



**CAMPO Executive Board**  
**Joint CAMPO & DCHC Commuter Rail Subcommittee Meeting**

March 23, 2023  
2:00 – 4:00  
CAMPO Large Conference Room

**CAMPO Subcommittee Members in attendance or *absent***

**Vivian Jones, CAMPO Chair**  
*Butch Lawter, CAMPO Vice-Chair*  
*Corey Branch, City of Raleigh*  
**Harold Weinbrecht, Town of Cary**

**Ken Marshburn, Town of Garner**  
**Sig Hutchinson, GoTriangle Board of Trustees**  
**Susan Evans, Wake County**  
**TJ Cawley, Town of Morrisville**

**DCHC Subcommittee Members in attendance or *absent***

**Jenn Weaver, DCHC Chair**  
Sally Greene, Orange County  
Javiera Caballero, City of Durham  
**Brenda Howerton, Durham County**

Michael Parker, GoTriangle  
**Damon Seils, Town of Carrboro**  
**Wendy Jacobs, Durham County**

**Others in attendance**

Alex Rickard, CAMPO  
Anna Stokes, CAMPO  
Chris Lukasina, CAMPO  
Doug Plachinski, CAMPO  
Ellen Beckmann, Durham County  
Filmon Fishastion, DCHC MPO

Joe Milazzo, Regional Transportation Alliance  
Katharine Eggleston, GoTriangle  
Kelly Fomenko, DCHC MPO  
Matthew Clark, GoTriangle  
Shelby Powell, CAMPO

**MEETING SUMMARY**

1. Welcome and Introductions – CAMPO Chair Vivian Jones opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.
2. Public Comment – Anna Stokes, CAMPO, stated that no one had signed up prior to the meeting to speak. No one in attendance asked to speak during the Public Comment period.
3. Greater Triangle Commuter Rail Presentation – Katharine Eggleston, GoTriangle, presented this item. Ms. Eggleston reviewed the 2050 projections for population, traffic congestion, and jobs along the Commuter Rail Study corridor. She reviewed the public engagement efforts, stating that round one of engagement was done in 2020 and the results showed there was interest in all-day service above the peak-hour commuter service model being proposed. Round two of engagement was conducted in 2023 and showed similar results. Ms. Eggleston said that a full detailed presentation on this engagement would happen at the joint MPO meeting next week. As an overview, she reported that over 6,000 survey responses were received, and 1,000 of those were from current bus riders.

Ms. Eggleston went on to review the Phase II Study results. She said that the full project corridor did not appear to be viable for federal funding due to low ratings. Further, the team found that a starting phase of West Durham to RTP was infeasible due to the high cost and constrained funding in the Durham Transit Plan, and because of infrastructure challenges. Looking at Raleigh Union Station (RUS) to Ellis Road appeared to be feasible with local revenues from the Wake and Durham plans. However, the Auburn Road to RTP segment appeared to be too expensive to do all at once, but could be implemented with a phased approach where one section from RTP to RUS was completed, and the section going to Auburn Road was added as an extension later.

Ms. Eggleston reviewed the project costs, and said that costs can't be discussed directly on a station-by-station basis because of other ancillary costs that would go along with different segments. The costs in the base year are using 2022 numbers with a 4% annual cost escalation, which is consistent with the county transit plan models. Elements such as station locations and designs could affect final costs.

Ms. Eggleston reviewed the ridership projections. She noted that downtown Raleigh and NCSU are major destinations, and that the bulk of riders board the service at the end of the lines via park-and-ride. As such, ridership models show that ridership is about the same whether the western terminus is at RTP or at Ellis Road. Similarly, ridership is about the same whether the eastern terminus is at Clayton or at Auburn.

Sig Hutchinson, GoTriangle, asked the question of whether downtown Garner as an eastern terminus would have similar ridership. Ms. Eggleston responded that downtown Garner is not a good eastern terminus because of lack of space for a large park and ride to serve the service.

Ms. Eggleston reviewed the funding options. The transit plans currently assume that 50% of the project cost will come from federal CIG grants; however, it does not seem likely that this entire project would be eligible for federal CIG grants due to the low ratings. If a decision is made to move forward, we should plan to fund phase one with local-only dollars. This could set future phases up to be more competitive for federal grants. If additional local funding became available sooner, the project phases could start sooner.

