

ACEC-NC Transportation Committee – August 30, 2021

Meeting Minutes taken by Greg Purvis, PE – Wetherill Engineering, Inc.

➤ Welcome and Introductions

- Davis Diggs welcomed everyone to the meeting held at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh.
- Angelo Saake of IMCI was introduced. They provide professional liability insurance for A&E firms.

➤ Charles Latucca of GoTriangle, was the featured speaker for the meeting. Items covered included:

- He gave an overview of GoTriangle's Greater Triangle Commuter Rail Project.
- The proposed project will cover Wake, Durham, and Orange counties. The study area is 43 miles from Clayton to Durham and includes 15 stations. The purpose is to serve growth in the region. There will be an additional 650,000 people in the area by 2035. Study to complete by the end of the year.
- The current study utilizes the NCRR corridor. It is currently in the planning phase of the study. This includes ridership studies, job opportunity studies, public engagement, etc.
- Their studies have shown that commuter rail will provide a great option in tandem with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and they are complimentary investments.
- The cost breakdown for the project includes \$1,059,000,000 for Construction, \$350,000,000 for Professional Services, \$128,000,000 for Real Estate, and \$174,000,000 for Vehicles.
- Public Engagement thus far has been very successful with a 87% positive feedback. The Top 3 wants are Reliability, Mitigate congestion, and increase connectivity.
- A website has been created ReadyForRail.com has been created to provide updates about the project.
- The study is currently in Round 2 of Public Engagement. Responses will be developed to feedback from Round 1 including How the service could work, Who it could serve, and How it could provide access. Also included in this round will be efforts to educate Low Income and public housing residents, Transit riders, the Triangle's underserved communities, Colleges and universities, and Businesses along the corridor.
- When the study is complete next steps will include the County sponsors will decide if the costs and benefits are acceptable. If approved the project will advance into development for environmental review, final design, and application for federal funding. Construction could start in early 2025 and Service could start as early as 2030.
- Charles asked members of the committee to advocate for the project.

Jim Smith and David Ferrell provided a Federal/State Legislative update. This included the following:

- The Legislature is in the Long session this year. Initial efforts focused on COVID relief efforts and the focus now is on the budget. Next year (2022) will be the short session and will focus on budget tweaks.

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- The House passed a budget followed by the Senate. A conference committee was appointed to work out a compromise budget. The schedule is to pass a budget by September 17. They are still negotiating big ticket items.
 - Once the budget is passed they will move on to Redistricting. North Carolina had 1 Congressional seat added from the Census.
 - Several groups have studied Long Term Sustainable Transportation Funding including the NC First Commission, NC Chamber, ACEC Task Force, and the NC TEN Commission.
 - NC TEN Commission recommendations include:
 - Electric Vehicle Registration Fee - \$275M/Annum
 - Hybrid Vehicle Registration Fee - \$125M/Annum
 - Highway Use Tax (HUT) – 5% (2% increase)
 - Transportation Network Companies - \$0.25/trip
 - E-Commerce Fee - \$0.25/delivery
 - Senate Budget Proposals
 - Include short-term vehicle lease fund that would be deposited into the Highway Fund instead of the General Fund - \$75M/year.
 - Study the existing DEQ permit structure.
 - Remove the \$1.0B cash balance cap in order to sell the Build NC bonds.
 - House budget proposals
 - Raise the Cash Balance Cap for Build NC Bonds to \$2.0B.
 - Clarify Permits in Isolated Wetlands.
 - Includes the language from the “Be Pro, Be Proud” mobile workforce development bill focused on middle/high school students.
 - Seven new positions in NCDOT Purchasing.
 - Listed 45 specific highway projects (outside of STI).
 - Listed 28 grants-in-aid to specific towns/airports.
 - Proposed study to change STIP prioritization process to promote multistate transportation projects.
 - The budget conference committee will iron out the differences. There is a chance additional funding items can be added. Jim urges members to contact Senators and Representatives.
 - Brock Storrusten who chairs the Legislative Committee spoke briefly to mention some of their initiatives. They are looking for more engagement on Transportation and want to be more proactive on legislation.
- The Federal update was next.
- The ACEC priorities for 2021 include passage of a robust infrastructure based economic recovery agenda and to protect member firms with PPP loans from regulatory overreach due to the FAR credits clause.
 - Infrastructure Bipartisan Agreement
 - Major components include:
 - Roads/bridges, transit, airports
 - Passenger rail, freight
 - Water, ports, waterways
 - Power, broadband

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- \$550 billion in new spending over 5 years.
 - INVEST Act
 - House passed \$715 Billion bill including \$550B for highways/bridges/transit, \$51B for wastewater, \$117B for drinking water.
 - Goal is completion by September 27th.
 - \$3.2 Trillion reconciliation package moving concurrently
 - PPP Credits Clause
 - FHWA guidance – limited to federal funded contracts. Clarifies that fixed price/lump sum contracts aren't affected. Limits on multi year contracts. ACEC/DOT FAQ guidance provides common framework for implementation.
 - ACEC negotiating language to either waive the credits clause on PPP loans or restrict State DOT's from going beyond FHWA's policy.
 - Asked members to contact Congressman/Senator.
 - NC Congressional Delegation Reception on September 22, 2021.
- Subcommittee reports were given for Project Delivery, Construction & Materials Testing, Design Build and the Joint Conference.
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The next meeting is scheduled for November.

Meeting was adjourned.