Charlotte City Council

Transportation & Planning Committee

Meeting Summary for September 13, 2010

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

I. **Subject:** **Status Report on the Regional Transportation Planning Study**
Action: None

II. **Subject:** **Blue Line Extension Update**
Action: None

III. **Subject:** **USDG Update on Ordinance Language**
Action: None

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Present:	David Howard, Michael Barnes, Nancy Carter, Warren Cooksey, Patsy Kinsey
Time:	1:30 pm – 3:05 pm

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agenda Package
2. Blue Line Extension Update.ppt

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Chairman Howard called the meeting to order and asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves. He said the first item on the agenda is an update on the Regional Transportation Planning Study from Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG). He then turned it over to Danny Pleasant.

I. **Status Report on the Regional Transportation Planning Study**

Mr. Pleasant said this presentation from Rebecca Yarbrough will walk the Committee through the study they have been working on over the last several months. The study is to look at how

transportation planning is getting done from a regional perspective, who the various parties are, to see how we can work closely together with the various regions, and to see the upcoming steps once the consultants final report is out for review. Mr. Steinman added that they are not asking for any action today.

Ms. Yarbrough said that Executive Director Al Sharp is here because they need to have a conversation about the next steps. Ms. Yarbrough began reviewing the "Regional Transportation Planning Study" presentation (copy attached). She described the purpose and goals of the study and said that it is to look at whether or not potential changes in organizational structures or decision making structures would potentially position the greater Charlotte Bi-State region to plan, develop and implement an effective regional multi-modal transportation system. She added that they did this to provide sound information to decision makers because the 2010 Census will be coming out in the next few years and that will impact the boundaries of transportation planning organizations, because it's going to impact the urbanized areas. Also, the Federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) reauthorization is coming up and the initial drafts of that legislation had some real ramifications about how transportation planning is done in regions, in terms of requirements and opportunities.

Ms. Yarbrough said that the methodology chosen was benchmarking on how planning is done here versus how it's done in other areas of the country that are perceived as either best practice areas and/or able to get things done more effectively than in our area.

Barnes: Were you going to be providing some of the highlights of the potential negative and positive impacts of the SAFETEA-LU reauthorization?

Yarbrough: I'm not prepared to do that in detail, but I can provide that to you. One of the big things that came out in the Oberstar bill, which was one of the first proposals, was that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that included a population of 1 million or more were eligible to create metropolitan mobility funds and metropolitan mobility plans. The metropolitan infrastructure banks, potentially, represented another revenue generation tool that was not available to the smaller MPOs. In this region, although our population is somewhere around 2.3 million, we only have 1 MPO whose population is over 1 million. The next largest transportation planning organization is the Lake Norman Regional Planning Organization (LNRPO) with 350,000 and they aren't federally recognized.

Barnes: Was there a potential funding source identified for that infrastructure bank?

Yarbrough: I don't think there was. I think the thought was that the larger MPOs were going to have more access to more tools and have more federal attention. If one part of the region would be getting more federal attention, we were thinking it would be good if we could craft that in such a way that more of the metro area was able to benefit.

Carter: We've had a discussion about the consolidation or the realignment of RPOs and MPOs, particularly looking at the Census activity and redistricting. Is there a possibility of that? If we focus on air quality, it seems to me we need to be larger or have other partners in the mix.

Yarbrough: Well, what I'm going to go through is some of the results of the work that has been done so far on the internal assessment because part of what we did in that process, was to ask people what they like about the way things are now and what they didn't like. We tried to get at what kinds of things might create tipping points that would get people to look at other alternatives.

Carter: So, it would be our choice and not imposed upon us?

Yarbrough: Yes. We don't know how likely it is that anyone would impose something.

Ms. Yarbrough continued discussing the methodology slides in the presentation. She then read through the participating organizations list.

Ms. Yarbrough discussed the internal findings, so far. The consultant started out by looking at how the MPOs and RPOs are currently organized and found that the organizations are fairly consistent. The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) has the most detailed decision-making structure and they also have weighted voting. Gaston is the only one with an Executive Board. Only MUMPO and Lake Norman have any form of weighted voting. The functional objectives of the organizations are all very similar and Gaston's is the only one that actually states that they are the "premier" decision-making authority for transportation planning in situations where the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) concurrence is not required. She said that none of these organizations get heavily involved in discussions of revenue generation and additional funding sources.

Ms. Yarbrough went on to talk about the importance of public engagement and also about each organizations project prioritization.

Barnes: I recall having a challenge with getting folks to identify funding sources. Are you aware of any effort that might suggest more global funding sources?

Yarbrough: The thing that several people in the process said is "the one thing that would get me to look at doing something different, organizationally, is if there was a way to have more voice in Raleigh, find ways to generate additional revenue or leverage additional funds." We know that Senator Clodfelter's bill has been proposed, but I don't know if that is a big enough carrot to get that discussion going.

Barnes: I raise the issue because it is clear there is competing interests depending on the size of the particular geography involved and the varying revenue generating capacity. Typically, folks that generate the most money want to do what they want to with that money, as opposed to letting the smaller areas do what they would like to do.

Yarbrough: One of the regions we are looking at as a benchmark region is Minneapolis-St. Paul, and the driver for looking at them is they do some very innovative things with revenue generation and how that revenue is allocated.

(Council member Cooksey entered the meeting)

[“Survey Results: Perception of Effectiveness” slide]

Ms. Yarbrough said they surveyed the policy boards and the technical committees, as well as focus groups that represented business, environment, livability and multi-modal interests. They asked them a series of questions about what’s important to them and how are they doing now. The dark bar shows what they think are the most important things that the MPOs and RPOs do and the lighter bars show how effectively they believe that is now being done.

[“Survey Results: What might be different with some level of merger/consolidation?” slide]

Ms. Yarbrough said on this slide the red shows what some people think would be worse if there was some level of merger or consolidation, and the blue is what people think would be better. The only item in red is the timely implementation of local transportation projects. The one that was flat was the ability to apply transportation revenue to projects that concerns the respondent. She said they suspect that also has to do with those smaller, local projects.

[“Survey Results: What things should MPOs/RPOs be doing that they aren’t doing, or doing better?” slide]

Ms. Yarbrough said the most frequently raised thing in this section of the survey was multi-modal transportation planning. Also, frequently mentioned were improving and enhancing revenue streams and ensuring better coordination between land use decisions and transportation planning.

[“What Works Well from MPO/RPO Members’ Perspectives” slide]

Ms. Yarbrough stated that they had focus groups that met a few hours and they gave them some structured questions and also just let them have an open discussion. She said they reported that they felt staff support was excellent, but there was frustration because they felt sometimes staff was very heavily involved. However, at the same time it is so complex. Most felt like their group was a cohesive group. She said they are concerned that a large organization would not provide the opportunity to really know an area and project.