Wendy Jacobs, Durham County, asked if other methods of funding, such as Federal Rail Administration (FRA) funding, had been explored. Ms. Eggleston stated that other federal funding sources have been explored, and the team has identified pieces of the project that could be eligible for some of those programs. It is difficult to develop a funding plan based on those programs, however, because they are generally competitive in nature and cannot be depended upon for sustainable funding. Also, there is not enough opportunity there to make up the full 50% that was planned to be paid for by federal CIG grants. The GoTriangle team is working with local staff to continue to submit grant applications for pieces of the project. Ms. Jacobs asked whether, if the Charlotte to DC corridor is identified as a priority corridor, that could increase our chances to get improvements in the corridor funded. Or whether the project could get STIP funding through the state. Mr. Hutchinson asked Ms. Eggleston to review the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program. Ms. Eggleston reported that the RRIF is a loan program with a low interest rate and could be paid back over 35 years starting 5 years after the project opens. She mentioned an example in Texas, the Cotton Belt Corridor, that had been built using \$900 Million in RRIF financing.

Chris Lukasina, CAMPO, asked whether getting things such as grade separations or other improvements funded through the STIP would result in a dollar-for-dollar cost decrease on the project. Ms. Eggleston replied that was not exactly the case. The projects that were already assumed to be funded in the STIP were already included in the project cost, so those items would not lower the cost. However, if those items were leveraged by NCDOT or others to use as match for additional federal funds for the project, that could affect the financing.

Ms. Jacobs asked about the possibility to increase the rating for the project through Land Use, and what that might look like. Ms. Eggleston reported that part of the federal score is based on land use plans and ordinances in place along the corridor. If local governments could come together to identify a unified land use vision along the corridor and implement appropriate tools to make that vision a reality, that could really help the score. Doug Plachinski, DCHC MPO, said it would be helpful to understand how Raleigh has approached that along the BRT corridors since they were having a lot of success with federal funding on that program. Ms. Eggleston noted that FTA has grant funding available to assist with this type of planning, and that GoTriangle has been working with TJCOG and the MPOs to figure out a good regional approach. She noted that one critical success factor is that the region must be prepared to deliver the initial and future phases to build out the full regional vision. There are significant railroad coordination challenges west of RUS. There is a lot of passenger rail existing between Raleigh and Cary, which could be a big delay factor for running this service. As we move forward with any phase of the project, there will need to be updated railroad modeling and a variety of agreements.

Ms. Eggleston said that GoTriangle needs support from the MPOs on how to phase and how to fund the project moving forward. Ellen Beckmann, Durham County, asked about a recent NCRR application for federal funding. Ms. Eggleston noted that NCRR had submitted for CRISI funding from FRA to double track between Morrisville and Cary. Ms. Stokes asked if that was meant to address a pinch point identified on earlier Commuter Rail presentations; Ms. Eggleston replied that it was. Mr. Plachinski asked if there was a 45% contingency included in the costs. Ms. Eggleston reported that there was a similar contingency here, depending on the section of the project. There was both line item and unallocated contingency for various sections of the project.

4. Open Discussion – Ms. Jacobs asked about the possibility of adding a temporary station in East Durham. Ms. Eggleston said that Ellis Road is north of RTP and east of the East Durham Rail Yard. The question has been whether a station closer to downtown Durham is feasible. It would be \$50-70 Million to get any closer than Ellis Road. The lower end of that estimate is if an existing station were relocated; the higher end is if another station is added.

There was some discussion on the long-term issue with the maintenance yard in East Durham. That is a big component of the project cost. Ms. Eggleston reported that there is a trend toward having longer trains to get higher cost effectiveness, but there is a problem with maintaining those long trains. More space is needed. To provide reliable passenger service, we need to have space to hold the trains. NCRRT has been asked if another place could be used for that maintenance yard. While it's possible that future Norfolk Southern changes could alleviate the issue with the maintenance yard in the future, we are not in a position to require that yard to be moved.

Ms. Jacobs said that, however we move forward, we need to keep in mind how the larger transportation network fits into the picture. We will need to be able to get people to stations. Ms. Eggleston said that if a smaller piece of the project moves forward, GoTriangle could work with the MPOs and towns to get people to stations. Ms. Jacobs said that we need to think of that as a regional corridor issue and develop a plan for it, and have the implementation of it be part of this project. Damon Seils, Carrboro, asked if Ms. Jacobs was looking for something beyond what is in the county transit plans for that. Ms. Jacobs replied that perhaps, but she was unclear how this was addressed in the county transit plans related to this project. Ms. Eggleston state that between RTP and RUS, there is significant bus service existing and planned, and significant investment to connect downtown Durham to the Regional Transit Center. Ms. Jacobs said we need to ensure that a single ticket or pass will get a rider across all modes to reach destinations.

