

DURHAM-CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

April 22, 2015

MINUTES OF MEETING

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Committee met on April 22, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Committee on the second floor of Durham City Hall. The following attended:

David Bonk (TC Vice-Chair)	Chapel Hill Planning
Hannah Jacobson (Member)	City of Durham Planning
Laura Woods (Member)	Durham County Planning
Linda Thomas Wallace (Member)	Durham County Planning
Scott Whiteman (Member)	Durham County Planning
Ellen Beckmann (Member)	City of Durham Transportation
Alison Carpenter (Member)	Duke University
Margaret Hauth (Member)	Hillsborough Planning
Peter Murphy (Member)	Orange Public Transportation
Bret Martin (Member)	Orange County Planning
Tom Altieri (Member)	Orange County Planning
John Hodges-Copple (Member)	Triangle J Council of Governments
Patrick McDonough (Member)	Go Triangle
Julie Bollinger (Member)	NCDOT, TPB
Kelly Becker (Member)	NCDOT, Traffic Operations
Ed Lewis (Alternate)	NCDOT, Division 7
Darius Sturdivant (Alternate)	NCDOT, Division 8
Bergen Watterson (Alternate)	Town of Carrboro
Lisa Jemison (Alternate)	Research Triangle Foundation
Dale McKeel	City of Durham/DCHC MPO
Felix Nwoko	DCHC MPO
Andy Henry	DCHC MPO
Meg Scully	DCHC MPO
Lindsay Smart	DCHC MPO
Brian Rhodes	DCHC MPO
Jeffrey Sullivan	Go Triangle
Katherine Eggleston	Go Triangle
David Charters	Go Triangle
Donnie Brew	FHWA
Than Austin	UNC
Ellis Cayton	Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority
Tim Schwarzialier	Chapel Hill Transit
Brad Schults	Go Triangle
Mike Kneis	NCDOT

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47 Quorum Count: 15 of 31 Voting Members
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50 Vice Chair David Bonk called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Chair Mark Ahrendsen was
51 absent from the meeting in order to attend the East End Connector groundbreaking ceremony. The
52 Voting Members and Alternate Voting Members of the DCHC MPO TC were identified and are indicated
53 above.

54 **PRELIMINARIES:**

55 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

56 Vice Chair David Bonk asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. There were no
57 adjustments.

58 **Public Comments**

59 Vice Chair David Bonk asked if there were any public comments. There were no public
60 comments.

61 **CONSENT AGENDA:**

62 **3. Approval of March 25, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

63 Vice Chair David Bonk asked if there was any discussion on the March, 25 2015 meeting
64 minutes. There were no comments or proposed amendments to the minutes. Vice Chair David Bonk
65 asked for a motion to approve the March 25, 2015 meeting minutes. Tom Altieri made a motion to
66 approve the minutes and John Hodges-Copple seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

67 **ACTION ITEMS:**

68 **4. Downtown Durham Traffic Simulation Report—Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project**

69 **Patrick McDonough, Go Triangle**

70 **Katherine Eggleston, Go Triangle**

Patrick McDonough stated that he would be discussing the project broadly, with particular emphasis on general updates and cost evaluations. Because of the size and scope of the project, cost estimates are subject to change. Patrick McDonough stated that due to new information provided by utility companies and UNC, he felt the previously discussed “low-cost option” for the project was no longer attainable. Rather, project costs would be put into cost ranges. Patrick McDonough also stated that there would be discussion concerning Downtown Durham alignment, traffic analysis, and questions from the committee.

After a brief recap of Transportation Secretary Foxx’s visit to Durham, Patrick McDonough discussed the “five key decisions” concerning the project. These include the Duke VA station location, how to cross Little Creek and New Hope Creek, where to build the Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility (ROMF), and the overarching question of to build or not to build.

Concerning the Duke VA station, Patrick McDonough stated a station near Fulton St. was originally considered, but alternatives were considered after traffic concerns were raised by the hospital. Analysis was conducted for several potential stations in the area. Duke Hospital and the VA both requested a station at Trent Dr. and Flowers Dr.

In regard to rail lines crossing Little Creek, Patrick McDonough highlighted the four alternatives available. The alternatives addressed concerns and requests raised by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and residents of Meadowmont. The Corps of Engineers rejected one alternative since there are options available that do not cross Corps land.

Patrick McDonough then discussed major additional cost items, which are activities beyond basic installation required to make an alternative feasible. Of the three remaining alternatives for crossing Little Creek, all carry additional costs ranging in the tens of millions of dollars. Upon further research, it was determined that the alternative considered the “low-cost option” had a comparable price range, and could no longer be considered low-cost.

95 A question was raised concerning the contingency of the project. Patrick McDonough stated
96 that contingency varies by item, and that there are both allocated and unallocated contingencies. He
97 also stated that 30% is the highest contingency, with 24% as an average.

