

LAND OF SKY

RURAL PLANNING RURAL ORGANIZATION

RPO Technical Coordinating Committee

October 12, 2023 – 10:00 A.M., Land of Sky Regional Council and Zoom Platform.

[Join LOSRPO TCC Meeting](#)

or call in: (646) 558-8656

Meeting Id: 817 1442 3170 Passcode: 158378

Agenda

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
Welcome and Introductions, William High
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
3. **Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda** William High
 - A. August 2023, TCC minutes
 - B. LOSRPO PWP Amendment
 - C. LOSRPO Public Involvement Plan Edits
4. **RPO BUSINESS**
 - A. LOSRPO P 7.0 FINAL Submittal list and updates Vicki Eastland
 - B. Wildlife Crossings Identified Needs Tristan Winkler
 - C. New FBRMPO LOSRPO Planning Boundary Tristan Winkler
5. **REGULAR UPDATES**
 - A. NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates Division Staff
 - B. Transportation Planning Division Updates Daniel Sellers
 - C. NCDOT Integrated Mobility Updates Alexius Farris
 - D. Staff Updates Vicki Eastland
6. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Upcoming Meetings

Land of Sky RPO TAC – Thursday October 19th, 2023 - 11:30 AM LOSRC Offices and Zoom

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

3. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes from the RPO TCC August 10, 2023, Meeting

Remote and in Person Attendance:

Chair William High	Vicki Eastland	Stephen Sparks	Jon Barsanti
Hannah Cook	Jodie Ferguson	Forrest Gilliam	Jane Pies (Minutes)
Asha Rado (Minutes)	Steve Williams	Dylan Casper	Alexius Farris NCDOT
RH Darnell	Tristan Winkler	Chris Medlin	Daniel Metcalf
Darby Terrell	Emily Brewer		

WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

William High called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00am, welcomed everyone, and roll was called. A quorum was announced to conduct business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Forrest Gilliam moved to approve the agenda and the consent agenda including the May 2023 minutes, the Letter of Support for NCDOT Div. 13 Protect Grant, and the modification to the May 2023 attendance to include Forrest Gilliam. Jodie Ferguson seconded, and the motion passed upon a roll call vote.

RPO 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 is a reflection of this increase in funding.

[LOSRPO FY 2024 PWP Amendment](#)

Vicki Eastland presented.

Steve Williams moved to recommend the LOSRPO FY 2024 PWP to the RPO Board for approval. Jodie Ferguson seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

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[LOS RPO 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 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/prioritization/>

Current schedule for P7.0.

P7.0	Schedule.
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/LOS RPO 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

Steve Williams moved to recommend the draft list of Prioritization 7.0 to the Board for approval. Jodie Ferguson seconded the motion which passed upon a roll call vote.

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Discussion occurred. Jodie Ferguson inquired if approving this, it will not hinder other projects and Vicki Eastland responded that it would not. Vicki Eastland also shared that projects not on the list but that are needed may sub in or ask division partners if they can be added in. There is still time for additions and edits if needed.

Division 13 wants to change the alternate criteria deadline listed above as it is due September not April.

Jon Barsanti presented on Park & Ride as well as Park & Pool, many of these current locations are underutilized and there is potential to work with other regions as well as work with schools.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair High opened the floor a second time for public comment. No public comments were received.

REGULAR UPDATES

NCDOT Division 13 &14
NCDOT Transportation Planning Division
NCDOT IMD
Staff Updates

Hannah Cook/Steve Williams
Daniel Sellers, PE
Alexius Farris
Vicki Eastland

8/31/23 FBRMPO/RPO Hellbender Regional Trail Forum -AVL 9-12 (8-9 network/coffee) @ Smoky Park Supper Club Greenway Walk 12:30-210/
LOSRPO/MPO Rural Roadway Safety Presentation (FHWA, NCDOT to present) Oct 11

8/15/23 LOS BBQ

ADJOURNMENT *William High adjourned the meeting at 10:53 AM as there was no further business.*

B. LOSRPO 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](#)

C. LOSRPO Public Involvement Plan Edits

The Land of Sky RPO maintains a Public Involvement Plan PIP that guides public involvement of LOSRPO Rural Transportation planning activities.

The LOSRPO PIP was last updated in May of 2015. The PIP was reviewed and there are a few minor edits. These edits do not impact the length of public comment windows or the means that comment will be collected. The changes include removing a planning document that the RPO does not maintain, removing some confusing language, and removing language stating that the RPO will put copies of CTPs in local libraries. The changes can be reviewed in the marked-up PIP. This was first shared at the May TCC and TAC meetings and is now back for final adoption.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the Consent Agenda

RPO 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.

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

Current schedule for P7.0.

P7.0 Schedule.

