



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY  
GOVERNOR

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SECRETARY

**North Carolina Board of Transportation  
Environmental Planning and Policy Committee  
Meeting Minutes for November 5, 2008**

A meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee (EPPC) was held November 5, 2008 at 8:30 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building. Nina Szlosberg chaired the meeting. Other Board of Transportation members that attended were:

Conrad Burrell	Bob Collier	Nina Szlosberg
Arnold Lakey	Tony Dennis	Marion Cowell
Andrew Perkins	Doug Galyon	Nancy Dunn
Gus Tulloss	Cam McRae	

Other attendees included:

Julie Hunkins	Angela J. Person	David Brook
Jeffrey Crow	Allen Pope	Ricky Greene
Debbie Barbour	Phil Harris	Bruce Dillard
Phillip Ayscue	Wally Bowman	Greg Thorpe
Donnie Brew	Jennifer Garifo	Daniel Keel
Ken Pace	Donna Dancausse	Eddie Dancausse
James Tortorella	Eric Midkiff	Drew Joyner
Don Voelker	Dave Henderson	Any Simes
Don Lee	Bob Andrews	Mike Mills
Tim Johnson	Bill Rosser	Tim Johnson
C. A. Gardner	Bill Gilmore	Bill Laxton
Linda Rimer	Pat Ivey	Rob Hanson
Mike Bruff	Anne Tazewell	Joel Setzer
M. L. Holder	J. J. Swain	Dan Thomas
Terry Arellano	Libby Smith	

Ms. Szlosberg called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM and accepted a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the October committee meeting as presented. The minutes were approved.

Ms. Szlosberg began the meeting by mentioning the historic day in the country -- to have our first African American President and our first female Governor of North Carolina.

Ms. Szlosberg announced that the gallery outside of the Board Room has changed to reflect some of the wonderful departmental environmental initiatives. There are pictures depicting the passenger rail program, which is reducing traffic congestion in our State. The Rail Division has done unbelievable things and is recognized nationally. They are asked to participate on a national level to discuss some of the issues facing passenger rail in the country. The gallery also showcases an innovative method used by the Equipment and Inventory Control Unit to increase the intervals that equipment can be operated before a scheduled oil change, which is saving time and money. "Super Streets" are also highlighted; this design is used to alleviate traffic congestion and lower emissions. It also showcases the preservation of historic train stations across the state which last year earned NCDOT's Rail Division a National Award from the National Trust and Historic Preservation.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced the presenter of the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), Ms. Terry Arellano from the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB), who provided a continued update on the CMAQ. Ms. Arellano highlighted where the department stands with the process. They made initial presentations to several of their planning partners in the summer months about changes in the program. They solicited and received comments and incorporated changes to the process based upon the comments they received. At last month's meeting they presented the recommended changes to the EPPC committee. Ms. Arellano mentioned that everyone on the Board should have received a mailing from her detailing the changes to the CMAQ process and where they are with the process at the present time.

Ms. Arellano summarized the recommendations associated with three CMAQ processes. The first is a process to program unallocated funds from the 2004 project. NCDOT went out in 2004 to individual MPO's and RPO's, told them what their CMAQ target allocation was, and allowed them to program some projects. Some areas still have a balance of that funding. TPB proposed a process that would allow these areas to go ahead and fund those projects. That would also include one million dollars that is left in the statewide project allocation. This process would involve a minimum threshold of \$100,000 for projects or a portion of it in areas that doesn't have the money left for remaining balances. Any remaining funds left over after this process would actually be reverted to the general balance of the CMAQ funding and be subject to the CMAQ guidelines.

The second process recommended was a process to fund eligible CMAQ projects at 100% federal funding for the 2009 federal fiscal year. The 2007 Energy Act allowed full funding with federal money for CMAQ projects for fiscal years 2008 and 2009. NCDOT wants to take advantage of this by allowing their planning partners to go ahead and program projects that they already have started and new projects that might come out of the first process outlined above. They would allow them to fund the projects at 100%, as long as they met the "fast track" project deadline. The targets are projects that are ready to go by September 15, 2009.

The third process recommended includes new guidelines to program CMAQ funding for years 2013 and beyond. This process would coincide with a TIP develop cycle. There would be a CMAQ funding project established for individual MPO's and RPO's and would also include \$6 million per year set aside for statewide projects. There would be an interagency review team

that would review all submitted applications for CMAQ eligibility. All projects submitted through this process would need to meet the minimum cost threshold of \$100,000. Any funds not programmed by the end of the specified timeframe would go back into the general balance and would be subject to redistribution during the next TIP update cycle. They are hoping that this process would commence with the development of the 2011-2027 TIP.

