

**Division 7 One-on-One Meeting
FY 2011-2020 Transportation Improvement Program**

Agenda

FY 2011-2020 TIP Items for Discussion

- a. General Funding and Design Issues**
 - b. Project Schedules and Funding**
 - c. Other Items**
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FY 2011-2020 TIP Items for Discussion

The DCHC MPO has reviewed the FY 2011-2020 Draft STIP and developed the following list of issues for discussion. The MPO is developing the FY 2011-2020 MTIP which will be approved in late spring/early summer 2008. Traffic counts and volume-to-capacity (V/C) ratios that are identified on this documents can be found on a companion document titled “Historic and Projected Traffic Counts and Volume-to-Capacity Ratio.”

a. General Funding and Design Issues

1. SPOT and Loop evaluation processes

The DCHC MPO commends the NCDOT for developing the SPOT and Loop evaluation processes that incorporate a more objective and open methodology for equity formula and loop highway projects. The MPO appreciates NCDOT’s solicitation of input to the development of those evaluation methodologies and the willingness of the NCDOT to address many of the MPO’s concerns and incorporate its suggestions.

2. Project selection

The MPO wants to make project selection, a power granted to the MPO through federal transportation legislation. This power is usurped in several ways but most notably when the NCDOT does not provide the STIP budget to the MPO and does not permit the MPO to move funding from deleted, scaled back and under budget projects to other projects designated by the MPO. As an example in Division 7, the MPO anticipates that the Smith Level (U-2803) and Weaver Dairy (U-3306) projects will be well under the budgets stated in the draft STIP because the project designs are to be scaled back while the draft STIP has actually increased the projects costs, and the Elizabeth Brady Road Extension has been deleted from the STIP. However, the MPO is not given the opportunity to reapportion this funding to projects that are MPO priorities.

3. Need additional funding for transportation

The MPO commends the NCDOT for their part in getting the Mobility Fund enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly. As the NCDOT develops the evaluation process and criteria for this fund, the MPO encourages the NCDOT to prioritize large projects in urban areas.

The DCHC MPO has two new major highway projects in Division 7 shown in the draft FY 2011-2020 STIP, including I-3306 (I-40 widening) and I-0305 (I-85 widening), which are scheduled for construction relatively far into the future (years 2019 and 2020, respectively). The high cost of these projects has left no funding for other projects, except for two minor bridge projects, in the second half of the draft STIP, i.e., years 2016 to 2020. The Mobility Fund needs to finance projects like the I-40 widening and I-85 widening so funding is also available for other roadway, bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects.

Meanwhile, all Division 7 roadway projects in the first half of the draft STIP, i.e., years 2011 to 2015, have been delayed one to three years when compared to the FY2009-2015 STIP. These projects have been delayed even though the Elizabeth Brady Road Extension, budgeted at \$34 million and planned for a 2012 construction start, was deleted from the draft STIP. Where has the funding gone? The project cost increases would only consume a small portion of these funds.

4. Funding for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects

The DCHC MPO strongly supports multi-modal transportation. Many of the MPO's top priorities are bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects in Orange County (see Regional Priority List). Unfortunately, the traditional funding sources for these projects have been disproportionately targeted for rescissions in the past and the SPOT process, which the MPO believes to be a substantial improvement over the previous prioritization process, does not allocate sufficient funding to bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects.

In addition, the policy for sharing projects costs is skewed against bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Local governments are not required to share in the cost of highway facilities but must share a large portion, 30% to 50%, of the cost of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The DCHC MPO wants bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects to receive more funding, even if the funding increase must come from funds traditionally used for highway projects (such as Surface Transportation Program – STP), and to remove the bias against bicycle and pedestrian projects in the cost sharing policy.

5. 2010 Funding Rescission

Recently, the MPO found that the method the NCDOT developed to rescind funds in North Carolina will take the bulk of the rescission funding from programs that the DCHC MPO believes are important. The CMAQ and STP-Enhancement programs provide the majority of the \$61.5 million rescission in North Carolina.

The MPO programs most of the CMAQ funding, and uses the STP-Enhancement program to fund many of the area's non-highway projects. The rescission should take an equal proportion across all programs and not target non-highway programs.

6. Complete Streets/Project Descriptions

NCDOT has changed its approach to highway design from accommodating motor vehicles only to providing for a multi-modal transportation system. The Complete Streets program has initiated much of this needed change. However, on roadway projects that include widening and multi-modal facilities, the STIP persists in describing projects with "widen to multi-lanes" with no mention of multi-modal facilities. The DCHC MPO continues to believe that the TIP would better communicate to the public and to NCDOT departments the actual project scope if the project descriptions said "widen to multi-lanes and include bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities" where appropriate.

b. Project Schedules and Funding

7. Churton Street Congestion in the Town of Hillsborough

The Elizabeth Brady Road Extension project (U-3808) was eliminated from the FY2011-2020 STIP. The principal purpose of that project was to relieve traffic congestion on Churton Street, which currently has a volume exceeding a LOS E capacity by 20%. The Town of Hillsborough and the DCHC-MPO are currently analyzing several projects from the draft STIP and 2035 LRTP to identify those whose cumulative effects will have the greatest positive impact on Churton Street congestion. The MPO asks that the NCDOT study the following set of projects as an alternative to the Elizabeth Brady Extension. The MPO understands that these projects cannot be implemented as quickly as the Elizabeth Brady Extension had been scheduled, i.e., year 2012, but asks that these projects be moved forward as soon as possible.