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 – October, 2023 ***
NCDOT Data Review and Scoring (Partner Rev. Feb 2024)	November 2023 – April, 2024
Project Prioritization Public Survey	Winter - Spring 2024
Alternate Criteria Deadline/LOSRPO Local Input Point Methodology Due	May, 2024
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:

Review and discuss, recommend Draft list to the LOSRPO TAC for approval at the October 19th meeting.

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 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.

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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)**.*

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.

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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:

Recommend Potential Wildlife Crossings for the French Broad River MPO & Land of Sky RPO Planning Areas Report to the LOSRPO TAC for adoption at the October 19th meeting.

Item 4C: New FBRMPO LOSRPO Planning Boundary

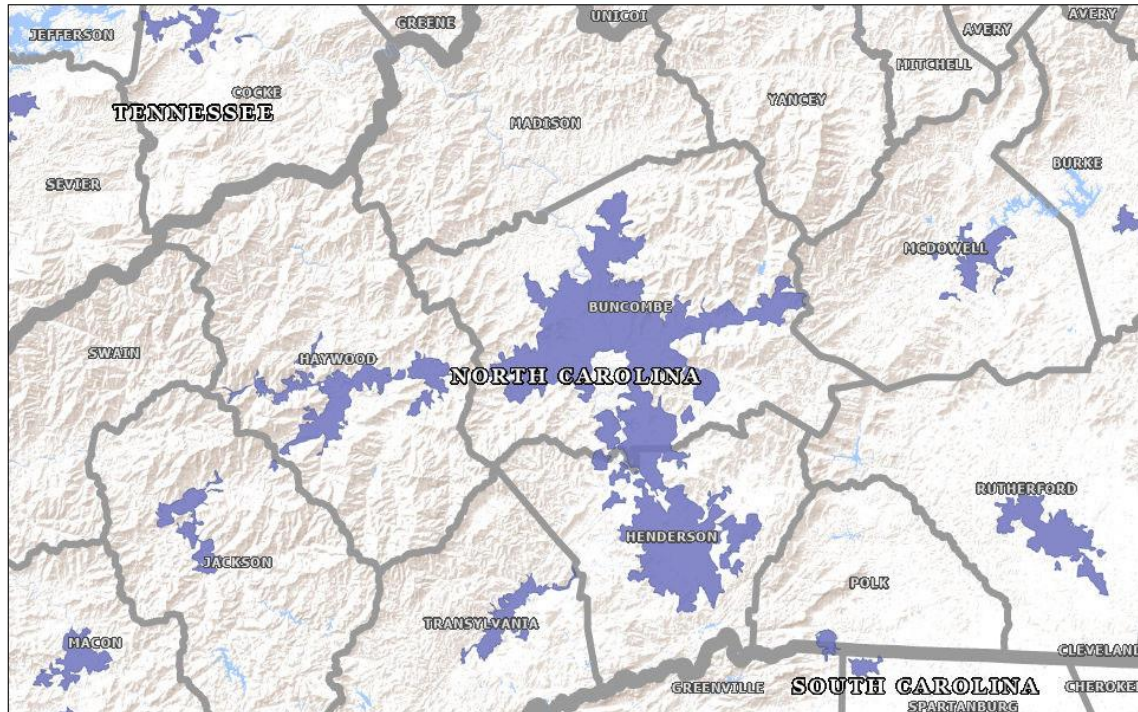
MPO and RPO Planning Area Boundaries

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.

WNC Urban Areas



July 24, 2023

Counties 2020 Urban Areas States
 States Counties

0 5 10 20 mi
 0 5 10 20 km
 1:755,944
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA

Created with: TIGERline
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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

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Situation: Buncombe County is primarily within the urban area but is a member of both the MPO and RPO.

Boundary Development: any block group intersecting the urban area was made part of the Draft Planning Area.

Changes: some territory was added in Eastern Buncombe due to a simplified methodology. The current boundaries are somewhat arbitrary and not built on any census geography. One block group in NW Buncombe was removed from the MPO and added to the RPO due to a lack of urban area. No changes in member jurisdiction.
MPO Population: 258,694

Haywood County

Situation: Haywood County, after being part of the Asheville Urban Area since 2000, has no part of the Asheville Urban Area due to changes in the 2020 Census. Instead, there are two small urban areas- Canton and Waynesville. However, there is a very high likelihood Haywood County will rejoin the Asheville Urban Area within the next 20 years.

Boundary Development: MPO staff met with County and municipal representatives, and they requested to stay within the MPO. All block groups that intersected Canton or Waynesville Urban Areas were brought into the MPO Planning Area (note: part of the Waynesville Urban Area goes into Jackson County. This was not considered or discussed with Jackson County.) One block group that intersected Waynesville Urban Area was not added at the request of Land of Sky RPO.

