

**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
Friday September 20, 2019, 10:30 AM
Carolina Shores Town Hall**

Members Present

Ms. Pat Sykes
Rep. Frank Iler
Hon. Debbie Smith
Mr. Bill Brennan
Hon. Mary Louise Knight [Chuck Nance]
Mr. Carson Durham
Mr. John Corbett

Other Attendees

Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT
Dan Newquist, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT
Roy Cundiff
Parks Kelly, NCDOT
Chris Palsgrove, NCDOT

Chairman Walt Eccard had an excused absence from today's meeting. Vice Chair Hon. Debbie Smith noted that a quorum was present and brought the meeting to order in Carolina Shores Town Hall at 10:30AM. Since there were several new attendees from NCDOT, Hon. Smith asked if everyone could introduce themselves.

Mr. Mark Hoeweler read the ethics statement and asked the members present if they had any conflicts. There were none stated.

Vice Chair Smith reviewed the meeting minutes from May 10, 2019. There were no changes proposed. **Mr. Corbett made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Durham seconded. All voted in favor.**

Vice Chair Smith then welcomed Ms. Caitlin Marks to provide an update on the status of current projects in the area. Ms. Marks mentioned that Chad Kimes would provide a more detailed update on the impacts of project schedules resulting from the recent NCDOT budget shortfall. Ms. Marks referred to her report in the meeting packet and noted that the

Holden Beach Bridge repair project is nearing completion and is still on track for an October 2019 finish date.

Mr Kimes then gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting recent changes to the STIP resulting from NCDOT's budget shortfall. Mr. Kimes, explained that NCDOT maintains a \$250 million to \$1 Billion operating budget. While the state was closer to the max budget threshold a few years ago, the Department has been trending closer to the \$250 million floor in FY 2019 requiring immediate action to ensure the operating budget does not fall below the established floor. NCDOT's policy is that no new contracts can be executed if the operating budget falls below \$250 million. Some of the main contributing factors that have influenced the budget situation is the recent costs incurred due to hurricane events since FY 2017, the general increase in construction costs, and the resolution of MAP Act legal cases. NCDOT maintains an annual budget of \$66 million in emergency funds to address repairs resulting from natural disasters. Over the last three years the average annual costs incurred have been \$220 million. Reimbursements from Hurricane Matthew and Florence have been slow to be processed. Mr. Kimes highlighted the increase in construction costs by sharing an example that a typical 1 mile segment of sidewalk costing \$50,000 five years ago would now be closer to \$300,000 in total project costs.

To correct the situation, NCDOT has delayed all new projects that were selected through the SPOT 5.0 process by 3 years with the exception of projects funded in part by GARVEE or NC Build bonds. For the GSATS area the projects impacted include the interchanges at US 17 at NC 211 and US 17 at Smith Ave. In order to take additional measures to correct the budget, preliminary engineering has been temporarily suspended on all project that are not within 12 months of completion. The Carolina Bays Parkway, Calabash Bridge Repair, Holden Beach Road Study, and the Wall St/Main St realignment project in Shallotte have all been exempted from this requirement.

Mr. Kimes then provided a status on the Carolina Bays Parkway project. He indicated that the next merger meeting is scheduled for September 30, 2019. The committee will review 9 corridor concepts and determine 3-5 to move forward with. At that time public workshops will be held to solicit public input on the options. Once the preliminary alternatives are selected, NCDOT can begin to analyze all potential impacts and start to define the corridor of the route. The final alternative is scheduled for a year from the initial alternatives analysis.

Ms. Sykes asked Mr. Kimes if he could verify the adjusted schedule for the NC211 interchange. Mr. Kimes confirmed that ROW acquisition is scheduled to begin in 2022. Rep. Iler mentioned that the NCDOT budget has been a major concern discussed at the statehouse. He said the MAP Act settlements are having a major impact across the state. He also said that NCDOT is the only department that is not authorized to utilize the state's rainy day fund.

Mr. Kimes mentioned that the state has developed the NC First Commission to study the long-term transportation needs of the state and develop recommendations on feasible funding strategies that could be implemented. Mr. Brennan mentioned that local

jurisdictions are also seeing issues with their operating budgets. Ms. Sykes shared concern about the job loss that has occurred and its potential impact on road maintenance in Brunswick County. Finally Ms. Smith mentioned that she was active in storm debris activities following Hurricane Florence and from that experience alone is not surprised by the staggering costs associated with Hurricane recovery efforts.