[“What’s Frustrating?” slide]

Ms. Yarbrough said this list is considerably longer than what works well. The limited amount of funding is a huge issue, as well as the inability to deliver projects. One of the drivers they are looking at with the benchmarking process is the extent to which other regions are able to deliver projects and what is perceived, by them, in a timelier manner. The lack of local decision making authority was another big frustration. In many parts of the country, the MPO makes the funding allocation decision. That is not the case in North Carolina. A lack of flexibility at NCDOT was another issue cited; however, many said that they could see that changing. Another concern is that elected officials turn over and there is a need to continually re-educate them as they are appointed to a MPO or RPO board. Because project delivery takes so long and the long range transportation process really is long range, it becomes a challenge when elected officials turn

over.

Barnes: Complaining about re-educating local officials and the turnover of elected officials doesn't really help. We do change and we know it takes years and years to get the projects done, but that's the process and we aren't trying to create frustration.

Howard: If I'm not mistaken, some of this may have even come from people in Charlotte, right?

Yarbrough: I don't know where the individual comments came from.

Barnes: It seems like the comment would have come from a staff person who supports one of those boards.

Pleasant: As someone who participated in a focus group, it was made up of the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) staff members and elected officials that serve on a MPO board. You really heard it from both sides. On the elected official side, they would say, "there is so much information to get a hold of in a hurry and it's frustrating." As for staff, most staff has been doing this a long time, so they understand the need to re-educate.

Yarbrough: There were many that were saying there is excellent staff education and orientation of elected officials.

Carter: Is this list of frustrations prioritized?

Yarbrough: It's not prioritized, but I would say that the funding and the funding decision-making were at the top of the list.

["How Does Collaboration Work Now?" slide]

Ms. Yarbrough stated that people said collaboration works pretty well at the staff level. It is very limited at the policy level. There is a group called CRAFT, the Charlotte Regional Alliance for Transportation, and their Executive Board does not meet frequently. So, there was a feeling that came out of the focus groups that this had an impact on the ability to move forward large regional projects. The business group said they thought we needed to get a handle on the fact that when we have trucks sitting in traffic, that is costing business money.

Ms. Yarbrough continued with the presentation and read through the benchmarking criteria and the benchmarking regions. She stated that there are a couple of regions they are looking at because they don't want to be like them, but there are several on the list that are frequent comparison communities to Charlotte.

Ms. Yarbrough said the draft report will come out at the end of this week and the Study Advisory Committee will meet and provide feedback to the consultant. It will then go to the Executive Board on October 13 and they plan to do a regional release on October 28. She said they will need to have dialogue about how to go forward after the report comes out.

Mr. Steinman said they will come back to the Committee once the consultant report is back. They will structure the information on the technical side and the policy side, confirming and re-verifying the consultant's findings.

Chairman Howard thanked everyone for the information and requested to move on to the second agenda item.

II. Blue Line Extension Update

Chairman Howard said that he has some had great conversations with Carolyn Flowers and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) staff over the last couple of months and thought that the Committee should hear directly from them.

Ms. Flowers said that Danny Rogers will be making a presentation. She stated that they have made some significant milestones over the summer. The 30% Value Engineering Study has been completed and the results will come back sometime in October. She said they are also in the process of doing public hearings on the draft Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). She then turned it over to Danny Rogers.

Mr. Rogers said the draft EIS is a major milestone that they just completed. He then began reviewing the "Blue Line Extension Project Update" presentation (copy attached). He described what the draft EIS is and why the needed it. He also read through the draft EIS's circulation period and timeframe to receive comments.

[Draft EIS Alternatives" slide]

Mr. Rogers said there are 4 alternatives that are considered in the EIS. The No-Build and Transportation Systems Management alternatives are basically there to use for comparison purposes, to show the benefits of the build projects. The other two build alternatives are the Light Rail project extending from 7th Street all the way out to I-485, which they are pursuing, and the other alternative was a Sugar Creek alternative. They determined that the costs were significantly more and the benefits were relatively minor, so they eliminated that one.

["Visual Impacts" slide]

Mr. Rogers said there are a couple of places that have potentially significant impacts. The first one is at the Mallard Creek Apartments, where the rail line takes out 2 buildings. The other one is at CMC-University, at the intersection of Harris Blvd. and North Tryon St, where the bridge would go up and over the intersection. That's one of the busiest intersections in the City. So, they have to figure out a way to mitigate that visual impact. To do that, they are looking at implementing aesthetic features so it will look nicer. Another thing is signing opportunities to try to work with the hospital to make sure people can find their way into the hospital.

["Potential Noise Impacts" slide]

Mr. Rogers said another potential impact is noise. There are several places with moderate impacts, but Mallard Creek Apartments would have severe impacts. It's a new activity adjacent

to those properties, so it's imposing noise that wasn't otherwise there. They will be looking at ways to mitigate the noise. One way to do that is to put in insulated windows. They could also put vehicle skirts on the rail vehicles to try to dampen the noise from the wheel squeal. There are also sound barriers, which are walls that can be put up. They will look at each individual situation and see what would work in those places.

["Acquisition & Displacements" slide]

Mr. Rogers discussed the fact that since the project is such a long project that there are a lot of properties involved. There are 25 full acquisitions, which is where they buy the entire property. There are 195 partial acquisitions and if they did the Sugar Creek alternative, it would have been 204 partial acquisitions. There would be 22 businesses and 1 residential relocation. Once there is a Record of Decision they can start the right-of-way acquisition.

["Environmental Justice" slide]

Mr. Rogers said they had to pay a lot of attention to environmental justice. They had to identify neighborhoods that are being affected differently than others, specifically, if they are minority or low income. There are two of those; Pines Mobile Home Park, which is located across the street from Old Concord Road, and the Mallard Creek Apartments.

["30% Design Update" slides]

Mr. Rogers said there are some changes that occurred during the 15% - 30% design stage. The biggest change is the fact that they have to add a Vehicle Light Maintenance Facility (VLMF) for the vehicles. When the intermodal yard relocates to the Airport, that property will become available to put in a storage yard and maintenance facility. The reason for that is they thought they would need 12 additional cars, which could go in the existing facility. However, with the success of the South Corridor, the demand is much higher and we will need 26 more cars. They can't accept that many in the existing facility.

Another change is after they did some transportation analysis they decided that they needed to add 5 more intersections along North Tryon to keep the connectivity. At each crossing, you have to provide gates and signals. They also made an alignment shift at UNC Charlotte, in response to their request to give them more buildable property. That actually saves the City money.

