

MEETING MINUTES
Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln
Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) Board
September 24, 2020
Virtual Meeting

The scheduled Board meeting of the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020 from 6:30 pm – 7:40 pm via GoToMeeting and conference call.

Members Present

Richard Atkinson	Town of Cramerton, Commissioner
H.L. Beam	City of Cherryville, Mayor
Violet Dukes	City of Shelby, Council Member
Martin Eaddy	City of Lincolnnton, Council Member
Ken Ervin	City of Lowell, Council Member
Allen Fraley	Gaston County, Commissioner
Tommy Greene	Town of Boiling Springs, Council Member
Brad Lail	NCDOT Div. 12 Board Member
Charles McCorkle	City of Mount Holly, Council Member
Charles Odom	City of Gastonia, Council Member
Jill Puett	City of Cherryville, Mayor Pro Tem
Milton Sigmon	Lincoln County, Commissioner
Richard Turner	City of Belmont, Council Member

Staff Present

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

Guests Present

Loretta Barren	FHWA, Planner
Hannah Cook	NCDOT STIP Unit, Senior Program Engineer
Blake Guffey	NCDOT, District Engineer
Dean Ledbetter	NCDOT, Program Dev. Branch, Corridor Dev. Engineer
Anil Panicker	NCDOT Division 12 Planner
Mark Stafford	NCDOT Division 12 Engineer
Jim Walker	Citizen
David Wasserman	NCDOT-TPD, STIP Western Region Manager

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

Member	Sept	Dec	2020 Jan	Mar	May	July	Sept
City of Belmont	-----	-----	-----	X	-----	-----	-----
City of Bessemer City	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	X
Town of Boiling Springs	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Cherryville	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Town of Cramerton	-----	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----
Town of Dallas	-----	X	X	-----	-----	-----	X
City of Gastonia (1/2)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Gastonia (2/2)	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	X
City of Kings Mountain	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	X
City of Lincolnton	X	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Lowell	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
City of Mount Holly	X	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Town of Ranlo	X	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	X
City of Shelby	-----	-----	-----	X	X	X	-----
Town of Stanley	-----	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cleveland County	-----	-----	X	-----	X	-----	X
Gaston County	-----	-----	X	-----	X	-----	-----
Lincoln County	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
NCDOT – Board of Transportation	X	X	X	X	-----	X	-----

1. Introduction of Members & Guests

Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair

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

2. 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. Mr. Beam seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Determination of Quorum and Good Standing

Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair

Mrs. Gates determined that a quorum had been met.

4. Ethics Awareness & Conflict of Interest Reminder

Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair

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

5. Approval of Minutes

Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair

Mr. Turner asked for a motion to approve the July 30, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.

Mr. Fraley motioned to approve the July 30, 2020 minutes as presented. Mr. Eaddy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Public Comment

Presenter: Richard Turner, MPO Board Chair

Mr. Jim Walker thanked the Board for their continued support of the Build a Better Boulevard projects. Mr. Walker also thanked Division 12 and Mark Stafford for scoring projects.

7. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Reprogramming
Presenters: Hannah Cook, Senior Program Engineer, NCDOT STIP Unit

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the passage of House Bill 77 into law, and project cost increases received over the past year, the NCDOT STIP Unit has recently performed a reprogramming exercise to ensure the 2020-2029 STIP remains fiscally constrained. Ms. Cook explained that the STIP is a planning document listing most capital projects that NCDOT expects to deliver over the next ten (10) years. The STIP is comprised of four (4) parts; an estimated budget, projects, estimated project costs and estimated project schedules. The document is fiscally constrained so estimates are a large portion of the document but the document is also subject to change when cash flow projections change.

Prior to COVID, NCDOT was already experiencing cash flow issues due to storm response and legal settlements resulting from the MAP Act. Once COVID hit revenues were devastated with gas tax not being collected. This summer, House Bill 77 (HB 77) was passed which shifted revenue from the Highway Trust Fund to the Highway Fund and allows for a \$700M dollar BUILD NC Bond sale in FY 21 to be used on active construction projects. Additionally, HB 77 increased the amount of GARVEE Bonds available. With all of this combined, NCDOT expects to see a decrease of about \$2B dollars in the STIP programs over ten (10) years.

Since September 2019, NCDOT has seen project cost increases of over \$3B dollars primarily arising from projects in P3.0 and P4.0 with the largest increases in ROW estimates, especially in urban areas. In order to address this issue, certain improvements are underway which include reviewing all cost estimates in the STIP, updating estimates and improving internal processes to ensure the latest cost data is known. Also in September 2019, NCDOT paused preliminary engineering on roughly 100 projects across the state due to budget issues. If a project was paused at that time it is likely that there will be at least a one (1) year suspension on the project. In restarting projects, there will continue to be delays due partially to the complex and lengthy process of relocating utilities.