Changes: a significant amount of land south of Canton and Clyde with roughly 3,600 residents will change from MPO to RPO but some land north and south of Waynesville with roughly 1,100 residents will change from RPO to MPO. No change in member jurisdictions.

MPO Population: 51,673

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

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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.

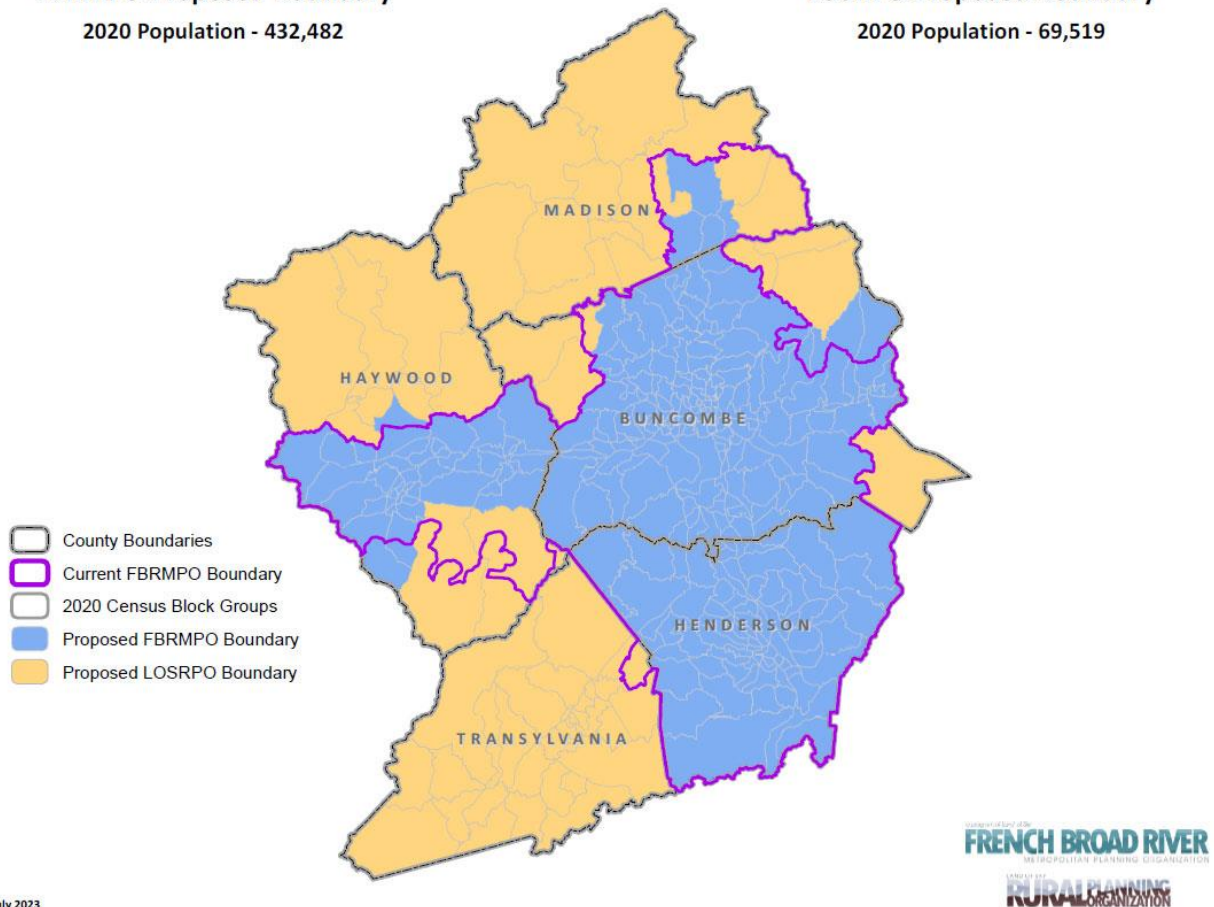
MPO Population: 0

FBRMPO Proposed Boundary

2020 Population - 432,482

LOSRPO Proposed Boundary

2020 Population - 69,519



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**

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PUBLIC COMMENT

5. REGULAR UPDATES

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| A. NCDOT Division 13 and 14 updates
https://landofskyrpo.org/division-13-updates/
https://landofskyrpo.org/division-14-updates/ | Division Staff |
| B. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division Updates
https://landofskyrpo.org/ncdot-tpd-news/ | Daniel Sellers, PE |
| C. NCDOT Integrated mobility Division | Alexius Farris |
| D. Staff Updates | Vicki Eastland |

ADJOURNMENT

Upcoming Meetings

Land of Sky RPO TAC – Thursday October 19th, 2023 - 11:30 AM LOSRC Offices and Zoom

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