98 Patrick McDonough then provided a brief description of the merits and demerits of the three
99 remaining options for crossing Little Creek, which included concerns of speed, land acquisition, and
100 environmental impacts. Andy Henry raised a question about Meadowmont alignment, which
101 precipitated a brief discussion about property acquisition and business impact in the area.

102 In regard to New Hope Creek crossing, Patrick McDonough briefly discussed route options
103 and cost range updates. Again, cost ranges for the current route options are comparable, so no
104 “low-cost option” exists. Patrick McDonough then provided a brief description of the merits and
105 demerits of all options, including wetland impact, business impact, and land acquisition.

106 Patrick McDonough then directed the discussion towards the proposed ROMF. Updates on
107 right-of-way and relocation costs were presented, and “lead track” was discussed. Again, all cost
108 ranges were overlapping and no “low-cost option” exists. Questions were raised pertaining to the
109 source of the cost range estimates. Patrick McDonough discussed merits and demerits of all
110 proposed ROMF locations.

111 There was a discussion of business impacts surrounding the potential Alston Ave. ROMF,
112 which Patrick McDonough asserted would have the highest cost and most negative impact on jobs. A
113 comment from the committee clarified that the job impact may not be as dramatic. A discussion
114 surrounding Brenntag, a chemical company with a facility in the area, followed. Patrick McDonough
115 concluded that despite the optimism of some members of the Technical Committee, the overall
116 likelihood that Brenntag could be relocated within the neighborhood was slim.

117 Patrick McDonough then discussed the final key decision of to build or not to build. He
118 stated that there were more benefits than costs and impacts and that the project should proceed.

Katherine Eggleston, a transportation planner with the project, then presented details on the Downtown Durham alignment. Katherine Eggleston stated that the railroad provided plans identifying space that must remain open for future freight, passenger, and commuter rail needs. The restrictive nature of these plans negated previous Go Triangle plans for the Downtown Durham alignment. Instead of an at-grade alignment on Pettigrew Street, which would cause traffic complications, an elevated railway would be constructed in order to maintain two way traffic and on-street parking.

Katherine Eggleston then discussed the Alston Avenue station area. New information concerning utilities and future bridge construction complicated original plans, which led to refinement. Instead of a site on the east side of Alston Ave., a new site on the west side of Alston Ave. near Murphy Street is proposed. This site provides fewer complications and allows for a two-track platform. Katherine Eggleston also pointed out that this location is closer to several low-income neighborhoods, and thus provides greater transit connectivity for residents. This location also opens the door for future light rail extension. Because this location is further from some locations in east Durham, such as Durham Tech, there will be a particular emphasis placed on station area connectivity with public transit and infrastructure improvements to maintain light rail access for those locations.

Katherine Eggleston briefly discussed Go Triangle's efforts to improve bicycle, pedestrian, and transit connectivity within station area corridors in Durham. She then moved on to a discussion about traffic analysis through the year 2040. Katherine Eggleston stated that the analysis concluded that light rail had little impact on traffic congestion on NC 54, even with future street projects considered. For University Dr., light rail lines would lower traffic capacity and therefore necessitate some mitigation treatments such as additional turn lanes. On the railway between Chapel Hill St.

and Dillard St., analysis indicates that light rail would have little impact on downtown traffic, although there could be some vehicle stacking.

Katherine Eggleston then stated that the planned portion of the presentation had concluded and opened the floor for questions. Questions were raised concerning business preferences for rail lines along the 15-501 corridor, basis for engineering drawings, Wake County transit plans, and other topics. There was a brief discussion about bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in relation to widened roadways along the rail corridor, which would be finalized during the engineering process. Ellen Beckman raised a question about a total project cost estimate, which was estimated to be 1.5 to 1.6 billion dollars, according to Patrick McDonough. There was another discussion about the design/construction process and timeline. Another question from Ellen Beckman concerned potential conflicts between light rail and future MTP projects. Patrick McDonough emphasized that light rail plans are made in relation to projects in the adopted 2040 MTP, and future changes to the MTP will have to conform to the light rail plans. There was another question about station area planning grant, and Patrick McDonough stated that the grant application was received by the FTA, but there were no further updates.

Vice Chair David Bonk stated that there was no action that the committee needed to take besides receiving the report. With no further questions, the meeting proceeded to the next item.

5. National Highway System (NHS) Map Change

Andy Henry, LPA Staff

Andy Henry stated that the Federal Highway Administration is amending its system map, and has asked if the DCHC MPO would like to propose any changes. Andy Henry told the committee that the action is to approve a potential map change that would include the Triangle Expressway. Andy Henry asked the committee to review agenda attachments that include the potential map changes.