Mr. Newquist then provided an update on the SPOT Prioritization process. He stated that in response to the changes to the STIP, the SPOT office has adjusted the SPOT 6.0 schedule to a three year process. They indicated that this would be a one-time change. Mr. Newquist noted that SPOT online is scheduled to open in October with a project submission deadline of May 1, 2020. This is roughly twice as long as the submission window for SPOT 5.0 which will enable staff to more thoroughly evaluate project concepts. Mr. Newquist advised the TCC members to review projects within their jurisdictions and contact GSATS staff if they would like to discuss any scope changes to a project that was submitted during SPOT 5.0. Mr. Newquist mentioned that MPOs were given an opportunity to test intersection projects to examine travel time savings. Of the intersection improvement proposals submitted by GSATS the NC 130/ Mt. Pisgah Road and the Village Road at Main St in Shallotte intersections both received very high scores for travel time savings. Finally, Mr. Newquist indicated that the SPOT office is introducing a new step in the process to provide more details on the purpose and need of a project submittal. GSATS is coordinating with Division 3 staff to ensure that we are properly fulfilling this requirement.

Next, Mr Newquist introduced a Resolution to endorse a Bike/Ped Planning grant that the Town of Shallotte is applying for. The Resolution of support is required from the local MPO as part of the application submittal. Mr. Brennan mentioned that there was an error on the meeting date listed on the resolution. Mr. Brennan made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Durham seconded. All voted in favor. Mr. Newquist noted that he will coordinate with Hon. Smith to correct the date prior to obtaining her signature on the resolution.


Mr. Hoeweler then briefed the committee on the federal FAST Act Safety Performance measures. SCDOT and NCDOT have adopted the statewide targets for the 2016-2020 reporting period. Mr Hoeweler reminded the committee that last year, GSATS expressed interest in developing an MPO level safety target as allowed by the federal FAST Act. This was motivated due to the contrasting methodologies used by SCDOT and NCDOT plus the unique characteristics of the region as a coastal tourism destination. GSATS staff has worked through issues expressed by NCDOT and FHWA and is prepared to develop GSATS level targets beginning this reporting period due on February 29, 2020. Mr. Hoeweler said there are several new projects coming on line which should help reduce accident rates so hopefully we notice a decreasing trend. Mr. Hoeweler also mentioned that he felt that many improvements would need to be legislatively driven such as motorcycle helmet laws, golf cart/ moped restrictions, and the use of red light cameras. Rep. Iler concurred. He mentioned that GSATS staff is included on a fatal accident notification email list from the NCDOT Safety office. To date, there have been 5 traffic related fatalities in the GSATS area this year. It appears that statewide there is a high prevalence of pedestrian fatalities. Mr. Hoeweler mentioned that GSATS is hosting their first working

meeting of the recently established Safety Committee on September 26, 2019 where they will be reviewing 29 fatalities that have occurred between January 1st- June 13th 2019. Mr. Hoeweler then presented an action item to change the scope of the Town of Shallotte DA sidewalk project. After some further engineering work and revised cost estimates, they are proposing to scale back the length of sidewalk originally proposed. The new proposal will extend sidewalk from the Smith Ave/ US 17 intersection south along Main St. While the total project cost will increase from \$200,000 to \$265,000 the Town of Shallotte has agreed to maintain the 40% local match. Mr. Durham mentioned that the long-term goal is to make Main St walkable from the Walmart plaza all the way to Hills Grocery plaza. Mr. Brennan made a motion to approve the change of scope. Mr. Durham seconded. All voted in favor. Mr. Hoeweler mentioned that the Town of Ocean Isle Beach is working closely with Div 3 to coordinate the bike lane project on First St. with an already scheduled resurfacing project. Brunswick County has formed a committee to begin work on the Holden Beach Causeway Master Plan study.

Mr. Hoeweler then introduced Mr. Norowzi to provide an update from the NCDOT Planning Division. Mr. Norowzi mentioned that the Base Year calibration for the Brunswick County CTP model is underway and that he will forward a copy of the model to GSATS staff for their review. Mr. Norowzi also highlighted the NC 2050 Moves process. There is a survey that will be launched at the end of the year.

With no further discussion, Mr. Brennan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Sykes seconded. All voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,


Mark Hoeweler, MPO Director


Mayor Walt Eccard, Chair

Date