Vehicle Collision (WVC) counts and severity, plus asset management and maintenance/replacement schedules for transportation infrastructure, a similar approach can be taken for wildlife crossings.

Staff Recommendations:

Adopt Potential Wildlife Crossings for the French Broad River MPO & Land of Sky RPO Planning Areas Report.

Item 4C: New FBRMPO LOSRPO Planning Boundary

MPO and RPO Planning Area Boundaries

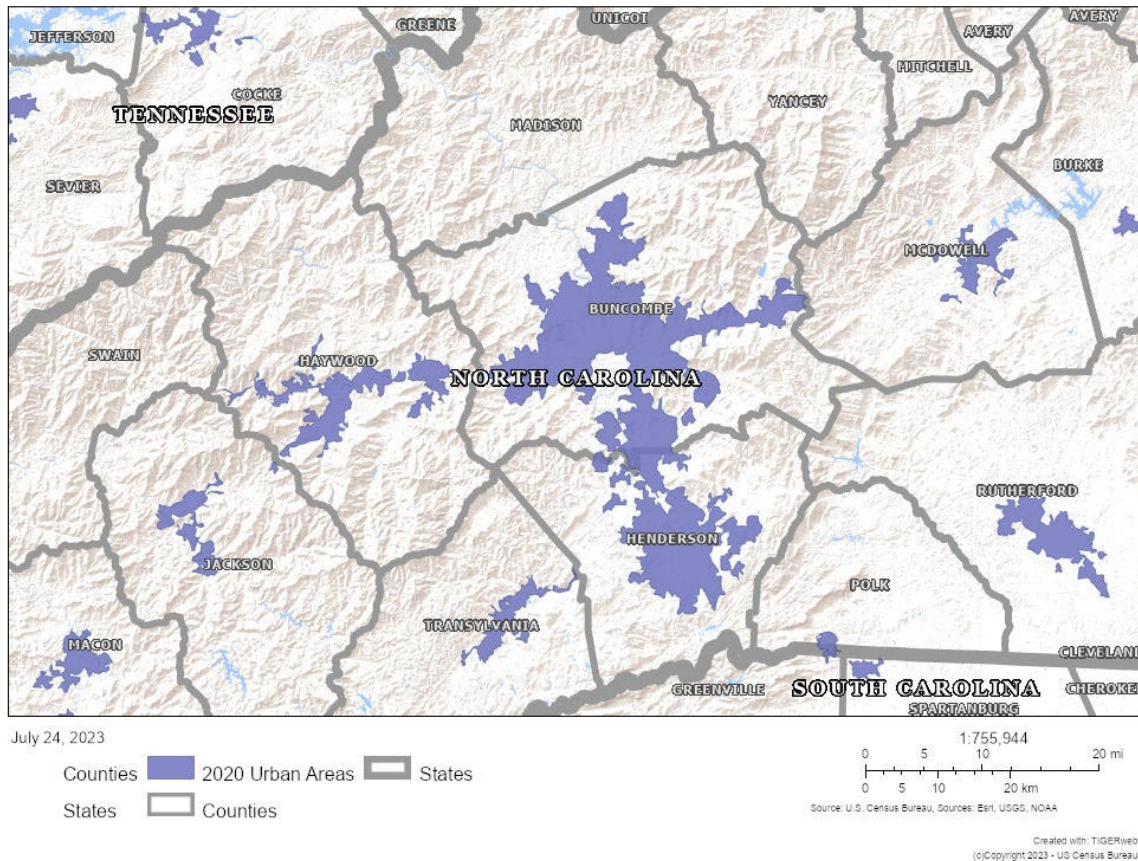
FBRMPO staff has developed an updated Planning Area for the French Broad River MPO.

What Changed with the 2020 Census Urban Area?

A number of criteria used for determining the urban area were changed. For our area, the most significant change involved hops and jumps, which are considerations for bridging areas of urbanization. The hops and jumps were reduced and large areas of the 2010 Asheville Urban Area, including Haywood County and parts of Madison County, were removed from the 2020 Asheville Urban Area.

Meeting Agenda

WNC Urban Areas



How Are MPO Planning Areas Determined?

The regulations require that the MPO Planning Area include the Urban Area as well as what is anticipated to urbanize in the next 20 years. Beyond that, there are not many requirements. In discussions with other MPOs from across the country, most MPO's tend to determine their planning boundaries by taking any census tract or census block group intersecting the urban area and make those census tracts/block groups their boundary.

How Was the Draft Planning Area Drawn for the French Broad River MPO?

Each of the counties in the region have been approached somewhat differently based on unique considerations but generally the planning area was determined pulling in any block group that intersects the Asheville Urban Area, Canton Urban Area, or Waynesville Urban Area (within Haywood County.)

Buncombe County

Meeting Agenda

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Buncombe County

Henderson County

Situation: Henderson County elected to be fully within the MPO in 2010. The urbanized area changed somewhat within Henderson, but the County retains a significant amount of Asheville Urban Area.

