

Minutes
of the
Mid-East Rural Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)
held
Wednesday, May 4, 2011

The Mid-East Rural Technical Coordinating Committee held its meeting on Wednesday, May 4, 2011 at 10:00 am in the Beaufort County Commissioners Room in Washington.

Those in attendance:

TCC: Alicia Arnold, Dempsey Bond, Joyce Harrell, Glen Moore, Jonas Hill, Hood Richardson, Betty Moore, James Rhodes

DOT Staff: Saeed Mohamed, Barry Hobbs, Betty Ann Caldwell, William Pettit, Rockne Bryant

MEC Staff: Bryant Buck, Linda Roberts, Wayne Rollins, Tim Ware

Guest: Robert Cayton, Marc Finlayson, Daryl Vreeland

Chair Moore called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda

Mr. Rhodes made the motion to approve the agenda, and Mr. Bond seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Minutes

Mr. Rhodes made the motion to approve the February 2 minutes as submitted, and Mrs. Harrell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

There were no public comments.

Resolution Opposing HB 635 or any Legislation Changing the current Equity Formula

Mr. Buck stated that he had forwarded the proposed resolution opposing HB 635 and the change in transportation funding that would occur for the TAC to review. He also sent the June 2009 NC Highway 17 Association Newsletter regarding the importance of our current equity formula.

Mr. Buck called on Mr. Finlayson for comments. Mr. Finlayson stated that the Highway 17 Association is concerned with the potential changes to the equity formula. He stated that in 1989 the General Assembly conceived of the equity formula as part of the creation of the Highway Trust Fund. Revenues have been distributed using the formula ever since, and most legislators and DOT administrators believe the distribution has been fair and beneficial.

As North Carolina becomes more urban, the more metropolitan areas have complained that the formula penalizes the big cities and metro counties who face mounting traffic congestion and need increasing revenues to keep up with growth. Without the current equity formula, the rural areas would not grow and we need the transportation infrastructure to help with tourism, as well as, growth.

HB 635 shifts money from rural to urban and the equity formula only applies to the Highway Trust Fund revenues for the intrastate highway system, secondary road improvement and Powell Bill funds for municipalities. The metropolitan divisions already receive transportation resources apart from the equity formula, which are Urban Loop Funds, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Compliance.

After a discussion, Mr. Bond made the motion to send the resolution opposing any changes to funding formula, and Mr. Rhodes seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Highway 17 Association Updates

Mr. Finlayson reported that this is the first time that five projects are under construction simultaneously: Washington Bypass, two in Jacksonville, and two in Craven. The Washington bypass North section was let in March and the southern leg is running behind scheduled and should be completed this summer. The segment between Washington and Williamston is making progress.

Advertised this week for research partners to help us conduct a Highway Study, what Eastern North Carolina would look like after completion and means. Proposals should be coming in within the next three to four weeks.

Mr. Finlayson stated that he attended a meeting in regards to the Hampton Roads Virginia area, where there is a 4.5 mile project for widening the road which will replace a draw bridge. This project could add some creditability to our projects, especially in Camden County and other counties in the area.

He updated the TCC on the proposal to cap the gasoline tax.

Planning Work Plan (PWP)

Mr. Buck informed the TCC that the PWP subcommittee met on March 24th and discussed items for the upcoming 2011-2012 Mid-East RPO PWP. He stated that a draft of the PWP was enclosed in the TCC package and has been approved by NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch. The subcommittee gave more detailed information under the Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the Civil Rights Compliance sections.

He stated the level of funding would be the same as last year and there were minor changes in the PWP with elaboration on the projects.

Mr. Bond made the motion to recommend the PWP to the Technical Advisory Committee. Mr. Rhodes seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Transportation Improvement Priorities

Mr. Buck stated that he would like the committee to continue review of our current 2011-2017 Transportation Priorities for additions and or possible revisions.

Mr. Rollins reported that the NC 33 corridor has a lot of truck traffic and the corridors are outdated. He recommended for modernization of the corridors. In recent months, Potash has expanded their mining operation, which has required a lot of traffic. Every time Potash develops a new product, there will be increased travel on the roadways.

As you are aware, the trucks have a no ditch policy. He stated there is potential for a bridge, and it would give the employees points of access to enter Aurora. There is only one access at this time. He announced there are over 3,000 different construction workers and the increase of fleets over the last 12 months has increased 50%.

Southern Albemarle Association Update

Mr. Buck reported that on April 4, 2011, the Mid-East RPO and Albemarle RPO in conjunction with the Southern Albemarle Association had the opportunity to present our local priorities and transportation issues to our state representatives. He encouraged the TCC to talk with our representatives every chance they get.

The Association held its quarterly executive meeting on April 21st. The Mid-East RPO and Albemarle RPO staff presented to the Roads and Bridges Committee current transportation priorities within the Southern Albemarle Counties. He stated that the Association is highly motivated on transportation issues.

NC HWY 11 Workgroup Update

Mr. Buck stated that the East Carolina RPO staff and he have made presentations to the Towns of Grifton, Ayden and Kinston, as well as, Pitt and Lenoir Counties. The next step is to seek public input from citizens within these jurisdictions.

NC Association of Rural Planning Organizations/NC Association of MPO Conference

Mr. Buck reported that at the RPO/MPO conference, he had the opportunity to talk with Secretary Gene Conti, Department of Transportation, on the equity formula, gas tax, DMV tax, tolls and ferries. He said that DOT is aware of the issues.

Proposed Functional Classification Changes to US Hwy 17

Mr. Buck stated that the reason for the change is due to the completion of a new segment of the US 17 corridor (R-2510), bypassing the City of Washington, which he discussed. Three maps were presented to the committee: existing map, changes, and proposed map.

Mr. Buck acknowledged that several areas listed below will be reclassified, but will not lose funding.

The Division Planners went over the functional classification changes for US 17 corridor (R-2510B), bypassing the City of Washington, which follow:

1. R-2510B, Southern termini to the Urban Boundary of Washington, change Future Principal Arterial to Freeway/Expressway.
2. R-2510B, Urban Boundary of Washington to the northern termini with US 17, change Future Freeway/Expressway to existing Freeway/Expressway.
3. US 17 Business, Southern termini of the US 17 new location to the new tie in of US 17 Business, delete the Principal Arterial.
4. US 17 Business, US 17 to US 17 Business, add as Minor Arterial.
5. US 17 Business, New connector on southern end to the new connector on the northern end, change principal Arterial to Minor Arterial.
6. US 17 Business, New connector on the northern end to dead end, change the Principal Arterial to local. (0.20 mile) SR-1474 route change
7. US 17 Business/SR-1471, dead end to US 17, delete Principal Arterial.
8. US 17 Business, SR-474 to US 17, add as Minor Arterial.

The National Highway System federal regulations run hand and hand with functional change.

After a discussion, Mr. Spruill made the motion approve the functional classification change. Mrs. Harrell seconded the motion, and the motion carried. Mr. Rhodes amended the original motion to include that City of Washington was in attendance at the meeting and agreed with the specific to the change. Mr. Bond seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Mr. Buck announced that there may be a joint meeting to the TAC & TCC before the August 3rd meeting.

NC DOT Updates

Division One and Division Two planners handed out information on their projects. The next meeting is scheduled for August 3, 2011.