

Downtown Cary Multi-Modal Transit Center Concurrence Meeting for Points 1-4

December 17, 2020 (10:30am-12:00pm)
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Meeting Summary

1. Attendees

AGENCY	ROLE	ATTENDEES
Town of Cary	Project Sponsor	Kelly Blazey
Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization	Cooperating Agency	Bret Martin Stephanie Planchich
Federal Railroad Administration	Cooperating Agency	Kevin Wright
North Carolina Railroad Company	Cooperating Agency	Edward Wu
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Rail Division	Cooperating Agency	James Bridges Ronald Lucas Anamika Laad Matthew Potter
North Carolina Department of Transportation – Highway Division 5	Cooperating Agency	Richard Hancock
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office	Cooperating Agency	Renee Gledhill-Early
City of Raleigh	Participating Agency	David Walker
GoTriangle	Participating Agency	Jay Heikes
Wake County	Participating Agency	Tim Gardiner
WSP, on behalf of Town of Cary	Consultant	Morven Maclean

2. Explanation of CAMPO's Concurrence Process

Bret Martin, CAMPO, explained the overall purpose and structure of the concurrence framework adopted for significant Wake County Transit Plan-funded projects. He mentioned that it can best be characterized as a risk management activity that dovetails with project development and design for major capital projects and that it is primarily concerned with ensuring certain projects comply with applicable laws, regulations, or policies that address resources or interests that may be impacted and that are under the jurisdiction of other agencies. It is to be conducted within a regulatory context rather than a technical opinion context. He mentioned that it is modeled after the NCDOT merger process, which has a similar intent. Mr. Martin explained the roles of various agencies in the concurrence process for the downtown Cary transit center and made the following further points about the concurrence framework and its applicability to the proposed project:

- *The concurrence process is tied to projects that are funded by Wake County transit tax revenues similar to how NEPA requirements tie to federally funded projects;*
- *Funding for later project phases is not awarded until concurrence at significant milestones that precede those later phases is achieved;*

- All applicable projects have a concurrence plan that lays out the concurrence points that correspond to project-defining actions or milestones, and each successive concurrence point builds from project actions or decisions made at prior concurrence points;
- The concurrence plan for the downtown Cary transit center currently addresses the first six (6) concurrence points for the proposed facility, and the meeting today will address the first four (4);
- Decisions on avoidance, mitigation, and a project's trajectory are best made with all Cooperating Agencies with concurrence authority in the same room so that compromised-based decisions for project implementation can be made; and
- Signification of concurrence means that the Cooperating Agency does not object to the project sponsor's proposed action.

3. Project Background/Explanation and Concurrence Point 1: Project Purpose and Need

Morven Maclean, WSP, provided an overview of the Town of Cary's proposed Purpose and Need for the project. She explained that the existing downtown Cary Depot, which currently serves as a transit center for the Town, is already capacity-constrained with existing services. The Cary Depot does not contain much, if any, space to accommodate transit service expansion envisioned in the Wake County Transit Plan, including bus rapid transit, commuter rail, and additional local bus services. A new transit center is needed to serve all of these additional modes of transit to better connect Cary to the region and enhance investment in downtown Cary.

The proposed Purpose & Need statement for the project is:

The purpose of the Downtown Cary Multi-Modal Center is to provide a comprehensive multi-modal transportation facility for regional and local bus services, intercity passenger and commuter rail, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The center may include mixed-use Transit Oriented Development opportunities. This facility will enrich and enhance the Town's recent Downtown development efforts and will provide Cary residents improved transportation options to connect regionally within the Triangle.

4. Concurrence Point 2: Identification of Alternatives to Study Further

Morven Maclean, WSP, provided an overview of the Town's proposed facility alternatives that were selected and studied further. She identified a number of sites within or near downtown Cary and explained that there were three (3) critical requirements for the siting of the facility. These include:

- 1) *The site must have access to both the NCRR and CSX rail lines to accommodate inter-city passenger rail services;*
- 2) *There must be straight sections of track to accommodate 800-1,000-foot passenger rail platforms; and*
- 3) *The site must be located in downtown Cary to maintain centralized transit connections.*

Further, the sites need to be positioned and configured such that they can appropriately accommodate the modes of transportation envisioned to serve the site, and the size of the

sites would need to accommodate the full program requirements of the future modes to be served in accordance with long-range plans.

5. Concurrence Point 3: Screening/Elimination of Alternatives

Morven Maclean, WSP, explained that there was only one site identified among those evaluated that meets the functional requirements for the facility and that satisfies the project purpose and need. There were no other alternatives that could be carried forward as viable alternatives.

6. Concurrence Point 4: Locally Preferred Alternative Recommendation

Morven Maclean identified the site that meets the established criteria, which is a site that involves retaining the existing Cary Depot site and expanding the facility's footprint west across Harrison Avenue. The expansion would involve the acquisition of a multitude of privately owned parcels that total approximately eight (8) acres, have direct access to both rail lines, and have adequate sections of straight track for passenger rail platforms. A 'test fit' was performed to validate that the required functions of the new multi-modal center can be accommodated at the referenced site.