Boundary Development: all of Henderson County is considered part of the MPO Planning Area. Changes: No Changes

MPO Population: 116,281

Madison County

Situation: Madison County joined the MPO and Asheville Urban Area after the 2010 Census but fell out of the Asheville Urban Area in 2020.

Boundary Development: Madison County and the Town of Mars Hill requested to stay within the MPO. All block groups that intersect the Town of Mars Hill were added as well as an additional block group (371150106021) in order to keep P 7.0 submittals within the MPO. Changes: three block groups will move from MPO to RPO and the population within the MPO will be reduced by roughly 3,600. No changes in member jurisdictions.

MPO Population: 5,834

Transylvania County

Situation: Transylvania County is currently a non-voting member of the MPO due to a small enclave from the Asheville Urban Area in the 2010 Census. This enclave was removed from the Asheville Urban Area in 2020.

Boundary Development: Transylvania County was removed from the MPO Planning Area. Changes: no part of Transylvania County is part of the MPO Planning Area. One block group with approximately 1,100 residents will switch from MPO to RPO.

MPO Population: 0

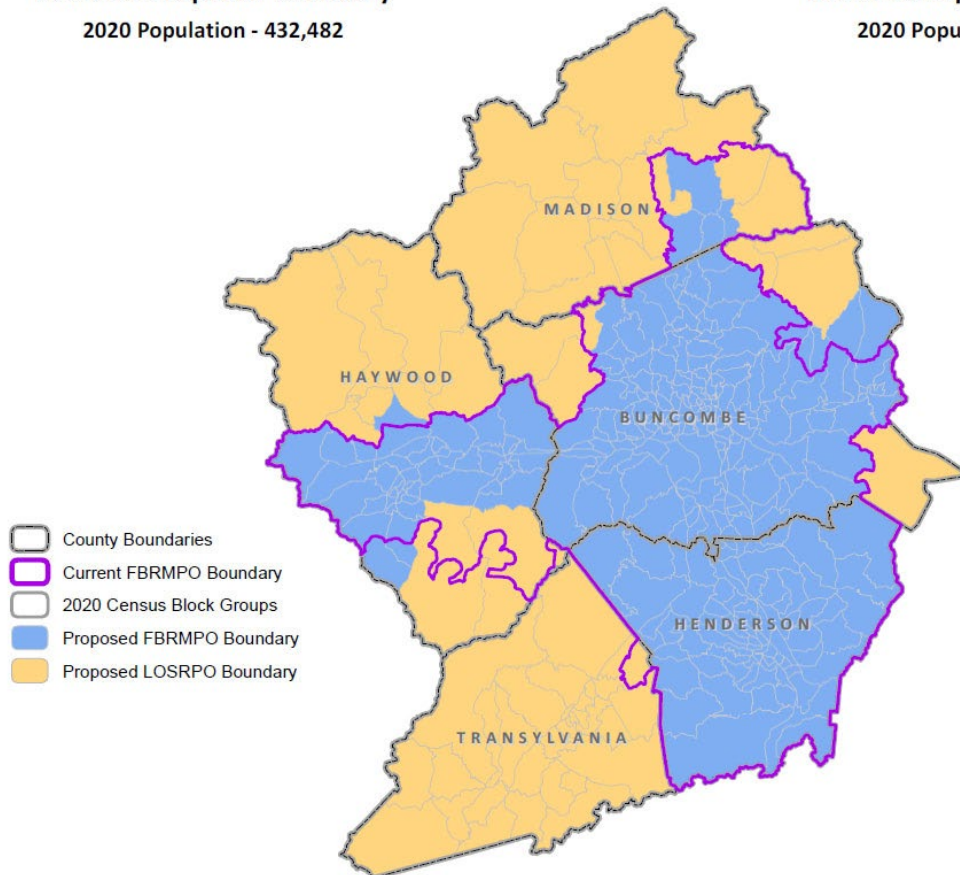
Meeting Agenda

FBRMPO Proposed Boundary

2020 Population - 432,482

LOSRPO Proposed Boundary

2020 Population - 69,519



July 2023

COORDINATED BY
FRENCH BROAD RIVER
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
LAND OF SKY
RURAL PLANNING
ORGANIZATION

Staff Recommendations:

Review and discuss, no action recurred. RPO Staff has developed new dues based on new population numbers. **all information was copied from FBRMPO August Board meeting agenda**

Public Comment

Meeting Agenda

6. REGULAR UPDATES

NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates

NCDOT Staff

Most Recent Updates

<https://landofskyrpo.org/division-13-updates/>

<https://landofskyrpo.org/division-14-updates/>

Transportation Planning Division updates

Daniel Sellers

NCDOT Integrated mobility Division

Alexius Farris

Staff Updates

Vicki Eastland

ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS, SPECIAL UPDATES

7. ADJOURN LOSRPO TAC MEETING

Matt Wechtel

Upcoming Meeting

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