Brenda Howerton, Durham County, asked about the ridership numbers on other possible Durham stations. Ms. Eggleston said the team would compile that information.

Mr. Lukasina reported that the Town of Apex has similar issues as the East Durham maintenance yard, with a CSX switching yard facility in their downtown. CAMPO is starting a feasibility study to figure out whether that could be relocated and how that could happen. He suggested something similar could be done for the East Durham yard. Susan Evans, Wake County, confirmed that Apex has significant issues with creating a truly walkable community due to that rail yard. Ms. Jacobs stated that the East Durham yard is really an environmental justice issue because it is in an historically black neighborhood and was preventing good quality of life. TJ Cawley, Morrisville, asked if there was non-municipal land that could be used for the relocation. Mr. Lukasina said Apex is looking at some town land that is zoned for industrial use.

Mr. Cawley said that it would be up to the municipalities to determine how people would reach station areas in each town along the corridor. Ms. Jacobs replied that it would be better if there as a regional vision so it could all fit together, like what had been done in south Florida.

Ms. Beckmann pointed out that downtown Durham is still several miles from either RTP or Ellis Road, and the GoDurham buses have a hub at the downtown Durham bus station. It would be a

significant change to reorient those routes toward an east Durham terminus. Also, the bus service available at a different eastern terminus would not be as robust as what is available at the Durham bus station. Ms. Howerton noted that many citizens don't have cars and will need help to ensure they can access the project. If the station is 15 or 20 miles away, what is the advantage to those people to spend all this money on this project?

Ms. Eggleston said that if the central portion goes first, it is critical for Durham to consider whether to provide more robust bus service investment to access RTP station or if it is more advantageous to get the rail to Angier Ave or Ellis Road and reorient bus service investment to better serve those areas. Ms. Howerton explained the need to involve the business community before answering questions such as those. Mr. Cawley said the community has been involved throughout and this group needs to make some decisions to move the project forward. Ms. Eggleston noted that GoTriangle has made tremendous efforts to meet with as many groups as possible for engagement on this project. Ms. Howerton stated that, as of today, Downtown Durham, Inc has not been involved or spoken to at all about this. Ms. Eggleston said she would circle back with the engagement team and make that happen. Mr. Cawley stated that the officials in the room could serve a role in telling groups like that what the options are and getting input that way. If RTP is a good option for a terminus and there is 15-minute bus service to downtown Durham, that sounds good. He asked whether it might be better to have a bus going to a station closer to Durham than RTP. Ms. Howerton said she is concerned about running into the same issues as the Light Rail Project and would like to avoid that by having the support from the business community. Mr. Lukasina noted that a to-do from today's meeting is to determine any difference in ridership if the station is at RTP versus Ellis Rd versus somewhere else in Durham. No one from the City of Durham was in attendance, and they are critical for that conversation. Mr. Plachinski stated he would pull together a conversation with Durham City officials prior to the Joint MPO meeting next week if possible. Ms. Evans asked if it might be feasible to do a BRT line between downtown Durham and RTP that could serve as a connection if the rail piece was too expensive. Ms. Jacobs said we all need to think about land use and transportation together and that station area planning should be happening regardless of whether the service being provided is on CRT or BRT or something else. The region needs to adopt a future corridor and future stations and plan around those cohesively.

Mr. Hutchinson said the group needs to figure out how we want to pay for the project. He reported that he, along with Brenda Howerton, Mary-Ann Baldwin, Joe Milazzo and Shinica Thomas had traveled to USDOT in DC last week to discuss transportation funding. They had discussed this commuter rail project and FTA does not see a path forward for this project through the CIG grant process. However, the RRIF program did sound promising since we would have a longer payback period. They are looking for a different frame of transit, tying it more to affordable housing and community development. We need a broader sense of the region, and need an integrated program to deliver that. We need to figure out how to leverage all the new federal programs to move the region forward. Ms. Evans noted that FTA seems more keen on BRT than CRT recently. Mr. Hutchinson said it was exciting for CAMPO and DCHC to work on this together, and that the group needs to figure out what the phase one looks like and how we can deliver that. Ms. Jacobs said we need to figure out what the City of Durham wants. Mr. Plachinski said it would be a good idea to figure out how to deal with the East Durham yard and wherever the western terminus is, to figure out how to deliver additional bus service to that point. The group generally agreed that we need to move away from the "commuter" phrasing.

