

Durham Staff Working Group
September 18, 2024
MEETING NOTES

The Durham Staff Working Group met on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 1:00pm in the Durham County Admin II Building, Room 128, as well as through the Microsoft Teams platform. The following members and guests were in attendance:

Doug Plachcinski (Chair, Voting Member)	DCHC MPO
Ellen Beckmann (Vice-Chair, Voting Member)	Durham County
Jay Heikes (Voting Member)	GoTriangle
Eric Simpson (Alternate, Voting Member)	City of Durham
Brandi Minor	Durham County
Curtis Scarpignato	Durham County
Brian Fahey	City of Durham
Shauna Parker	City of Durham
Lindsay Smart	City of Durham
Paul Black*	GoTriangle
Paul Kingman*	GoTriangle
Steven Schlossberg	GoTriangle
Meg Scully*	GoTriangle
EmmaLea Ange*	Orange County
Greg Saur	Public

Quorum Count: 4 of 4 Voting Members

*Attended remotely

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Doug Plachcinski called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. All voting members were acknowledged to be in attendance.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair Doug Plachcinski asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. There were none.

3. Public Comment

Chair Doug Plachcinski asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

4. Administration

a. SWG Administration

i. Approval of August 2024 Minutes

Ellen Beckmann made a motion to approve the SWG Meeting Minutes. Eric Simpson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Brandi Minor stated that the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair was inadvertently skipped at the June 2024 meeting. Brandi asked for a motion to approve the FY25 terms for the existing Chair, Doug Plachcinski, and Vice-Chair, Ellen Beckmann. Jay Heikes made a motion to approve the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair. Eric Simpson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Tax District Administration

i. Review Preliminary FY24 Year-End Actuals

Steven Schlossberg provided an overview of the preliminary FY24 Year-End Actuals. The budget for the ½ cents sales tax revenues was \$40M, and we finished the year at \$42,698,008, which is a 6% increase over budget. These actuals are also slightly higher (about 1%) than the FY23 revenues. The \$7 and \$3 Vehicle Registration Taxes were slightly below budget, which is consistent with FY23, as the same number of cars are typically registered each year. The Vehicle Rental Tax was lower than budget, as the Tax District is now retaining these revenues. Preliminary Operating Expenses show that we will have an additional \$2M going to fund balance, partially due to the Tax District saving money by not using the Consultant as much as anticipated. On the City side, the savings was partially due to driver shortages. For the Capital expenses, the budget includes \$34M in carryover, and there was a total of \$48.3M available in FY24. The actuals for FY24 were \$12.2M, more than half of which can be attributed to the electric vehicle purchases by the City of Durham.

ii. FY26 Local Revenue Kickoff

Steven Schlossberg reviewed the anticipated revenues for FY26. He indicated that they use guidance from the Federal Reserve. The FY26 current Financial Model is estimating the ½ cents revenues at \$44,645,921. Steve mentioned that he would recommend a \$44M budget, which is a 3% increase over the FY25 budget. He also noted that the FY23 Actuals was \$42.3M and the FY24 Estimate is \$42.7M. The \$7 and \$3 Vehicle Registration Taxes will be recommended at \$1,879,874 and \$805,996 respectively. The total FY26 Revenue Recommendation is \$46,685,870.

c. Public Engagement and Communication

i. GoForward website updates

Meg Scully stated there were no updates. Brandi Minor mentioned that she reached out to Wendy Mallon regarding the posting of the FY25 Q2 amendments on the GoForward website. Meg Scully replied and asked Brandi to contact Chris Clark as he is the person who updates the GoForward website.

ii. Transit Tracker Development

Curtis Scarpignato stated that the workbooks the consultant put together have been sent out.

5. Work Program

a. FY25 Work Program

i. Q2 Amendments

Brandi Minor stated that there are two presentations today related to the Q2 amendments. The first presentation, presented by Ellen Beckmann, was an overview of the Durham County Transit Plan – Faster, More Reliable Bus Service and Quick Regional Connections. Ellen’s presentation included details regarding what has happened since 2023 regarding the Rail and Bus related projects. Ellen also reviewed the MPO Study (Bus Speed and Reliability Study), which currently has a FY25 Q2 Amendment to be reassigned to Durham County, be renamed as the Durham County BRT Vision Plan, and will add a dedicated staff person to Durham County to support this effort. Ellen then reviewed the Fast 2 Study, which is led by NCDOT but involves five different counties (Durham, Wake, Orange, Johnston, Chatham). Ellen stated that the most important part of this study in her opinion is the coordination with NCDOT and integrating into their design processes. This study has a deliberately focused geographic scope, and no public engagement will be involved in this process. Ellen then provided an overview of the City of Durham’s request for FTA Small Starts Application Study. She noted that the FY25 Work Program includes a \$500K placeholder for “Quick and Reliable Regional Service” to use for planning or grant-match requests. Ellen then provided an updated recommendation to merge the BRT studies. This recommendation includes adding the Small Starts Application analysis and preparation to the County BRT Study RFI, and to contract one entity with an ILA to allow for co-management of specific tasks. Her updated recommendation also includes funding for a City BRT staff person as a standalone project in the amount of \$150K (which would be \$75K for half-year). Lindsay Smart stated that the City is not in disagreement with Ellen’s proposal but believes there are a lot of details that need to be refined. There was some additional discussion amongst the SWG regarding the coordination of these efforts. Jay Heikes commented that sending out two similar efforts on BRT for public engagement could create confusion and fatigue, as the public has indicated that they are tired of seeing studies and surveys and would much rather see things happening and getting done. Jay is also worried about sending two efforts for approval to the governing boards. There was some additional discussion on how to present these studies to the public before pivoting to the next presentation.

