



GSATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Wednesday December 15th 2021, 10:30 AM Hybrid Meeting

Committee Members Present

Walter Eccard, Town of Shallotte- Chair
Debbie Smith, Town of Ocean Isle Beach, Vice Chair
Alan Holden, Town of Holden Beach
Patricia Sykes, Brunswick County
Rep. Frank Iler
John Corbett, Town of Sunset Beach
Donna Long, Town of Calabash
Randy Thompson (Ms. Helen Bunch)

Other Attendees

David Hewett, Town of Holden Beach
Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Dan Newquist, GSATS
Whitney Warner, GSATS
Evan King, GSATS
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT
Jim Bradshaw
Clay Swenson
Roy Cundiff
Patrick Flanagan, Cape Fear RPO

Chairman Mr. Walter Eccard noted quorum attained at 10:28 AM, began meeting at 10:30

I. Ethics and Conflicts of Interest Awareness Reminder

Mr. Mark Hoeweler asked committee members if they were aware of any conflicts of interest concerning agenda items, none identified.

II. Introductions

Mr. Hoeweler introduced new GSATS staff member Ms. Whitney Warner.

III. Meeting Minutes from 10/22/2021

Chairman Eccard asked for comments on minutes from previous TAC meeting, hearing none, asked for motion to approve them. Mr. Corbett moved, Mayor Smith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously

IV. Public Comments

(Members of public waited until NCDOT projects update agenda item to provide comments)

V. FTA 5310 Recommendations

(Ms. Caitlin Marks had audio difficulties, Mr. Daniel Newquist asked Ms. Elizabeth Tucker to go over 5310 recommendations section first)

Ms. Tucker explained decisions regarding a smaller ARPA pot of FTA funding. Brunswick transit (BTS) received highest score by staff, who put a high value on transit development. Staff and Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) recommend forwarding recommendation of ARPA funding (\$49,000) to Policy Committee. Ms. Tucker asked for a motion, Mr. Corbett moved, Ms. Sykes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Tucker explained decisions on main pot of FTA 5310 funding, discussing how more funding was requested than was available, which is an optimistic development as it ensures the funds will be used. This led to less funding than requested for some of the applicants requesting the most, as well as reductions in major blocks of spending such as providing funds for one less vehicle than requested.

Chairman Eccard asked about main 5310 pot versus the smaller ARPA pot, Ms. Tucker explained that the larger pot was for mobility management, and that BTS would be awarded funding from both pots. Ms. Sykes moved to forward recommendation to award funds as determined by staff to Policy Committee, Mayor Smith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. NCDOT Projects Update

Ms. Marks, having accessed meeting audio by phone, gave a rundown of area NCDOT projects currently slated or in progress, with particular emphasis on two superstreet upgrades along US 17 (with let dates of 12/16/2021) and multi-use upgrades to the Calabash River Bridge, which had been accelerated. Chairman Eccard asked for a clarification on let dates and timing, which Ms. Marks provided.

Questioned by a member of public on the nature of a superstreet, Ms. Marks confirmed it was indeed what some refer to as a “Michigan left” and explained how it was navigated and traversed in various directions as well as its safety benefits. Mr. Newquist said he would provide the current design concepts for the Hickman Rd Superstreet project.

A member of the public expressed concern for possible (claimed 5, 6-minute) delays of emergency vehicles imposed by superstreets. Mr. Hoeweler assured the citizen that such

extreme delays would not be permitted, citing common ways to reduce or eliminate delays for certain vehicles such as mountable curbs and signal preemption.

Ms Sykes suggested that members of public submit some questions prior to meetings, to enable better answers and less redundant discussion.

Chairman Eccard requested that meeting move on to next agenda item.

VII. DA Call for Projects Selection

Mr. Newquist explained GSATS' allocation of direct attributable funds. GSATS is an MPO area more than 200,000 in population, and therefore eligible for direct federal funding for projects. Mr. Newquist stated that the current call for projects welcomed two types of proposals: transportation alternatives, and transportation studies.

GSATS received two proposals for studies: a street connectivity study in Shallotte and a corridor study for NC 904 in Sunset Beach, and one transportation alternatives proposal for bike lanes along Ocean Blvd in Holden Beach. Mr. Newquist spoke favorably of all the proposals, especially of Holden Beach's with regard to its large commitment of local match. Mr. Newquist explained the scoring process, involving individual staff scoring and subsequent discussion.

Prompted with questions, Mr. David Hewitt discussed progress on the Holden Beach project and local parking challenges involving the impending sale of a public lot.

Mayor Holden moved to recommend award of funds to the Policy Committee, Mr. Corbett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

(Chairman Eccard was obliged elsewhere and ceded chair to Mayor Smith)

VIII. GSATS 2045 MTP Update

Mr. Hoeweler discussed metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) update funding – its population-based weighting between North and South Carolina, and forthcoming changes in SC portion of the funding.

Mr. Newquist explained process of land use collection, Mr. Hoeweler followed with a cursory explanation of the travel demand modelling process, the basis of projecting future traffic patterns as a result of land use collection work, and the involvement of in-house staff and consultants.

A member of the public asked whether this work could be focused on small areas, individual developments or corridors, and whether this work was predictive and future oriented. Mr. Hoeweler affirmed that travel demand modelling provides prediction down to relatively small areas, and that, with limitations as far as predictive power, travel demand modelling is fundamentally predictive and future-oriented. Mr. Hoeweler also emphasized that GSATS consults with municipalities in the area to aid in local growth projection. Ms. Helen Bunch added that, at a more basic level, development projects generally require transportation impact assessments for municipal approval, where transportation facility improvements are often required as conditions for approval.

A committee member asked whether GSATS' travel demand modelling could be used to inform larger projects such as interstate highways. Mr. Hoeweler replied that while it can inform, statewide and other models are also needed for projects of such interregional

significance, and there has been difficulty in the past with getting state DOTs to comprehend the pace of growth in the Grand Strand area.

IX. Other Business

Mayor Smith encouraged members of the public to send questions to committee and staff members prior to the next meeting, and suggested future meetings try to stick to inviting public comments at the beginning of the meeting. A member of the public replied that it was hard to know what to ask before hearing about it at the meeting. Mayor Smith stated that members of public should also get in touch with their communities' representative committee members with concerns.

In responding to a question regarding the Carolina Bays Parkway project, Mr. Hoeweler stated that the next step in the process will be the beginning of elimination of alternatives in favor of an eventual preferred alternative. Mr. Hoeweler and others also discussed North Carolina funding as the currently most significant obstacle facing commencement of the project.

X. Adjourn

Mayor Smith moved to adjourn meeting, Mr. Corbett seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.