

Coordinated Transportation Workshop
March 29, 2007
Questions and Answers (Q&A's), Comments

Questions and Answers from Workshop Sessions

Session II: Welcome and Introduction

No questions

Session III: Presentations on Transportation 101; CTP/Integration; SAFETEA-LU

Q: Describe the Capital Area MPO in terms of staffing. How does it compare to other MPOs?

A: The Capital Area MPO (CAMPO) is the second largest in North Carolina (population approximately 850,000), and the staff is comprised of 5 -6 people. CAMPO receives a lot of cooperation and assistance from the member jurisdictions (municipalities and counties). Most MPOs have 2 to 4 people on staff.

CAMPO is motivated to implement coordinated, integrated transportation planning. They want to share knowledge and reach a point where resource agencies have confidence in the MPOs. CAMPO believes they need 3 people to work full time on implementing the CTP/Integration vision.

Q: What is the timeframe for implementing the CTP-Integration Process?

A: In general a 5-8 year implementation timeframe is to be expected. Most MPOs have one to two years to incorporate the SAFETEA-LU requirements in their updated plans (e.g. the Triad MPO's update is due October 1, 2008; CAMPO's is due June 15, 2009). It is expected that these upcoming updates will represent an initial effort and that more comprehensive improvements should be realized over the next 5 to 10 years.

Q: Will there be a standard forecasting methodology for land use?

A: There is currently not a standard methodology for making land use projections. In the large regions (Metrolina, Triad, and Triangle) there is coordination between region's MPO's and the surrounding RPO's. The other eight MPO's provide land use projections for their area. Outside of the MPO's, the RPO's will be providing guidance on growth projections during CTP development and will be ensuring consistency throughout their areas.

Q: Does SAFETEA-LU specify what constitutes a conservation plan?

A: SAFETEA-LU does not provide this specification. Rather, SAFETEA-LU's intent is to facilitate coordination between transportation and environmental planning. From the FHWA North Carolina Division's perspective a conservation plan should be something that is being actively used and implemented.

Q: Would MPOs utilize land use plans that are older than 5 years?

A: It is felt that most land use plans are relatively current. MPOs frequently rely on the local planners to explain and communicate the land use vision.

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For RPO's, the state law requires that land use plans not be older than 5 years. If a plan passes this mark, the plan's validity must be reconfirmed.

Q: Do any MPOs currently have resource agency representation on their Technical Coordinating Committees (TCC)?

A: For the most part, no. TCC's are primarily composed of an MPO's and/or a municipality's planning staff and city and state transportation staff. The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County MPO TCC does have personnel from the Forsyth County Environmental Affairs Department to focus on air quality, and Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection participates on the MUMPO TCC.

Comments:

- Division of Community Assistance (DCA) has been providing land use planning assistance for 50 years. They are interested in the outcome of coordinating with resource agencies and with working closer with transportation planning efforts.
- Long range plans as well as NEPA studies need to consider impacts to climate change. North Carolina ranks as number three in potential impacts due to rise in sea level.

Session V: Panel Discussion

Q: Will this process (i.e. the CTP/Integrated Process) help reduce time it will take to get projects constructed?

A: The objective of the Integration effort is to streamline the environmental review process that occurs during project development. Opportunities for streamlining exist by identifying the most environmentally, viable projects during the long range planning phase. This would include documenting the need for the project and the various alternatives that were considered but eliminated due to their impacts on the human and natural environment. Hopefully once a project is in the project development phase, unnecessary time and effort will not be spent (1) assessing and debating a project's purpose and need statement and (2) studying project alternatives that are beset with issues and impacts. Thus, the intent is that we hope to see a reduction in the project development time, especially for projects that are expanding capacity.

Q: Are some historical properties mapped (GIS) at the local level?

A: Some are. 1997 data on listed historical properties is available on NC 1 Map.

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C: Another plug for GIS Strategic Plan – get political and financial buy-in statewide

R: *This message was delivered to ILT at their April 17th Meeting.*

C: Would love to have a Triad joint LRTP/SAFETEA-LU workshop – very soon!! with FHWA, MPOs, NCDOT and other regional partners

R: *FHWA (Bill Marley) is working with Triad MPOs to organize a session*

C: (Contact Shannon Deaton) Info. I would like to include on ILT website:

1. Link to WRC Swimming with the Current info request
2. NC listed species publication (link to WRC site)
3. Link to WRC Secondary & Cumulative Impacts document

R: *These will be added to the website*

Q: If step 2 of CTP will use existing data to help determine/guide selection of a proposed recommendation how can time/resource savings be achieved if alternative analysis will occur again in NEPA? Also, how will future reduction of transportation revenue and local politics impact efficiency that ILT and CTP is trying to create?

A: *The goal is that the evaluation of alternatives in the CTP process would allow for fewer alternatives to be looked at and carried forward for detailed study in the NEPA process, thereby saving time. By providing robust documentation of the evaluation and decision-making process with the CTP to the NEPA process will enable the NEPA practitioners to act on information that has already been created. The action may include: accept the information and decisions that were made in the CTP process; request that information be updated or verified for accuracy (i.e. conditions have not drastically changed since the CTP was developed) before making a decision on the CTP information; or accept the information but move forward with re-evaluation based on major changes that have occurred since the CTP was developed.*

This issue of limited transportation revenue increases the importance of making better decisions in the CTP process that can be upheld by the NEPA process. Through better documentation in the long range transportation plan, issues can be identified and the project schedule and cost would be more accurately predicted (hopefully major issues have been identified and addressed so they do not bog down the NEPA process).

Politics, both State and local, are a fact in implementing transportation projects. Education is the key issue for making sure politicians understand the need to balance local politics with decisions made for the CTP. It is also essential that there is an understanding that daily land use/development decisions will have an impact on the existing and future transportation decisions and needs.

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Q: At what stage will non-governmental organizations be included?

A: *Public involvement will occur throughout the CTP process. This will include the general public as well as groups that may have a specific interest in planning issues (e.g. environmental groups, neighborhood groups, business groups, etc.). Engaging the public and other groups in long-range transportation planning can be a daunting task. NCDOT is currently working with a consultant to develop a Public Involvement Toolkit that will be used primarily in the CTP and NEPA processes. The Public Involvement Toolkit can be used as a guide to more effectively engage the public during the long-range transportation planning process.*

C: Need to ensure some data (environmental, LU, TRAAS) are available for vision process

R: *There will be data available during the CTP visioning step. This will primarily be in the form of existing data that has been used in the development of other plans. More important than having the actual data during the visioning step is engaging a broad range of technical expertise. Bringing together land use professionals, transportation planning/engineering professionals, environmental specialists, and others that have a basic knowledge of the area allow for issues to be acknowledged while not limiting the visioning process. A broad range of expertise will also be able to identify data sources and limitations of data sources that will be available for CTP evaluation.*

Q: What are the exact guidelines and what exactly does FHWA want in the LRTP?

A: *These are currently being developed. FHWA-NC Division has discussed some draft guidelines at the April 27th NCAMPO Meeting. Guidelines will be finalized and disseminated to the MPOs and NCDOT by mid-May, 2007.*