Mr. Rogers added that one thing that is not showing up in the 30% design, but they know it's going to happen, and they have already made a commitment to make the change, is that Mallard Creek Church Road will now be grade separated. If they went over it, they would get into the flood plain.

They have completed the review of the 30% design and are now moving into the 65% design. They have resolved most of the comments that they received during the 30% design, so that they know how to go forward with the 65% design. He said they are also wrapping up the value engineering exercise. They had a consultant team come in and do a week long study of the project and make a series of suggestions for them to consider. That is a federally required

process and they are in the process of responding to their recommendations and they will send that to the FTA in the next month.

Howard: One of the reasons I asked for this presentation is because I came away with a different understanding of this project than from the last update meeting we had at Council. From my understanding, we are just about one year away from being able go to the feds and ask for a full funded grant.

Flowers: Yes, and that is dependent on our financial plan.

Howard: That's the key to this. I've also learned that even though we didn't get the $40 million we requested from the government, the $3.7 million combined with the $14 million that we have, is enough to finish out the engineering study that we need to get us to that point with the federal government.

Flowers: That's correct. Regarding all of the stuff that was going on in the media about the earmarks, our request for the earmark had included funding to start the acquisition of the right-of-way. The acquisition of the right-of-way would have allowed us to keep the project on schedule because we would have acquired the right-of-way by the time we got the Record of Decision. Once we receive the Record of Decision, we can get into the President's budget and will be able to start construction, but because we didn't get the earmark level we had requested, it won't allow us to keep the project on the accelerated schedule.

Howard: The $36 million that we didn't get was money that we would have gotten reimbursed from the federal government when the time came for us to get a full funded grant, right?

Flowers: Yes, and our concern was requesting the money in advance because the federal government only allows you to receive $100 million a year in reimbursements. So, based on the schedule we had for construction, and not being able to get the right-of-way ahead of time, that will move back the construction schedule.

Howard: The other thing I learned is the real problem we are having with our project is the sales tax. When we go next year to the feds, not only do they want the engineering study, but they will also want a plan on how we will fund our capital and operation on the east. The sales tax is holding us back because of the economy. The problem is local. It's not federal. Could you tell us about what you are doing with the consultant for this issue?

Flowers: We have gone out for a financial consultant and have looked at what other systems have done, in terms of innovative systems. There have been some very creative financial models that have been approved by other transit systems, including Denver. They have other private-public partnerships that are out there. Getting approval for the consultant will allow us to explore different options for a creative financing model.

Howard: We are trying to get our portion decided before we go to the federal government. Basically, we have to show up the ½ cent sales tax. The media was trying to imply that the problem is with the feds, but it's not. It's a local issue.

Barnes: With respect to the long term ½ cent sales tax projections, I understand the numbers are not what we projected to be a few years back. Do you know what the current projections are for the next 3 years, in terms of returning to 2006 or 2007 numbers?

Flowers: We are still at about 2005 numbers. We have very conservative projections for the next few years. The economists aren't giving us a lot of information. There has been a lot of discussion about whether this will be a double-dip recession or not. Our projections are only about a 3.5% growth factor. Right now, with our numbers, our projection is there is a $350 million drop from the last update of the 2030 Plan.

Barnes: Do you have a completion date in mind?

Rogers: We have a production schedule, which puts us to the middle of 2017 and that relates to the $33 million versus the $43 million. We were at the end of 2016. The schedule is also part of the process that we are going through.

Barnes: Do you have any indication whether the State is experiencing any challenges with respect to their 25%?

Flowers: No, we don't. As part of our legislative agenda, we keep requesting the State commitment to at least a 25% local share. We are continuing to advance that as part of our MTC legislative agenda. BLE is in the State's list of priority projects. It's one of the highest for transit.

Barnes: Finally, do we know if the $50 billion that President Obama announced for infrastructure could have impact in a positive way on this project?

Flowers: It probably would. Right now, everyone is looking for additional funding for transit. That commitment to transit and transportation would help us out.

Howard: I'd like to wrap this up. The feds are heavily invested in trying to figure this out.

Flowers: I'd also like to clarify that the feds have kind of changed the way they are funding projects. When they were giving out earmarks, they were only giving them to projects that were already in the President's budget. There were only 5 other projects that received funding outside of those that are already in a full funding grant agreement status. Charlotte was one of those five. I think that still shows commitment on their part for the project that we have.

Howard: It also says, now that they are going to another system, we need to be serious about getting this done. By next year, if we aren't ready, we can fall out of line of where we are in the process. The same thing is true with the State. The Triad and Triangle have now gotten together and identified funding sources for their project. I think you said it was the ½ cent sales tax and some other sources.

Flowers: They have rental car taxes that are basically funding their operating costs.

Howard: Right now, our sales tax funds operation and capital, while they are taking care of it by figuring it out ahead of time. We have a lot of reason to get in front of this.

Cooksey: We are also using car rental tax for transit too. The City is levying it to be used in the maintenance for effort payment that we have to do for CATS. That was part of the arts facility deal.

Flowers: That's correct, but it's capped.

Cooksey: The maintenance of effort part is capped, but I think it's important to note that we have tapped into car rental tax as an additional funding stream for meeting our CATS obligation.

Howard: Understood. Thanks everyone for the information. Let's move on to the third item.

III. Urban Street Design Guideline Update on Ordinance Language

Chairman Howard reminded everyone that they are very short on time. Danny Pleasant said they will move this along fairly quickly. He then turned it over to Mike Davis and Shannon Frye.

Mr. Davis began reviewing the "Urban Street Design Guidelines Ordinance (USDG) Implementation" presentation (copy attached). He said today they will quickly discuss the key changes they have implemented: 1) block length averaging, 2) block length exemptions, 3) zoning-required parking on local "wide" streets, and 4) driveway conflicts with on-street parking.

["(1) Block Length Averaging" slide]

Mr. Davis said this slide relates to residential land use. In typical form, a block in a residential setting would be one that is made up of long streets (shown in blue), that become loaded with lots. The lots then have houses on them. The purpose of the blue streets in the diagram is to create access for those lots. Those blocks then are metered or broken up at regular intervals by the cross streets (shown in green). The separation between the blue streets doesn't have anything to do with block lengths. Those are based on how deep your lots are.

Maximum block lengths have impacts in the spacing between the cross (green) streets. The current ordinance only allows you to go 1,000' as an interval between the cross streets before you have to break up the blocks along the long streets. Under USDG, they proposed the ordinance language be changed so that, for at least residential use, it varies by use and by where you are, in terms of Center, Corridors and Wedges. For single-family residential, that maximum can be either 800' or 650' based on the density.

