



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)
Friday, June 30, 2023
10:30 AM Hybrid Meeting

Members Present

Hon. Walt Eccard
Ms. Pat Sykes
Mr. Bill Brennan
Hon. Alan Holden
Rep. Frank Iler
Mr. Randy Thompson
Mr. John Corbett
Hon. Debbie Smith

Other Attendees

Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Elizabeth Tucker, GSATS
Jason Werner, GSATS
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
Mark Pleasant, NCDOT
Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT
Rich Alt, City of Southport
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Tom Dobrydney, GSATS
Darryl Elliott, GSATS
Mike Hargraves, Sunset Beach
Matthew Kirkland, Oak Island
Jeff Repp, Saint James
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Savanna Tenenoff, Brunswick Beacon
Mr. Sam Boswell

Chairman Walt Eccard noted that a quorum was present and brought the meeting to order 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 May 5, 2023. **Mr. John Corbett made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Pat Sykes seconded. All voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard then invited Ms. Michelle Howes to provide an update on the status of

current projects in the area. Ms. Howes described the transportation project information that was provided in the packets. Her remarks are listed below.

- Intersection conversions to reduced-conflict intersections in Brunswick County is scheduled to be let to construction on July 15, 2025.
- The US 17 and NC 211 interchange is scheduled to be let to construction on June 15, 2032.
- The US 17 and NC 904 reduced-conflict intersection is scheduled to be let to construction on January 1, 2040.
- The US 17 and South Main Street interchange near Shallotte is scheduled to be let to construction on January 1, 2040.
- The US 17 and Smith Avenue interchange in Shallotte will be let to construction on January 1, 2040.
- There have not been any updates regarding the Carolina Bays Parkway extension project.
- Intersection improvements at US 17 and Pea Landing Road/Thomasboro Road and Hickman Road is 63% complete.
- The bridge replacement project over Cawcaw Swamp on Ash Little River Road is about 20% complete and is expected to be finished by the end of October of 2023.
- Construction of the Calabash Bridge replacement project has not yet started but is scheduled to be completed on October 28, 2025.
- The North Mulberry Road paving project is 45% complete and is expected to be completed by the end of September.
- There is no new information about the Holden Beach resurfacing and bike lane project.

Rep. Frank Iler asked when the Calabash Bridge replacement project will begin. Mr. Corbett replied that it should start in September. Rep. Iler noted that according to Mr. Chad Kimes, the US 17 and Pea Landing Road/Thomasboro Road and Hickman Road intersection improvement project's original contractor filed for bankruptcy but soon a new contractor will continue the work. Mr. Randy Thompson asked if it was NCDOT's financial situation that has delayed several projects to 2040. Chairman Eccard replied that funding was an issue, but the 2040 dates were placeholders and that it is still unknown when the projects will start. Mr. Thompson asked why progress on the Cawcaw Swamp bridge replacement project has seemingly stalled. Ms. Howes replied that she was unsure and would check. Ms. Sykes asked why the NC 211 and US 17 interchange project was delayed when there is frequent traffic congestion at that intersection. Ms. Howes replied that she was unsure. Mr. Thompson asked when the section of US 17 between South Old Ocean Highway to North Old Ocean Highway will be resurfaced. Mr. Sam Boswell noted that the US 17 and NC 211 interchange project was delayed due to a lack of funds but will be re-scored at the next available time. Chairman Eccard asked when the Carolina Bays Parkway extension project public hearings will be held. He noted that the project's constant delays are disappointing and frustrating. Mr. Thompson lamented that it is embarrassing that SCDOT has their portion of the project funded but NCDOT still doesn't. Rep. Iler commented that he is considering other options on how to fund the project. Chairman Eccard asked if a resolution to receive Carolina Bays Parkway extension project updates could be signed by TAC members. Mr. Hoeweler responded that a better alternative to that idea would be to invite

the officials in charge of that project to the next TAC meeting. **Mr. Thompson made a motion to write a letter to NCDOT expressing their concern and invite the officials in charge of the Carolina Bays Parkway extension project to the next TAC meeting. Hon. Debbie Smith seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard invited Ms. Elizabeth Tucker to present the PM2 and PM3 Performance Measures Resolution. Ms. Tucker stated that NCDOT has asked GSATS to adopt their pavement and bridge condition targets. Mr. Thompson asked what the target percentages were. Ms. Tucker provided an example. The target is to have 62% of interstate pavement to be in good condition and only 1.5% in poor condition by 2025. Mr. Corbett asked if the last targets established were met. Mr. Behshad Norowzi responded that in most cases the targets were not met largely because the targets were very ambitious. However, the targets this time seem to be more achievable. Mr. Thompson asked if there were any consequences of not meeting the targets. Mr. Norowzi replied that there have not been any consequences so far. Chairman Eccard asked if any additional funds will be allocated towards achieving the targets. Mr. Norowzi answered that there is an ongoing effort to identify problem areas and that some federal funding has been allocated. Mr. Hoeweler noted that the targets are specifically for pavement and bridge conditions. **Ms. Sykes made a motion to adopt the PM2 and PM3 Performance Measures Resolution. Mr. Thompson seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard invited Ms. Tucker to present the Certification of the Planning Process Resolution. Ms. Tucker stated that the resolution is adopted on an annual basis and certifies that GSATS has been following all the planning process requirements of Title VI. **Mr. Thompson made a motion to adopt the Certification of the Planning Process Resolution. Ms. Sykes seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the study area boundary recommendation. Mr. Hoeweler stated that four potential areas to expand to were drawn up after the combined TAC and TCC meetings on May 5th and, on their June 16th meeting, the TCC recommended expanding into areas A, B, C in one motion and then added area D in a separate motion. He then described the two maps of the areas that were provided to each member. A housing unit density of 200 per square mile is considered urban by the US Census Bureau. Blue block groups met that definition and pink block groups were just below that threshold. Most of the coast is blue and pink, which indicates that it is likely that the whole area will be urban at the next Census. One of the maps has a quarter mile buffer around the urban census blocks because the Census Bureau requires at least half a mile to connect urban areas.

