

Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): New Bern Corridor Concurrence Team Meeting - Concurrence Points 5-6 Meeting Summary

April 23, 2021 (10:30am-12:00pm)
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions

Agency	Role	Names
City of Raleigh	Project Sponsor	Mila Vega, Het Patel, Meghan Finnegan, Sean Driskell
Capital Area MPO	Cooperating Agency	Bret Martin, Stephanie Plancich, Evan Koff
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cooperating Agency	Renee Gledhill-Earley
North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)	Cooperating Agency	Richard Hancock
Town of Cary	Participating Agency	Kelly Blazey
GoTriangle	Participating Agency	Jay Heikes
Wake County	Participating Agency	Tim Gardiner
Town of Garner	Participating Agency	Gaby Lawlor
HNTB	Consultant	Mona Elabbady, Mark Huffer

2. Update on Project Progress and Relationship to Concurrence Process

The City of Raleigh project team provided an overview of progress made to date on the development and further design of the New Bern Avenue BRT corridor. The team mentioned that the proposed project is approaching 60% design, and that concurrence on the least environmentally damaging locally preferred alternative (LEDPA) under consideration for this concurrence team meeting corresponds to the footprint of the proposed project and its impacts at the 30% design stage. The project team then provided an overview of the project's characteristics.

The project includes 3.3 miles of new dedicated transitway between the GoRaleigh Station in downtown Raleigh and WakeMed Hospital Raleigh Campus at Sunnybrook Road and approximately 1.8 miles of service in general traffic lanes between Sunnybrook Road and New Hope Road. The project would also include transit signal priority (TSP) at signalized intersections and nine (9) weather-protected BRT stations. All BRT stations would be designed to include off-board fare payment, level vehicle boarding platforms, real-time bus arrival information, and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act-compliant facilities. GoRaleigh intends to purchase 7 compressed natural gas (CNG)-fueled, 60-foot articulated BRT vehicles to operate the proposed BRT service. The project team further

mentioned some impacts associated with the project as revealed by the NEPA and preliminary design process, including the need for right-of-way acquisition at nine (9) locations involving 10 total parcels along the corridor that are mostly necessary to accommodate station and sidewalk improvements

3. Concurrence Point 5: Least Environmentally Damaging Preferred Alternative (LEDPA) Recommendation

The project team covered the overall impacts associated with the proposed project as revealed through the process to complete a documented categorical exclusion (DCE). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved the DCE for the associated project in February of 2021 with a finding that there are very limited natural and human environmental impacts associated with the proposed project. The approved DCE recommended continued coordination with project stakeholders and regulatory agencies as the project design advances.

The project team also mentioned that FTA completed the Section 106 process with the North Carolina SHPO in February of 2021. A number of historic and architectural resources were identified within the area of potential effects delineated for the proposed project, and the FTA determined that the proposed project would have no adverse effect on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed or other eligible resources in the area of potential effects. Four (4) resources were determined to have a potential Section 4(f) use. Since the proposed project would have no adverse effect, the FTA determined that under Section 6009 of the SAFETEA-LU provisions of 2005, the proposed project qualifies as a de minimis use of the four (4) resources identified. In February of 2021, the NC SHPO sent a letter concurring with FTA's determination of effects on the historic properties within the area of potential effects with the condition that the City of Raleigh, in consultation with SHPO, develop and implement a landscape plan to restore the pre-existing landscape or vegetative buffer for historic properties where the use of a temporary easement allows and/or requires the removal of existing landscape.

While not related to the LEDPA stage of project development and design, the City of Raleigh project team discussed the potential use of BRT lanes by vehicles for other transit services. The City of Raleigh project team mentioned that it would work to make the BRT lanes available for use by other transit services as much as possible, but in response to discussion about station platforms heights, the City mentioned that it does not intend to blend regular bus services with BRT services and vehicles at the stations proposed along the corridor. Further discussion ensued regarding how and when service policies will be developed to address questions of BRT lane and station use by other transit services. GoTriangle staff mentioned that GoTriangle would prefer that platform height at stations not preclude BRT lane use by vehicles for other transit services.

Renee Gledhill-Earley (NC SHPO) asked who will enforce use of the BRT lanes by other unauthorized vehicles. City of Raleigh staff explained that an enforcement plan will be developed that addresses those sorts of potential issues. Mark Huffer, HNTB, explained that it is much more difficult and unlikely for unauthorized vehicles to meander into center running BRT exclusive lanes where they are proposed, as they can be distinguished with a different color and do not run along portions of the corridor where cars will be directly accessing abutting land uses. It is along the business access and transit lanes portions of the proposed corridor where enforcement may be more difficult.

4. **Concurrence Point 6: Agreement with Jurisdictions for Additional Concurrence Points**

The City of Raleigh project team explained that there may not be a need for the Cooperating Agencies associated with the New Bern corridor to reconvene on additional concurrence points beyond the LEDPA, particularly given that the City has entered into a separate memorandum of understanding with NCDOT to address construction of improvements, maintenance, and use of the NCDOT right-of-way. CAMPO staff asked NCDOT and NC SHPO staff what their thinking on additional concurrence points is for the remaining steps of the project's implementation. Renee Gledhill-Earley (NC SHPO) mentioned that the SHPO doesn't necessarily see the need for additional defined concurrence points, but SHPO staff will need to see that the landscape mitigation plan is included in final construction plans for the project. Richard Hancock (NCDOT) mentioned that he may need to take a closer look at the MOU between NCDOT and the City, but his first instinct is to assume that most of NCDOT's requirements and interests are likely covered in that arrangement. CAMPO staff mentioned that it may have an interest in reconvening for one (1) additional concurrence point at the final pre-construction plans milestone for the Cooperating Agencies to get one more look at the project's elements before the City initiates construction.

5. **Next Steps**

Mr. Martin (CAMPO) mentioned that the next step following the concurrence team meeting is for the Cooperating Agencies to sign the concurrence forms or have the appointed representatives from those agencies indicate via email that they concur with the project sponsor's proposed actions.

Final Concurrence Result: The following Cooperating Agencies have concurred with the City of Raleigh's proposed least environmentally damaging locally preferred alternative (LEDPA) as of April 26, 2021: Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The project sponsor's proposed action for Concurrence Point 5 has achieved full concurrence. The project sponsor and the Cooperating Agencies have agreed to one (1) additional concurrence point and associated concurrence team meeting to be held to correspond to the final pre-construction plans milestone.