



GSATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Friday October 22nd 2021, 10:30 AM Virtual Meeting

Members Present

Walter Eccard, Town of Shalotte - Chair
Alan Holden, Town of Holden Beach
Bill Brennan, Town of Carolina Shores
John Corbett, Town of Sunset Beach
Patricia Sykes, Brunswick County
Randy Thompson, Brunswick County

Other Attendees

Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT
Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT
Kelly Jones, NCDOT
Patrick Flanagan, Cape Fear RPO
George Hoops, Federal Highway Administration
David Hewitt, Town of Holden Beach
Jim Bradshaw, Citizen
Eric Edgerton, Citizen
Jeff Dayton, HDR Consulting
Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Daniel Newquist, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Whitney Warner, GSATS
Evan King, GSATS

Chairman Mr. Walter Eccard welcomed the meeting attendees, established a quorum and began the meeting at 10:30 AM.

I. Ethics Awareness and Conflicts of Interest Reminder

Mr. Mark Hoeweler reminded committee of stipulations of the State Government Ethics Act, and asked if any committee members were aware of potential conflicts of interest related to agenda items. None were stated.

II. Introductions

Mr. Hoeweler led introductions.

III. Meeting Minutes from 5/14/2021

Chairman Eccard asked committee members if they had any corrections to the summary of the previous TAC meeting. No comments or questions were provided.

IV. Public Comments

Chairman Eccard invited members of the public if they had any comments for the committee. None were provided.

V. NCDOT Projects Update

Ms. Caitlin Marks proceeded with updates on project progress in the county, notably two county superstreets advanced to further stages toward implementation.

Ms. Marks displayed a list of active projects and their estimated levels of completion, and said that GIS-based progress reporting on NCDOT projects would be available and up to view soon. Ms. Marks mentioned that upcoming Carolina Bays Parkway decisions and environmental review processes would soon be entering public comment periods.

Mr. Corbett asked about the meaning of the ‘PY’ acronym – Ms. Marks replied that it stood for “Post Year” projects.

VI. NCDOT Budget Update

Mr. Chad Kimes presented on current NC STIP budget changes.

Prioritization and selection processes for new projects, under the P6.0 system, have been suspended after recent cost reviews – Mr. Kimes made clear that the reason is rapidly-rising construction costs, as opposed to NCDOT funding and cash balance.

Due to these cost increases, regional, division, and especially state (\$3 billion) funding pots, as allocated to various projects, are significantly overprogrammed, and only committed projects are currently fixed in the prioritization schedule – non-committed projects must continue going through application and prioritization processes each year.

Mr. Kimes emphasized that projects will continue on schedule for the next three years, and that it is longer-term prioritization that is in this way impacted.

Mr. Kimes outlined new procedures for NCDOT project prioritization: More frequent cost estimation (every 2 years), value engineering/assessment, cost savings in design, and taking area project prioritization into account.

Mr. Jim Bradshaw asked about cost overrun tendencies, citing an I-95-related project near Lumberton. Mr. Kimes replied that NCDOT projects have fiscal constraints in place and that projects facing cost overruns will not be allowed to jeopardize others by taking more resources than their share. Mr. Kimes added that supply chain issues have slowed down all projects regardless, giving an example of the difficulty of obtaining steel girders.

Mr. Hoeweler asked about complete streets standards in NCDOT projects. Mr. Kimes replied that complete streets provisions can make a project expensive.

Asked about the tenability of NCDOT's maintenance finance structure, Mr. Kimes stated that it remains quite strong.

VII. DA Call For Projects Update

Mr. Daniel Newquist said that, as a metropolitan region with more than 200,000 residents, GSATS is eligible for direct FHWA funding.

Mr. Newquist displayed and discussed the funding breakdown available by type of project, a November 15th deadline for project submission, and an overview of the scoring system to be applied, with components such as types of benefits conferred, local funding match amount, and coordination with comprehensive planning.

Mr. David Hewitt asked whether undertaking two projects in conjunction reflected well in scoring, referencing a current road widening and pedestrian project in Holden Beach. Mr. Newquist replied that it wasn't a formal scoring criterion but that this kind of coordination has been consistently beneficial to projects and that the Holden Beach project is in a good position. Mr. Alan Holden stated that the Holden Beach Project has been long awaited, and asked whether there was anything GSATS needed related to it.

Mr. Corbett said that an application for a Sunset Beach project was incoming, Mr. Newquist said the related paperwork already submitted looked good.

VIII. CRRSSA Act Funding Update

Mr. Hoeweler reviewed the CRRSSA funding award to North Carolina portion of GSATS area (\$136,000) and its minimal stipulations. Mr. Hoeweler suggested optimum use of these funds might be in studies, especially for potential transit and bicycle and pedestrian projects.

IX. Cares Act FTA 5310 Recommendations

Ms. Elizabeth Tucker explained the purpose of the 5310 program and described the sole applicant and recipient Neighbor to Neighbor's intended use of the funds for mobility and food pantry service expansions. Mr. Corbett asked for confirmation that this was the only application – Ms. Tucker confirmed. Mr. Hoeweler said a motion was needed to recommend award to policy committee. Chairman Eccard asked whether there was any discussion of the award to be had, hearing none, Mr. Corbett moved to recommend, with numerous seconds and a unanimous affirmation.

X. GSATS 2045 MTP Update

Mr. Hoeweler displayed a detailed MTP update funding breakdown between NC and SC allocations, outlining the basis of GSATS' request for \$40,000 from North Carolina for their 10% apportionment of the cost. Chairman Eccard called for a motion to recommend funds be provided – Mr. Randy Thompson moved to recommend, with numerous seconds and a unanimous vote to do so.

XI. Brunswick County CTP Update

Mr. Newquist provided a status on the Brunswick County's CTP, likely to be adopted next summer. Mr. Newquist emphasized the high quality of the relevant survey and its results, touching on turnout, demographic representation, priorities elucidated, respondent comments, and other topics.

XII. Other Business

Mr. Newquist asked Mr. Beshad Norowzi if he had updates from NCDOT's TPD Office. Mr. Norowzi replied that transportation demand has almost recovered to pre-covid levels.

Mr. Corbett mentioned several problematic intersections and road segments in Sunset Beach, asking about prospects for speed limit reductions and signalization.

Ms. Marks requested that the town submit queries on these areas to her office, to pass along to NCDOT's traffic services division for assessment, with the larger potential project being a candidate for eventual SPOT 6 prioritization.

Mr. Newquist described recent developments with Carolina Bays Parkway corridor analysis, mentioning recent field visits and the current emphasis on hydraulic features of the corridor and probable preferred alternative selection this coming spring.

To answer Mr. Bradshaw's earlier (SC 31) question, Mr. Hoeweler stated that South Carolina funding was likely assured, clarifying along with Chairman Eccard that it would be coming from the county (Horry) and not the state.

XIII. Adjourn

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Bradshaw thanked committee and NCDOT.

Mr. Bill Brennan moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Thompson seconding, adjournment passed unanimously,

Meeting adjourned 11:41 PM