Mr. Davis said that one of the comments they received through the public review was that single-family residential today is typically not built with 1,000' blocks. It's usually less than that. People perceived the value of the 1,000' blocks as giving some inherent flexibility to move streets around. He said they looked back and found that was basically true. He said they wanted

to hang on to their maximum block length values, but in terms of trying to address that need for flexibility and how it's applied, they felt like averaging with less would sort of move the streets within the network. You end up with some long blocks and some short blocks, but the key concept is the average for the overall site cannot exceed the maximum that is established.

Carter: Are you counting point to point or are you measuring meandering if it meanders?

Davis: The measurement is taken for the center of a street to the center of the next street along that block. If the street is curvy, you would measure along the curvature of the street.

Howard: So none of the blocks can be more than 1,000'?

Davis: That's right. No individual block can be more than 1,000'. That is consistent with today's ordinance.

Kinsey: Does that mean the average can't be more than 800' or 650'?

Davis: The average for the site cannot be more than the maximum.

Kinsey: Which is the maximum, the 800' or the 650'?

Davis: That's based on the density proposed for that site. If it's greater than 5 dwelling units per acre, it's 650'. If it's less than 5 dwelling units per acre than it's 800'. Those values come straight out of the USDG policy.

["(2) Block Length Exemptions" slide]

Mr. Davis said the next topic also deals with block lengths. The first 6 items listed are conditions that already exist in the current ordinance. They are proposing that those additions carry in with the new ordinance, but they have also added 2 more.

Mr. Davis said that for the first one, in the public process, it was brought to their attention that the Siemens Manufacturing site off of Westinghouse Blvd., where they are building turbines, the very nature of that industry requires that you have buildings that exceed the maximum block lengths. So, they have added in that manufacturing or special security requirements would be exempt for maximum block lengths.

The other one added was, if you follow the prescribed methodology and met the maximum block lengths, you may end up where some streets are not in alignment across one side of a thoroughfare. Therefore, you would be allowed to move some streets around to align with existing streets to create intersections.

Barnes: I can imagine a developer and an attorney using exemptions 4, 5, 6 and 8 as a reason to avoid the whole policy because of how one might define the elements of those. I raise the issue because it may be that you all would want to provide us with some greater limitations around those four items. You can always make reasoning about the shape of a property or the

accessibility to a property. We don't want to create so many exceptions, loopholes and exemptions that people are routinely avoiding this.

Davis: Items 4, 5, and 6 are practiced today under what we have been calling Door 2. Beyond that, I would say this is the example of where we struggle to find the sweet spot in flexibility and predictability. Also, this is summarized. I can show you language that is slightly longer than what is written here. There are extra words that would, hopefully, give staff a better sense of how they ought to be making those interpretations.

["(3) Zoning-Required Parking" slides]

Mr. Davis said the next topic deals with parking on wide streets. One of the things they heard through the public process is, "if it's the land use that created the need for the parking and that parking has been accomplished in the design, then why can't that parking be counted in the zoning-required parking?" The current Zoning ordinance already has a requirement that land uses, based on their type and intensity, require a certain amount of parking. Some zoning districts already allow for on-street parking to be counted towards zoning-required parking. He said they realized they needed to go back in their Zoning ordinance and add one amendment to say there are some other districts that will apply.

Howard: So, the USDG is going to require it and the Zoning ordinance is going to count it?

Davis: The USDG doesn't require anything in and of itself. The Subdivision ordinance is what will require the street type. The Zoning ordinance determines how much parking is needed and that's what's being modified.

["(4) Driveway Conflicts with Parking" slide]

Mr. Davis said the next change has to do with driveway pads. If there are driveway pads connecting to the street, then you wouldn't want recessed parking there because vehicles would be parking in front of the driveways. So instead, the change would be along that edge, replace the recess parking bay with a straight curb and bring the driveways out to the curb.

Carter: There is an implication with the driveways that we have been talking about internally. If the sidewalk meanders where the driveway is, you could have additional parking that would be allowed. Is there any discussion of sidewalks in this? Some cars are parking in the middle of the sidewalk if there is an 8' planting strip.

Davis: There is currently and ordinance requirement that would say that the front of your garage has to be 18' from the edge of the sidewalk.

Frye: It's supposed to be for two cars from the face of the building and not to overhang on the sidewalk.

Carter: I'm seeing violations in my area, and I'm not sure if it has to do with the 18' feet given or not. I'm also seeing issues with private streets.

Frye: We can look at those and get with you about that.

Chairman Howard thanked everyone for the presentation. He requested to cancel the September 23 meeting and all Committee members agreed. He said the next meeting will be October 11 at 3:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Transportation & Planning Committee

Monday, September 13; 1:30 – 3:00 PM
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
Room 280

Committee Members: David Howard, Chair
Michael Barnes, Vice Chair
Nancy Carter
Warren Cooksey
Patsy Kinsey

Staff Resource: Jim Schumacher

AGENDA

I. Status Report on the Regional Transportation Planning Study – 30 minutes
Staff Resources: Norm Steinman & Rebecca Yarbrough
The Committee will receive information on the purpose of the Regional Transportation Study; including, a summary of information collected from interviews with the various types of stakeholders, information to be included during the benchmarking process, a schedule of upcoming events, and the expectations for MUMPO and/or Charlotte to provide comments.
Attachment: 1. Regional Transportation Planning Study.ppt

II. Blue Line Extension Update – 30 minutes
Staff Resource: Danny Rogers
Staff will review the LYNX Blue Line Extension Light Rail Project and will provide an overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) currently available for public comment. Additionally, the presentation will highlight changes made to the project during the 30% design and upcoming activities.

III. USDG Update on Ordinance Language –30 minutes
Staff Resources: Mike Davis & Shannon Frye
Staff will be presenting key changes in the proposed ordinance amendments resulting from the public review process. Staff will also provide responses to questions from the previous Committee meeting related to the proposed Development Review Board.
Attachment: 2. USDG Ordinance Implementation.ppt

Next Scheduled Meeting: Thursday, September 23 at 2:00 pm in Room 280

Distribution:	Mayor & City Council	Curt Walton, City Manager	Leadership Team
	Transportation Cabinet	Shannon Frye	Rebecca Yarbrough
	Danny Rogers	John Muth	

Regional Transportation Planning Study

Presentation to the Charlotte Transportation and Planning Committee
September 13, 2010

Purpose and Goals

- To examine alternative organizational/decision-making structures and processes that would potentially

  better position the greater Charlotte Bi-State Region to plan, develop, and implement an effective regional multi-modal transportation system

- Why: To provide sound information for decision-makers in light of census, reauthorization, competing voices

