

CRAFT Technical Committee
Meeting Notes
Gastonia City Hall
June 29, 2009

Attendees: Dana Stoogenke, Rocky River RPO; Bernie Yacobucci, Gaston MPO; Bjorn Hansen, Lake Norman RPO; Vincent Wong, Gaston MPO; Lauren Avioli, Gaston MPO; Shannon Ransom, NCDOT; Linda Dosse, NCDOT; Phil Conrad, Cabarrus-Rowan MPO; David Hooper, RFATS; Frances Thomas, RFATS; Nick Polimeni, MUMPO; Stuart Basham, MUMPO; Reid Simons, NCTA; Hank Graham, Gaston MPO.

Mr. Hank Graham from the Gaston MPO began the meeting at 10:14 am, welcomed everyone in attendance, and asked for edits or corrections in the **February 24, 2009 minutes**. Mr. Phil Conrad made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and Ms. Stoogenke seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Graham announced that agenda item # 4 would not be presented as the presenter, Scott Huffmon, had had an emergency and was not present. Mr. Graham stated that perhaps Dr. Huffmon's presentation might take place at the next meeting. Mr. Graham also stated there was a change in presenters in item # 3, as Reid Simons, not Jennifer Harris, would be presenting that item.

Ms. Simons gave an informal update on the progress of the Garden Parkway and Monroe Connector projects. She began her presentation on the two projects, mentioning a series of public workshops that had recently taken place for the Garden Parkway Draft Environmental Impact Study. Ms. Simons also reviewed the Citizens' Summary of the DEIS, mentioning that the Garden Parkway involved more residential displacements than the Monroe Connector, making the former project more expensive. Ms. Simons stated that the NCTA's objective at this time is to disseminate correct information about the Parkway in an effort to combat much misinformation in the community. She stated that because many residents are concerned about traffic volumes, the NCTA has addressed traffic volumes and projections in an FAQ sheet that is also available on their website. She explained that as traffic approaches US 321 from I-85, volumes drop to only about 9,000 cars. According to NCTA's traffic projections, with the Garden Parkway terminating at US 321, traffic volumes on US 321 will not be significantly higher north of Stagecoach Road. Ms. Simons also announced numbers of people in attendance at each of the 4 Open Houses and 2 Public Hearings for the Garden Parkway and stated that common themes of the meetings seemed to deal with traffic congestion at US 321 and the financial feasibility of the project. She then stated that in early 2010 the NCTA will begin an Investment Grade Traffic and Revenue Study to determine the financial feasibility of the Parkway from I-485 to US 321. The \$1 million study will include TIFIA loans, gap funding, and bond insurance as parts of the project's financial plan. Ms. Simons then asked for questions on either project. A brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Simons then made a short update on the Monroe Connector. The TIFIA loan now has a new process with a deadline in September. As part of the Investment Grade Traffic and Revenue Study for the connector, NCTA is conducting a State of Preference Survey, a draft of which will be available in fall 2009, and the final copy in July 2010. An Aesthetics Committee will be created for the Monroe area by late July 2009 and will be composed of stakeholders such as impacted MPOs, RPOs, and officials from impacted communities. A brief discussion followed Ms. Simons' presentation.

Mr. Graham announced that they would be skipping item # 4 during this meeting. Mr. Hansen passed out PowerPoint handouts from a "webinar" on the 2010 Census. He then presented the PowerPoint, giving a quick history of how the Census Bureau previously delineated urban areas. He contrasted the methodology used in 1990 with that of 2000 and stated that the 2010 methodology will include updates to 2000 methods, including changes of delineation units from blocks to tracts, and the inclusion of criteria other than population and density, such as "journey-to-work flows," employment, and topography. Mr. David Hooper asked if an area must have all 3 criteria to be an urban area or if one is enough. Mr. Hansen replied that certain thresholds must be met, and that these would be made clear in the Federal Register this fall. He also reviewed the differences between "hops" and "jumps" and the role of exempted territory in determining urban areas. He stated that these changes are all attempts to eliminate human randomness and to make the process more proscriptive. Ms. Stoogenke stated that these changes will not impact regional agencies until 2012 and Mr. Hansen agreed that we will react to these changes 3 years from now. Some discussion followed Mr. Hansen's presentation of Census Bureau contacts. Mr. Hansen then outlined what he saw to be impacts on our region, including the Catawba River as becoming a less significant barrier to urban growth, and recent exurban growth that should significantly expand urban areas along major road corridors. More discussion ensued.

Mr. Graham stated that Mr. Hooper would present item # 6 instead of Ms. Frances Thomas, as stated on the agenda. Mr. Hooper stated this presentation would provide feedback on how RFATS' 2035 LRTP process went. He gave a summary of the 2035 LRTP update and provided examples of how it was made SAFETEA-LU compliant. Key projects in the LRTP included a new Catawba River crossing, Galleria area improvements, and an extension to David Lyle Boulevard. Mr. Hooper then listed which chapters of the LRTP were changed to comply with SAFETEA-LU requirements; these included public participation, social & environmental screening, safety, security, highways, congestion management, and a financial plan. Mr. Hooper stressed that many of these requirements were already being done in an informal way and that the FHWA sought to have them formally documented within the LRTP. After a brief discussion, Mr. Graham called for a short adjournment for lunch before beginning final agenda item # 7.

Mr. Graham stated that he had included item # 7 in the agenda because MPOs and RPOs are required to create UPWPs and he wished to make this an open discussion item to talk about any difficulties or insights in the CRAFT members' UPWPs. Mr. Hansen and Ms. Stoogenke stated that they are attempting to achieve conformity in their UPWPs, but that the guidance they are given is not standardized. Ms. Thomas asked if anyone was doing

a freight study. Mr. Graham replied that the Gaston MPO had done one and Mr. Hansen stated that he hoped some truck traffic information had been collected in the HOV/HOT lane study. Mr. Conrad stated that his MPO was focusing on getting through this conformity cycle. Ms. Thomas stated that for RFATS the most important component would be congestion management. A short discussion of funding methods ensued.

Mr. Graham asked for additional questions and asked that a motion for adjournment be entertained. Mr. Hansen suggested everyone discuss a time for the next meeting, with RFATS hosting. After some deliberation, the members decided on sometime during the last week in September 2009. Mr. Hooper asked Mr. Graham for an updated CRAFT contact list.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm.