



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

Meeting Summary

September 12, 2023
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
CAMPO Large Conference Room

ATTENDANCE

CAMPO Subcommittee Members

Vivian Jones, CAMPO Chair
Harold Weinbrecht, Town of Cary
Ken Marshburn, Town of Garner

Sig Hutchinson, GoTriangle Board of Trustees
Susan Evans, Wake County

DCHC Subcommittee Members

Jenn Weaver, DCHC Chair
Sally Greene, Orange County

Michael Parker, GoTriangle
Wendy Jacobs, Durham County

Others

Brenda Howerton, Durham County
Chris Lukasina, CAMPO
Chuck Lattuca, GoTriangle
Doug Plachcinski, DCHC MPO
Ellen Beckmann, Durham County
Ben Howell, CAMPO
Katharine Eggleston, GoTriangle
Shelby Powell, CAMPO
Alex Rickard, CAMPO

Jessica Perkins, GoTriangle
Julie White, NCDOT
Jason Orthner, NCDOT
Colleen McGue, DCHC MPO
Michael Clark, GoTriangle
Meredith Van Duyn, NCDOT
Michael James, Wake County
John Hodges-Copple, Presenter
Michelle Peele, GoTriangle

MEETING SUMMARY

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Vivian Jones, CAMPO Chair, opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

2. **Public Comment** – The floor was opened for public comments; none were received.

3. **Triangle Regional Rail/Transit Vision – John Hodges-Copple, TJ COG (Retired)**

John Hodges-Copple, retired Triangle J Cog (now Central Pines Regional Council) Planning Director presented an overview of the history of regional transportation and transit plans and other decision documents for the region, including an overview of the major transit infrastructure and corridors that were included in the 2045 CAMPO and DCHC MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan. He also reviewed the Special Transit Advisory Committee (STAC), which worked from 2007 to 2008, that was formed to assist MPOs in the development of the Regional Transit Plan. The STAC's Plan recommended "Full Diesel DMU" commuter rail in the rail corridor, with the service running during peak commuting hours with frequencies of 4-6 times per hour during the peak hours and 3-4 times per hour during the non-peak hours. The STAC also recommended light rail between Durham and Chapel Hill, with frequent circulator services between the region's 5 activity centers and enhanced bus service in other corridors. The STAC recommended funding the service with the ½ cent sales tax and a \$10 vehicle registration fee. There was general discussion from the Committee about the possibility of using hybrid rail (FLIRT) using electric and diesel with quicker, level boarding and multiple doors.

4. **NCDOT Passenger Rail Program & Corridor ID Program –Jason Orthner, NCDOT**

Jason Orthner, NCDOT Rail Division Director, provided an overview of NCDOT's Passenger Rail Program, noting that the state's Amtrak Piedmont and Carolinian services had the highest ridership in its 32-year history in 2022, and through Q2 of 2023 is on track to exceed the 2022 ridership. He noted that the NC By Train program is among the best performing services during and post pandemic, that NCDOT has added a 5th Raleigh-Charlotte round-trip in July 2023 and is targeting a 2027 opening of the Charlotte Gateway, and stated that NCDOT is working to add a 6th Raleigh-Charlotte round-trip in the coming years. Mr. Orthner provided an update on the S-Line Corridor Development, noting that NCDOT has received several Federal Rail Administration (FRA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants in recent years to acquire land for the corridor, begin engineering work for construction in the corridor, and designing Mobility Hubs in certain towns along the corridor. NCDOT is submitting Mobility Hubs for final design, NEPA and construction to the USDOT Reconnecting Communities (RCN) grant as well as seeking to submit the Wake Forest to Henderson portion of the corridor for the FRA Fed-State Partnership in 2024. Mr. Orthner also provided an overview of the 12 rail corridors, centered on the Triangle, that NCDOT has submitted to the FRA Corridor ID Program. He concluded his presentation with an overview of the FRA funding programs that NCDOT is pursuing for rail corridors in the state.

Wendy Jacobs, DCHC MPO Board Member, asked if NCDOT has spoken to federal representatives about potential claw-backs and how important the funding is for the rail program. Mr. Orthner responded that yes, NCDOT has and continues to speak with federal representatives about this concern. Ms. Jacobs then asked if NCDOT expects that there will be a second/separate track from freight for the passenger service, and Mr. Orthner responded that NCDOT is looking at that option where it is necessary but is looking at building low-level platforms where possible to avoid the need of a second track. Ms. Jacobs also asked about the possibility of an RTP stop, and what would be the vision/goal for the service. Mr. Orthner stated that NCDOT is evaluating including an RTP stop in their Mobility Hubs RCN grant to look at what the possibilities and best option would be for that location.

Sig Hutchinson, GoTriangle Board Member, stated that he would love to see CAMPO partner with NCDOT to get the federal funding, and asked Mr. Orthner to talk more about the RCN grant and potential partnership opportunities with NCDOT. Mr. Orthner stated that NCDOT is working with the S-Line communities on the RCN grant, with NCDOT planning to ask for approximately \$108 Million to advance 4 stations through construction and another 3-4 stations through final design/NEPA review, but that does not include the RTP Mobility Hub – NCDOT would look at including the RTP Mobility Hub in the RCN Grant, but it would require increasing the funding ask.

Jenn Weaver, DCHC MPO Board Member, asked if NCDOT has a sense that intercity rail has a more real opportunity to be constructed versus transit-based rail. Mr. Orthner responded that intercity rail has a lot of legislative support, and NCDOT is being very pragmatic and moving step-by-step. Doug Plachcinski, DCHC MPO Staff, asked if NCDOT has started engaging RTF or county transit plans on the proposed RTP Mobility Hub. Mr. Orthner stated that NCDOT has been working with RTF and that they understand that GoTriangle is also working on a RCN grant application for the RTP Mobility Hub.

5. GoTriangle Update – Katharine Eggleston, GoTriangle

Katharine Eggleston, Chief Development Officer for GoTriangle, provided an overview of regional passenger rail next steps. She began her presentation by providing an overview of funding sources, types of rail services, and GoTriangle's goal for all day, hourly regional passenger rail service in the corridor between Garner and Durham, with future expansion to Clayton, Selma, Wake Forest, Apex and Hillsborough. Ms. Eggleston reviewed the regional passenger rail program rail network modeling, with near-term and long-term improvements that GoTriangle is considering to develop fast, frequent and reliable passenger service in the corridor. She then reviewed USDOT federal discretionary grant funding opportunities in 2023 and 2024, and provided an overview of potential corridor improvements, including rail crossing improvements/safety projects, rail capacity/operations improvements, and rail station improvements. Ms. Eggleston concluded her presentation with an overview of the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Regional Partnerships Challenge grant application that GoTriangle is considering submitting.

Sig Hutchinson, GoTriangle Board Member, asked why can't the region/NCDOT work together to have one grant submission rather than 2 – adding the RTP Mobility Hub to the NCDOT grant application instead of GoTriangle applying separately. Ms. Eggleston responded that GoTriangle has started conversations with NCDOT about including the RTP Mobility Hub in their grant, but the regional partnerships grant is a separate grant looking to do different things than the RCN grant that NCDOT is applying for. Wendy Jacobs, DCHC MPO Board Member, asked if there are concerns about having two similar grant applications in the same geographic area, and what makes strategic sense. Eggleston stated that the region has not historically attempted to self-select projects for grant opportunities.

The Subcommittee members discussed the pros and cons of the different grant applications, the timing of the applications, and potential partners for the GoTriangle Regional Partnerships Challenge grant application. The members are generally supportive of grants and support further discussion at upcoming MPO meetings. The members also believe that CAMPO and DCHC MPO should jointly support the grant applications.

6. Next Steps

The Subcommittee members agree with the approach to regional rail – a coordinated, strategic and incremental approach. CAMPO staff stated that they will present an update to the full Executive Board on the Subcommittees' discussion at the next meeting.