

CAMPO & DCHC-MPO – TRIANGLE STRATEGIC RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT STUDY

FINAL Scope of Work – **08/21/2024**

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Durham-Chapel Hill Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC-MPO) are the two governmental entities charged with stewarding the Continuous, Comprehensive and Coordinated transportation planning process in the Triangle Region comprised of Raleigh, Durham, Cary, Chapel Hill and surrounding counties and municipalities.

As part of those efforts, CAMPO and DCHC-MPO are engaging HDR (henceforth referred to as **the Consultant**) to support the development of a Rail Infrastructure Strategy for the Triangle region. Within the current national policy environment, the requirements to fund rail projects under the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) New Starts program are attuned to larger metropolitan areas with different development patterns than the Triangle, which has made advancing a rail project under New Starts a challenge for the region.

At the same time, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has made significant funding available for investment in mainline rail corridors that may have freight rail, Amtrak intercity rail, or both services operating over their tracks. NCDOT Rail Division has had great success in obtaining not only several Corridor Identification grants from FRA, but also a \$1 billion commitment for the first phase of the Southeast High Speed Rail project, which will upgrade the S-Line from Raleigh to Wake Forest.

The goals of this study are to survey the universe of committed and proposed rail projects within the two MPOs, to assess which of these projects will do the most to increase the amount of passenger rail service operating in the Triangle, to align those projects in a way that maximizes their eligibility for BIL and other funding opportunities, and to develop an ongoing passenger rail development strategy for the region that can be updated over time.

TASK 1 – PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

HDR recognizes the importance of customizing and implementing a strong project management approach and project control system led by experienced project and task managers. HDR will use project management and cost/schedule tools that integrate scope of work activities with schedule, resources, and budget details.

The Consultant’s proposed project leadership team includes Patrick McDonough, AICP, the Senior Transit Planner in HDR’s Raleigh office, and Olivia Wineski, Transit Planner in HDR’s Atlanta office. Cat Dobbs in HDR’s Raleigh office will provide task leadership over all technical rail work. We have selected Patrick, Olivia and Cat to lead this effort understanding the importance to have HDR’s senior leadership team advising and driving this study in coordination with CAMPO and DCHC staff. Contact information is shown below:

Project Manager:	Patrick McDonough (919) 601-2973 Patrick.McDonough@hdrinc.com
Deputy Project Manager:	Olivia Wineski (404) 951-7964 Olivia.Wineski@hdrinc.com
Rail Infrastructure Lead:	Cat Dobbs (202) 969-6482 Catherine.Dobbs@hdrinc.com

Task 1.1: Project Management Plan

The Consultant will develop a Project Management Plan (PMP) for submittal to CAMPO for review and approval within 14 days of Notice to Proceed (NTP). The PMP is designed to outline the processes and tools to be utilized throughout the project to monitor scope, schedule, budget, and quality control. It also sets forth project communication methods and includes a final organizational chart documenting staffing and points of contact. The PMP will be a dynamic document and updated as necessary.

Task 1.2: Project Schedule

The Consultant will develop a detailed project schedule that establishes start and end points for each project task; submittal dates for draft and final deliverables; and project, agency and public meeting dates. The schedule will be updated monthly and any activities that have fallen behind will be flagged and schedule recovery mitigations identified.

Task 1.3: Monthly Reporting and Invoices

The Consultant will prepare monthly progress reports that describe activities that have been completed in the preceding month; activities planned for the next month; any outstanding issues or concerns that affect the project schedule, budget, or technical tasks; and project status relative to the schedule and budget. The Consultant will submit monthly invoices and reports to CAMPO.

Task 1.4: Project Management and Technical Steering Committee Meetings

The Consultant will facilitate monthly Project Management Team (PMT) meetings throughout the course of the project. Prior to each meeting, the Consultant will prepare an agenda and accompanying materials for discussion, inclusive of an action item list and unresolved issues that require attention.

Throughout the life of the project, the Consultant will prepare and host four (4) one hour virtual TSC meetings. The Consultant will also prepare for two in person meetings with MPO staff and others they may designate. The topics of these meetings will be:

- One (1) meeting early in the study with the two MPOs SPOT teams to review the initial project lists and hear from the SPOT teams about present rail prioritization, and which questions around the SPOT process and its interaction with other funding sources are critical to address in the study.
- One (1) meeting later in the study to discuss the Decisionmaking Framework approach in Task 7. This meeting may include RVC members in addition to local government staff.

