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METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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To: DCHC MPO Board
 From: Felix Nwoko, MPO Manager
 Date: November 10, 2021
 Re: Additional Full-time Staff for MPO

Summary. For several years the administrative duties for the MPO, including the recording and compilation of minutes for the MPO Board and Technical Committee (TC) meetings, have been performed by either part-time employees or temporary staff obtained through an agency. Due to the current job market, as well as additional planning staffing needs, this arrangement is not conducive to continued quality work in this regard. Furthermore, as the region has grown and the MPO has taken on additional responsibilities, the need for additional planning staff is required. Therefore, MPO staff requests the authorization for an additional full-time (FTE) planner to conduct these duties. The staff recommendation is for this FTE to be an entry-level planner position.

There are sufficient funds within the MPO's budget to accommodate the requested FTE. No additional local match from our contributing local jurisdictions will be required to fulfill the request.

Background. In 2014, an additional FTE was identified by the MPO as a staffing need for administrative duties. However, this position was eventually absorbed into the City of Durham Transportation Department, and is now exclusively used by the City (the City provides the funds for the position). At that time, the MPO began to use temporary staffing agency personnel to staff these needs, eventually hiring people into this position on a part-time basis. While the quality of work thus far has been excellent by these employees, there has been substantial turnover in the position. The MPO is now on its third administrative person in four years, and the job market is such that the MPO is concerned that keeping outstanding personnel will prove even more difficult.

Analysis. Making the current part-time position full-time will make it more marketable and allow the MPO to retain talent. There are additional planning duties that the MPO is in desperate need of at the moment, particularly regarding transit. While the MPO has planners dedicated to and knowledgeable in highway and bicycle and pedestrian development, only the planning manager is dedicated to transit, and cannot devote the time and attention to this important factor of the region's transportation future as it deserves. Hiring a full-time planner will allow the MPO to devote resources and expertise to transit that are desperately needed.

Planning duties that the new full-time planner would be devoted to include, but are not limited to:

- Transit analysis for SPOT submissions and implementation of the upcoming new transit plans in Durham and Orange counties;
- Regional coordination on transit issues;
- Research on environmental impacts of transportation plans and development of environmental aspects of future transportation modeling and analysis;
- Assisting with development of the MTP and CTP, and amendments to those plans; and
- Developing materials for public outreach.

Financial Impact. The MPO has determined that there is sufficient funding for a full-time entry level planner within the existing budget. No additional funding through local match will be required to fund the position. Since

some of these duties are currently being conducted by a part-time staff person; it is anticipated that there will be less money spent on part-time wage expenditures with the hiring of a full-time staff person.

Recommendation. Staff recommends that the MPO Board authorize the establishment of an additional full-time staff person to provide planning and administrative duties to the MPO.