Methodology

- Based on benchmarking how planning is done here and what products are produced against planning done in areas of the country that are perceived as:
  - Using best practices
  - Moving projects forward more quickly
- Designed by Study Advisory Committee representing all the transportation planning organizations, their lead planning agencies, Charlotte Chamber, Charlotte Regional Partnership, CCOG, NCDOT, others

Methodology

- Study conducted by independent consultant selected by team representing TPOs in region
- Funding provided by NCDOT and Centralina
- Scope includes:
  - Local research and extensive stakeholder input through focus groups
  - Benchmarking
  - External factors analysis
  - Formulation of recommendations

Participation

- Cabarrus-Rowan MPO (CRMPO)
- Gaston Urban Area MPO (GUAMPO)
- Lake Norman RPO (LNRPO)
- Mecklenburg-Union MPO (MUMPO)
- Rocky River RPO (RRRPO)
- NCDOT
- Official "Observer Status:
  - Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (RFATS)
  - SCDOT

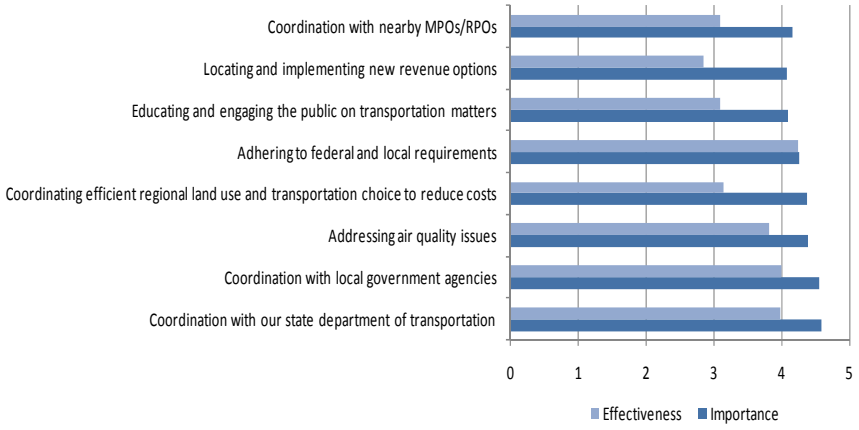
Internal Findings

- Organization
  - MOUs largely consistent
    - MUMPO's most detailed in terms of decision-making
    - GUAMPO has an Executive Board
  - Voting varies
    - MUMPO and LNRPO weighted or combined
    - CRMPO, GUAMPO, RRRPO simple majority
- Functional Objectives
    - GUAMPO's stipulates "premier" decision-making authority where NCDOT concurrence not required
    - Other MPOs similar
    - RPOs similar

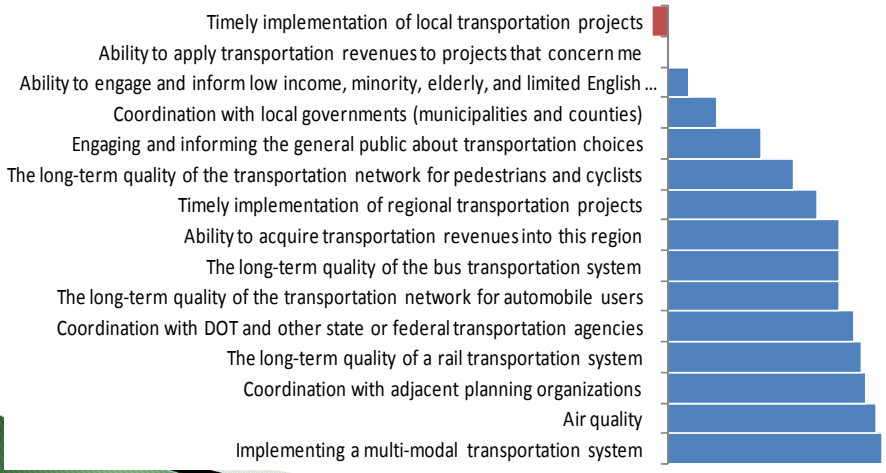
Internal Findings

- Public Engagement
  - Varies by MPO in detail of described process
  - Probably more similar in practice
- Project Prioritization
  - Most cite Congestion Reduction, Safety, Consistency with LRTP, and minimizing harm to environment
  - MUMPO's most detailed in integrating transportation/other planning
  - RRRPO allows direct allocation of some points by policy board members
  - CRMPO did not provide rating factors

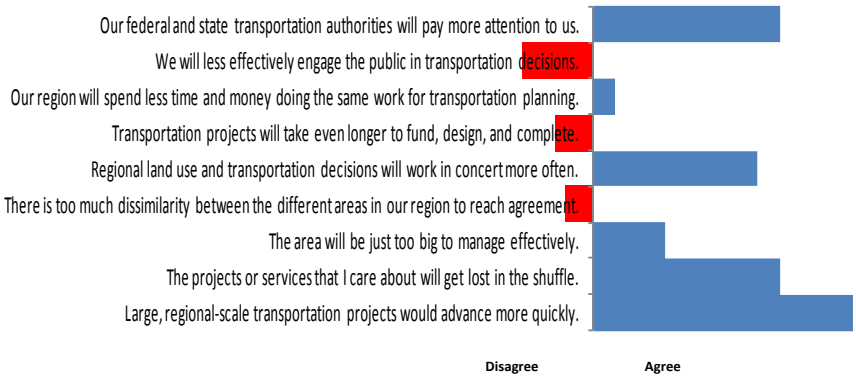
Survey Results: Perceptions of Effectiveness



Survey Results: What might be different with some level of merger /consolidation?



Survey Results: What might be better with stronger regional collaboration?



Survey Results: What things should MPOs/RPOs be doing that they aren't doing, or doing better?

- Most Frequently Mentioned:
  - Planning and development of a truly multi-modal (transit, bike, pedestrian as well as roadways) transportation system
- Also Frequently Mentioned:
  - Improving/enhancing revenue streams
  - Ensuring better coordination between land use and transportation decisions and planning

Focus Group Results

- Eight Focus Groups:
  - Lake Norman RPO
  - Rocky River RPO
  - Cabarrus-Rowan MPO
  - Gaston Urban Area MPO
  - MUMPO
  - Environment/Livability Advocates
  - Chamber of Commerce/Economic Development
  - Public Transportation/Multi-Modal Representatives
- Over 100 participants

What Works Well from MPO/RPO Members' Perspectives:

- Staff support is excellent
- Most of my fellow MPO/RPO members are "on the same page" philosophically
- Size of the group is good and I can know the area
- We seem to be able to come together when we need to (conformity, I-85 bridge)

What's Frustrating:

- **Limited amount of funding** available inhibits timely project delivery
- Funding allocations and **lack of local decision-making authority**
- **Lack of flexibility** at NCDOT, although this may be changing
- Need to **continually re-educate** elected officials who are new to the process
- **Challenge of long-term planning** and projects (transit in particular) when elected officials change more frequently
- **Lack of meaningful public involvement** in the process
- **Overall complexity** of the process and requirements, such as conformity
- **Lack of land use-transportation planning links**

How does collaboration work now?