TASK 1 ASSUMPTIONS

- The Consultant will host a monthly Project Management Team virtual meeting with CAMPO & DCHC.
- The Consultant will host a monthly internal consultant virtual meeting offset two weeks from the PMT meeting.
- The Consultant will largely limit travel to in-person meetings to attendance from staff in the HDR Raleigh, Charlotte and Atlanta offices. For key meetings where it makes sense, the Consultant may propose in-person visits from other senior rail experts from around the country, but travel by those individuals to the Triangle will not take place without approval from CAMPO & DCHC.
- CAMPO & DCHC will manage invitations for virtual meetings with local government agencies and partners, such as the Rail Vision Committee (RVC), which is comprised of the two MPOs' joint rail subcommittees, and TSC meetings.

TASK 1 DELIVERABLES

- Draft and Final Meeting Agendas, Materials and Summaries

TASK 2 – CONVENE COMMITTEE AND ESTABLISH RAIL VISION

The Consultant will host one four-hour meeting with the RVC that will combine educational and consensus-building discussions, with a goal of establishing a passenger rail network vision for the Triangle region that can be built out incrementally.

One hybrid meeting will be held in a large conference room at CAMPO or DCHC-MPO's offices. Anticipated attendees from the Consultant team would include:

- Patrick McDonough
- Cat Dobbs
- Olivia Wineski
- John Mitchell

Additional Consultant personnel may participate virtually depending upon the final agenda content.

MEETING PLAN FOR THE VISIONING WORKSHOP

- Develop overall content approach for the meeting; share drafts with technical stakeholders (staff from both MPOs, NCDOT Rail, GoTriangle, others as desired) to get feedback
- Outline Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) authority for intercity passenger rail operations and provide overview of the FRA project development lifecycle for intercity passenger rail supporting grant programs. Conversation will focus on differentiating the FRA Service Development Planning and intercity passenger rail funding programs from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts process.
- Educate RVC about how SPOT rules surrounding rail investment work at the Statewide, Regional and Division Tier levels for State funding.
- RVC Member Engagement: letting RVC members share their goals for passenger rail in the region (moderator: John Mitchell)
- Framing Questions from the Consultant team:
 - What are the geographical boundaries of the Rail Vision? MPO boundaries? Certain Counties?
 - Is the vision for primary corridors (NCRR and S-Line) also the same for secondary corridors? Or are there differences in how the vision expresses itself in each group of corridors?
 - Which outcomes within the passenger rail vision do the most to create a sense of progress? New stations on existing passenger rail corridors? Passenger rail service from primary corridors to new destinations that do not have passenger service today? Additional frequency on existing rail corridors?
 - How should we confront financial and project delivery time trade-offs when they

emerge? (this question may be better answered at the end of the study than the beginning, but the RVC may have initial guidance for the study)

- Identifying opportunities and trade-offs: Response to initial visioning discussion from:
 - Technical stakeholders
 - Consultant team

TASK 2 ASSUMPTIONS

- CAMPO/DCHC to act as point of contact for identified rail committee members included in the workshop.
- The consultant will produce meeting materials for the workshop using shapefiles provided by CAMPO/DCHC.
- CAMPO/DCHC to create base maps to be displayed in room and online.
- The Consultant to create meeting plan and PowerPoint deck for workshop.

TASK 2 DELIVERABLES

- Draft and Final Meeting PowerPoint
- One facilitated 4-hour Workshop in Fall 2024
- Meeting minutes and summary, with key take-aways documented in MS Word

TASK 3 – ASSESS UNIVERSE OF RAIL PROJECTS

The Consultant will conduct a scan of all existing rail projects identified in the RFQ and related maps, assess how each contribute to the expansion of passenger rail, and report on which bundles of projects have additional benefits when completed as a group.

If additional potential projects are identified by the RVC or technical staff during early meetings that were not identified with the initial RFQ, the consultant will add those projects to the universe of rail projects for analysis.

With the Consultant's extensive rail modeling and operations analysis experience, the team will look carefully at physical infrastructure (number of tracks, track speed, signaling, existing passenger service) and current operations (number of trains per day, locations of junctions, yards, diamonds, interchanges, and other locations of rail activity) in order to make high-level qualitative assessments about the complexity of initiating passenger service on each line studied. This task aims to identify the projects that offer the highest return on investment in enhancing passenger rail frequency within the region and highlight all projects that are part of a critical path to the network envisioned in Task 2.

- Freight railroads and operators are CRITICAL stakeholders. There is a specified process they must follow. Railroad agreements must be worked on PRIOR to seeking some FRA grant funding opportunities. The goal is to avoid surprising freight infrastructure owners and operators.

- Outreach to freight railroads as part of this process
 - Be collaborative, understand that FRA recognizes benefits to freight in their funding evaluations, both safety and operationally
 - Want to understand if there are projects freight railroads would like to pursue
 - Assess freight railroad near and long-term capital and operational needs; identify potential projects that can benefit freight operations/service while also supporting a passenger rail network vision.
 - Consultants will make at least two attempts to engage NCR, CSX and NS about this project. Freight operators will be updated regularly through the project study, and the study will outline plans for continued engagement through future project development opportunities.

TASK 3 ASSUMPTIONS

- If necessary, CAMPO/DCHC staff will make additional shapefiles for new projects identified in early meetings that expand the universe of candidate projects and then share those shapefiles with the consultant, who will use them in analysis and production of deliverables.

TASK 3 DELIVERABLES

- Draft Universe of Rail Projects Assessment
- Final Universe of Rail Projects Assessment

TASK 4 – FEDERAL FUNDING READINESS, ELIGIBILITY, & MERIT SCREENING

Using the Consultant's expertise in obtaining BIL and rail investment grants nationally, the project team will identify projects in the project list from Task 3 that are strong candidates for Federal Grants, either as standalone projects or as part of a bundle, similar to the CRISI grant application noted in the RFQ.

The Consultant will screen rail capital projects to determine alignment with, and competitiveness for, federal funding from federal transportation discretionary grant programs, based on each project's readiness, eligibility, and merit to pursue funding. The methodology will entail a two-step process, to screen and then prioritize projects according to eligibility and selection criteria for each grant program. The screening process will evaluate the funding programs for which each project is eligible.

The prioritization process will evaluate each project's likely competitiveness for funding given USDOT grant selection criteria, as well the funding needs for each project, the national pool of available funds, and the likely range in grant awards by program. The prioritization process will also consider the extent to which each project may meet other evaluation factors, such as benefit-cost ratios, based on available information, and other information supplied by CAMPO and DCHC-MPO.

For each grant program, the Consultant will provide a list of projects anticipated to be competitive for grant funding, and the reason why each project would be competitive. The Consultant will also

summarize additional research, analysis and/or project development activities recommended to support future pursuit of grant opportunities.

The Consultant will also summarize recommended revisions to potential projects to make them more competitive for funding. For projects that do not make the competitive projects list, the Consultant will describe the reasons why they were excluded. This might include recommendations to bundle projects or advance specific project elements through grant programs.

The findings of this task will be detailed in a spreadsheet and documented in a written memorandum and briefing deck summarizing high-level findings

TASK 4 DELIVERABLES

- Draft and revised methodology for screening projects
- Memorandum and briefing deck summarizing findings
 - List of competitive projects for each grant program and rationale
 - Recommended revisions to potential projects, if any, that would make them more competitive
 - Recommended grant strategy and timing (to be updated two times during the life of the project to reflect changes in grant opportunities)

TASK 5 – STATE & DISCRETIONARY LOCAL FUNDING SCREENING

Task 5 will determine what state and local funding sources could be utilized to fund rail projects submitted to NCDOT's Strategic Transportation Prioritization (SPOT) program.

The Consultant will review the SPOT 7.0 scores released in May 2024 to analyze all projects submitted and identify common elements of projects that scored well and were likely to be funded, as well as projects that did not score well and why they were less likely to receive state funding.

After the completion of Task 3, the Consultant will use this analysis of SPOT 7.0 suitability and coordinate with the rail technical team to identify projects that significantly advance progress on the regional passenger rail vision, and divide those projects into two lists:

- Those likely to receive state funding under SPOT
- Those unlikely to receive state funding under SPOT

Key projects in the first category will be prioritized for regional tier points in the MPO's participation in the SPOT process.

Key projects in the second category will be prioritized for local transit discretionary funding from the ½-cent sales tax and other sources, such as STPBG and CMAQ funding.

This task will culminate in the creation of a memorandum that details a programming approach for projects that enable joint development of a rail investment strategy across CAMPO/DCHC-MPO, as well as coordination with NCR, CSX, NS and adjacent highway Divisions and SPOT Regions, including Region D (Orange County, Division 7), Region A (Johnston County, Division 4), and Region E (Lee and Chatham Counties, Division 8).

