

MECKLENBURG-UNION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center Conference Room 267
August 19, 2009-Special Meeting
Summary Minutes

Members Attending:

Susan Burgess – alt. for Anthony Foxx (Charlotte), Jim Bensman (Cornelius), Brian Sisson (Huntersville), Lee Myers (Matthews), Dumont Clarke (Mecklenburg County), Ted Biggers (Mint Hill), Bob Smith (Monroe), Jim Eschert (Pineville), Lynda Paxton (Stallings), Tracy Kuehler (Union County), Daune Gardner (Waxhaw), Nancy Anderson (Weddington), Tracy Clinton – alt. for Brad Horvath (Wesley Chapel), Greg Phipps (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission)

1. Call to Order

Chairman Myers called the July 2009 MUMPO meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

2. Citizen Comment Period

Summary:

Martin Zimmerman, representing the Charlotte Area Bicycle Alliance, addressed the MPO on the concept of “Complete Streets.” He discussed the NC Board of Transportation’s (BOT) recent adoption of a complete streets policy, and distributed a complete streets FAQ sheet from the National Complete Streets Coalition.

3. Economic Stimulus-Project List Endorsement

Presenter:

Robert Cook

Summary:

Mr. Cook stated that the original reason for this matter coming before the MPO was that bids for economic stimulus projects were coming in under estimates, resulting in additional funds being available for other projects. He noted that the TCC had unanimously recommended endorsement of the project list. He reminded the MPO that this subject was addressed at the July meeting and that the MPO had unanimously recommended adoption of a project list at that time. However, immediately prior to the meeting, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) determined that the NC BOT can amend the state TIP for projects deemed to be exempt from air quality regulations, thereby possibly making additional projects eligible for stimulus funds. For that reason, the MPO directed the TCC to:

- a. examine MUMPO’s March list of TIP amendments to determine if additional projects from that list are eligible to be added to the state’s TIP; and
- b. review the endorsed list to determine if any prioritization changes are appropriate if it is found that projects can be added.

Mr. Cook reported that the TCC had conducted the requested reviews and made the following recommendations to the MPO:

- a. there were five projects that could be added to MUMPO’s list; and
- b. a complete reprioritization was not necessary.

It was further reported that there were some proposed changes to the list based upon a determination that some projects may not be shovel-ready as well as a request to add a project. Details were listed in an explanatory memorandum included with the agenda packet. Mr. Cook requested that the MPO endorse the list as recommended by the TCC and as presented.

Motion:

Brian Sisson made a motion to endorse the list as presented. Susan Burgess seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. I-485 Funding Options

Presenter:

Bill Coxe, TCC Vice-Chairman

Summary:

Mr. Coxe began his presentation by stating that NCDOT has been responsive to information requests, but that despite several requests, nothing in writing has been received from NCDOT outlining details of its proposal. He noted that requests have been made for assurances that what has been proposed can actually take place, and stated that there are no doubts that Secretary Conti and his staff would deliver on their promises, but that there was concern that they may not be in their current positions when it comes time to fulfill the promises.

Mr. Coxe then walked the MPO through the details of NCDOT's proposal to shift the GARVEE bonds from the Independence Boulevard project (U-209B) to I-485 (R-2248E) in order to fulfill the Governor's pledge to begin construction on I-485 earlier than currently proposed. NCDOT's proposal would result in construction starting on I-485 in 2012 (current start date is FY 2015), but Independence Boulevard would be delayed from its current construction start date of FY 2011 to at least FY 2015. He stated that the positives to NCDOT's proposal are a certain amount of certainty associated with the construction start date of I-485 and that the GARVEE bonds would be repaid out of the Loop fund, but that the negatives of the proposal were that Independence Boulevard would be delayed and that its certainty was clouded.

Following his presentation, Mr. Coxe responded to questions from the MPO members. Mr. Sisson asked if there were any guarantees associated with the proposal. Mr. Coxe replied that assurances had been requested. Tracy Kuehler questioned if the region would end up getting the same amount of funding if the MPO went along with the proposal. Mr. Coxe stated that in the short-term the MPO could get more money, but in the long-term the MPO would see no net change. In response to a question from Mr. Sisson regarding air quality conformity, Mr. Coxe stated that approving the change would not have an impact on the LRTP and its future conformity determination. Ms. Burgess stated that the proposal was a false choice and that Independence Boulevard should be completed as planned and that I-485 should be built with Loop funds. Mayor Anderson stated she would not accept the proposal. Chairman Myers asked if the Loop funds were controlled by the Governor and if I-485 is a priority for her, could she shift them to I-485. Mr. Coxe stated that the answer was "yes" to both questions. Chairman Myers suggested that savings from stimulus projects coming in under bid from throughout the state could be applied to I-485, as well as potential savings from other Loop projects that also might be coming in under bid.

Chairman Myers stated that if no action is taken by the MPO, that that would constitute action by keeping priorities as they are currently stated. Dumont Clarke stated that he was not willing to take action on verbal promises. The discussion concluded with no formal action being taken by the MPO.

5. LRTP Update Status

a. Draft Financially-Constrained Project Lists

Presenter:

Andy Grzymiski, CDOT

Summary:

Mr. Grzymiski began his presentation with a brief overview of how the projects lists were developed, then reviewed several important points: project costs are inflated year of expenditure; based upon information from the NC Turnpike Authority, MUMPO's two toll projects are shown in the 2015 horizon year; the MPO directed staff to assume three funding levels--no new revenue; 1/8 of a cent of new revenue; 1/4 cent of new revenue. Mr. Grzymiski then provided a detailed review of the four scenarios that formed the basis of the development of the project lists, noting that they were based upon the approved funding levels mentioned above. (Details on the scenarios can be found in a Power Point presentation that is a part of these minutes.)

Following the presentation, Mr. Grzynski responded to questions and comments from the MPO members. Mr. Sisson stated that NC 115 Two-Way Pair project in Huntersville was not ranked high by the Town and recommended moving it down the list. Jim Bensman noted that there were projects in MUMPO's Candidate Projects List that were not listed in the draft LRTP project lists. Mayor Anderson noted that the 2015 horizon year project list contains several projects related to Cornelius' Augustalee project, but that the project was not moving forward. Mr. Bensman responded by saying that negotiations are proceeding concerning the project's financial difficulties. Mr. Grzynski stated that information about Augustalee's future was needed very soon. Mayor Anderson suggested that congestion improvements can be made by improving intersections as opposed to full-scale road widening. Mr. Clarke asked for a clarification about the concept of fiscal constraint. Mr. Grzynski provided clarifying information. Mr. Bensman suggested that the MPO establish a policy on how to make its decisions, further suggesting that issues such as congestion or air quality could be given more weight in the MPO's decision-making process.

Motion:

Mr. Sisson made a motion to allow staff to move forward with the draft financially-constrained project lists as presented and to present them for public review. Mayor Biggers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Public Involvement & Consultation

Presenter:

Robert Cook

Summary:

Mr. Cook stated that two public meetings were scheduled to obtain the public's comments on the draft financially-constrained project lists: August 24 at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center and August 31 at Indian Trail Town Hall. He also stated that the lists had been provided to a variety of resource agencies as a part of MUMPO's efforts to fulfill the Consultation requirements of the metropolitan planning regulations.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.