- **Fairly well at the staff level**
  - Conformity
  - FAST Lanes Study
  - NC 73 Council of Planning
- **Very limited at policy level**
  - Regional transportation projects and policies
  - Linked land use-transportation planning
  - Major regional transportation projects
- Inadequate engagement with key stakeholders (business, environmental, etc.)
- Business group: more regional approach critical for major projects for business expansion because congestion=delays=increased costs and lost revenues

Benchmarking Criteria

- **Successfully integration of** the interests of both **large and small communities**
- Ability to **keep members engaged**
- **Innovative approaches to project financing** or leveraging funds
- Good linkages between **land use and transportation planning**
- **Bi-State** MPO organizations
- Regions with **strong multi-modal transportation systems**
- Regions that do well with **stakeholder engagement**

Benchmarking Regions

- Atlanta
- Kansas City
- Nashville
- Austin
- San Diego
- Tampa-St. Petersburg
- Minneapolis-St. Paul

Key Dates

- Study Advisory Committee receives draft summary report September 19
- Study Advisory Committee meets September 23
- Final report will incorporate Study Advisory Committee feedback
- CCOG Executive Board receives on October 13
- Regional Release on October 28, 8:00 a.m., Hilton University Place

Next Steps

- Sponsor Intelligent Regional Discussion
  - Presentations to each MPO/RPO
  - Inter-MPO/RPO Dialogue
  - Resolve a regional strategy based on study findings and dialogue
- Recommend appropriate action to NCDOT

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Centralina Council of Governments

For More Information:

Al Sharp or Rebecca Yarbrough

Centralina Council of Governments
704-372-2416

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Urban Street Design Guidelines Ordinance Implementation

Review of Changes Since 1st Draft

September 13, 2010

Mike Davis, PE
Department of Transportation

Shannon Frye
Planning Department

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Agenda

1. Status Update
2. Review of Key Changes due to Public Review

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Status Update

T&P Committee

- 5/10 Overview of approved policy
- 5/27 Introduction of key content
- 6/14 Follow-up Local Streets & "Door 3"
- 6/24 Summary of Public Meeting #1
- 7/26 Status update; Alternative compliance
- 8/23 Summary of Public Review Process
- 9/13 Review of Key Changes
- 9/23 Responses to Committee Questions

Public Review

- 6/15 Introduce draft ordinance changes
- 7/13 Present comments received Clarify issues as needed
- 8/18 Present recommended disposition of comments

Full Council

- 10/4 Council Workshop
- 11/15 Public Hearing
- 12/20 Decision

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Status Update Continued

- Draft ordinance language has been filed
- Updates to the Land Development Standard Manual are being posted to the website
- Staff is continuing to test and evaluate ordinance language on real site plans

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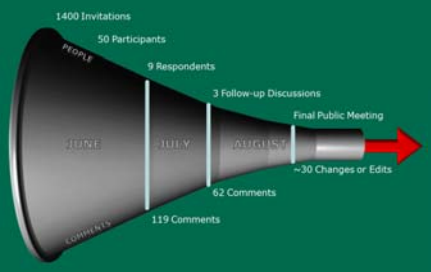
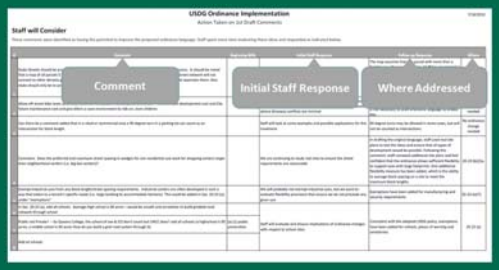
Summary of Key Changes





Key Changes

1) Block length averaging
2) Exemptions for block lengths
3) Zoning-required parking on local "wide" streets
4) Driveway conflicts with on-street parking

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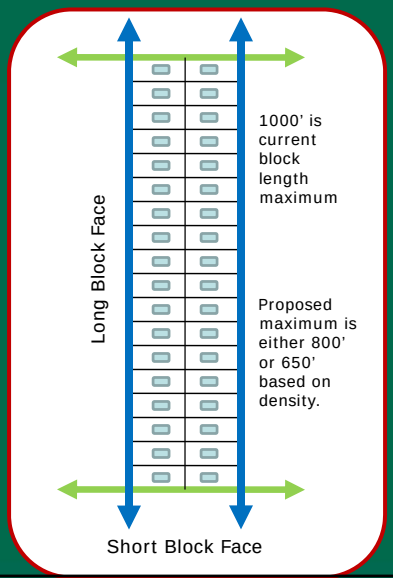
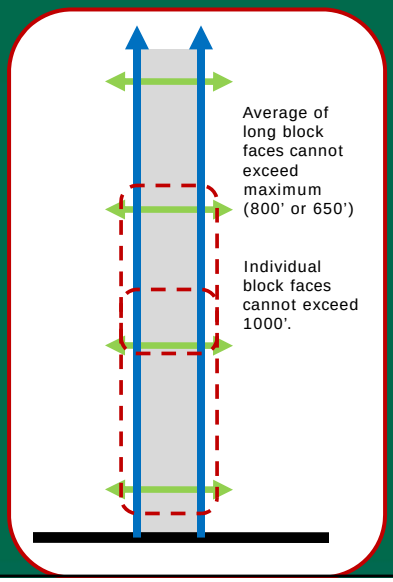
(1) Block Length Averaging

Typical Residential Block



Residential Network of Blocks



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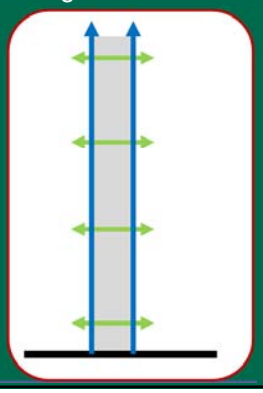
Block Averaging Continued

- Averaging applies only for residential land uses located in wedges.
- Averaging only applies to the connected long block faces (blue streets in schematic), thereby excluding the following:
  - Short block faces (cross-streets)
  - Cul-de-sac streets
  - Stub streets



