

1 **NEW BERN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**
2 **TCC MEETING MINUTES**

3
4 **September 26, 2013**

5
6 The New Bern Area Metropolitan Planning Organization held its regularly scheduled meeting on
7 Thursday, September 26, 2013 at 10:00 AM in the City Hall Courtroom, 2nd floor, 300 Pollock
8 Street.
9

- 10 **Members Present:** Mr. Jeff Ruggieri - Chair
11 Mr. Gene Hodges – Vice-Chair
12 Mr. David Fort - Bridgeton
13 Mr. Terry Jordan – CARTS
14 Mr. Don Baumgardner – Craven County
15 Ms. Jill Stark – FHWAY
16 Mr. Kevin Roberts – NB Chamber of Commerce
17 Mr. Jeff Cabaniss - NCDOT
18 Mr. Steve Hamilton – NCDOT
19 Mr. Drew Havens – River Bend

- 20
21 **Members Excused:** Mr. Patrick Flanagan – Down East RPO
22 Mr. Tom Braaten – NB Regional Airport
23 Mr. Ivo Dernev – NCDOT (via phone conference)
24 Ms. Cheryl Leonard - NCDOT
25

- 26 **Members Absent:** Mr. Jordan Hughes – City of New Bern
27

- 28 **Guests Present:** Mr. John Rouse – NCDOT
29 Mr. Jed Dixon – NCDOT
30 Mr. Ryan Shook – NCDOT
31 Mr. Sterling Baker – NCDOT
32 Mr. Reid Smith – NCDOT
33 Ms. Lori Shadday – NCDOT
34 Mr. Harold Thomas - NCDOT
35

- 36 **Staff Present:** Ms. Kimberly Langley
37
38

39 **New Business:**

- 40
41 **1. Call to Order:** Chairman Mr. Jeff Ruggieri called the meeting to order
42
43 **2. Action:** Kim Langley took roll call. A quorum was not initially achieved, but with the
44 late arrival of members Jeff Cabaniss and Steve Hamilton, a quorum was reached.

45 **3. Action:** Approve minutes from August 22, 2013 & September 26, 2013 meetings.

46
47 As an initial quorum was not reached, approving the minutes was tabled to the
48 October 24th meeting.

49
50 **4. Presentation:** Ferry Division – Mr. Sterling Baker, NCDOT

51
52 Mr. Ruggieri introduced Mr. Sterling Baker, Division Maintenance Engineer with the North
53 Carolina Department of Transportation, Division of Highways – Division One.

54
55 Mr. Baker utilized a PowerPoint presentation while providing information on the Ferry Division.

56
57 Mr. Baker provided definitions for a few terms:

- 58 - Ramp & Gantry: The ramp and system utilized to carry vehicles from land onto the
- 59 ferry.
- 60 - Dolphin: The pilings used at the docks to aid the ferry's in docking.

61
62 Mr. Baker advised the Ferry System is not eligible for any statewide funding.

63
64 Regional funding typically covers Ramp & Gantry refurbishments/replacements, installations of
65 new Ramp & Gantry (as is currently underway at Cherry Branch), modernization or expansion of
66 Ferry Shipyard Major Assets including platens (system of railcars used to move the ferry's
67 around the yard), and vessel lifts among others.

68
69 Division funding typically covers Ferry vessel replacement, ferry vessel upgrades and
70 modernizations, support vessel replacement and support vessel upgrades and modernizations.
71 Support vessels include three tug boats, three barges, a crane barge (for dolphin fixes) and a
72 dredge.

73
74 The rating system for ferries is 50% determined after being assessed for current condition and
75 50% for ramp & gantry inspections, as determined by the National Bridge Authority. Each
76 percentage is then subtracted from 100. The number remaining determines what has the highest
77 repair needs based on condition.

78
79 Each vessel is reviewed on an annual basis, with continual maintenance taking place. Each
80 vessel spends a minimal period of time in the ship yard for routine maintenance. Every two
81 years each vessel spends a longer period of time in the ship yard for significant upgrades. Full
82 inspections are completed every three years.

83
84 Ramps and gantries are inspected every two years.

85
86 Mr. Baker provided the project scoring overview for the ferry projects. For regional funding, the
87 overall weight consists of 70% determined by quantitative data and 30% by local input. For
88 division funding, the overall weight consists of 50% quantitative data and 50% local input.

90 The benefit cost is determined by the time value saved by utilizing ferry routes versus the time it
91 takes in utilizing a land route. Equation becomes time on ferry times vehicle on land to equal
92 total number of hours saved.

