



Triangle Transportation Coordination

Long Range Transportation Plans – Air Quality – Travel Modeling

Meeting Summary

Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization ♦ Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
North Carolina DOT ♦ Triangle Transit ♦ Triangle J Council of Governments

September 4, 2009, 9:30 am – **Triangle J Council of Governments**
4307 Emperor Blvd. Suite 110, Durham, NC 27703

1. Participants

John Hodges-Copple (TJCOG), Edward Dancausse (FHWA), Julie Bollinger (NCDOT-Transportation Planning Branch), Amanetta Somerville (EPA), Janice Godfrey (NCDENR-DAQ), Mike Bruff (NCDOT), Marc Hamel (NCDOT-Rail Division), Calista Freeman (NCDOT-Rail Division), Kirk Webb (PBS&J-environmental consultant), Will Kerr (PBS&J-environmental consultant), Heather Hildebrandt (DENR-DAQ), Derry Schmidt (NCDOT), Andy Henry (DCHC MPO)

2. 2035 LRTP Amendment for DCHC MPO -- Description of Project

Andy Henry described the project. It consists of the following elements:

- i. Realignment of the railroad alignment in the vicinity of Hopson Road to lessen the curvature of the rail line
- ii. Grade separation of the rail road from Hopson Road, with the rail road on a bridge over Hopson Road [note added after meeting: the bridge will accommodate two tracks and will allow for a four lane cross-section of Hopson Road]
- iii. Closure of the Church Street crossing of the Railroad south of Hopson Road
- iv. Connection of Church Street north to Hopson Road
- v. Widening of Hopson Road from 2 to 4 lanes from NC 54 to the section of Hopson Road just east of Davis Drive that is being widened to four lanes as part of the Davis Drive project that is nearing completion (a distance of about 0.7 miles)

Andy distributed a project map and a revised project list (Appendix from the 2035 LRTP report) that indicated the changes to be made.

Marc Hamel reiterated that the basic reason for the project is to straighten out a curve in the rail line. In doing so, there is an opportunity to grade separate the railroad and close another crossing (Church Street). For the environmental documentation, the footprint for Hopson Road is a 4-lane divided road, since traffic already backs up from NC 54 back to the railroad at times and a part of Hopson Road just east of Davis Drive is being widened to four lanes as part of the Davis Drive project.

Marc Hamel noted that the project is being submitted as a “Track 2” federal stimulus-funded project from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds devoted to high speed rail; it is combining and expanding two unfunded TIP projects along the rail line (i. Rail line realignment/Hopson Road grade separation, and ii. Church Street railroad crossing closure). The Track 2 application needs to be submitted by the end of October. He indicated that two developers -- Keystone along a part of the southern side of Hopson Road and the Davis Park (Metro Center) developer along a part of the northern side of Hopson Road -- may also be participants in some of the project costs. Amanetta Somerville asked for clarification on the private sector participation.

Hopson Road is classified as an urban collector in the federal functional classification and is included in the Triangle Regional Travel Demand Model as a collector. The participants discussed the nature of the project and all concurred that the 5 project elements described above, along with the designation of Hopson as a collector street, means that the project is not regionally significant as defined by 40 CFR Part 93.101 (see table below):

Regionally Significant Project Checklist

1. The facility serves regional transportation needs (i.e. facilities that provide access to and from the region or that provide access to major destinations in the region).
2. The facility is functionally classified higher than a minor arterial (minor arterials may be regionally significant if their main purpose is to provide access to major facilities in the region).
3. The facility is a fixed guideway transit facility.
4. The facility is included in the travel model for the region (in many cases collector streets are modeled and not regionally significant).

To be regionally significant a facility should meet one or more criteria in this checklist. 40 CFR Part 93.101

3. Products, Tasks and Responsibilities for Amendment & Conformity

The participants discussed the specific activities to be undertaken and documents to be prepared. The participants concurred that because the project is not regionally significant, a regional emissions analysis is not required.