Due to the \$2B decrease in revenues and the \$3B increase in project costs the STIP is no longer fiscally constrained so NCDOT now needs to reprogram the STIP. The STIP must remain fiscally constrained in order to meet federal requirements and not jeopardize federal funding, to provide realistic delivery schedules and to update project funding with BUILD NC and GARVEE Bonds, due to HB 77. The reprogramming process started with getting a revised budget for the ten (10) year STIP and dividing that among the 22 STI funding buckets while working with Divisions to identify priorities. NCDOT then programmed \$700M in FY 21 BUILD NC Bonds first to be used on active construction projects; once active construction projects were covered that would free up money for other projects. NCDOT then updated projects with BUILD NC bonds for FY 22 and beyond as well as updating the projects with GARVEE Bonds. NCDOT then had to ensure that each individual year in the STIP was also fiscally constrained so they tested each year in each of the funding buckets. Finally, NCDOT had to make sure that they were within STI law constraints which state that the budget cannot be more than 15% overprogrammed in the first five (5) years of the STIP and no more than 10% overprogrammed in the entire ten (10) year program.

NCDOT considered several parameters while reprogramming the STIP including active USDOT grant commitments, project delivery status, recent substantial cost increases, prioritization scores and P5.0 committed status. Project delivery status drove a lot of the reprogramming process in an effort to be consistent while still considering pauses in project engineering. The result of the reprogramming is a starting point and adjustments can be made as long as constraints are met. Any of adjustments would be zero-sum within the same Division, PO and STI category. NCDOT considers the reprogramming process similar to a typical Draft STIP development and acknowledges that once a project is committed it remains committed and will not have to re-compete for prioritization except any project committed in P5.0 that is subject to review by the STICKR Committee. The reprogramming changes will need Board of Transportation (BOT) action to be finalized and went before the Board in September for information. The Board will vote on the document in October 2020.

There are caveats to the changes that must be considered, as well. Schedules presume \$700M in BUILD NC bonds sold in Fall 2020 and require Federal reauthorization which is not guaranteed. Congress may recommend a continued resolution in which Federal funds come in over the course of the year rather than as a lump sum. Rebalancing will be ongoing as additional cost increases happen and may result in additional changes. Lastly, the full effect of COVID on revenues remains unknown.

Key projects that are affected by the STIP reprogramming are below:

- R-707D/E (Shelby Bypass) – Let in FY 24 – Schedule change due to pause in ROW acquisition and funding availability. Remains a BUILD NC bond project.
- I-5719 (I-85 from US 321 to NC 273 – widen to eight lanes w/ interchange improvements). To be let with U-3608 and U-5800 – Right-of-way in FY 24 and Construction in FY 25 – Progressive Design-Build
- R-5712A (NC 73 from NC 16 to Vance Road Ext – widening) – Right-of-way in FY 24 and Construction in FY 27 due to funding availability.
- U-5821 (NC 279 from Titman Road to Union-New Hope Road – widening) - Right-of-way in FY 23 and Construction in FY 26; Remains a BUILD NC bond project.
- U-2567 (US 74 at NC 150 – Construct Interchange) To be let with U-5929 – Right-of-way in FY 29 and Construction in Post Years, due to funding availability.

This item was for information only.

8. Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Amendment Policy Revisions

Presenter: Julio Paredes, Planner

The GCLMPO's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Amendment Policy was originally adopted in September 2019. After a comprehensive review of the policy, it has become evident that there is a need to revise the policy to add a distinction between administrative versus procedural types of CTP Amendments. The policies below do not change where a request to amend the CTP comes from, requests still come from MPO staff or from the jurisdiction where the project is located. Instead, the amendments will turn the authorization of approval into a process. Additionally, the policy amendments will help in showing which changes need to be presented to the public for comment.

The following amendment types and descriptions are being proposed:

Administrative CTP Amendments

- Can be measured to have zero (0) impact to very minor impact to property owners based upon the proposed CTP map amendment.
- Deemed minor if there is a shift in an alignment by less than 1,000 linear feet, unless MPO staff recommends otherwise.
- Public involvement will not be conducted if the GCLMPO staff determines the CTP amendment to be an administrative modification.

Procedural CTP Amendments

- Can be measured to have a minor to major impact to residents and/or stakeholders.
- Deemed minor to major if there is a shift in an alignment by 1,000 linear feet or more.
- This type of amendment may also alter the intent of a project or add or remove a project.
- A full public engagement process will be required. If an amendment comes at the request of a local government, the local government shall be responsible for advertising and conducting the 30-day public comment period and public meeting.

