

FRENCH BROAD RIVER

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Citizens' Advisory Committee

August 7, 2017 – 10:00 A.M.

Minutes

Members Present

Lexi Binns-Craven
Charles Menefree
Ted Figura
Stagg Newman

Non-Voting Members

Ritchie Rozzelle
Tristan Winkler
Lyuba Zuyeva

Welcome and Introductions, Approval of Agenda and CAC Minutes from April 12th.

Ted Figura started the meeting with a round of introductions and next asked for approval of agenda and CAC minutes from April 12th. Stagg Newman made a motion, Lexi Binn-Craven seconded. No further discussion, motion carried.

Public Comment

No public comment

SPOT 5.0 Public Outreach Strategy

Tristan Winkler gave an overview of the SPOT Prioritization process. SPOT prioritization is repeated every two years in North Carolina and results in the development of a 10-year TIP and STIP Programs. The 2018-2027 TIP is going to the MPO Board for adoption on August 24th. In the meantime, work is underway to start SPOT 5.0 Currently the draft list of SPOT 5 projects is available-it will go to the MPO Board later in August.

In response to a question about the Statewide Mobility category, Tristan Winkler responded that the MPO has input for this category in two ways:

- Submit projects for this category
- If not funded at the Statewide Tier, consider "cascading" for funding at the Regional or Division tier

Further discussion followed regarding specific Statewide Mobility projects.

I-40 West widening is on the agenda for the Statewide Mobility category in SPOT 5. This is a major freight corridor in our region.

Tristan Winkler further spoke to the public outreach --MPO staff will be looking for public input as part of assigning local input points to regional impact projects and division needs projects. At the next CAC meeting, MPO staff plan on sharing a draft survey regarding SPOT projects. Stagg Newman made a recommendation to include a link to real-time traffic data as part of the survey. Tristan Winkler responded that MPO staff do have access to some real-time data but there are limitations.

Ted Figura asked about the existing carry-over projects and whether those would be a part of the survey.

Tristan Winkler responded that carry-over projects are typically those that have an active NEPA document or are siblings of other funded projects, or are shown as funded in the 10-year TIP/STIP but not in the first 5 years

“committed” section. Any Regional or Division Tier projects submitted or carry-over in SPOT will be subject to MPO local input and will be part of the survey. Tristan Winkler next spoke to the local match requirement for bicycle and pedestrian projects—they require a local match.

Lexi Binn-Craven posed a question regarding bicycle and pedestrian projects being considered. Tristan Winkler—NCDOT staff typically handle design and development of specific roadway projects; under the DOT Complete Streets policy accommodation for bicycles and pedestrians is considered. Input re: important corridors for bicycle and pedestrian accommodation is important both during SPOT and later during the project development. Local governments are also responsible for cost-share for bike ped accommodation.

Lexi Binn-Craven indicated that she can help get the word out to the bicycle community through the Bicycle Thrift Store. Charles Menefee added that he has been trying to reach out to UNCA students but it has been difficult to get them engaged. Lyuba Zuyeva explained that when the projects are funded and go to development, there are public input meetings held by NCDOT that are a good opportunity to provide input for specific community preferences regarding project design. Tristan Winkler added that even before project development, during SPOT Prioritization, is also a good time to consider specific corridors and their needs.

Tristan Winkler further explained the cost-share system, where municipalities provide a different local cost share depending on their size. For example, the City of Asheville has to pay 40% cost-share for sidewalks. A lot of more innovative bicycle and pedestrian facilities take up more ROW and NCDOT complete streets policies do not account for those—for example, buffered bike lanes or cycle tracks. The cost share increases as more ROW is required. Greenways and multi-use paths typically require a much higher cost share due to the extra width. Ted Figura posed a question regarding the local cost-share requirements and where those requirements originate. Tristan Winkler explained that federal rules require a 20% local match and state policies further spell out how the local match is split between the state participation and local cost-share.