93
94 Mr. Baker advised their measurement for capacity and congestion is based on the number of cars
95 that take a ferry route versus the number of cars left in queue; how many cars are not boarded
96 and have to wait for the next ferry. The scoring scale is the percentage of vehicles left behind at
97 each departure as compared to the total number of vehicles carried by the route in a one-year
98 time frame. Some of this measurement includes double counting for cars; as the cars are counted
99 prior to boarding, then the remaining cars are counted again, some of which are in the queue,
100 thus duplicated.

101
102 Jeff Ruggieri asked what the resolution is, using Hatteras as an example, as that ferry has the
103 highest percentage of vehicles left behind.

104
105 Mr. Baker stated the project proposed takes into account those high numbers, but noted these
106 numbers are for a limited time period. During the peak season, there are more vehicles left in the
107 queue than during the rest of the year. This is considered acceptable and do not feel the need to
108 change the route/number of ferries to accommodate a short-term season peak.

109
110 Ms. Jill Stark noted seasonal changes drive the need for many of the projects, questioning if
111 instead of an annual average, if the season peaks are considered.

112
113 Mr. Baker advised seasonal changes are not considered currently. They need to come up with a
114 good comparison. Hatteras routes are tourist-driven routes, where the Cherry Branch and Aurora
115 routes are commuter-driven. There will always be less drop numbers on commuter routes versus
116 tourist routes.

117
118 Mr. Gene Hodges asked how many vessels are in our division. Mr. Baker advised in Division II
119 there are a total of 6 vessels. There are 4 at Cedar Island, 3 at Cherry Brand and 1 in Minnesott
120 Beach. One of the three at Cherry Branch is a backup vessel, so is not in use.

121
122 Mr. Harold Thomas advised the entire fleet consists of 22 vessels; 9-10 that run Cedar Island to
123 Southport; 4 at Cedar Island, 3 at Cherry Branch, 1 at Minnesott Beach and 7-9 at Hatteras.

124
125 Mr. Hodges inquired with local funding, what's the replacement schedule in our division, and
126 will this limit the money allocated for local projects.

127
128 Mr. Baker advised they have a 10-20 years program list with 3 vessels in the TIP currently. With
129 the new formula's hitting on July 1, this will create a fresh start. Each MPO and RPO will have
130 the ability to select 5 projects.

131
132 Mr. Jed Dixon noted they are working on some numbers and should have something money-wise
133 prepared and ready for review in approximately two weeks. The ability to sort by MPO/RPO
134 and location will be possible.

135 Mr. Thomas advised after 2020 the vessels will be prioritized for replacement.
136

137 Mr. Baker stated they are currently replacing the dredge, which was built in 1968, and was very
138 out of date from a technology standpoint, as well as a maintenance standpoint. The cost of
139 replacing this vessel is \$7 million.
140

141 He also noted that currently the support vessels are their top priority right now, as opposed to
142 replacing ferries. The dredge requires a tugboat, the cost of which runs from \$500,000 to \$5
143 million depending on the size of tug. The projects pertaining to the support vessels will be
144 spread across Division I, II & III because they are support vessels and all divisions have a vested
145 interest in them. This will allow these projects to be more cost effective for all divisions.
146

147 Mr. Don Baumgardner asked Mr. Sterling for his ideas and views on the concept of tolling and
148 how it would work.
149

150 Mr. Baker explained that under the current law, the DOT will not initiate any tolling on routes
151 that aren't already tolled. Existing toll routes will continue. The future toll options now depend
152 on the surrounding counties, MPO's and RPO's. If it is decided at a point in the future to toll a
153 currently free route, the revenue generated from the toll will be put into a special fund for each
154 route that will cover replacement needs on that route only.
155

156 Mr. Baker also noted that because of the active tolls, the ferry system was awarded \$5 million
157 extra dollars in their budget. Now that the previously suggested tolls are not being put into
158 place, next year they anticipate being awarded only \$2.5 million, with no further guarantee
159 beyond next year for additional funds. Therefore, they are not including any additional funds in
160 their future budget planning. Mr. Baker noted it will be challenging to keep things status quo as
161 the lack of funding will affect future level of service and assist in determining where cuts must
162 be made.
163

164 Mr. Thomas noted revenue options are being studied with options including concessions for
165 routes, marketing and state administration of routes. It is unknown given best case scenario how
166 much money can actually be generated by any of these options, but they are certain it will not
167 approach the \$2.5-5 million they are currently receiving.
168