For the LRTP amendment, 2 changes to the LRTP document will be prepared by Andy Henry:

- An amended project list in Appendix 1 to include the Hopson Road and Church Street changes
- A new amendment page within the body the document to track this and any future amendments to the 2035 LRTP.

Eddie Dancausse sought clarification that because the Triangle has a maintenance SIP and that the SIP includes conforming county-level budgets, that only the DCHC MPO and NCDOT would be required to make conformity determinations, and that CAMPO and B-G MPO would not need to be involved in the process. John Hodges-Copple asked if NCDOT would need to act if it only affected the Durham County budget? Eddie Dancausse said he would check and report back (Eddie Dancausse subsequently reported that NCDOT would need to make a determination). The participants concurred that only DCHC MPO and NCDOT would need to make conformity determinations.

Eddie Dancausse indicated that he would work on the resolutions that are required. For this conformity process we are going to need the following resolutions from the DCHC MPO:

- Conformity Determination on the LRTP Amendment
- Conformity Determination on the TIP Amendment
- Adoption on the LRTP Amendment
- Adoption on the TIP Amendment

We will need adoption of a STIP amendment and a conformity determination on the STIP (which also serves as the long range plan outside of MPO boundaries) from NCDOT for the rural (donut) areas of Chatham and Orange Counties.

The participants discussed the format and content of the conformity determination report. TJCOG will be responsible for preparing the report. The participants suggested that the report be modeled on a previous Triangle TIP conformity report where a regional emissions analysis was not required and that John Hodges-Copple prepare a template for the report to share with the participants for review and comment.

4. Timeline for Amendment and Conformity Approval

Marc Hamel noted that the Track 2 ARRA projects will be submitted in October, but there is no requirement that LRTP/TIP amendments or environmental determinations (e.g. FONSI) be complete prior to submittal. Andy Henry indicated that the initial intent was to ask the DCHC MPO TAC to put the LRTP amendment and conformity report out for the 42-day public comment period at their September 9th meeting, but if a TIP amendment is needed and the ARRA submittal is not dependent on the amendment, then it would probably be best to authorize the public comment period at the October TAC meeting, hold the public hearing at the November meeting and adopt the amendment at the December meeting.

Mike Bruff will set up a meeting with Mike Stanley and others to determine the information needs and timing to incorporate the project into a 2009-15 TIP amendment.

Eddie Dancausse recommended that a written timeline be developed as part of this meeting summary.

Summary of decisions and next steps:

1. The project will have five elements:
 - a. Realignment of the railroad alignment in the vicinity of Hopson Road to lessen the curvature of the rail line
 - b. Grade separation of the rail road from Hopson Road, with the rail road on a bridge over Hopson Road [note added after meeting: the bridge will accommodate two tracks and will allow for a four lane cross-section of Hopson Road]
 - c. Closure of the Church Street crossing of the Railroad south of Hopson Road
 - d. Connection of Church Street north to Hopson Road
 - e. Widening of Hopson Road from 2 to 4 lanes from NC 54 to the section of Hopson Road just east of Davis Drive that is being widened to four lanes as part of the Davis Drive project that is nearing completion (a distance of about 0.7 miles)
2. The project is not regionally significant.
3. A regional emissions analysis is not required.
4. The following actions will need to be taken by the DCHC MPO and NCDOT:
 - a. DCHC MPO will adopt a 2035 LRTP amendment
 - b. DCHC MPO will adopt a 2009-15 MTIP amendment
 - c. DCHC MPO will make a conformity determination on the 2035 LRTP amendment
 - d. DCHC MPO will make a conformity determination on the 2009-15 MTIP amendment
 - e. NCDOT will adopt a 2009-15 STIP amendment
 - f. NCDOT will make a conformity determination on the 2009-15 STIP amendment
5. Andy Henry will prepare two documents that will constitute the 2035 LRTP amendment:
 - a. Revised Appendix 1 roadway list to add both the Hopson Road widening and the Church Street closure and realignment.
 - b. A new section to be added at the front of the document that tracks all changes to the joint 2035 LRTP report since its initial adoption by the MPOs in May 2009.
6. Mike Bruff will set up a meeting with Mike Stanley to translate the 5 project elements (see #1 above) into the language of MTIP/STIP amendments, including costs by year by work activity type (e.g. ROW/utilities, construction) and by project phase (e.g. A or B if the project will be broken into components).
7. John Hodges-Copple will develop a template for the conformity report; it will be modeled on a previous Triangle TIP conformity report that did not require a regional emissions analysis
8. John Hodges-Copple will develop a timeline fro the tasks to amend the TIP and LRTP and make the needed conformity determinations.