Eric Simpson provided a presentation on Durham Station updates. He indicated that the City held two bid openings, one in July and one in August, receiving a total of 32 bid packages, 10 in July and 22 in August. City Council is expected to award the contract on October 11, 2024. The contractor is still finalizing the schedule, but the groundbreaking is scheduled for February 2025 with an anticipated closeout of Fall 2026. Eric then provided an overview of the cost escalations that have occurred over the past year. Between Q2 and Q3, there has been a 20-25% increase in the price of concrete and masonry. Eric then stated that in August 2023, the budget for Durham Station was forecast at \$18,348,00, which then increased to \$22,495,000 in May 2024 (Pre-GMP), and then increased again in August 2024 to \$26,058,764 (GMP) which includes construction and soft costs. Eric then provided an overview of the Value Summary, and Shauna Parker mentioned that some of the enhancements that have been added to design include color changing lighting, solar arrays, and

canopy changes. Curtis Scarpignato asked how the City decided on some of these design elements. Shauna replied that some of these items were included in the alternates rather than the base bid. Eric then reviewed the Value Engineering Options, which included Soffit, Canopy Lighting, Shelters, PV Panels, and Colored LEDs. These VE categories represent a potential savings of over \$1.2M. Next steps for Durham station include the anticipated approval of the FY25 Q2 amendment for an additional \$3.5M in November 2024, the City Council will approve the awarding of the construction contract in October 2024, and the groundbreaking will occur during the Fall 2024. Jay Heikes stated that GoTriangle supports this project but would like to meet with the City to gain a better understanding of the specifics of the second cost increase. There was some additional discussion on Durham Station, but it was agreed that the City would setup a meeting with GoTriangle and any other interested parties, to discuss further.

Brandi Minor reviewed the amendment schedule and the FY25 Q2 amendment summary, noting that the current list of amendments has not been updated based on today's conversation, but would be updated before released to the public. During this review, the following changes were proposed to the existing amendments:

1. GoTriangle rescinded the Bus Stop, Park and Ride, Property Maintenance request.
2. The Bus Speed Reliability Study/BRT Vision Plan project description will be modified to include the Small Starts Grant Application.
3. The City of Durham will rescind the Small Starts Grant Application request.
4. The City of Durham will submit a new request for the BRT FTE (\$75,000).

Ellen Beckmann made a motion to release the amendments for public comment with the suggested four revisions mentioned above. Jay Heikes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Global Agreement Approval Updates from Partners

Brandi Minor stated that the County's Global Agreements are currently in process and that they will be sent to Doug Plachcinski for approval (for projects with federal funding).

b. FY26 Work Program

i. Review Pre-Lists

Brandi Minor briefly reviewed the FY26 Transit Work Program Pre-List. In the interest of time, Brandi asked if anyone had any urgent questions regarding the pre-list. As there were none, it was decided that any questions could be addressed outside the meeting or at the next SWG meeting.

ii. Project Budget Sheets

Steven Schlossberg reviewed SharePoint and showed the SWG where the Project Budget Sheets ("PBS") are located as well as the base budgets. Steve reviewed the guidelines explaining when a PBS needs to be submitted. He also reviewed the base budgets and how to fill them out correctly (as needed). Ellen

Beckmann asked when these would be due, to which Steve replied he would like to have these completed before the next SWG meeting.

iii. Review Schedule and any upcoming tasks for next month

Brandi Minor reviewed the flow chart she created to outline the major Work Program development deadlines occurring between August and December. Brandi mentioned that project sponsors should have begun completing their project budget sheets, and that the first workshop was held on September 11th. Brandi also reminded the SWG that the PBS are due on October 11, 2024.

6. Project Sponsor Updates

a. City of Durham

Eric Simpson stated that they received over 250 comments on the Better Bus Project. He also stated that the schedule is a little bit delayed, and the planning meeting has been moved to January. Brian Fahey stated that they had their presentation and final recommendations and analysis from the Paratransit Improvement Services Study, which was received well by the BOCC and City Council. Next steps are to inform the next contract for GoDurham ACCESS Service. Brian also stated that the microtransit zones will be up and running by October 15th.

b. GoTriangle

Jay Heikes stated that GoTriangle instituted service expansion on August 11th and that for Durham, midday service was added to Route DRX. Early indications appear that overall productivity of the route has increased. Operator recruitment and retention continues to improve, and they will continue to seek improvements for retention. Jay also mentioned they are in a place to be able implement some additional service expansion as originally programmed for August and November, which are focused in Wake County, but will benefit those in Durham and Orange counties because they will be able to increase service on Route 310 which connects the regional transit center to Cary as well as improve reliability on Route 100.

c. Durham County

Ellen Beckmann stated that she and Curtis Scarpignato are going to the museum tomorrow night to talk to their Ignite member and are hoping to get some good information to move that project forward. Ellen also stated she is still waiting on FRA approval which should be any month now.

d. DCHC MPO

Doug Plachcinski stated he has no updates.

7. Next Meeting Date – October 16, 2024

Brandi Minor announced the next Durham County SWG meeting will be October 16, 2024.

8. Adjournment

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.