169 **5. Other Business: Candidate for MPO Administrator Position** 170

171 Mr. Ruggieri advised an offer was extended to their candidate of choice, but he declined to
172 accept the position. Negotiations ensued but no resolution was found, so they will begin the
173 process over. Mr. Ruggieri noted he will re-evaluate the current salary range, and will ultimately
174 make the range higher than it currently is.
175
176
177
178
179

180 Safety Study previously presented on Highway 70 Data

181
182
183
184
185
186
187
188
189
190
191
192
193
194
195
196
197
198
199
200
201
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215
216
217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224

Mr. Ruggieri asked if there was anything that could be done to prepare for future discussions to improve the safety on Highway 70 in the James City area, advising the stretch of road by Taberna is the 7th most dangerous road in the state. Mr. Kevin Roberts asked what options we have to work on this.

Ms. Jill Stark advised funds could be pooled together to obtain a longer stretch of safety study on the area. It would require hiring a consultant, but if all the PO's along the corridor work together it would lessen the burden on each PO.

Mr. John Rouse suggested a feasibility study for the bypass that would improve the existing corridor. This would reduce access to Highway 70, but wouldn't be well received by businesses and residents along the corridor. It would require significant time and effort to consider improvements, but there are not many viable options.

Mr. Roberts strongly urged this issue needs to be addressed. Mr. Roberts agreed with Mr. Roberts as well as doing a study to review the specific areas of that stretch of highway to identify the areas with the most issues. Mr. Roberts reiterated, noting this topic is perfect for this group and feels they could make some major progress in determining a viable solution.

Mr. Ruggieri noted discussions have taken place with the county to extend utilities to grow that area which would compound the existing problem.

Ms. Stark advised the safety employee she works with has 25 years' experience, and will speak with him, have him look into it and prepare a presentation for the next meeting, providing options, evidence, facts and next step options.

Mr. Rouse suggested the issue could be solved by creating a separate interchange and removing the stop lights. He noted the stop light that is in the works at the intersection of Carolina Colours is not going to be helpful, but rather more detrimental in aiding the already significant congestion.

Mr. Roberts questioned how much this interchange, overpass, would cost. Mr. Steve Hamilton advised approximately \$15 million.

Ms. Stark noted the project would be one considered at the state, Regional and Divisional levels so funds could be obtained from all and suggested speaking to a member of the Board of Transportation.

Mr. Drew Havens questioned at what point might the DOT acknowledge the concerns of the businesses and residents, but essentially override them to promote a safer alternative than the currently deadly scenario.

225 Mr. Rouse acknowledged this to be a viable question, noting from experience these matters
226 quickly become politically charged. The opposition received from residents and businesses is
227 typically very strong.
228

229 Ms. Stark noted this becomes an environmental justice issue as well, citing an example from
230 another city where change was made decades ago, yet they still get backlash from the road
231 changes that happened in the 60's. She stated providing as much information to the public,
232 educating them fully with all options, benefits and cons may help them understand the bigger
233 picture, but this takes more effort on everyone's part.
234

235 Mr. Rouse noted the DOT cannot accomplish the change alone. They must work with local
236 counsel and city commissions to try and move forward. Those in James City corridor have
237 provided heavy opposition in the past, at times forcing their removal from meetings. Mr.
238 Ruggieri noted with the MPO there is a new forum to convey information differently, and hopes
239 that will be beneficial.
240

241 Mr. Steve Tyson stated he felt there is a misunderstanding with the people that a \$400 million
242 bypass that wouldn't be attained for another 15-30 years will not solve the problem. There are
243 10-15,000 vehicles that travel Highway 70 in Jones County and 50-60,000 that cross the Trent
244 River Bridge, therefore feels this still wouldn't solve the traffic and accident problems. He has
245 and will continue to talk to residents in the area but agrees a proper forum to present information
246 would be beneficial.
247

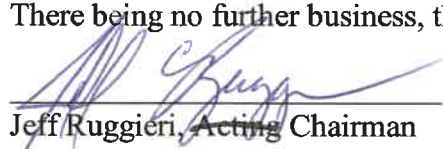
248 Mr. Don Baumgardner advised in speaking with Durwood Stevens, this possibility was discussed
249 of sending a letter from the MPO in support of looking at reserving funds for the Highway 70
250 area from Williams Road to Airport Road to Taberna and Thurman.
251

252 Mr. Ruggieri suggested waiting until the October meeting, with an update and presentation with
253 additional information, then putting together a plan and submitting.
254

255 **6. Public Comment: N/A**

256 **7. Adjourn**

257 There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.
258

259 
260
261
262 Jeff Ruggieri, Acting Chairman


Kim Langley, Secretary