Additional notes from follow-up conference call on September 8, 2009

Participants: Mike Bruff, Mike Stanley, Marc Hamel, Julie Bollinger, Jill Stark, Eddie Dancausse, John Hodges-Copple, Scott Walston

This follow-up call is to define how the NCRH/Hopson Road project would be reflected in a 2009-15 TIP amendment.

Project Details

John Hodges-Copple sought clarification on details of the project. In addition to the description in the previous section, details include:

- The currently proposed railroad bridge over Hopson Road would be a single structure designed to carry two tracks for freight and intercity rail; the design could accommodate passenger rail service traveling up to 90 mph, but track separation on the bridge would not be sufficient for speeds greater than 90 mph. Any subsequent track for high speed rail service at speeds greater than 90 mph and any track for light rail transit would need to be on separate structures not currently envisioned as part of this project.
- Developers south of Hopson Road (Keystone) and north of Hopson Road (Triangle Metro Center) may have involvement as part of Durham City and/or County conditions of development. Details need to be clarified. John Hodges-Copple will contact Andy Henry with the DCHC MPO and ask him to work with the Planning and Transportation departments in Durham to provide any developer requirements or commitments that have been a part of development approvals.

Mike Stanley noted that the Hopson Road grade separation/railroad realignment and the Church Street closure are both unfunded projects in the existing 2009-15. Mike Stanley indicated that in order to be reflected as a funded project in the STIP and MTIP, three things are needed:

1. The cost for the each phase (e.g. A, B) and work activity type (e.g. ROW/utilities, construction) of the project
2. The timeframe for each phase and work activity type of the project
3. The revenue source for each phase and work activity type of the project

The participants discussed whether to divide the project into phases and, if so, what parts of the projects should go in which phase. The participants agreed that the project will be split into 2 phases, A & B:

- A. Phase A will include at a minimum:
 - i. The realignment of the rail line near Hopson Road and the grade-separation of the rail line from Hopson Road
- B. Phase B will include at a minimum:
 - i. The widening of Hopson Road

The Church Street Closure and accompanying realignment/extension to Hopson Road may become a part of either Phase A or Phase B. It was noted that peak period traffic already backs up from NC 54 to the rail line; a concern is if the Church Street closure and realignment is done in advance of the Hopson widening, this situation will be exacerbated by the additional traffic routed to Hopson Road and destined for NC 54.

Summary of decisions and next steps:

1. For this amendment, 100% ARRA stimulus funding from the High-Speed Rail funds will be assumed for all work activity types and both A and B phases.
2. NCDOT staff will work with Paul Worley to determine what project elements go in which Phase (A or B)
3. NCDOT rail division will work with Mike Stanley to provide the TIP cost estimates for ROW/utilities, and construction for the A and B phases. Cost estimates will be developed by the third week of September.
4. John Hodges-Copple will work with Andy Henry of DCHC MPO to obtain the details (scope and timing) of any conditions of approval for development along Hopson Road that would result in changes to Hopson Road
5. John Hodges-Copple will work with Andy Henry of DCHC MPO on the timing of the MPO actions, which are assumed to be:
 - i. MTIP and LRTP amendments, and draft conformity report, released for public comment at October 14 TAC meeting
 - ii. Public hearing on MTIP and LRTP amendments, and draft conformity report held at November 11 TAC meeting
 - iii. Resolutions on MTIP and LRTP amendments, and draft conformity report, adopted at December 9 TAC meeting.