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(2) Block Length Exemptions

Exemptions for Maximum Block Lengths

Existing Provisions

1) Physical barriers (railroads, freeways, gas pipelines)
2) Natural barriers (slopes, creeks, wetlands, floodplains)
3) Industrial-to-residential land use relationship
4) Property shape
5) Right-of-way or sight distance limitations
6) Property accessibility

New

7) Manufacturing or security requirements
8) Alignment with existing streets to create intersections

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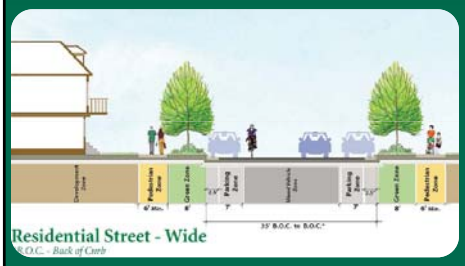
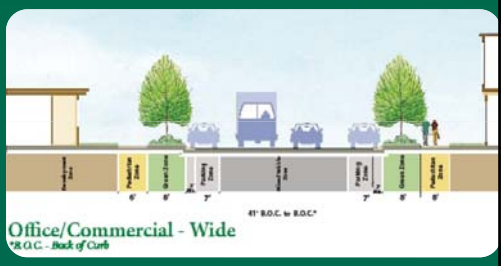
(3) Zoning-Required Parking





Local wide streets are used for land uses and intensities that create significant demand for on-street parking.

On-street parking spaces created through the local wide streets will count towards the zoning-required parking.

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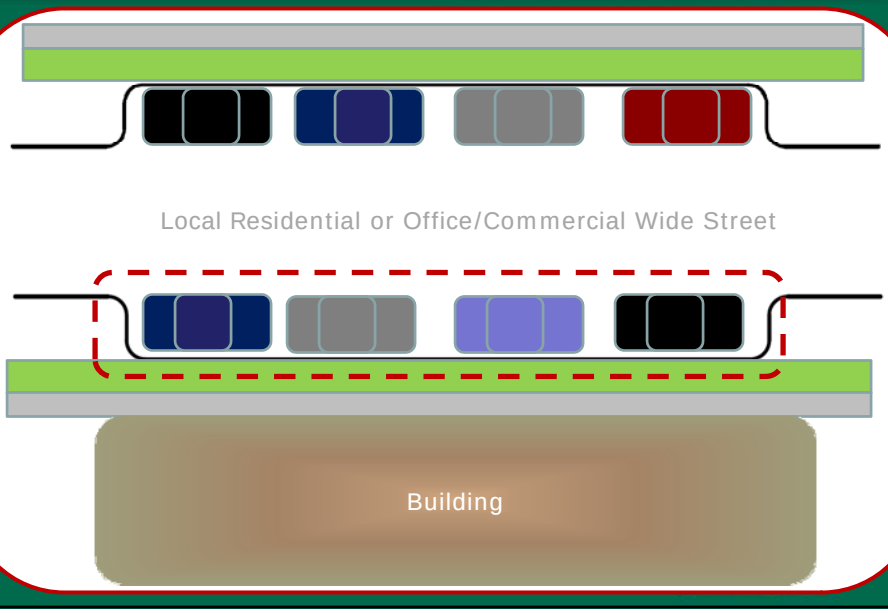
Zoning Required Parking (Continued)



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Zoning Required Parking (Continued)

Background

- The zoning ordinance requires a minimum number of parking spaces to be required for developments based on the use and size of the development.
- Certain zoning districts already allow on-street parking to be counted towards required minimum parking requirements.

Change

Draft ordinance language now includes an additional zoning amendment to allow other districts that would use local wide streets.

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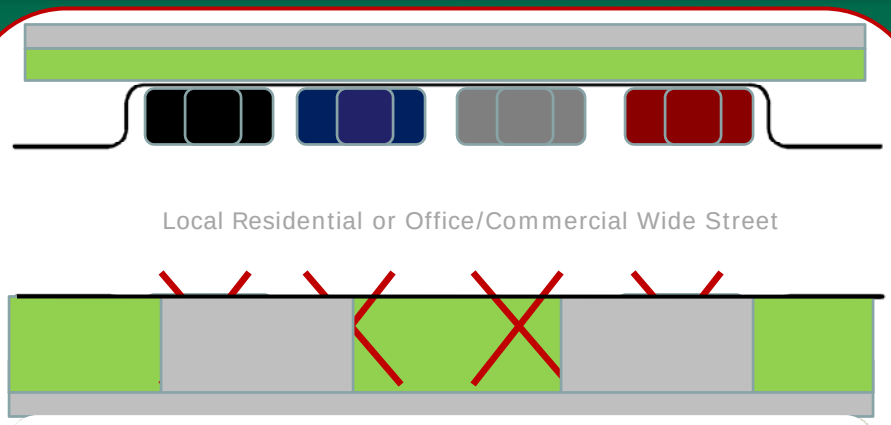
(4) Driveway Conflicts with Parking



Change:
Curb does not have to be recessed wherever the presence of frequent driveways precludes the use of on-street parking.

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Next Steps

Status Update to Transportation & Planning Committee on September 23

City Council Workshop on October 4

Public Hearing to be held on November 15

Request Council Decision on December 20

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Questions

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Blue Line Extension Project Update

September 13, 2010

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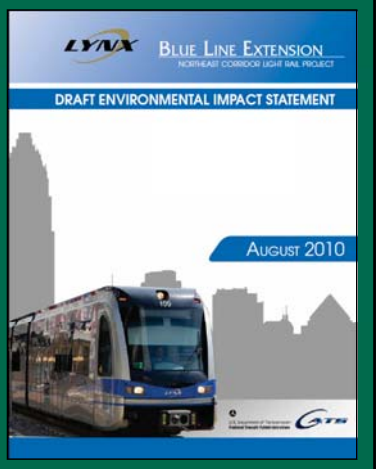
Draft EIS Completed

- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
- Mandates that Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) be prepared for major federally-funded projects
- Discloses the impacts of the project
- Requires governmental agency coordination
- Serves as a forum for public input



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Draft EIS Public & Agency Review

- 45 day circulation period required
- Distribution began August 17, 2010
  - Federal, state, local governmental agencies; elected officials; interested parties; residents, business & property owners
  - Full DEIS – 27 hard copies & 153 electronic CDs
  - Executive Summary – 68 hard copies
  - Notice of Availability – 8,500 notices
  - Posted on CATS website **www.ridetransit.org**
  - Placed in public libraries and CATS offices at CMGC
- Notice of Availability in Federal Register August 27, 2010
- 45-day comment period: August 27 – October 12, 2010
- Newspaper ads, press releases, riders alerts

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Public Meetings & Hearing

Public Meetings: Presentation & Open House
Written Comments Accepted

Thursday, September 9
Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church
Fellowship Hall
101 West Sugar Creek Road

