

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln**  
**Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) Board**  
**September 23, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**

The scheduled Board meeting of the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization was held on Thursday, September 23, 2021 from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm virtually, via Zoom.

**Members Present**

Stan Anthony	City of Shelby, Mayor
H. L. Beam	City of Cherryville, Mayor
Lynn Black	Town of Ranlo, Mayor
Rick Coleman	Town of Dallas, Mayor
Cathy Davis	Lincoln County, Commissioner
Martin Eaddy	City of Lincolnton, Council Member
Ken Ervin	City of Lowell, Council Member
Allen Fraley	Gaston County, Commissioner
Jamie Fowler	Town of Ranlo, Commissioner
Tommy Greene	Town of Boiling Springs, Council Member
Leigh Anna Helms	Town of Stanley, Council Member
Johnny Hutchins	Cleveland County, Commissioner
Charles McCorkle	City of Mount Holly, Council Member
Keith Miller	City of Kings Mountain, Council Member
Scott Neisler	City of Kings Mountain, Mayor, <b>MPO Board Vice-Chair</b>
Jill Puett	City of Cherryville, Mayor Pro Tem
Milton Sigmon	Lincoln County, Commissioner
Richard Turner	City of Belmont, Council Member, <b>MPO Board Chair</b>

**Staff Present**

Randi Gates	GCLMPO, Principal Transportation Planner
Julio Paredes	GCLMPO, Planner
Kristen Wheeler	GCLMPO, Administrative Assistant

**Guests Present**

Rusty Bost	City of Gastonia, Development Services Director
Dominique Boyd	NCDOT TPD, GCLMPO Coordinator
Juan Garcia	Gaston County, Senior Transportation Planner / Data Analyst
Blake Guffey	NCDOT Division 12, District Engineer
Jason Lawrence	CATS, Senior Transportation Planner
Dean Ledbetter	NCDOT, Program Dev. Branch, Corridor Dev. Engineer
Wil Neumann	Citizen
Anil Panicker	NCDOT Division 12, Planning Engineer
Mark Stafford	NCDOT Division 12, Division Engineer
Jason Wager	Centralina Regional Council, Principal Planner
Jim Walker	Citizen

**Absences (x = Absent) / Not In Good Standing**

Member	July	Sept	Dec	2021 Jan	Mar	May	July	Sept
City of Belmont	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Bessemer City	-----	X	X	-----	X	-----	-----	X
Town of Boiling Springs	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Cherryville	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Town of Cramerton	-----	-----	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	X
Town of Dallas	-----	X	-----	X	-----	X	-----	-----
City of Gastonia (1/2)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	X	-----	X
City of Gastonia (2/2)	-----	X	X	-----	-----	X	-----	X
City of Kings Mountain	-----	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Lincolnton	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Lowell	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Mount Holly	-----	-----	X	-----	-----	X	-----	-----
Town of Ranlo	-----	X	X	X	X	-----	-----	-----
City of Shelby	X	-----	X	-----	-----	-----	X	-----
Town of Stanley	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-----
Cleveland County	-----	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Gaston County	-----	-----	-----	X	-----	X	X	-----
Lincoln County	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
NCDOT – Board of Transportation	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	X

**1. Introduction of Members & Guests**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mr. Turner welcomed all members and guests. Mrs. Gates conducted a roll call.

**2. Determination of Quorum and Good Standing**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mrs. Gates determined that a quorum had been met.

**3. Ethics Awareness & Conflict of Interest Reminder**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mr. Turner read the ethics awareness and conflict of interest reminder.

**4. Set Agenda**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mr. Turner stated that it was time to set the agenda.

**Mr. Ervin motioned to set the agenda as presented. Mr. Greene seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mr. Turner asked for a motion to approve the July 22, 2021 meeting minutes as presented.

**Mr. Beam motioned to approve the July 22, 2021 minutes as presented. Mr. Coleman seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **6. Public Comment**

**Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair**

Mr. Walker thanked the Board and NCDOT Division 12 for their consistent participation at the meetings and the quality of work of the organization. Mr. Walker also thanked the Board for the ability to participate in the meetings.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **7. 2020-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Administrative Modifications**

All projects receiving federal funding must be in the GCLMPO's TIP and the NCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The federal regulations also require that project schedules and funding amounts be consistent between the TIP and the STIP.

**Mr. Fraley motioned to approve the 2020-2029 TIP Administrative Modifications as presented. Mr. Hutchins seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

## **REGULAR AGENDA**

### **8. CONNECT Beyond Recommendations**

**Presenters: Jason Wager, Principal Planner, Centralina Regional Council**

**Jason Lawrence, Senior Transportation Planner, Charlotte Area Transit System**

Mr. Wager noted that CONNECT Beyond recently released its draft plan and is receiving feedback from the public and stakeholders. Mr. Wager covered the project priorities which are increased economic competitiveness, improved transportation choices, enhanced public transit, promoting sustainable regional growth, advancing equity and encouraging environmental stewardship across two (2) states and twelve (12) counties. A transportation equity index has also been created which is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the region's population, from vehicle accessibility to disabled and minority populations. The maps also provide context for placement of the preliminary high-capacity transit corridors throughout the region.