It was determined that the site can accommodate:

- *An adequate number of bus bays for current and future GoCary and GoTriangle fixed-route and paratransit services;*
- *A bus rapid transit station (BRT) for the Western Wake BRT Corridor;*
- *GoCary Road Supervisor space;*
- *Amtrak passenger rail boarding platforms;*
- *Amtrak baggage handling access and cart storage;*
- *Commuter rail passenger boarding platforms;*
- *Rideshare pick-up and drop-off space;*
- *Bicycle and scooter racks and staging areas;*
- *Parking for transit staff;*
- *General parking;*
- *An electric vehicle charging station;*
- *Rail and transit waiting areas, including customer service, ticketing and restrooms; and*
- *Driver amenities.*

Ms. Maclean mentioned that the site was endorsed by the Cary Town Council at a February 20, 2020, council work session and is proposed to be recommended to CAMPO for its approval of the site as the locally preferred alternative.

Mr. Martin mentioned that the three (3) considerations that come along with a decision on a locally preferred alternative for a multi-modal transit facility are the location/site for the facility, the travel modes to be accommodated by the facility, and the capacity of the facility to accommodate the future program requirements for those modes. He mentioned that the site should be looked at as having a 40-year useful life for planning purposes.

Jay Heikes, GoTriangle, asked whether the recommended locally preferred alternative is making assumptions about the placement or exact size of passenger rail platforms. Mr.

Martin responded that the locally preferred alternative does not get into specific design decisions; it is only concerned with ensuring the site can accommodate passenger rail platforms up to a certain length. The determination of platform lengths and how they are situated on the site will be addressed in later concurrence steps. Ms. Maclean and Kelly Blazey, Town of Cary, confirmed.

Mr. Heikes asked about what consideration has been given to the placement of the platforms with respect to existing rail track and right-of-way lines, with the understanding that additional track may be necessary to implement commuter rail service in the NCRR corridor. Ms. Maclean explained that, as part of the test phase and review of concept layouts, the site and platform lengths could still accommodate an expanded rail track footprint. She further mentioned that only the passenger platforms are within the rail right-of-way, with the other elements assumed to be outside the right-of-way. Mr. Heikes then asked what assumptions were made for parking and vehicular access at the site. Ms. Maclean and Ms. Blazey explained that the concept evaluated would accommodate 620+ parking spaces for rail and transit passengers and staff working at the facility. Specific details for parking needs will be evaluated with later phases. Ms. Maclean and Ms. Blazey further explained that vehicular access to the site is assumed to occur from Harrison Ave., as it is the only readily available access point and it has passed initial feasibility assessments and is expected to meet project needs.

Anamika Laad asked whether there have been any assumptions or decisions made regarding the Harrison Avenue grade separation at the rail corridors. Mr. Martin explained that there was a funded grade separation project planned and studied for Harrison Avenue, but the Town's leadership landed in a position of not wanting to pursue it in the immediate future. If conditions warrant the need for a grade separation in the future, it may be revisited in later years, but the current assumption being made by the Town is that it will not happen. Ms. Blazey explained that the existing passenger platform is rather short and causes the Harrison Avenue crossing to be blocked for long periods of time. The recommended locally preferred alternative would better accommodate train length and will reduce the impact at the crossing.

Tim Gardiner, Wake County, asked what the demographic profile of the property owners or occupants is on the parcels to be acquired for the facility. Ms. Blazey mentioned that the Town has a list of the impacted property owners but cannot provide further details at this time. Ronald Lucas, NCDOT Rail Division, asked whether the first four (4) concurrence points under consideration at this meeting will set the parameters and framework for later concurrence point decisions that coincide more closely with NEPA and preliminary design work. Within this vein, he further asked whether we should expect there to be a multitude of potential design alternatives within the parameters set by the locally preferred alternative decision. Mr. Martin confirmed this to be the case and how the process is expected to play out.

Matthew Potter, NCDOT Rail Division, mentioned that there could be some concern regarding the distance from the train station to the passenger platforms. He mentioned that this is something that we should keep in mind as the site ventures into the design stages. Mr. Martin mentioned that learning of such a concern at this stage in the process is highly productive because it allows the Town to understand what sensitivities there are before proceeding to the design phase for the facility.

7. Next Steps

Mr. Martin mentioned that the next step following the concurrence team meeting is for the Cooperating Agencies to sign the concurrence forms. Mr. Martin will send concurrence forms to each Cooperating Agency, and concurrence can be indicated through an email message. He also mentioned that the recommended locally preferred alternative will be forwarded to CAMPO for its consideration of approval.

Following the December 17, 2020, concurrence team meeting, Kevin Wright, Federal Railroad Administration, requested that the Town provide a purpose and need statement worded in the form of a conventional purpose and need statement for NEPA purposes. The Town subsequently provided this language, and it was added to the concurrence materials.

Following the December 17, 2020, concurrence team meeting, concurrence on concurrence points 1-4 has been provided by the following Cooperating Agencies:

- 1) North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office*
- 2) North Carolina Department of Transportation – Highway Division 5*
- 3) North Carolina Department of Transportation – Rail Division*
- 4) North Carolina Railroad Company*
- 5) Federal Railroad Administration*
- 6) Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization*