



**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)  
Friday July 17, 2020, 10:30 AM Virtual Meeting**

**Members Present**

Ms. Pat Sykes  
 Hon. Walt Eccard  
 Hon. Debbie Smith  
 Mr. Bill Brennan  
 Mr. Carson Durham  
 Mr. Jamie Phillips  
 Hon. Alan Holden  
 Mr. Randy Thompson

**Other Attendees**

Mark Hoeweler, GSATS  
 Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT  
 Dan Newquist, GSATS  
 Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS  
 Caitlin Marks, NCDOT  
 Chad Kimes, NCDOT  
 Douglass MacDonald  
 Roy Cundiff  
 Jason Werner  
 Carol D  
 Jeff Dayton  
 Chris Palsgrove  
 Patrick Flanagan

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Chairman Walt Eccard noted that a quorum was present and brought the meeting to order via Zoom video conference software at 10:30 AM.

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

Chairman Eccard asked if anyone attending from the public would like to address the committee. No members of the public signed up to provide comment to the committee.

Chairman Eccard reviewed the meeting minutes from February 7, 2020. There were no changes proposed. **Mr. Bill Brennan made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Carson Durham seconded. All voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then welcomed Ms. Caitlin Marks to provide an update on the status of current projects in the area. Ms. Marks explained that about 40% of NCDOT's revenues are generated from gas taxes alone. Due to the reduction of vehicles on the road as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, fuel tax revenues have declined. For the last several weeks, NCDOT has been below the cash balance minimum floor. However, a legislative bill that was passed July 6 has helped stabilize the NCDOT budget. Ms. Marks referred to her project status handout. Several projects were placed on hold. Carolina Bays Parkway, was not on placed hold. Ms. Marks explained that NCDOT is continuing with Carolina Bays Parkway because South Carolina

is progressing with their portion of the project. Recently, a Concurrence Point 2 merger meeting was held. At the meeting seven alternatives were agreed up to move forward for detailed study. Ms. Marks indicated that Mr. Hoeweler received a document that shows the different alternatives. Mr. Hoeweler confirmed that he did receive the Concurrence Point 2 letter and has signed and returned it. Ms. Marks concluded by noting that she received an update that the Holden Beach bridge guardrail is the last item awaiting installation for that project but the shipment of the guardrail has been delayed due to the pandemic. The timeframe for that project's completion is in either August or September.

Chairman Eccard then asked Mr. Dan Newquist to brief the committee on the GSATS FY20-29 MTIP Amendments. Mr. Newquist stated that following the SPOT 5.0 process, which ended in the middle of 2019, the NCDOT STIP Office began including the funded projects in the STIP and also changed the programming years out to 2029. Mr. Newquist reminded the committee that the STIP Office asked for the adoption of the new GSATS MTIP, which reflected the current projects approved by the North Carolina Board of Transportation following SPOT 5.0, at the TAC meeting in December. Mr. Newquist noted that during that transition time, there were some changes that GSATS is currently catching up with. Mr. Newquist then listed the projects and explained the changes to each one.

1. Priority Project 2, the Smith interchange project on US 17. In fiscal years 2024 and 2025, there is an increase in estimated construction costs from \$2.7 million per fiscal year to \$10 million per fiscal year.
2. Project Priority 9, the superstreet intersection project on US 17 north and south of Shallotte. In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, there was an increase in construction costs from \$2.2 million to \$4.75 million per fiscal year. NCDOT asked GSATS to revise those changes.
3. Project Priority 5A, which is the Ocean Isle Beach bike path. After that project was further developed, the cost estimate, which was presented to the TCC and TAC at the December meeting, increased from \$700,000 to \$858,000.
4. Shallotte sidewalk project. Its cost estimate increased from \$200,000 to \$265,000.
5. The final change involves the funding of the Holden Beach Causeway study. The NCDOT transportation planning division instructed GSATS to change the funding category from DA funds to the GSATS PL funds. That change is reflected in the MTIP and GSATS can now move forward in that planning process' authorization.