Mrs. Gates added that the original CTP Amendment Policy was approved in September 2019 following a citizen requesting a CTP amendment. Since that time MPO staff realized that the amendment policy did not include a differentiation between procedural and administrative amendments. Nor did the CTP Amendment Policy distinguish which kinds of amendments required a public comment opportunity from ones that did not. The new amendment policy will identify that certain amendments can be reported to the TCC and Board without having a formal public comment period.

Mr. Beam motioned to approve revisions to the CTP Amendment Policy as presented. Mrs. Dukes seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

9. Public Participation Plan (PPP) Revisions

Presenter: Randi Gates, Principal Transportation Planner

An analysis of the GCLMPO's Public Participation Plan has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of

the MPO's public involvement program by surveying its current practices, assessing state and federal requirements, and developing recommendations based upon best practices. This information was brought before the TCC and Board in March to release for public comment but, due to COVID, there was concern about taking revisions to a Public Participation Plan out for public comment when there was no opportunity to hold a public meeting. Working through NCDOT and FHWA, MPO staff decided to use the TCC and Board meetings as the public comment opportunity.

The following revisions to the GCLMPO's Public Participation Plan are being recommended to strengthen the MPO's ability to solicit input, communicate, and engage with the public:

1. Remove the stipulation that "a minimum of seven (7) days will be allotted between the close of a public comment period and the TCC meeting in which a recommendation will be made to the MPO Board regarding consideration of the public comments".
2. Remove the requirement for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to be taken out for a 30-day public comment period with associated public meetings. Instead, the MPO will solicit input on the draft UPWP following the posting of the TCC agenda, seven (7) days prior to the meeting, allowing a minimum of fourteen (14) days for public comment prior to the adoption by the Board. The same will apply for amendments to the UPWP.
3. Add Performance Measures to the list of MPO Public Input and Comment Activities.
4. Add the GCLMPO's Title VI Policy Statement to the PPP and refer to the GCLMPO Title VI Program Plan.
5. Clean up the locations for "Posting of Public Meetings" and meeting locations for public meetings.
6. Add Social Media External Use Policy.
7. Rearrange the document for ease of reading.
8. *Add reference to the CTP Amendment Policy and amendment types.**

In accordance with the current Public Participation Plan dated July 28, 2016, a 45-day public comment period was held from July 21 – September 3. Only one (1) comment was received: *Please update the Public Participation Plan to add the Administrative Modifications reference that is located within your CTP Amendment Policy.**

Mr. Eaddy motioned to approve revisions to the Public Participation Plan as presented. Mr. McCorkle seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

10. Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Amendments – Bicycle & Pedestrian

Presenter: Jane Love, Senior Transportation Planner

GCLMPO's CTP was adopted in March of 2018. Following NCDOT's Complete Streets Implementation Guide that came out in late January 2020, staff is proposing several amendments to the CTP Bicycle Map and the CTP Pedestrian Map. The reasons the amendments are being proposed are:

- To support inclusion of needed bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with locally advantageous cost sharing status, in roadway projects that are being submitted in NCDOT's Prioritization 6.0. In NCDOT's most recent Complete Street Implementation Guidance (Jan. 2020), the CTP is the "controlling plan" and the needs identified in the CTP will factor into whether a certain type of bicycle and/or pedestrian facility is included in a road project without additional local match required, included but with a certain percentage of local match required, or included and paid for by the locals at 100%.
- To reflect the type of facility that was included in a Bike/Ped submittal in P6.0.
- To ensure that the necessary bicycle and pedestrian facilities are included in STIP projects that do not yet have the environmental document signed. (Per NCDOT Complete Streets policy, the design of programmed projects will not be revised to change the bicycle and pedestrian facilities if the environmental document has been signed.)
- To incorporate recommendations of several bicycle and/or pedestrian plans that have been completed since the CTP was adopted.
- To correct alignment(s).

The agenda had two (2) lists and two (2) maps that provided the details of the proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian CTP revisions:

- CTP Bicycle Revisions List – Includes the location and type of revision for segments being revised due to P6.0 submittals or due to a STIP project. Due to the large number of revisions, segments that are proposed

only due to recent Bike/Ped plan completion are not individually listed unless they also are affected by one of the other aforementioned reasons.

