

Wake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): Southern Corridor Concurrence Team Meeting - Concurrence Points 3-4 Meeting Summary

May 21, 2021 (10:30-11:45am)
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions

Agency	Role	Names
City of Raleigh	Project Sponsor	Mila Vega, Het Patel, Meghan Finnegan
Capital Area MPO	Cooperating Agency	Bret Martin, Stephanie Plancich, Evan Koff
Town of Garner	Cooperating Agency	Gaby Lawlor
North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) – Division of Water Resources	Cooperating Agency	Rob Ridings
North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT)	Cooperating Agency	N/A
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Cooperating Agency	N/A
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Participating Agency	Lyle Phillips
GoTriangle	Participating Agency	Jay Heikes
Wake County	Participating Agency	N/A
Town of Clayton	Participating Agency	Patrick Pierce
Town of Cary	Participating Agency	N/A
NC State University	Participating Agency	Darcy Downs
Johnston County	Participating Agency	N/A
WSP	Consultant	Rachel Gaylord-Miles, Greg Saur, Kaitlin Hughes

2. Concurrence Process Overview

Het Patel, City of Raleigh, provided an overview of the concurrence process, including the roles and responsibilities of the Project Sponsor and the Cooperating and Participating Agencies. Mr. Patel then reviewed the timeline for the concurrence process for the Wake BRT: Southern Corridor, including dates for a prior concurrence meeting in March of 2020 to address concurrence points 1-2, dates of endorsement by the Town of Garner and City of Raleigh for the proposed Wake BRT: Southern Corridor locally preferred alternative

(LPA), and next steps for the LPA and for the concurrence process coming out of the May 21st concurrence team meeting.

3. Review of Concurrence Point 3: Screening of Alternatives/Elimination of Alternatives

Rachel Gaylord-Miles, WSP, reviewed the aspects of the project that are being considered for concurrence point 3 and, in doing so, provided an overview of the six (6) alternatives that were carried forward for further study at concurrence point 2. She then explained the tradeoffs between the alternatives for the northern section of the corridor in terms of the difference between using the S. Saunders Street alignment versus the S. Wilmington Street alignment. She mentioned that the S. Wilmington Street alignment involves a lower cost of implementation, lower competing traffic volumes, more available right-of-way with fewer potential impacts to properties abutting the facility, better bicycle and pedestrian connectivity opportunities, and the potential for a better transit user experience when compared to the S. Saunders Street alternatives.

Ms. Gaylord-Miles then explained the tradeoffs between the alternatives for the southern section of the corridor in terms of the difference between using a Fayetteville Road alignment versus using an alignment along a new location extension of S. Wilmington Street. She mentioned that a S. Wilmington Street extension alignment would provide more opportunity for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connections and for economic development, including equitable transit-oriented development. She also mentioned that the S. Wilmington Street extension option would provide a parallel facility to Fayetteville Road with lower vehicle speeds and lower traffic volumes that would be better suited to the overall transit user experience when compared to the Fayetteville Road alignment option. She further mentioned that the Fayetteville Road alignment would present challenges for implementing dedicated bus-only lanes.

For the southern section of the corridor, Ms. Gaylord-Miles mentioned that a City of Raleigh Southern Gateway Corridor Study recommended the Wilmington Street extension as the preferred alignment option and that the Wilmington Street extension alignment was endorsed by the Raleigh Transit Authority in April of 2021. Ms. Gaylord-Miles also mentioned that the Garner Comprehensive Plan recommended the Wilmington Street extension alignment as the preferred alignment option and that the Town of Garner endorsed the alignment as the preferred alignment in April of 2021.

4. Concurrence Point 4: Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Recommendation

Rachel Gaylord-Miles, WSP, reviewed the aspects of the project that are being considered for concurrence point 4. She presented a map of the recommended LPA, which would make use of S. Wilmington Street in the northern section of the corridor and a S. Wilmington Street extension in the southern section of the corridor. At the southern terminus of the corridor, the LPA would use Garner Station Blvd and would terminate at Purser Drive.

Bret Martin, CAMPO, asked the City of Raleigh to reaffirm that general purpose travel lanes on the new location alignment of S. Wilmington Street were not part of this project's definition, but that general purpose travel lanes could be included on the new thoroughfare under the definition of a separate project. Rob Ridings, NCDEQ, mentioned that it was a previous question for the definition of the project at concurrence point 2 when that

concurrence point was considered in March of 2020, and if general purpose travel lanes were to be included under the project definition, the Purpose and Need for the project would likely need to be revisited. Mila Vega confirmed that general purpose travel lanes are not part of the definition of the project currently under consideration.

Rob Ridings, NCDEQ, mentioned that the proposed LPA appears to have fewer potential stream impacts compared to other options but with the possibility of greater potential impacts to wetlands. Mr. Ridings mentioned that the NCDEQ will concur with the recommended LPA with the caveat that further avoidance and minimization efforts should occur as the project continues development. Mr. Martin, CAMPO, mentioned that the next step in the concurrence process will be consideration of concurrence on the least environmentally damaging preferred alternative (LEDPA), which will be a more fleshed out view of the alternative that corresponds to 30% design progress for the project and the NEPA-preferred alternative. At that point, actual impacts to streams and wetlands should be much more apparent, opportunities for avoidance and minimization will have been investigated, and avoidance and minimization actions should be incorporated into the project. At the LEDPA concurrence step, it is also possible for further opportunities for avoidance and minimization to be discussed or considered before Cooperating Agencies are asked to concur at that step of the project development process.

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. 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 LPA will be considered by the CAMPO Executive Board in June after a 30-day public comment period.

Final Concurrence Result: The following Cooperating Agencies have concurred with the City of Raleigh's proposed screening/elimination of alternatives and recommended locally preferred alternative (LPA) as of June 3, 2021: Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Town of Garner, and North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) – Division of Water Resources. The project sponsor's proposed actions for Concurrence Points 3 and 4 have achieved full concurrence.