



**TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
Friday May 14, 2021,
10:30 AM Virtual Meeting**

Members Present

Ms. Pat Sykes
Hon. Walt Eccard
Hon. Debbie Smith
Mr. Bill Brennan
Mr. Carson Durham
Mr. Chris Palsgrove
Hon. Alan Holden
Mr. Randy Thompson
Mr. Patrick Flanagan
Ms. Donna Long
Mr. John Corbett

Other Attendees

Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT
Dan Newquist, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT
Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Roy Cundiff
Jason Werner, GSATS
Carol Coleman, GSATS
Eric Edgerton, Private Citizen
Jabin Norris, Private Citizen

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.

Mr. Hoeweler then asked the attendees if they could introduce themselves and state their affiliation.

Chairman Eccard reviewed the meeting minutes from February 3, 2021. There were no changes proposed. **Mr. Alan Holden made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Carson Durham seconded. All voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard stated that Mr. Jabin Norris, a member of the public, was present and invited him to speak. Mr. Norris introduced himself and asked for an update on the Holden Beach Causeway traffic study.

Mr. Dan Newquist responded that the study was selected and funded as part of the Direct Attributable program. The study encountered several delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic preventing in-person meetings and NCDOT's budget shortfall. Its project scope has now been completed and the project is on the TIP. The next step is an inter-local agreement between GSATS and Brunswick County which would outline the procurement process. Brunswick County is reviewing that agreement internally. Mr. Newquist concluded by noting that bidding is scheduled to start at the beginning of FY2022 which starts on July 1.

Chairman Eccard thanked Mr. Newquist for providing Mr. Norris with that update. He then invited Mr. Eric Edgerton, a member of the public, to speak. Mr. Edgerton stated that the stretch of NC 904 between US 17 and Old Georgetown Road is in poor condition and needs to be repaired or resurfaced.

Chairman Eccard then welcomed Ms. Caitlin Marks to provide an update on the status of current projects in the area. Ms. Marks stated that the Ocean Isle Beach bike lane project will let to construction on May 20 and that the Carolina Bays Parkway Extension project team recently had a meeting with the citizen group that offered another alternative route which had a positive outcome. The Carolina Bays Parkway project is proceeding on schedule with a route decision being made in the spring of 2022. Ms. Marks concluded by noting that NCDOT is currently updating project cost estimates in the STIP and will complete that by June 30.

Chairman Eccard asked Mr. Newquist to brief the committee on the GSATS FY20-29 MTIP Modifications. Mr. Newquist stated that two modifications were made to the FY20-29 MTIP. The first was to shift the existing Holden Beach Causeway traffic study funds to FY22. The second one is to account for funding GSATS received through a CARES Act apportionment of \$136,556 which is labeled as Project Priority 10. He concluded by noting that eligibility for that apportionment is flexible and the deadline for it is September 30, 2024. Mr. Hoeweler asked Mr. Chad Kimes if this apportionment needed to be spent on an ongoing project like what was required in South Carolina. Mr. Kimes replied that it can be used for any funding needs but it has to be spent quickly.

Without any further discussion, **Mr. Durham made a motion to adopt the GSATS FY20-29 MTIP Modifications. Mr. Bill Brennan seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then asked Mr. Hoeweler to brief the committee on the 2045 GSATS MTP Update. Mr. Hoeweler reminded the committee that every five years the MTP is updated and the next update is due in November of 2022. He then explained that the amount of funds received for the last update amounted to \$300,000 from South Carolina guide share funds. North Carolina's DA funds covered 10% of this amount which was \$30,000. For this update, the MTP line item needs to be \$400,000 from South Carolina and \$40,000 from North Carolina's DA funds to avoid a potential cost overrun. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that the TCC recommended this funding proposal at their May 5, 2021 meeting.

Without any further discussion, **Mr. Durham made a motion to approve the 2045 GSATS MTP. Mr. Brennan seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then invited Mr. Newquist to present the Shallotte Bike/Pedestrian Plan Resolution. Mr. Newquist informed the committee that NCDOT has a grant program for bike and pedestrian plans. The Town of Shallotte is interested in applying for the grant and the grant requires the local MPO to endorse the project. A 20% match is required for the grant. The application deadline is June 30. Mr. Newquist concluded by noting that for a town the size of Shallotte, a typical bike/pedestrian grant award is \$60,000.