Mayor Alan Holden asked if there were any changes to the Holden Beach Road Project. Mr. Newquist responded that it may be in the list of SPOT project submissions. Without any further discussion, **Hon. Debbie Smith made a motion to adopt the GSATS FY20-29 MTIP Amendments. Mayor Holden seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then asked Mr. Newquist to brief the committee on the SPOT 6.0 Project Recommendations. Mr. Newquist began by providing an overview of the SPOT process. He reminded the committee that the deadline for project submittals is July 31. Mr. Newquist noted that the deadline changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An additional workshop with the TCC to review the project list was held during the extra time. Mr. Newquist reiterated that there are three tiers of projects in the SPOT process: statewide mobility, regional impact, and division needs. Each are given a quantitative score based on various measures such as congestion rates, crash history data, and project costs. Once the scores are released next spring, GSATS will revisit the regional impact projects and the TAC will be assigned local input points. GSATS is eligible for fourteen projects per mode. There is a carryover provision in the SPOT process and GSATS will be submitting three carryover projects, which won't count against the Highway submittal quota. Mr. Newquist then provided a status update for each of the projects that will be submitted. For each project, he referenced a presentation with informational slides and aerial imagery.

- The aviation project being submitted is for the Odell Williams Municipal Airport. Airport officials are

interested in buying additional land and constructing a new hangar building. This project was submitted in SPOT 5.0 initially and there is no change in scope.

- The Town of Sunset Beach is interested in constructing a multipurpose path along Sunset Boulevard that would connect Sunset Beach Park to NC 904. There are existing sidewalks between Pine View Drive and NC 904. When GSATS originally submitted this proposal, the cost estimate was relatively high. As a result, Sunset Beach officials asked GSATS to change the scope of the project to the stretch from Station Trail to Pine View Drive which currently has no pedestrian infrastructure. The concept is one mile in length and while the cost estimate still seems a little high, GSATS will still submit both project concepts.
- The three carryover projects are the Carolina Bays Parkway extension, which is going through the environmental merger process, the US 17 Business South interchange project in Shallotte, and the Bridgers Road extension project, which currently has the environmental document in place.
- The first highway project is the Holden Beach Road widening project from the Mount Pisgah Road intersection to the Holden Beach Causeway intersection. In SPOT 5.0, GSATS had a submittal for a widening from Smith Avenue in Shallotte to Holden Beach proper. While it scored well, due to the project length and high cost estimate, it was segmented into two submittals with Mount Pisgah Road being the intersection dividing the corridor into two segments.
- The second highway project is the Holden Beach Road widening from Smith Avenue to the Mount Pisgah Road intersection. The Mount Pisgah Road/ Holden Beach Road intersection needs to be upgraded, so a project for that is included in the scope of both this submittal and the Mount Pisgah Road intersection to the Holden Beach Causeway intersection submittal.
- The third highway project is the NC 179 and Persimmon Road intersection, the Thomasboro Road and Persimmon Road intersection, and the Thomasboro Road and Beach Drive intersection. In SPOT 5.0, GSATS submitted a project to address the NC 179 and Persimmon Road intersection. The other two intersections mentioned were added to the scope because it was determined that a larger project was needed to address the issues in that area of Calabash holistically. There has been positive feedback on this concept, and the NCDOT Feasibility Studies Unit is assisting GSATS with the design concept.
- The fourth highway project is the NC 904 widening from US 17 to the intersection of Pireway Road and Longwood Road. This project was submitted in SPOT 5.0. However, in that submittal the widening terminated at the Etheridge Road 904 intersection. Since then, GSATS determined that an additional half mile distance would provide additional long term benefits to the regional network.
- The fifth highway project is a new location project from the Smith Avenue and US 17 intersection to NC 130. Currently, there is a narrow and unpaved local road alignment of Mulberry Road at that location. The proposal is a two lane road that the NCDOT Feasibility Studies Office is currently examining.
- The sixth highway project is the widening of NC 130 from Village Road in Shallotte to the terminus of the Mulberry Road improvement proposal. This was submitted in SPOT 5.0. For SPOT 6.0, the terminus of the project was changed from McMilly Road to the alignment of Mulberry Road as outlined in the Smith Ave Extension project.
- The seventh highway project is NC 179 Business access management in Sunset Beach. This project was submitted as a four lane widening project in SPOT 5.0. After subsequent feedback from the TCC and TAC during the SPOT 6.0 project development, it was determined that a widening project might not be the best solution for this corridor. As a result, GSATS proposed an access management project for NC 179 from Seaside Road to Ocean Isle Beach Road.
- The eighth highway project is NC 179 access management in Calabash. In SPOT 5.0, this was submitted as a widening project. However, it was determined that there were significant right-of-way constraints along the corridor. As a result, GSATS will propose an access management project instead.
- The ninth highway project is the widening of NC 904 from US 17 to Old Georgetown Road. This project was submitted in SPOT 5.0 initially and there is no change in scope.