- CTP Pedestrian Revisions List – Includes the location and type of revision for segments being revised due to P6.0 submittals or due to a STIP project. Due to the large number of revisions, segments that are proposed only due to recent Bike/Ped plan completion are not individually listed unless they also are affected by one of the other aforementioned reasons.
- CTP Bicycle Map Insets - Includes proposed revisions marked in either red (newly recommended on-road bicycle facility) or blue (newly recommended multi-use path). This map includes all of the proposed bicycle map revisions, whether due to P6.0 submittals, STIP projects, and/or recent bicycle plans. The New Recommended Multi-Use Paths would also be applied to the CTP Pedestrian Map. An additional map showing the proposed revisions for sidewalks will be provided before the next Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) meeting.
 - Note that “On-Road Bicycle” is a category that may indicate a need for any of the various types of separated bicycle lanes, or for buffered bicycle lanes, regular bicycle lanes, or paved shoulders. The local bicycle plans will be incorporated into the CTP by reference and guide the decision on which type of on-road bicycle facility should be provided on a given segment.
- CTP Pedestrian Map Insets - Includes proposed revisions marked in either orange (newly recommended sidewalk) or purple (newly existing sidewalk).

Ms. Love noted that, in Gastonia, most of the revisions are related to getting facilities needed on interchanges related to the I-85 Widening project as well as some P6.0 projects on Beaty Road and Lowell-Bethesda Road. In Lowell, the revisions are mostly from the bike plan that was completed recently. The connectors in Cramerton are already included in the CTP so there are no revisions needed there. The revisions in Shelby are a result of Shelby’s recent bike plan. In Bessemer City most changes are a result of the P6.0 SPOT submittals and in Kings Mountain there are some needs identified related to the new casino. Lincolnton revisions are related to P6.0 submittals for new roadway alignments. In Cherryville and Stanley recommended changes are opportunities for parallel bicycle routes and basic connections between towns and some STIP projects are identified in Dallas. In Belmont there are several possible future roadways that alignments don’t match the possible future roadways as well as a P6.0 submittal that has a multi-use path that needs to be extended. Additionally, the Build a Better Boulevard study had several recommendations for Catawba Ave. that could potentially be incorporated into the bridge replacement if the design could be modified. In Mount Holly the Belmont-Mount Holly Loop needs adjustment in addition to some changes resulting from the new bike plan. Ms. Love outlined various other proposed changes that can be found on the maps included in the agenda.

Pending the MPO Board action, the proposed revisions will be processed in accordance with the CTP Amendment Policy. The 30-day public comment period for amendments is proposed to be held September 28, 2020 through October 27, 2020.

Mrs. Dukes motioned to approve the release of the CTP Bicycle and Pedestrian amendments for public comment. Mr. Ervin seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

11. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update Process

Presenter: Jane Love, Senior Transportation Planner

The MPO is required to update its long-range transportation plan, known as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), by March of 2022. This MTP will replace the existing plan, which was adopted in March of 2018. The MTP will highlight existing and projected conditions in the three (3) counties, establish goals and objectives, project and assign fiscal resources, and identify projects to meet MPO needs. Due to our status as Maintenance for Ozone, this plan must be shown to maintain air quality levels. An MTP must be financially balanced; the estimated cost of the included projects cannot exceed the projected revenue. MPO staff have developed a preliminary schedule for this process. Most of these steps will overlap. At key points, the TCC and MPO Board will review and consider approval of elements such as goals & objectives, socioeconomic and fiscal assumptions, and a prioritized project list, before adopting the final plan at the end of the process. In general, the development of the MTP consists of the following, with public involvement at several points:

1. Identify goals and objectives
2. Collect data
3. Develop models with socioeconomic data

4. Identify funding sources and make projections
5. Prioritize projects
6. Evaluate various aspects of the highway and transit systems using the federal performance measures and the locally specified targets
7. Conduct an analysis for Environmental Justice (EJ)
8. Analyze air quality conformity
9. Create the planning document

Public input opportunities will occur to inform goals and objectives, identify projects, comment on project prioritizations, and comment on the overall plan and supporting air quality conformity document. There is a 19-month timeline to complete this MTP by March of 2022, which is the deadline before the existing plan lapses.

MPO staff requested TCC volunteers to serve on an MTP subcommittee that will help throughout the process. Several TCC members volunteered for the subcommittee.

Mr. Ervin motioned to approve the 2045 MTP Update process and schedule as presented. Mr. Beam seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

12. Other Business

a. NCDOT Updates

- i. NCDOT Board of Transportation Member** – Mr. Brad Lail introduced himself and encouraged the Board to come to him with any questions or concerns.
- ii. Division 12 Staff** – Mr. Panicker stated that there are five (5) projects ongoing in the MPO area and that all are on schedule. Mr. Panicker also noted that, as of September 2nd, Division 12 has been told to resume engineering work on the Catawba Bridge project on US 74. Mr. Turner asked if there was a timeline for this project. Mr. Panicker noted that he did not have it in front of him but could get it and let Mr. Turner know.

b. Transit Systems Ridership – For information only.

Adjournment

There being no further business Mrs. Dukes motioned to close the meeting. Mr. Ervin seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.