Discussion followed about the advantages and disadvantages of online public outreach. Ritchie Rozzelle commented that reaching out to the transportation disadvantaged populations might be more difficult through electronic means alone. Tristan Winkler added that reaching populations in Henderson and Haywood Counties has been more difficult through online media than it has been for Buncombe County. Discussion followed about levels of citizen engagement that vary across the region.

Train the Trainer Discussion

Ritchie Rozzelle spoke to a recent meeting between MPO staff and Just Economics about public outreach strategies. Just Economics has had a lot of success in reaching the transportation disadvantaged communities and have ties with other community groups in the region. Ritchie Rozzelle and Lyuba Zuyeva have met with Vicki Meath, Director of Just Economics to strategies. A suggestion for a “Train the Trainer” session emerged, where the MPO staff would hold a small group meeting with representatives of non-profits and community groups to explain the MPO public outreach opportunity and tools, get those staff members and volunteers comfortable, and let them take the message to their target groups. Discussion followed about how data are sometimes difficult to interpret and providing a narrative might be helpful for some of the target populations.

A discussion next followed about what will be included with the future survey. SPOT project descriptions are included, in generally very broad terms. A survey is created with descriptions, maps, and a simple scale for the preference for this project. Stagg Newman made a suggestion to test the survey with the CAC members first before broad distribution and commented that visualization of cross-sections might be helpful in addition to maps. Further discussion followed regarding incorporating the CAC into the Train the Trainer opportunity. Recommendation was to provide a written survey draft to CAC electronically prior to the meeting, as well as

invite them to the Train the Trainer section. Tristan Winkler noted that when doing public engagement for SPOT, MPO staff try to balance providing sufficient information with keeping the questions short so as to not lose people's interest. Tristan Winkler demonstrated the SPOT 5 projects online map.

Data Discussion

Tristan Winkler spoke to real-time travel data. A lot of the traffic data on Google Maps and other apps is from real-time cell phone data. The data companies combine and parcel cell phone user data including cell phone speed to show congestion. A variety of companies are using these data source. MPO staff have access to HERE data through a FHWA contract. This datasource is free but it takes time to download and use. For some of the corridors in the region we are starting to see more peaks –times when there is a crash or a vehicle break-down which results in increased congestion. Those peaks do not represent the average. MPO staff have to spend time downloading and breaking down the data, so there are limitations to its use. Stagg Newman—commented that this is a typical big data problem. Tools such as Tableau help deal with big data. Tristan Winkler—summarized that HERE and similar data help planners look at travel time reliability, to identify when the anomalies become more frequent and generate especially long delays more frequently during AM Peak and PM Peak.

Tristan Winkler further discussed additional data points: traffic counts and volume/capacity data are available through NCDOT, with a delay. MPO staff try to balance currency of data vs. trends—when looking just at the most recent year, the trends get lost in the noise.

Tristan Winkler next spoke to the crash data. Crash data available is generally a few years old. This is partially done in order allow for trends to emerge more clearly. A one-time crash might generate a lot of public attention but is not always indicative of the corridor safety. Looking at crashes over time helps identify truly dangerous corridors. NCDOT collects the crash data and has to convert it to a uniform format, since a variety of agencies collect the data. NCDOT also geocodes the crashes to make the data available in map format. Tristan Winkler again emphasized the importance of looking at trends and not just at the last year's data. Further discussion followed about bicycle and pedestrian data and the lack of good bicycle and pedestrian count data to calculate crash rates. Charles Menefee discussed Vision Zero approach of a data-driven process. Further discussion about the lack of “near-misses” potential crash data followed.

A discussion about traffic impact studies followed. Those do not necessarily take the full corridor into account, only the immediate development in question. Additional discussion about making data more available to the public to help people make more informed decisions. How can we show the trends to the citizens more easily? In summary, Tristan Winkler added that data is useful but there are limits to its use and applicability.

Announcements, News, Special Updates

Lyuba Zuyeva reiterated that the 2018-2027 TIP is going to the MPO Board for adoption on August 24th, the link to the draft document is posted on the MPO website.

MPO staff will be attending a national MPO conference in October.

Public Comment.

No public comment.