CHARLOTTE

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
M E M O R A N D U M

March 25, 2011

TO: Curt Walton, City Manager
Ron Kimble, Deputy City Manager

FROM: Dana Fenton, Intergovernmental Relations Manager

SUBJECT: **State Legislative Update**

Changes from the last report are shown in **bold face** type.

HOT TOPICS

Fire Separation Allowance (SB 350 – Hartsell)
Legislation would require the Local Government Employees' Retirement System or an equivalent locally sponsored retirement plan such as Charlotte Firefighters' Retirement System to provide an annual separation allowance to eligible retired firefighters; this would be in addition to all other currently provided benefits; fiscal impact is being determined at this time; similar allowance for retired police officers costs the City approximately $3 million per year; referred to Senate Pensions & Retirement & Aging

No High Speed Rail (HB 422 - Killian, Frye)
Legislation has been introduced in the General Assembly to prohibit North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) action to "… apply for, accept, or expend any grant funding from the federal government for any high-speed rail project unless the project has been approved through an act of the General Assembly." If HB 422 is enacted and authorization is not granted by the General Assembly, then the use of $566 million of High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail funding previously awarded by the federal government to the State of North Carolina is imperiled. Major uses of the funds in the Charlotte area include:

1. **$129 million NS/CSX Grade Separation Project, which primarily benefits freight and intercity passenger rail, but also provides secondary benefits to the proposed Red Line Commuter Rail**
2. **$23 million Phase 1 improvements at the Charlotte Maintenance Facility**
3. **$235 million double track between Charlotte and Greensboro**

4. **$22 million state match for the $42 million Sugar Creek Grade Separation project, which is proposed to be completed prior to the Blue Line Extension (BLE) bridge project at Sugar Creek; giving back the ARRA funds would require the project to be made part of the BLE project**

The State of North Carolina will be applying for another round of High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail projects very shortly. NCDOT intends to apply for funding for a number of projects. Absent authorization from the General Assembly, NCDOT would have to look for alternative funding for the following proposed projects in the Charlotte area:

1. **$56 million Charlotte Gateway Station track and bridge improvements and $40 million for construction of Charlotte Gateway Station, which would be the terminus of the Red Line Commuter Rail from Center City Charlotte to Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson**
2. **$28 million Charlotte south end track improvements including construction of a wye (an intersection where two tracks come together) at Charlotte Junction**
3. **$32 million proposed 36th Street grade separation project, which is part of the BLE project and assumes NCDOT's Rail Division will be a funding partner.**

State Budget

Governor Perdue released recommended FY 2012 and FY 2013 budgets on February 18; facing a $2.4 billion deficit for FY 2012 and $2.0 billion for FY 2013, budget closes the gap by reducing spending $3.2 billion and netting additional $1.4 billion in "revenue changes"; among netted "revenue changes" is continuation of 0.75% of the 1% temporary state sales tax implemented in 2009 and reduction of the corporate income tax rate from 6.9% to 4.9%; included in the spending reductions is elimination of 10,000 state positions through a combination of attrition, layoffs, and early retirements; House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees have been hearing presentations from state staff on proposed budgets and will be considering ways to shift monies to address specific issues; Transportation subcommittees are examining how to fill $300 million maintenance funding shortfall including considering cancellation of two turnpike authority projects (Garden Parkway and Mid-Currituck Bridge) and shifting gap funding to maintenance accounts; other projects may be at risk; the North Carolina Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division presented its budgetary needs to the joint subcommittees on Wednesday, March 9 including information with respect to the Blue Line Extension

Motor Fuels Excise Tax (aka "Gas" Tax)

Two bills introduced that would impact motor fuels excise tax (aka gas tax) collections are HB 399 (McElraft) and SB 235 (Rouzer); HB399 would cap the gas tax at 32.5 cents per gallon and according to NCDOT, would require reduction in expenditures over next ten years of $977 million; the impact to Mecklenburg County would be approximately $34 million, which includes $31 million for repaving state roads, $170,383 for secondary roads, and $2.3 million in Powell bill funding for local governments; SB 235 would eliminate the motor gas tax and make up the difference by repealing various tax credits and other expenditures that are not yet identified in the legislation