Mr. Cawley asked if there was general consensus that we could not go past the East Durham yard due to costs, and if so, whether Angier Ave, Ellis Rd and RTP are the only options. Ms. Jacobs noted that GoTriangle is getting the ridership numbers for Ellis Road being western terminus. Ms. Eggleston said she would also pull the population and employment projections around Ellis Road. Ms. Evans asked if there was adequate space for a park and ride at Ellis Road station area; the reply was no. Ms. Beckmann noted that since RTP and Ellis Road have similar ridership numbers, the fact that those riders were primarily using park and ride access means that the western terminus needs to have a good park and ride capacity available.

Mr. Seils said our main challenge is land use. We can either do something there to make this a more attractive project to achieve federal funding, or we can take our land use as a given and figure out how to pay for our transportation project locally. Mr. Lukasina said that if there is definitely an interest in eventually reaching downtown Durham with the project, the planning for that corridor could start now. Mr. Plachinski reiterated that he would pull together the Durham City folks and have a conversation in preparation for a larger regional conversation at the Joint MPO meeting next week. Ms. Weaver asked when the Wake County contingent needs to know what Durham wants.

Ms. Evans asked everyone to keep in mind that this is truly a regional effort and that Wake is committed to Durham's success, whether that be success in getting the rail project further into Durham or success in implementing BRT or other bus service to connect to the rail service. Instead of considering this as just a commuter rail project, we should think of it as a regional transportation corridor that needs a variety of solutions.

Ms. Weaver echoed those comments from the Orange County perspective as well. She also noted that in other places, the state had stepped in with funding. Since this is a big economic development driver, would the state agree to be a bigger player in this? Ms. Eggleston said the project team has actively engaged with NCDOT to position portions of the project to be successful in the STIP. Also, GoTriangle leadership is engaged in conversations with legislators at the state to increase GoTriangle revenues. However, with current rules, the commuter rail project is not competitive for state funding through the STIP. Mr. Plachinski said he would like to know how the Austin region had come to consensus around asking for a \$12 Billion loan from RRIF. He wondered whether it was cheaper to borrow the funds sooner rather than wait for grant funding later as costs continue to rise. Ms. Eggleston said the team could run some cash flow scenarios to look at that question.

Ms. Beckmann said we need to have better idea on the cost information for connecting to West Durham to have a more full conversation about that. Til now, it has been dismissed out of hand since the cost was assumed to be much higher than the funding available in the Durham Transit Plan. Ms. Eggleston noted that there was not enough funding in the entire Durham Transit Plan over 10 years to pay for the expense it would take to get to West Durham, even if nothing else was funded using that money. Ms. Beckmann said it was absolutely imperative that the state or federal government contribute funds if the connection to West Durham was ever going to happen.

Ms. Jacobs noted it was important to continue to talk about this as a regional project, and we need to keep looking at ways to chip away at the cost. Mr. Cawley asked about the cost of going from RTP to Ellis Road, and whether that section was feasible in the Durham Transit Plan if it

was about \$200 Million. Ms. Eggleston said her team would work on getting those comparisons down on paper for easier review and comparisons.

Mr. Cawley asked whether the group considered getting the rail project to RTP was the same as getting the project to Durham. Ms. Jacobs said that RTP is primarily in Durham County and the County is investing millions in the RTP Hub project and has paid for many tax incentives to bring jobs to the region in RTP. Mr. Seils said it is important for communities to continue investing in RTP.

5. Joint DCHC MPO / CAMPO Board Meeting Agenda Review – Mr. Lukasina noted that the Joint DCHC /CAMPO meeting will be held next week. At that meeting, GoTriangle will update the full groups on the project status, and the MPO staff will discuss rail planning conversations at each MPO. Hopefully there will be a broader discussion among both MPOs to talk about moving this project forward. Next week will not be the end of the discussion, but hopefully will provide direction on how to move this project forward. Ms. Stokes also noted that the special GoTriangle Board meeting to discuss the project would be held that same afternoon.
6. Next Steps - Mr. Hutchinson thanked everyone for their time and reiterated that we need to keep this regional conversation going. The groups will determine their next steps after next week's meetings.