Ms. Arellano asked if there were any questions.

Ms. Dunn commented that as issues arise again in the future, she would like a different approach so that the Board members would really have the input of all the related parties that need to have input into it before they try to move forward with changes. Ms. Dunn added that she feels NCDOT is getting to where we need to be with the CMAQ process.

Ms. Szlosberg suggested that the EPPC recommend to the full Board to move forward with the changes presented. She made the following motion:

*In an effort to more effectively utilize funding from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, better align the CMAQ program with the NCDOT's mission and goals, and address issues encountered implementing the CMAQ program since the 2004 call for Projects, NCDOT will implement the following:*

- *The recommended process to program unallocated funds from the 2004 Call for Projects;*
- *The recommended process to fund eligible CMAQ projects at 100% Federal funding for the 2009 Federal fiscal year (up to funding availability); and*
- *The recommended new guidelines to program CMAQ funding for Federal fiscal years 2013 and beyond.*

Ms. Szlosberg asked if there were any questions before moving forward.

Mr. Cowell asked if the three new processes presented correspond to the three dots above on the motion. Ms. Szlosberg and Ms. Arellano both answered, "Yes" and Ms. Szlosberg continued by stating that all the supporting information had been sent to the Board previously to the meeting.

Ms. Szlosberg's motion to bring the CMAQ changes before the full Board was seconded and approved.

She continued the meeting with an update from the Interagency Leadership Team. She stated that under the direction of Governor Easley, all of the Departments have been working together to try to integrate programs and move forward together. One thing they have been talking about for many years is an update to the GIS system -- trying to get people the information they need to make good decisions early so that they save time and money and get projects delivered in an efficient manner.

Ms. Szlosberg introduced the Co-Chair of the Interagency Leadership Team (ILT), Ms. Debbie Barbour from NCDOT. At the September EPPC meeting, the EPPC asked the ILT to look at

some funding strategies for moving the GIS initiative forward and to report back to the committee.

Ms. Barbour stated that it was her privilege to come back to follow up on the discussion from the September Board meeting on how they could advance GIS as it relates to the use in the project develop process. She presented a GIS proposal that she asked the Board to support and endorse.

As a result of the September Transportation meeting, Chief Deputy Secretary Bill Laxton from the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and herself met along with some members of the Federal Highway, NCDOT and Tim Johnson from the Center of Geographic Informational Analysis to discuss how to advance the update of GIS mapping based on the funding information that we currently have. After the discussion they developed a proposal regarding the advancement of GIS. They shared the proposal with the ILT at their meeting on October 6, at which time the proposal was endorsed by the ILT.

Basically, more robust use of GIS during the project development process would help to reduce the field delineations that are required. Today on a new location project, staff is field delineating any alternative that is under consideration on the project. Alternatives may be such that they have to delineate a 800- to 1000-foot wide corridor on a project that is ten to twelve miles long. It takes a long time and a lot of money to do the delineations and surveys; the use of GIS during the early planning stages will help to reduce the time and cost. GIS could be used to reduce the overall number of alternatives and associated preliminary designs they are doing today. In addition, it would help us to reduce the total project preliminary engineering costs. At the September EPPC meeting, Mark Pierce from the Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch provided an analysis of what would have happened and the cost that would have been achieved if they could advance the use of GIS through the selection of the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) for the Kinston Road project in Kinston. They did a post analysis of how much they would have saved if they could have used GIS. They estimated on that project that they would have saved \$400,000 and a minimum of 4 to 5 months of time within the project development process.

Today they are proposing to the EPPC that NCDOT provide funds to update of necessary high priority GIS layers in Lenoir County at an approximate cost of \$505,000, subject to funding availability. At this point, the Interagency Leadership Team has endorsed the Kinston Bypass as a subject GIS pilot project, in addition to the Carey Road Extension project that was already identified with the pilot project. Ms. Barbour feels that this is a really good project for them to look at in advancing GIS because it is a new location project, a freeway, 12.4 miles in length, and they are likely to be studying multiple alternatives. It is also currently scheduled in the TIP for right of way acquisition to begin in 2015, and the project planning study is just getting underway so it is the right time in the project development process. NCDOT should provide funding for updating GIS in Lenoir County because the opportunity exist for them to reap potential cost and time savings associated with preliminary engineering and environmental delineations for projects on new locations.

There are currently three new location projects in Lenoir County that could benefit from the GIS update. One would be the Pink Hill Bypass which is currently not funded in the TIP, but is included as post year. The Carey Road Extension is programmed for planning environmental studies to begin now. Kinston Bypass is funded for 2015. Another benefit to the update of the GIS data layers is to support planning associated with possible Global TransPark future expansion opportunities. Another benefit is that mapping benefits long range transportation planning in Lenoir County.

