



**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
Friday December 20, 2019, 10:00 AM
Carolina Shores Town Hall**

Members Present

Ms. Pat Sykes
Hon. Walt Eccard
Hon. Debbie Smith [Justin Whiteside]
Mr. Bill Brennan
Hon. Donna Long
Mr. Carson Durham
Mr. John Corbett
Hon. Alan Holden
Mr. Randy Thompson [Helen Bunch]

Other Attendees

Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT via phone
Dan Newquist, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT
Ben Hughes, NCDOT
Eric Edgeron
Roy Cundiff
Fred Thorne
David Simms
Debbie Simms
Jamie Phillips

Chairman Walt Eccard noted that a quorum was present and brought the meeting to order in Carolina Shores Town Hall at 10:00AM.

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

Chairman Eccard acknowledged that there were several members of the public in attendance at the meeting and noted that there was no public comment opportunity listed on the agenda. Mr. Bill Brennan made a motion to amend the agenda to include a public comment period. Mr. Durham seconded. All voted in favor.

Mayor Eccard then invited members of the public who wished to speak to address the committee. The following is a summary of the comments expressed during the public comment period:

- Mr. Eric Edgeron, Ocean Isle Beach: Mr. Edgeron stated that the proposal to extend Carolina Bays Parkway into North Carolina is the right road but in the wrong place. The vast majority of the nine alternatives shared at the December public meetings showed an alignment that would require significant improvements to existing US 17. The Right of Way constraints are too significant and the existing businesses along this corridor have been viable and successful. In addition there are already superstreet upgrades proposed for several intersection locations along the corridor. The preferred corridor should be further inland similar to the existing alignment of the Carolina Bays Parkway in South Carolina.
- Ms. Debbie Simms: Ms. Simms noted that the residential impacts particularly along the alternative routes 8 and 9 would be too significant.
- Mr. Fred Thorne, Ocean Isle Beach. Mr. Thorne expressed concern regarding the impacts on several businesses along the corridor including the McDonalds at NC 904 and the Ocean Ridge Golf Club. Mr. Thorne suggested that a preferred alternative should be considered further west of US 17, which would provide improved evacuation route options for the residents of Calabash, Shallotte, Sunset Beach, and Ocean Isle Beach.
- Mr. David Simms: Mr. Simms commented that the truck traffic along SC 57 has gotten worse and worse over time. Ultimately an alignment further west would not only cost less but should direct much of the through truck traffic off of local roads like Hickman Rd. He also noted that in South Carolina on Hwy 111 there are already billboard signs suggesting that a corridor has already been selected for the project.

Chairman Eccard thanked the attendees for sharing their views. He encouraged them to submit these comments in writing directly to NCDOT. He confirmed that the public comment period ends on January 10th. Mr. Hoeweler mentioned that he attended both public meetings and the alternative that received the most positive feedback was corridor concept #1 which did have an alignment west of US 17 until it ties back in at the NC 904 intersection. Mr. Hoeweler pledged to share the public interest of an inland corridor at subsequent project merger meetings. Mr. Corbett asked if it was appropriate for local jurisdictions to submit comments in the form of a resolution. Ms. Sykes mentioned that Brunswick County intends to submit a letter recommending an inland parallel route as well. Mr. Kimes confirmed that the current schedule is to narrow the corridor analysis to 3 or 4 alternatives for further environmental review in the Spring of 2020.

Chairman Eccard reviewed the meeting minutes from September 20, 2019. There were no changes proposed. **Ms. Sykes made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. 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 began by referring to her project status handout. She indicated that projects highlighted in yellow are projects that are temporarily suspended due to the budget shortfall at NCDOT. Ms. Marks also mentioned that to date there have been 450 written comments submitted regarding the Carolina Bays Parkway project.

Mayor Holden expressed concerns about the aesthetics of the temporary rails that are in place on the Holden Beach Causeway Bridge. Ms. Marks indicated that the project is scheduled for completion in November 2020 and that there would be no single lane closures between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Mr. Kimes explained that the temporary rail is an additional protection measure for the safety of workers. There was a previous bridge repair accident in North Carolina that resulted in new OSHA standards for bridge repair projects.