165 A question about the difference in line size on the map was raised from the committee, which
166 Andy Henry addressed. Andy Henry pointed out that most principal arterials in Durham are covered by
167 the NHS map and that the Triangle Expressway meets NHS qualifications for incorporation into the
168 highway system. Ellen Beckman asked about the significance of the map change, to which Andy Henry
169 responded that once the Triangle Expressway is designated as an NHS highway, it is eligible for NHS
170 funding. Moreover, NHS designation requires that the road meet certain design standards, which is why
171 the MPO is not requesting that Duke, Gregson, or Fayetteville streets be included in the NHS system.
172 Another question from the committee concerned whether other changes could be made to the map.
173 Andy Henry stated that it was possible, but no other changes are recommended at this time.

174 An additional question was raised about minimum traffic volume requirements as it pertains to
175 Chapel Hill roads in the NHS system. Andy Henry provided an explanation of the history of NHS
176 designation in the area, and some of the related problems. Andy Henry provided clarification to a
177 question raised by Ellen Beckman about whether or not the MPO could have roads removed from the
178 NHS, stating that this was not possible at this time. This precipitated further discussion about NHS
179 designations, limited timelines, STI prioritization, the statewide tier, and funding.

180 Andy Henry also discussed NHS map changes proposed by neighboring jurisdictions, including
181 the incorporation of NC-98 east of Durham. Ellen Beckman asked about TARPO's actions on the matter,
182 which was addressed from the committee. Ellen Beckman raised another question about a potential
183 mapping error about the inconsistent incorporation of segments of NC-54. Andy Henry stated he will
184 make a comment to that extent to the NHS. Additional discussion concerning questions about the
185 incorporation of particular roads followed.

186 Vice Chair David Bonk asked for a motion to approve recommending the map change to the
187 NHS. Ellen Beckman made a motion to approve the map change and Scott Whiteman seconded the
188 motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. FY2016-2025 TIP Development**Lindsay Smart, LPA Staff**

Lindsay Smart stated that NCDOT had not yet sent a formal response, but the subcommittee did meet to discuss the draft response. The MPO still wants Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funds to be programmed earlier. NCDOT did not address the questions posed about TAP funding, but the subcommittee will continue to press for an answer. There will also be projects ready to propose in the event funding is available.

Lindsay Smart stated that next steps included incorporating subcommittee comments into the draft TIP, having additional discussions with the MPO Board and the Technical Committee during the May meetings, and aligning the TIP with the STIP. Lindsay Smart then opened the floor for discussion concerning TIP development.

A question was raised from the committee about when the draft would be available. Lindsay Smart responded that the draft would be available as soon as final comments from the TC were received. A follow up question was asked about whether the process should be formalized. Lindsay Smart responded by providing the Technical Committee a deadline of the following Monday for submitting requests for TIP updates. Once received, the TIP subcommittee will reconvene to discuss updates as preparation for briefing the Technical Committee.

Additional clarification questions concerning timeline, Live STIP, and other concerns were raised from the committee, prompting discussion. In closing, Lindsay Smart provided a demonstration of the online MPO project database and how it can be used to search for funding information. Lindsay Smart stated that the online database would be live and available to MPO members and members of the public in July.

REPORTS:

7. Reports from Staff

Felix Nwoko, LPA Staff

Felix Nwoko reminded the committee that the meeting of the National Association of MPO's will be held the following week. Felix Nwoko also informed the committee about the schedule, agenda, and substance of other upcoming meetings relevant to the Technical Committee.

8. Report from the DCHC MPO TC Chair

Mark Ahrendsen, DCHC MPO TC Chair

Vice Chair David Bonk stated that there was nothing to report from the DCHC MPO TC Chair.

9. NCDOT Reports

Mike Kneis, NCDOT Division 5, stated that the DDC report was submitted late. Mike Kneis also briefed the Technical Committee on upcoming DDC projects. After a request from the committee, Mike Kneis updated the committee on the Old Chapel Hill Rd. bicycle and pedestrian project. The Durham and Chapel Hill sections are divided into separate segments. Both segments are moving forward, although there are snags with utility placement and permit delays. Construction could begin in June 2016, depending on right-of-way acquisition and utility movement. Construction may begin as late as June 2017.

Ed Lewis, NCDOT Division 7, stated that the report missed the submission deadline. After a question from the committee concerning Orange Grove Road, Ed Lewis said he would look into the question and report back at a later time.

Darius Sturdivant, NCDOT Division 8, provided updates on projects underway within Division 8.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

10. Recent News, Articles, and Updates

236 Ellen Beckman posed a question to NCDOT representative about the Governor's proposed
237 bond mentioned in the news. This precipitated a conversation about how the bond will fund what
238 projects, as well as the impact on the DCHC MPO.

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240 **ADJOURNMENT:**

241 There being no further business before the DCHC MPO Technical Committee, the meeting was
242 adjourned at 10:42.