The strategy that the ILT looked at closely was beginning with a small subset of the study (only a small portion of the state) and a smaller expenditure of funds (a portion of the approximate \$40 million needed for GIS statewide). They currently don't have the \$40 million dollars or more to do the whole state so they would like to do one county, look at a project or two, and determine what the benefits or issues are in advancing GIS. The one county and its associated projects could help the ILT prove the business case and show that they have (or don't have) a time and cost savings, as well as know what the further issues are. As mentioned, they have already obtained the ILT endorsement for the proposal and are in agreement to include the Kinston Bypass GIS pilot project. That is important because they want resource agencies to work with them in the process so they can evaluate the project together. It was important to obtain the support of partners of the transportation and environmental decision making process.

Ms. Barbour stated that the funding for the update of the data layers in Lenoir County could come from the preliminary engineering funds for the Kinston Bypass since this mapping will be used to advance that project. They would need a minimum of one year to update the GIS layers. Ms. Barbour stated she is seeking Board of Transportation endorsement of this proposal through the EPPC. In conclusion, this will help to advance the use of GIS in the project development process and give staff an opportunity to see what benefits can be reaped on a smaller scale before working to get this funded statewide.

Ms. Barbour recognized that about half of the Interagency Leadership Team members were present at the EPPC meeting. She introduced Jeff Crow and David Brook, from Department of Cultural Resources, Bill Laxton from DENR, Linda Rimer from the Environmental Protection Agency, Libby Smith from Commerce, and Bill Rosser from NCDOT. She stated that she appreciated them being at the meeting and the support and teamwork they have with the Interagency Leadership Team. The ILT has been a good forum to advance initiatives that help all of our missions move forward.

Ms. Barbour asked if there were any questions.

Mr. McRae made a comment that with all the work being done over the last eight years, this is the last link in the chain. He stated that GIS could help play catch up to the rest of the Bypasses.

Mr. Perkins stated that the only question he would have is pertaining to the benefits. The ILT needs to make sure that the Agencies accept this GIS tool as a way to move forward toward permitting and that they don't second guess themselves. He is hoping that the agreement that they have has a line in it stating that whatever resources we find and whatever we derive from this, that we agree and move forward.

Ms. Barbour answered that they have been cautioned by US Army Corps of Engineers that they have to prove the “least environmental damaging alternative”. They will be working very closely with the agencies in the planning process and hope to advance the use of GIS. They may have to go out and do some spot field delineations just to verify certain layers. This one project will give them a good sense of what direction they will need to go to reap the benefits or are they going to come to the end and not get a permit.

Mr. Laxton commented that from DENR’s perspective, they met with Tim Johnson and the staff in his agency doing the permitting for Lenoir County, and he can not guarantee today that if they do this, the project will be permitted. However, all of the ILT members were in agreement with the study and the pilot projects, and DENR is on board.

Mr. Perkins would like more from DENR about there intentions.

Ms. Szlosberg stated that GIS is a tool and not a guarantee of anything. There may be an air quality analysis that says that it doesn’t meet the threshold, which is not a GIS issue. What they can do is have more accurate information so that they can keep the process moving forward in an efficient manner.

Ms. Barbour stated that they will proceed to work cautiously. Instead of starting on a statewide basis, they figured it would be better to start on smaller scales and then if there are issues that come up and they don’t get a permit, they will know that they may need to continue doing the field delineations. That is what they are hoping to gain – at least a review of the issues and to understand the benefits.

Ms. Dunn asked, “Is the discussion and agreement in fact documented as much as it can be at this point in time”?

Ms Barbour answered, “There is an agreement for them to proceed ahead with using GIS to further advance GIS in the project development process. They are taking a risk by not being able to prove that the alternative that is selected was the least environmentally damaging. In the long run they would get to the selection of the alternative and then they would send a biologist to delineate one alternative instead of five.”

Ms. Dunn stated that it seemed that there could be some type of formal letter of intent. You can not guarantee any of the outcomes. None of the members may be on the Board two years from now, and it needs to be clearly documented that this is the intent of the team at this point in time and that everyone on the team has signed off on it.

Mr. Galyon asked to have a draft resolution incorporating the issues presented to this Committee for consideration and put on table for everyone to present in front of the full Board.

Ms. Szlosberg stated that she thinks this is something the environmental community is very supportive of. The more accurate the information is, the better the decisions are, and that means less impact environmental.

Ms. Szlosberg adjourned the meeting at 9:15 A.M.

The next meeting of the Environmental Planning and Policy Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, December 10, 2008 at 8:30 AM in the Board Room (Room 150) of the Transportation Building.

AJP/jh