DEVELOPING ISSUES

Municipal Broadband - Level Playing Field/Local Government Competition (HB 129 – Avila / SB 87 - Apodaca)
Bill imposes additional requirements for municipalities to follow when establishing broadband systems for use by the general public; section of bill exempts internal government broadband systems that work within the jurisdictional boundary; sponsor has agreed to Charlotte request to broaden exemption to regional systems so as to accommodate the public safety broadband system funded by the stimulus grant to serve regional public safety assets which will be operated by the City; Representative Carney was instrumental in securing agreement on City amendment; bill was amended on March 16 and is expected to be reported out of committee on March 23; bill will require further amendment on March 23 to reflect all City concerns; **bill reported out of House Finance and is on House calendar for final reading on March 28; sponsor agreed to work with City on securing needed amendments while bill is in Senate Finance, as have Senators Rucho and Clodfelter**

Billboards / Trees and Vegetation Removal (SB 183 – Brown / HB 309 LaRoque)
Billboard industry sponsored legislation that implements a set of statewide standards to maintain trees and other vegetation near billboards instead of the current practice of NCDOT enforcing local ordinances including the City's tree ordinance and zoning ordinance; proposed statewide standards enable the removal of trees and vegetation in state rights-of-way near billboards even though local ordinances may prohibit removal of such trees and vegetation; bill would also allow placement of billboards within one-hundred feet of other billboards whereas the current standard in the zoning ordinance is one-thousand feet; bill also allows current billboards to be replaced by digital billboards without regard to proximity to residential neighborhoods; bills referred to Transportation committees; **SB 183 sponsor agreed to set up stakeholders group to address local government concerns**

Roadside Campaign Signs (SB 315 – Daniel)
Bill enacts statewide standards for placement of campaign signs in state rights-of-way from 30 days before the election to 10 days after the campaign

Government Transparency Act (SB 344 – Clary)
Bill requires disclosure of reasons for each employee promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation, or other change in position classification, and performance evaluations

Spending Cuts for the Current Fiscal Year (SB 109 - Stevens)
SB 109 calls for spending reductions of $537 million in the current year for funding of the FY 2012 budget; SB 109 does not spell out from where the funds are to be secured unlike the vetoed SB 13**;** SB 109 passed Senate and House; sent to Governor; General Assembly overrode the veto of Governor's veto of SB 13, which was the predecessor to SB 109; SB 109 calls for reductions of over $500 million in the current fiscal year including specifically enumerated funds, including those for economic development

Increasing Costs Prohibition (SB 22 – Brown)
Bills prohibits state agencies subject to the Administrative Procedures Act from promulgating rules and regulations that result in higher costs unless adoption of the rule is required to respond to one of the following: (a.) a serious and unforeseen threat to the public health, safety, or welfare; (b.) an act of the General Assembly or United States Congress that expressly requires the agency to adopt rules; (c.) a change in federal or State budgetary policy; (d.) a federal regulation; or (e.) a court order; expires January 1, 2012; passed Senate and House, and sent to Governor

Partisan Elections for Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Superior and District Courts (HB - 64 – Sager / SB 47 – Tillman)
Bill would restore partisan elections for these judicial positions.

Eminent Domain/Economic Development (HB 8 – Stam / SB 37 – Jackson)
Proposed constitutional amendment would ban the use of eminent domain for any and all economic development purposes, even those that are incidental to the project; referred to Judiciary committees.

State Law to Provide for Acceptable ID's (HB 33 – Cleveland)
Specifies forms of identification that all governmental entities, including local governments are authorized to use to determine actual identity; reported favorably out of House Government and re-referred to House Judiciary; **substitute version of bill prohibits only use of consular or embassy documents to prove identity; reported out of committee**

Public Contracts / E-Verify (HB 36 – Cleveland)
Legislation prohibits state and local government contracts with those companies that employ illegal immigrants and requires such contractors to use the federal E-Verify program to ensure that illegal immigrants are not hired; contractors are starting to lobby the General Assembly regarding the additional costs and liabilities this legislation would impose upon businesses.