Tuesday, September 14
Oasis Shriners Center
604 Doug Mayes Place

Public Hearing: Verbal and Written Comments Accepted
Wednesday, September 22
MTC Meeting

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Draft EIS Overview

- Project purpose and need
- Alternatives considered
- Transportation impacts
- Environmental analysis
- Proposed mitigation
- Evaluation of alternatives
- Public involvement & agency coordination

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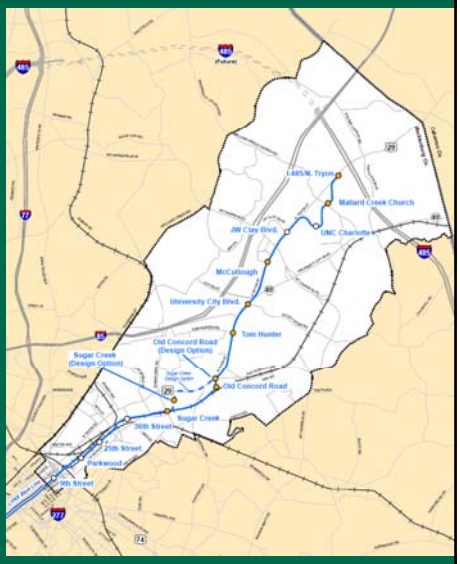
Draft EIS Alternatives

- No-Build Alternative
- Transportation Systems Management (TSM)
  - Baseline Alternative for FTA New Starts Criteria
- Light Rail Alternative
  - MTC Locally Preferred Alternative
  - 30% design plans
- Light Rail Alternative – Sugar Creek Design Option
  - Documents Sugar Creek/NCRR Alternatives Analysis - 2009



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Environmental Analysis

- Land Use & Zoning
- Socio-Economic Conditions
- Neighborhoods, Community Services & Environmental Justice
- Visual & Aesthetic
- Cultural Resources
- Parklands
- Natural Resources
- Water Resources
- Air Quality
- Noise & Vibration
- Energy
- Hazardous & Contaminated Materials
- Safety & Security
- Acquisitions & Displacements
- Construction Impacts
- Secondary and Cumulative Effects
- Financial Analysis

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Visual Impacts

- Potentially Significant
  - CMC-University
  - Mallard Creek Apartments
- Mitigation
  - Implement Urban Design Framework
  - Additional landscaping
  - Directional signage for hospital
  - Coordination with stakeholders

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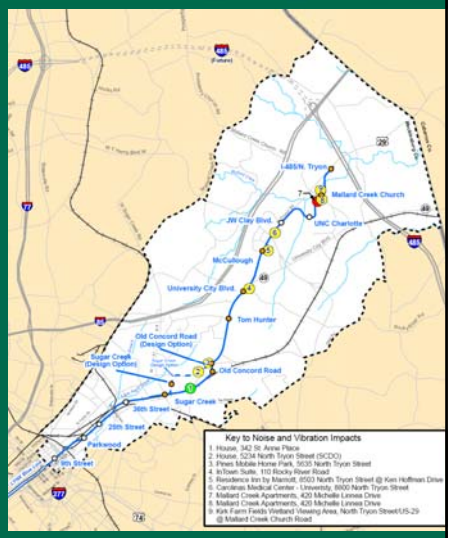
Potential Noise Impacts

- Moderate Impacts
  - Pines Mobile Home Park (26)
  - Mallard Creek Apartments (6)
  - In-Town Suites & Residence Inn by Marriott
  - CMC-University
  - Kirk Farm Fields
- Severe Impacts
  - Mallard Creek Apartments (2)
- Wheel squeal
  - UNC Charlotte Laurel Hall dormitory



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Noise Mitigation

- Detailed noise and vibration assessment for moderate and severe impacts
- Potential mitigation measures
  - Building sound insulation
  - Resilient or damped wheels
  - Rail vehicle skirts
  - Sound barriers
- Coordinate with property owners

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Acquisition & Displacements

- Full acquisitions: 25
- Partial acquisitions: 195 / 204
- Displacements:
  - 22 / 19 businesses
  - 1 residential parcel (Mallard Creek Apartments)
- Real Estate acquisition can commence following the Record of Decision
- Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act

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Environmental Justice

- Executive Order 12898: Identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations
- Two communities with adverse and disproportionate effects due to potential noise impacts:
  - Pines Mobile Home Park (minority and low-income)
  - Mallard Creek Apartments (low-income)

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EIS Schedule

Draft EIS	Fall 2010
Final EIS	Summer 2011
Record of Decision	Fall 2011

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30% Design Update

Significant Scope Changes 15% to 30%

- VLMF and Storage Yard
- Sugar Creek parking deck
- 5 additional signalized intersections N. Tryon St.
- Alignment shift at UNC Charlotte
- Mallard Creek Church Grade Separation (not in 30% design)

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30% Design Update

- 30% design and review process complete
- Resolution of issues for 65% design underway
- Value Engineering workshop held in July
- Draft VE report under review

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Next Steps

- 30% Cost Estimate
- VE recommendations
- Updated schedule for completing 65% design and FEIS
- Adopt NEPA Locally Preferred Alternative

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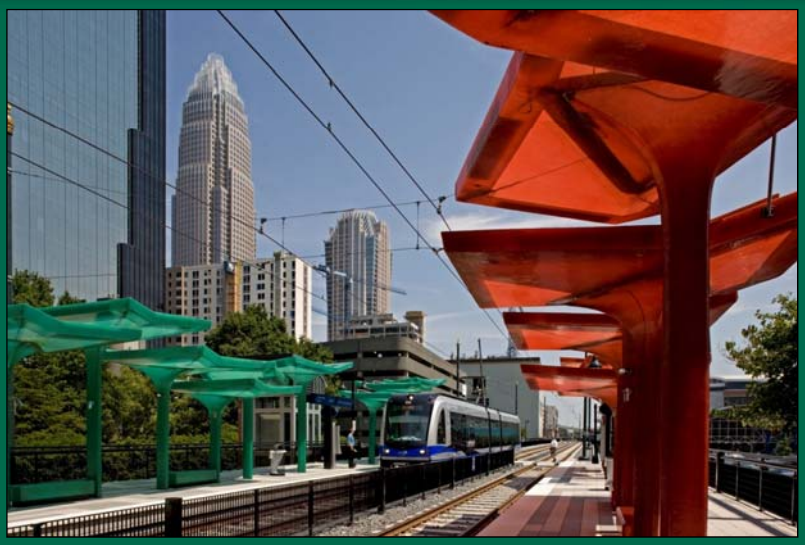
Questions



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