Mr. Thompson asked if the municipalities of the areas can choose not to join GSATS. Mr. Hoeweler replied that they can choose not to join. Mr. Corbett commented that if the study area were to expand, GSATS would have more area while the funding would remain the same. Mr. Hoeweler responded that federal funding will be received based on population so the additional population will increase federal funding. Mr. Corbett commented that there will be more competition for voting on projects. Mr. Hoeweler agreed. Mr. Corbett opined that GSATS should only expand to include Area A. Ms. Sykes stated that GSATS

should expand to include areas A, B, and C because it would include more funding and ultimately improve the transportation system in those areas. Mr. Hoeweler indicated that officials from the Wilmington MPO has approached the leadership of the municipalities within areas C and D and asked them if they would be willing to join their MPO so there is some pressure to quickly determine which areas to expand to. Mr. Rich Alt asked if the amount of funding that will be received is set. Mr. Hoeweler replied that there is not a set amount and due to the MPO's population exceeding 200,000, there is another set of funding. FTA also provides funds that can only be used for services within urban areas that are divided between the South Carolina portion and the North Carolina portion. Mr. Alt inquired how many people are needed to reach the next funding level. Mr. Hoeweler responded that there are no levels, and that funding is based on the 2020 population. The question is whether it makes sense to add more urban areas to the study area. GSATS does not directly give funding to participating municipalities, rather, there is a collective approach to transportation planning. Chairman Eccard stated that Shallotte has been a part of GSATS for a decade and that being part of the organization has been very beneficial. Mr. Alt commented that the NC 211 widening project has started without any help from GSATS. He added that he would need a better selling point for Southport to join GSATS. Rep. Iler indicated that he represents Leland and represented Southport in the past. About twice as much funding is provided to GSATS than to Cape Fear RPO. Each municipality in GSATS also has some representation. Hon. Alan Holden indicated that since becoming part of GSATS, the town has been faring better. This area is more like Myrtle Beach than Wilmington and as elected officials it is important to have good governance, and GSATS provides good governance. Hon. Smith noted that the Cape Fear RPO probably would not be as supportive of the Carolina Bays Parkway extension project as GSATS. Mr. Hoeweler stated that there were two motions at the TCC: one for areas A, B, and C, and one for Area D. **Hon. Smith made a motion to expand the GSATS study area to include areas A, B, and C. Mr. Thompson seconded. All attendees voted in favor. Hon. Smith made a motion to expand the GSATS study area to include Area D. Mr. Thompson seconded. All attendees voted in favor.** Mr. Bill Brennan asked when the study area boundary expansion deadline was. Mr. Hoeweler responded that NCDOT needed a resolution by the end of the calendar year and that the next step was to consult the leaders of the jurisdictions affected by the expansion. Rep. Iler inquired if the councils of each of the municipalities approve of membership. Mr. Hoeweler replied that they did. **Hon. Holden made a motion to combine both expansion motions. Ms. Sykes seconded. All attendees voted in favor.**

Chairman Eccard invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the MTP Update. Mr. Hoeweler described the status of the MTP Update. CDM Smith's staff is on schedule to meet the November deadline. Five public meetings were held in May and the one with the most attendees was in Shallotte though the number was less than expected. An online survey and virtual public meeting room were also available. Once completed, it will be approved by the TCC and TAC as well as the South Carolina committees. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that the steering committee of the plan has four North Carolina members.

Chairman Eccard invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the Carbon Reduction and CRRSAA Funds. Mr. Hoeweler explained the situation with those funding sources. The federal

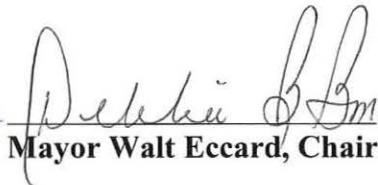
budget rescinded CRRSAA funds and NC reclaimed all CRRSAA funds disbursed in the state and spent them prior to that. However, a new funding source replaced those funds. The federal government has a carbon reduction program that funds transportation projects that reduce carbon emissions. Funding is based on population and the North Carolina portion of GSATS receives \$40,000 per year. NCDOT has allowed GSATS to utilize 5 years of funds, so the plan is to combine this \$200,000 with \$136,000 of SCDOT funds and use it to pay for the Shallotte traffic signal upgrade.

Chairman Eccard invited Mr. Norowzi to present the CTP Update. Mr. Norowzi stated that 22 meetings for the plan's adoption are being planned and that the plan is on track to be fully adopted either by the end of 2023 or by early 2024.

With no further discussion, Ms. Sykes made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Hon. Holden seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,


Mark Hoeweler, MPO Director


Mayor Walt Eccard, Chair

8-19-2023
Date