Additionally, the draft plan aims to move mobility forward by creating a regional public transportation network that allows residents and visitors to seamlessly cross city, county and state lines using public transportation options, elevate public transportation as a preferred mobility choice and community asset and grow regional competitiveness to attract industry which will grow businesses and retain jobs, among other things. The study has looked at mixed mobility layers which cover a variety of mobility options both urban and rural. Ultimately the study created five (5) Mobility Moves including creating mobility-friendly places, expanding mobility choices, strengthening rural to urban connections, building a better bus network and investing in strategic mobility corridors. Mr. Lawrence explained that these five (5) Moves need to be well coordinated to build a system and a pairing of land uses that can meet future needs.

Creating mobility-friendly places includes strategies to support pedestrian-friendly communities that have convenient access to public transit services. Some of the key strategies for the near-term include adopting transit supportive development policies, developing livable centers and corridors grant program and utilizing a common platform for land use analysis. The mid-term key recommendations include involving transit in the land use development process and concentrating on growth along high-capacity corridors.

Expanding mobility choices focuses on supporting how, when and where residents and visitors travel now and in the future. Near-term recommendations for this Move are to expand commuter choice programs to twelve (12) counties and establish regional technology for service/fare integration. Mid-term objectives are to pilot new on-demand mobility services and implement a regional network of mobility hubs. The study also recommends focusing on future-proofing mobility by anticipating and preparing for future workforce, emerging transportation technologies and preparing for future pandemics.

In order to strengthen rural to urban connections the study focused on strategies to improve mobility transportation choices for those who choose to live and work in rural communities. Key recommendations include regional coordination and representation, allowing for more general public use trips, regional

scheduling software and system streamlining.

Mr. Lawrence then covered the importance of building a better bus network, noting that it is imperative to integrate existing bus systems and enhance coordination between transit service providers across our region to make it easier for riders to plan, pay for and complete their trips. There are seventeen (17) transit systems in the region with six (6) providing fixed-route service. The near-term recommendations for building a better network include an educational campaign to show the value of transit/mobility and launching an implementation team who focuses on building a better bus network. In the mid-term, creating a transit workforce of tomorrow and creating more transit access networks/mobility hubs is key. Lastly, building ridership in strategic mobility corridors in a long-term objective.

Investing in strategic mobility corridors is the final Mobility Move that Mr. Lawrence covered, noting that the study had identified and analyzed candidate corridors throughout the region where high capacity transit lines could possibly be extended or newly constructed. There needs to be more planning to understand what the right-of-way width is and what the corridor landing should look like and considering all corridors in a regional sense.

Currently, the study is considering how to maintain momentum. Mr. Wager noted that this study needs to have an implementation plan for it to be useful. The CONNECT Beyond team recognizes that there needs to be partnerships and unified education for the public regarding mobility value to the community. Moving forward, Mr. Wager stated that there would be a two-pronged approach to formalizing regional collaboration. Utilizing existing agreements and relationships and continuing to convene and expand the work of the funding and partnership working group that was brought together through the CONNECT Beyond work over the last year and a half. Additionally, it is important to continue to evaluate future, regional partner structures. Funding will continue to be a vital part of implementation of the CONNECT Beyond plan and recommendations to continue growing funding include formalizing coordination among jurisdictions while enabling each jurisdiction to develop a funding approach, engaging in sustained and coordinated funding efforts, advocating with a unified voice to state legislators and federal partners and developing clarity on funding sources, potential yield and steps to implement new funding streams for shared projects.

Looking ahead, the plan will be released on September 29<sup>th</sup>, go before the Centralina Board of Delegates on October 13<sup>th</sup> and the MTC on October 27<sup>th</sup> for endorsement and then MPOs/RPOs/Transit Agencies for endorsement in November and/or December. MPOs/RPOs/Transit Agencies will then incorporate implementation activities into work plans and relevant comprehensive plans.

There is a website where comments can be posted regarding the Mobility Moves and Mr. Wager asked everyone to visit by September 24<sup>th</sup>.

Jason Lawrence noted that there was a question in the chat about the equity index data and how it relates to corridor identification and stated he would follow up with the person who asked the question.

Mr. Turner asked if Mr. Lawrence had any ideas of where to capture revenue streams to move forward with implementing the plan. Mr. Lawrence stated that there needs to be planning to create the funds in the future as federal funds need planning and community outreach and backing by the public and elected officials.

Mr. Neisler asked if there was any plan to create any sort of committee or authority to lobby toward implementing the plan. Mr. Lawrence noted that it is not a recommendation in the plan right now but they recognize that it could be necessary in the future.

## **9. 2020-2029 TIP / 2045 MTP Amendments**

**Presenter: Randi Gates, Principal Transportation Planner**

The GCLMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) need to be amended to reflect modifications that have been made to the 2020-2029 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These amendments require a 30-day public comment period which will run October 1-30, 2021 and will be conducted virtually both on the MPO's website and via email. The public comments will go before the TCC and Board in November/December for approval.