Without further discussion, **Mr. John Corbett moved to approve the Shallotte Bike/Pedestrian Plan Resolution. Mr. Randy Thompson seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the GSATS FY2022-2023 UPWP. Mr. Hoeweler informed the committee the UPWP is updated every two years and outlines where the federal funds and grants requiring matches are spent. GSATS staff is still unsure about what grants will be applied for in 2023, so the current 2022 projects is duplicated for that year until new information is available. The UPWP focuses on five categories: administration, short range planning/data collection, special studies, long range planning, and the TIP process. The largest item in the UPWP is the long range plan update. Data collection for that will start on May 17 and it takes about a year to collect all the land use data. Since traffic in the region is more influenced by tourism than commuters, land use data is especially important. Land use data is then provided to a consultant who will input that data into a traffic model. Once the model is updated, new projects to address traffic congestion can be ranked and scored. The UPWP match funds from North Carolina comes from Brunswick County. In South Carolina, 1/3 of the match funds come from Georgetown County and 2/3 comes from Horry County. The TCC has recommended this change. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that GSATS is in the process of hiring two new planners who will help with transportation planning.

Without further discussion, **Hon. Debbie Smith moved to approve the FY2022-2023 UPWP. Mr. Thompson seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the Carolina Bays Parkway Discussion. Mr. Hoeweler explained that the Carolina Bays Extension project team met with the citizen group at Ocean Ridge. The project is progressing slowly because there were still eight alternatives remaining after Concurrence Point 2 and each of those have to be studied in detail.

Chairman Eccard noted that the citizens group from Ocean Ridge had many concerns and are actively participating in the process. Mr. Thompson noted that the project would not be where it is today without the involvement of both the citizen group and NCDOT and that this is what public participation should look like. Mr. Corbett explained that Sunset Beach signed a resolution supporting the citizen group. Their idea avoids West Brunswick High

School and ends in an area that would allow it to easily be extended in the future, possibly all the way to I-140. Mr. Edgerton stated that the citizen group changed their name to Residents for the Right Road in the Right Place and that he appreciates being a partner in the process. Ms. Patricia Sykes asked if she could join any future meeting involving the citizen group.

Chairman Eccard then invited Mr. Chris Palsgrove to present the Brunswick County CTP Update. Mr. Palsgrove informed the board that there were recently seven steering committee meetings. The goals and objectives survey started on March 11 and will be available until June 9. Staff recently completed the transportation, bike and pedestrian, rail, and transit maps and is currently creating support maps. The survey has been successful so far. There were almost 4,000 responses, 100,000 data points (answers to the questions), and almost 5,000 comments. There is also a Spanish version. Mr. Palsgrove concluded by noting that paper copies of both languages of the survey are also available.

Chairman Eccard announced that there is other business that he would like to discuss. He stated that there is a consensus that more of Brunswick County may be joining the GSATS urban area. Mr. Hoeweler explained that population density data collected by the US Census determines the boundary of the MPO. It's highly probable that there will be more urban areas in Brunswick County by 2025. Varnamtown voluntarily joined. A community can choose not to participate, but they are not able to change whether or not they are within the boundary. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that Oak Island may also soon be within the boundary due to ongoing urban expansion occurring there. Chairman Eccard stated that the Shallotte area has benefitted greatly from being a part of GSATS due to funding and attention. Hon. Smith stated that she was skeptical of southern Brunswick County becoming part of GSATS at first but then realized that the area is very much a part of the Myrtle Beach metropolitan area because many residents travel to South Carolina and back for shopping, entertainment, medical needs, and sometimes even their job. She noted that the area is between Myrtle Beach and Wilmington, both of which are growing in population. Chairman Eccard noted that the GSATS MPO boundary is entirely data driven.

Ms. Elizabeth Tucker informed the committee that there is a call for projects for a 5310 grant for transit systems that serve the elderly and individuals with disabilities. This is not the usual 5310 grant, this is a different grant for \$59,000 that is paid for through CRRSAA for COVID relief. Ms. Tucker concluded by noting that there is no match required, it cannot be combined with other 5310 grants, and it is only open until the end of June. Mayor Holden asked what the amount was. Ms. Tucker replied that it was for \$59,000. Mr. Corbett asked who received information about this grant. Mr. Tucker answered that the usual 5310 applicants were emailed information about this grant and it is on the GSATS website.

With no further discussion, Hon. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Durham seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:25 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Hoeweler, MPO Director

Mayor Walt Eccard, Chair

Date