- The tenth highway project is the widening of NC 904 from Old Georgetown Road to Sunset Boulevard.
- The eleventh highway project is the widening of NC 179 from Main Street to Hale Swamp Road. In SPOT 5.0, GSATS had a submittal for a widening from Main Street in Shallotte to Ocean Isle Beach Drive. Given the length of that proposal and an interest from the TCC in other alternatives the project scope was segmented.
- The twelfth highway project is the widening of Old Georgetown Road from Hale Swamp Road to Ocean Isle Beach Drive.
- The thirteenth highway project is the widening of Old Georgetown Road from Seaside Road to Calabash proper.
- The final highway project is the Main Street signal upgrade in downtown Shallotte for the Whiteville Road, Wall Street, Smith Avenue, and Holden Beach Road intersections. Initially, a new signal was proposed for the Village Road and Main Street intersection but this alternative proposal was selected instead based on feedback from the TCC.

Chairman Eccard thanked Mr. Newquist for his presentation and asked how many of the projects are likely to receive funding. Mr. Newquist replied it is anticipated that there will be significantly fewer funds for the same amount of projects in SPOT 6.0, increasing the competitiveness. Mr. Kimes stated that there will likely not be much funding available for this round due to much lower revenues than expected. Chairman Eccard expressed interest in persuading state officials to adopt other methods of funding for road projects such as bonds. Mr. Kimes noted that bonds could improve the funding situation. Mr. Hoeweler asked if the SPOT process timeframe will be expanded. Ms. Marks replied that there hasn't been discussion on this and any changes would require state legislation approval. Without any further discussion, **Hon. Smith made a motion to adopt the SPOT 6.0 Project Recommendations. Mr. Jamie Phillips seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then invited Ms. Elizabeth Tucker to present the 5310 Transit Funding Recommendations. Ms. Tucker iterated that the program is specifically intended for agencies that provide service to the Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities. This year GSATS received four applications from three organizations: Horry County, Brunswick County Senior Resources, and Neighbor to Neighbor. Ms. Tucker noted that this was the first time Brunswick County Senior Resources applied and they were interested in purchasing services from Brunswick Transit. Ms. Tucker referenced charts that showed how much each organization requested and how much funding GSATS is recommending. Ms. Tucker mentioned that Horry County is purchasing two ADA compliant vans, Brunswick Senior Services is purchasing services and Neighbor to Neighbor is requesting mobility management funds. Ms. Tucker concluded by asking the TAC to approve the recommendations so they can be presented to the Policy Committee. Without further discussion, **Mr. Randy Thompson moved to approve the 5310 Transit Funding Recommendations. Ms. Patricia Sykes seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then welcomed Mr. Behshad Norowzi from the NCDOT Transportation Planning Division to brief the committee. Mr. Norowzi began by noting that half of NCDOT's revenue comes from fuel taxes. Mr. Norowzi explained that traffic volumes were 42% lower than normal in April from vehicle miles traveled tracking. In May it was 28% lower. In June it was 15% lower. For the first 12 days of July, traffic was only 5% lower than normal. Mr. Norowzi noted that information from the 2020 census may be available in May of 2021 which is sooner than expected and the census information could result in changes to the MPOs boundaries. Mr. Norowzi concluded by stating that Brunswick County's cost sharing proposal with the Cape Fear RPO has paused due to Cape Fear's RPO being short on staff and having other priorities. Effort has been refocused to other RPOs such as Pender County.

With no further discussion, Hon. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Holden seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:32 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Hoeweler, MPO Director

Walt Eccard  
Mayor Walt Eccard, Chair

2/26/21  
Date