Mr. Sigmon asked why U-5962 keeps getting delayed. Mrs. Gates stated that there are delays state wide due to scoping, funding and design changes.

**Mr. Hutchins motioned to approve the 2020-2029 TIP and 2045 MTP Amendments to be released for a 30-day public comment period (October 1-30, 2021). Mr. McCorkle seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **10. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Fiscally-Constrained Project Lists**

**Presenter: Julio Paredes, Planner**

Utilizing approved ranking criteria and financial assumptions, fiscally-constrained project lists for highway, bicycle and pedestrian, aviation, and public transportation were developed for the draft 2050 MTP and released for public comment from August 2 – 31, 2021. 96 comments were received online through an interactive GIS map and via email. Most comments received were supportive of the project lists and responses were included in the agenda for review. Staff is asking for approval of the responses as presented.

**Mr. Neisler motioned to approve responses to public comments received as presented. Mr. Beam seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **11. FY 21-22 UPWP Amendment – Special Study**

**Presenter: Randi Gates, Principal Transportation Planner**

On August 18, the GCLMPO issued a Call for Applications for FY 22 Special Studies. A total of \$60,000 in Planning (PL) Funds (+ 20% local match) is available to program for a local transportation planning activity. MPO staff wanted to give communities the opportunity to apply for those funds so that they are not lost. A total of five (5) applications were received. Applications included; a joint application from the City of Belmont and Gaston County for a South Fork/Catawba Peninsula Transportation Study, the Town of Stanley for a Downtown Stanley Transportation Study, GCLMPO staff for a US 74 High Capacity Transit Implementation Service Plan, Kings Mountain for a Kings Mountain Trail Connector Feasibility Study and the Town of Cramerton for a Realignment Feasibility Study of Armstrong Ford Road.

A subcommittee of local government partners, NCDOT and FHWA utilized approved scoring criteria from 2016 to rank the applications and are recommending that the Downtown Stanley Transportation Study be approved for funding. The ranking criteria included study type, cost, local government contribution, project schedule and whether the community had been awarded PL funds in recent years, among other things. The FY 21-22 UPWP will need to be amended to program this funding. Following the UPWP amendment, MPO staff will work with the Town of Stanley to hire a consultant, complete an interlocal agreement and issue at least one (1) invoice prior to the end of FY 22.

Mr. Turner noted that the City of Belmont is very disappointed with this decision as they have pursued this funding for five (5) years and have not been successful. With Belmont being on a peninsula with one (1) two-lane road leading out, and with the continued population growth, the road is approaching critical mass.

Mr. Hutchins asked if the money would cover all of the projects or how much extra would be needed to do all the projects. Mrs. Gates stated that all of the applications were asking for the full amount of funds available.

**Mr. Sigmon motioned to approve the FY 21-22 UPWP Amendment as presented. Mr. Coleman seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **12. Other Business**

- a. P6 Update** - On August 18<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Gates sent out an email to let everyone know that the P6.0 cycle was going to be halted due to rising costs for utilities, ROW and construction. There is currently no funding in the MPO's region to program any new projects so the statewide prioritization committee did not feel it necessary to go through public comment and local input point assignments. The Board of Transportation concurred that the process should be halted to avoid public confusion and false expectations. There does still have to be a 2024-2033 STIP which needs to be approved by December 2022 and the halt will allow NCDOT to complete project estimate updates and MPOs to work on this

at the local level. Mrs. Gates noted that she would keep everyone posted as she gets more information.

Mr. Stafford said that this STIP being over-programmed is an unprecedented situation and that it will have to be corrected, but that NCDOT is going to work with MPOs and RPOs across the state to find a solution.

Mr. Sigmon asked about the expected completion date of the signalization project on Optimist Club Rd. Mr. Stafford said he would check on the actual date and get back with Mr. Sigmon.

Mr. Turner asked what "reprogramming" means. Mr. Stafford said that it refers to the schedules and dates of when the funds can be spent on the various phases of a project. Mr. Turner then stated that, NCDOT overspent \$742 million last fiscal year and he hopes that they have overhauled their best practices as that is a considerable amount of money.

Mr. Neisler asked if Mr. Stafford thought everything would be pushed back or if committed projects would move forward. Mr. Stafford said that, as of now, committed projects are continuing but mid- to far-range projects may be delayed.

- b. NCDOT Update – Board Member, Division 12 Staff and TPD MPO Coordinator** – There was an attachment in the agenda packet that outlined project updates. Mr. Stafford also noted that litter clean up would be complete within the week. To date, NCDOT has picked up over 325,000 pounds of litter in the Division 12 area. Additionally, the secondary cycle of mowing will begin October 1<sup>st</sup> and the last cycle of interstate and divided highways will take place in November.
- c. Transit Systems Ridership** – For information only.

### **13. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Hutchins motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm. Mr. Beam seconded and the motion passed unanimously.