The final deliverable will identify the best opportunities to seek state funding for rail projects in SPOT, with an emphasis on strategy that recognizes potential nuance that emerges when funding criteria at different levels of government interact. For example, some rail grant Notice of

Funding Opportunity (NOFO) circulars have shown preference to projects that “overmatch” federal dollars with a match percentage above the standard 20%. However, this kind of nuance may be expressed through Congressional appropriations rather than USDOT policy. While we cannot predict what funding nuances may be inserted by future appropriations by Congress, this Task will be sensitive to the implications of such legislation, and take opportunities created by such legislation into account.

TASK 5 DELIVERABLES

- Draft State and Local Discretionary Funding Strategy Memo
- Final State and Local Discretionary Funding Strategy Memo

TASK 6 – RAIL INVESTMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY & PROGRAM OF PROJECTS

Task 6 builds on efforts established in all previous tasks to develop an investment strategy that outlines project prioritization within each MPO’s ten-year MTP horizon. This strategy determines which projects are strong candidates for STI, its priority level for Regional Input Points, and its value as a candidate for 100% local funding from County Transit plans if state or federal funding is unlikely. The Implementation Strategy will be defined from the viewpoint of both the overall network vision and the critical path projects.

Reflecting lessons learned from the success of the S-Line, there will also be attention given to identifying where projects funded with state and local dollars may also represent a local match for federal grants.

Prior to finalization, the strategy will be shared with the TSC and other technical stakeholders for their feedback and may be revised to incorporate their input.

The final Task 6 deliverable will be an actionable strategy but will also emphasize that the strategy must be a living document that should live and grow with the Rail Infrastructure Investment program. The strategy must also be able to adapt to potential changes in federal direction either through an election or through a major legislative action, such as the re-authorization of the Transportation Bill. The Task 6 deliverable will also define the process for updating the strategy in future years.

TASK 6 DELIVERABLES

- Draft Implementation Strategy and Program of Projects List
- Final Draft Implementation Strategy and Program of Projects List

TASK 7 – REGIONAL PASSENGER RAIL DECISIONMAKING FRAMEWORK

While the Rail Investment Implementation Strategy will be holistic and fully aligned to maximize revenue and progress toward passenger rail in support of the vision developed in Task 3, the distribution of projects contributing to this vision is expected to vary geographically across funding jurisdictions within the SPOT Regional Tier, SPOT Division Tier, and County Transit Plans.

This task is designed to establish a framework that will span the multiple MPOs, NCDOT highway divisions, County transit planning committees such as the Transit Planning Advisory Committee (TPAC), and jurisdictions that are willing to invest but do not have a dedicated revenue source.

It will also consider how public sector investment in freight rail projects or projects with joint freight and passenger benefit should be considered part of an overall strategy to expand passenger rail service by building a practice of partnership between the public sector and railroad stakeholders.

This framework will provide a sense of predictability and transparency for how jurisdictions will work and invest together. For example, if MPO X is regularly donating points for rail investment to MPO Y, then there may be a rule in the Rail Investment Prioritization Strategy that allows MPO X to ask for some of those points to be returned by MPO Y on other projects within a certain number of years. These assessments of fairness should be measured over five to 10-year time frames.

This task will contain hours for briefing the TCCs and TACs of both MPOs.

TASK ASSUMPTIONS

- This task will include Consultant meeting hours for a potential 2-hour in-person meeting with MPO and county transit plan or other local staff to assist in the development of this item.

TASK 7 DELIVERABLES

- Draft Regional Passenger Rail Decision-making Framework
- Final Regional Passenger Rail Decision-making Framework

TASK 8 – FINAL REPORT & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Task 8 activities will revolve around assembling materials from all prior tasks into a final report that is primarily comprised of a series of technical memorandums. A non-technical Executive Summary will be developed to be shared with policymakers and the general public in the form of a report and a short PowerPoint. A SharePoint site or other file storage mechanisms will be created and transferred to CAMPO/DCHC-MPO with all relevant project materials prior to June 30, 2025.

TASK 8 ASSUMPTIONS

- The Consultant will create and manage the SharePoint site or other file storage program for the duration of the study

TASK 8 DELIVERABLES

- Draft Executive Summary, Final Report, and Project Materials
- Final Executive Summary, Final Report, and Project Materials, and any other data created or collected for the study
- Final PowerPoint deck summarizing study outcomes in under 20 slides