

# MEMORANDUM

TO: The North Carolina Department of Transportation

FROM: Doug Plachcinski, AICP, CFM, Executive Director

DATE: August 30, 2023

RE: **FY2024-2033 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) DESCRIPTION UPDATES**

## I. SUMMARY

On June 6, 2023, the North Carolina Board of Transportation adopted the FY2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The MPO Board must adopt a FY2024-2033 DCHC MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The STIP and the TIP must match because state and Federal laws require project concurrency.

The DCHC MPO released the TIP for a 30-day public comment period between June 27 and July 26. The DCHC MPO received 85 public comments from individuals, a letter of concern from Bike Durham, and several people who commented in the public hearing at the MPO Board meeting.

Most of the feedback the MPO received pertained to current projects that are listed as road widenings. This feedback is critical of the MPO's 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) that lane additions must be designed carefully and include benefits like safety and multimodal connectivity outside of added capacity. The MPO Policy Board affirmed this direction, stating opposition to road widening projects within the DCHC MPO planning area, especially if the project does not include multimodal accommodations.

At the August 9th Board meeting, the Board reiterated this policy direction and approved the TIP with the condition that transit prioritization be added to the STIP description for U-5934. This has been written into the MPO's TIP and agreed to by both the STIP unit and Division 5 as follows:

U-5934: I-40 to NC 147 in Durham. Add lanes, rehabilitate pavement, and **prioritize the addition of transit accommodations.** (our emphasis added)

## II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Project U-5934 was originally added into the FY2016-2025 TIP through the SPOT 4 cycle and right-of-way is expected to begin in 2028. This is one of several projects that pre-date the MPO's adopted 2050 MTP, that states the following:

*Instead of relying on a conventional perspective that prioritizes faster car travel and less congested roads, this plan used a lens that also focused on the mobility and accessibility concerns of people who are less likely to own cars and have a greater propensity to use transit, walking and bicycling to meet their travel needs. Traditional road congestion and vehicle speed concerns are still addressed, but they are balanced by concerns for safer streets, user-focused transit services, more connected bicycle and pedestrian networks, and greater access to job hubs from traditionally under-represented neighborhoods – places that have historically borne an outsized burden of the impacts of highway projects... One clear message from*

*both elected official discussion and public engagement during the development of the plan is that roadways need to be designed and engineered with much greater care than has been typical in the past, using more flexible and context-sensitive standards that have now been successfully implemented in many places. Especially in urban and urbanizing locations, designs should prioritize steady, safe, reliable, moderate-speed travel, rather than emphasize high-speed travel.*

The MTP is the guiding document for transportation policy for the MPO and for the Greater Triangle Region, with the vision of providing comprehensive, multi-modal transportation projects that are sensitive to the local context. Projects such as U-5934 need to prioritize transportation alternatives and quality facilities, and the MPO respectfully requests this goes beyond using the guidelines for Complete Streets.

While it is standard practice for the STIP to include more generic project descriptions, adding language for the prioritization of transit accommodations is still inadequate for what the MPO intends for this project. Our stakeholders expect a collaboration-driven project development process and desire input at each step of design and implementation.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The MPO appreciates being a partner in the project design process and for continued coordination alongside NCDOT for transportation planning in the DCHC MPO area. The MPO looks forward to the additional collaboration necessary for projects such as U-5934 and ensuring that these projects are consistent with the MTP's regional vision as the MPO Policy Board adopted.