Public Employees / Public Contracts / E-Verify (SB 204 – Allran)
Legislation requires counties and cities to use the federal E-Verify program to verify the work authorization of new employees; also requires that private entities contracting with counties and cities use the E-Verify program to verify the work authorization of its employees

Land Transfer Tax (HB 92 – Howard / SB 226 - Tucker)
Bills would repeal the local option land transfer tax enacted in 2007; HB 92 reported favorably out of House Finance and passed House; reported favorably out of Senate Finance; **H92 passed Senate and presented to Governor**

Firearms in Locked Vehicles (HB 63 – Shepard)
Handgun Permit Valid in Parks and Restaurants (HB 111 – Hilton)
HB 63 takes away privilege of most employers to regulate whether employees can store firearms in personal vehicles on employer owned premises; HB 111 extends right of concealed weapons holder to carry concealed weapons into parks and restaurants; HB 111 amended to authorize

owners of restaurants to ban carrying of concealed weapons on their premises; both bills referred to House Judiciary; **HB 111 reported favorably out of committee**

Filling Vacancies in Local Offices (SB 266 – Clodfelter)
Legislation would standardize how vacancies in offices of mayor and city council, board of commissioners, coroners, register of deeds would be filled; for city councils with partisan elections, council would be required to consult the county executive committee of that political party and seek recommendations, and appoint one of those recommended if they are one of three or more unranked nominations; if there are fewer than three nominations, then council could make selection as it is currently done; referred to Senate Judiciary I

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Restrictions (HB 281 – LaRoque)
Bill appears to allow residents of ETJ areas to vote in municipal elections; this would require redrawing of council districts to include the ETJ; referred to House Government

Sunshine Amendment (HB 87 – LaRoque)
Bill would approve vote of the people to amend the North Carolina Constitution to make it more difficult for the General Assembly to amend public records and open meetings laws by requiring three-fifths vote for passage instead of majority vote; essentially this would make it much more difficult for local governments to successfully seek amendments to the public records and open meetings laws; referred to House Rules; **passed House Rules and before full House**

Taxpayer Information Act (HB 315 – Pridgen)
Requires information concerning estimated total amount of principal and interest of proposed general obligation bonds to be included in the ballot questions of local general obligation bond referenda

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Design-Build (SB 56 – Clodfelter)
SB 56 referred to Senate Finance

Right of Way Withdrawal
Nothing to report at this time.

Nuisance Abatement (SB 170 – Hartsell / HB 433 - Bordsen)
SB 170 referred to Senate Judiciary II; **HB 433 referred to House Judiciary Subcommittee B**

E-Mail Subscribers
City and League staffs have been working with Representative Samuelson on legislation.

Energy
Nothing to report at this time.

Business Privilege License Tax
Nothing to report at this time.

Annexation (HB 9 – Dollar / SB 27 – Brock)
Similar bills would impose moratorium on all involuntary annexations currently in process until July 1, 2012; City's proposed annexations effective June 30, 2011 would be impacted even though the City has already expended $5 million in support of annexation; purpose of moratorium is to get all parties to the table to arrive at mutually satisfactory bill to run in 2012 General Assembly; concern expressed by localities is that moratorium will merely be extended annually like what has repeatedly occurred in Virginia; SB 27 reported out of Senate State and Local Government and re-referred to Senate Finance; Senator Clodfelter was able to get amendment in Senate Finance exempting Charlotte 2011 annexations from moratorium; however Senate Republican leadership received many complaints about "special treatment" for City from other cities and Senators and sent bill back to Senate Finance to strip out Charlotte amendment; bill amended to remove Charlotte exemption and passed Senate on Monday, March 7

Several bills have been filed to repeal involuntary annexations previously authorized and implemented by Rocky Mount, Lexington, Kinston, Wilmington, Goldsboro, Biltmore Lake, Roanoke Rapids and other cities; basis for exercising this power is Section 1 of Article VII of State Constitution giving the General Assembly the power to fix jurisdictional boundaries

Courts Funding
Nothing to report at this time.

Mobility Fund
Governor's proposed budget provides $31 million in FY 2012 and $45 million in FY 2013, the amounts envisioned for FY 2012 and FY 2013 when the fund was established in 2010; Mobility Fund was reviewed by joint subcommittees on Transportation on Wednesday, March 16

Local Revenue Sources for Roads and Transit
Nothing to report at this time.

Bill Filing Deadlines:

	Local	Public
Senate	To Bill Drafting by **March 1** Introduced by **March 9**	To Bill Drafting by **March 11** Introduced by **March 23**
House	To Bill Drafting by **March 16** Introduced by **March 30**	To Bill Drafting by **March 24** Introduced by **April 6** **Ten Bill Limit per Member**