- a. R-2825 (South Churton Street): A Feasibility study was completed for this project in the mid-1990s but will need to be updated to recognize local planning efforts such as the South Churton Corridor Study and the schedule for the I-85 widening project. This project includes congestion management, access limits, and aesthetic and capacity improvements between US 70 Business and Interstate 40. One study concluded that the South Churton Street project alone will improve corridor travel time by 10%. The cost estimate for this project is \$19 million.
- b. U-3436 (Eno Mountain Road/Mayo Street alignment): This project is to realign the intersection and make additional safety improvements. The cost estimate for this project is \$2.4 million.

- c. NC 86 widening between US 70-A and Old NC 10: This project is in the 2035 LRTP but not the draft STIP. This project could be integrated with the I-85 widening. The cost estimate for this project is \$10 million.
- d. NC 86 widening from US 70 Bypass to Coleman Loop Road: This project is in the 2035 LRTP but not the draft STIP. The segment between the US 70 Bypass and NC 57 is the highest priority. The cost estimate for this project is \$7.5 million.
- e. Orange Grove Road Extension to US 70-Alternate: This project is in the 2035 LRTP but not the draft STIP. One study concluded that this project alone will improve corridor travel time by 10%. The cost estimate for this project is \$30 million.

8. I-0305 (I-85 widening, from I-40 to Durham County line)

I-3306 (I-40 widening, from I-85 to Durham County line)

These projects are not among the DCHC MPO priority highway projects and the I-40 widening project in particular is a low priority among the highway projects in the 2035 LRTP (in which it is scheduled for the 2025-2035 completion period). The MPO is concerned that the cost and scheduling of this large project precludes consideration of the set of projects submitted as an alternative to the former Elizabeth Brady Road Extension project (U-3808), which is discussed above, and consideration of higher priority sidewalk, bike lanes and safety improvement projects in Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough.

For this section of I-85, traffic counts have not grown over the last seven years and projected (for the year 2035) volume-to-capacity ratios (V/C) remain below a level of service (LOS) E except for the section between US 70 and NC 147. For this section of I-40, traffic counts have increased over 20% from 2002 to 2009; current V/C is approaching an LOS E; and projected V/C exceeds an LOS E by almost 20% for the section between NC 86 and US 15-501.

The MPO wants the NCDOT to consider a design alternative for the I-40 widening (I-3306) that would only add a westbound lane between the Durham/Orange county line and NC 86 (or, possibly a point before NC 86). This added capacity would address the worst level of congestion experienced in that section of the corridor, which is caused by the through lanes being reduced from three to two lanes, the long uphill grade for westbound traffic, and the traffic weaving of the on-ramp and lane reduction. The cost estimate for the I-85 and I-40 widenings are \$213 million and \$47 million, respectively.

9. U-5304 (US 15-501 bypass, bike/pedestrian/ transit accommodations from S. Columbia St. to Ephesus Church Road)

This project is #6 in the MPO's highway priority list. The construction year, 2019, should be moved to an earlier year given the high priority of the project and

the lack of highway projects in the second half of the draft STIP. The cost estimate for this project is \$5 million.

10. New Project (Erwin Road, from US 15-501 to NC 751)

This project, which is #3 in the MPO's regional priority list and placed #3 among Division 5 subregional highway projects in the NCDOT Strategic prioritization process, includes bicycle, pedestrian and safety improvements. It is a critical transportation link between Durham and Chapel Hill and as a consequence the levels of vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic along segments of this route are increasing. The MPO wants to work with the NCDOT to complete a feasibility analysis of this project and identify construction funding. The cost estimate for this project is \$5.5 million.

11. EB-4980 (Orange Grove Road Pedestrian Bridge)

This project is the number one priority for Orange County and was also listed on the Town of Hillsborough's priority list. The NCDOT Director of Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation recommends removing this project from the current five-year work plan and TIP schedule due to a lack of necessary supporting pedestrian facilities along Orange Grove Road. The DCHC MPO requests that this project remain on the TIP schedule. The County is developing a CTP, anticipated to be adopted in Spring 2012, and is also developing a Safe Routes to School Action Plan to address barriers to walking and bicycling at three Orange County schools including New Grady Brown Elementary. The pedestrian bridge is necessary for safe transport across I-40 for many of these school children, and a key part of the plan for that school. The estimated cost of this project is \$390,000 to \$600,000.

12. Hillsborough Train Station and Multimodal Center

This project is the top transit priority for the Town of Hillsborough. The MPO wants to work with NCDOT to identify an appropriate funding source for this project. The estimated cost of the train station is \$5.3 million.

c. Other Items

13. Roadway Signage in the Hillsborough Area

The Town of Hillsborough's Wayfinding Task Force recently made several recommendations to add, consolidate and relocate roadway signs in the Hillsborough area. NCDOT staff was involved and very helpful during the Wayfinding Task Force planning process. The Town of Hillsborough wants to work with the NCDOT to move forward in implementing the Task Force recommendations.

14. B-4962 (Replace Bridge #46, Eno River and US 70 bypass)

Orange County sent a letter, dated October 27, 2009, to the NCDOT/PDEA/Bridge Project Unit stating some concerns with the replacement of this bridge. For example, County staff was not clear whether a temporary bridge would be

used to permit continued use of the roadway during construction. Please identify to what extent the bridge design and construction staging will accommodate each of the items specified in that letter. The estimated cost of this project is \$6.6 million.