Chairman Eccard then introduced GSATS staff member Dan Newquist to brief the committee on the action item pertaining to the GSATS MTIP. Mr. Newquist explained that following the completion of the SPOT 5.0 process, NCDOT has since included projects that were selected for funding on the STIP. The Board of Transportation voted to approve the updated STIP in September which also expanded the program window to FY20-29. The STIP office requested that each MPO update and adopt their respective MTIP to ensure that their project schedule and funding commitment accurately reflects the STIP. The TCC has recommended approval.

Mr. Durham made a motion to adopt the GSATS FY 20-29 MTIP as presented. Mr. Brennan seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Newquist continued with the next agenda item which is an action item pertaining to a request from Ocean Isle Beach for an increase in DA funding to support the bike lane installation on First Street. Mr. Newquist reminded the committee of the scope of the project, which includes a 3 mile section on First St. to install 4-5 ft bike lanes on each side of the roadway. The proposal included coordination with NCDOT Division 3 staff on an upcoming resurfacing project that is scheduled for First Street. Following site visits from Division 3 staff and the preparation of more detailed cost estimates, the funding share required from Ocean Isle Beach and GSATS increased from \$700,000 to \$768,875. Ocean Isle Beach has already committed to \$315,000 which is well above the 20% minimum. Mr. Newquist confirmed that there were sufficient DA funds available to cover the revised funding request. Mr. Corbett asked when the funding would be opened up for additional project submissions. Mr. Newquist stated that would not occur in the immediate future as GSATS staff wants to ensure that the three projects that are currently funded proceed smoothly. The Local Project Administration process has been a learning curve to date which may result in potential changes to the submission criteria in a subsequent round of DA call for project proposals.

Mayor Holden expressed concern that Holden Beach has not received its fair share of project consideration over the past five years. Mr. Hoeweler mentioned that the DA project window was open to all jurisdictions. The only one that was received and not awarded funding was the Sunset Beach turn lane proposal. Mr. Hoeweler also reminded committee members that the Metropolitan Transportation Plan process which occurs every five years is an appropriate time to include local project ideas. Inclusion on the MTP ensures that a project concept is eligible for federal funds. Mr. Newquist also mentioned that NC 130 is a high priority corridor for GSATS staff during SPOT 6.0.

With no further discussion Ms. Sykes made a motion to approve the funding request from Ocean Isle Beach for the installation of the bike lanes on First Street. Mayor Holden seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hoeweler reemphasized many of the points already expressed regarding the Carolina Bays Parkway project including the positive turnout at the public meetings, and the majority viewpoint that an inland alignment is preferred. Mr. Hoeweler ensured the committee that regular updates would be provided and that GSATS staff will convey the concerns expressed from the local jurisdictions at subsequent project merger meetings.

Mr. Newquist briefed the committee on the status of project submittal via the SPOT 6.0 process. He reminded the committee that GSATS has 3 carry over projects that will be automatically evaluated in SPOT 6.0. That will allow for 14 additional project submittals per mode. The deadline for project submittal is May 1st, 2020. GSATS staff has begun coordinating with Division 3 staff on project ideas and has encouraged TCC staff members to contact GSATS staff with project questions and ideas. Sunset Beach has expressed interest in a possible sidewalk extension project.

Mr. Newquist then briefed the committee on updates from NCDOT's Planning Division including a survey that is being distributed as part of the 2050 NC Moves process.

Finally Mr. Hoeweler updated the committee on safety trends occurring in Brunswick County. There were two additional fatalities since the September 20th meeting increasing the total annual fatalities in the GSATS study area to six as of December 13th, 2019. Mr. Durham commented that it seems like about 70-80% of the fatalities are out of our ability to control, yet as an MPO we are held to the annual FAST Act target standards. Mr. Hoeweler mentioned that this would be discussed in more detail at our next meeting.

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

Respectfully Submitted,


Mark Hoeweler, MPO Director


Mayor Walt Eccard, Chair


Date