

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR SPECIAL MEETING ON August 8, 2023, 6:00 PM

I. Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. David Carter, Mr. Scott McCall, Mr. Rick Lasater, Mr. Harold Paxton, Mr. Aaron Bland, Mr. Jimmy Whitmire, Mr. James Felty, and Mr. Keith Wilmont were present. Mr. Howard Granat was not present but excused. Mr. Troy Wilson, Mr. Steve Williams, and Mr. Rusty Darnell from North Carolina DOT also attended. Ms. Vicki Eastland, representative of the Land of Sky RPO was also present. Transylvania County staff present were Mr. Jeff Adams, Director of the Planning and Community Development Department and Ms. Darby Terrell, Planner. There were five members of the public present, and no media present.

II. Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

III. New Business:

A. Discuss and approve Prioritization 7.0 List:

Ms. Vicki Eastland introduced herself as the Land of Sky RPO Director. Her position and organization work with Local Government to help advocate and plan for transportation, this includes helping Local Governments when working with NCDOT on their selection of road projects. She explained the Prioritization process involves the NCDOT's Statewide Improvement Project or STIP. This is where NCDOT combines data, division input, and local input into the process of selection of road projects in each County. Ms. Eastland went over the three main categories of the STIP/Prioritization.

The first is Statewide Mobility, which gets 40% of the total funding allocated to STIP. This is based on only data gathered by NCDOT, there is \$3.9 billion available, but there are no projects in the County available for this funding. This funding goes toward projects improving I-26, Class 1 Rail, or Airport projects. The second is Regional Impacts which provides 30% funding and 30% of the input from the Division of NCDOT. The funding is allocated based on population within the Region, in which case Transylvania County is a part of Region G, which includes both Division 13 and 14 (Transylvania County is in Division 14). Ms. Eastland informed the Committee that the funding for this portion is in the negative. The money available is -\$74 million. She explained this is due to the rising cost and will only get worse as time goes on. Example for projects would be making improvements on US 276 or NC 280. The last is Division Needs, which is 30% of the funding, and there is 50% (25% from Division, 25% citizens) taken from local input. The funding goes to all counties in Division 14, which is up to 10 counties. Ms. Eastland

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informed the Committee that the funding for this portion is \$198 million and must be equally shared throughout the Division. The road projects included in this project are all the state roads left, examples of those would be Neeley Road, Crab Creek Road, and Hanna Ford Road.

Ms. Eastland then went over the [Prioritization List](#) and explained each project listed as well as their ability to get chosen by NCDOT to be funded. She explained, each county must submit up to 7 projects to NCDOT. Ms. Eastland then went over the Carryover Project List:

- Projects that have been through this process and completed steps but not funded.
- Sibling project that is currently under construction or is already on the list.
- Submitted in the last 5 years in STIP.
- Originally a big project that was divided up.

She explained these projects are automatically being sent and are not considered a part of the 7 projects they need to submit; this is due to previous years stoppage of the STIP program due to funding issues.

Committee members asked clarifying questions to Ms. Eastland about the projects listed. Committee Member Jimmy Whitmire asked if a certain project will still be finished in the year 2028, Ms. Eastland confirmed it was still on track to be finished then. Ms. Eastland then received multiple questions dealing with potential projects on US 178 from the public present. There is a project on the list for US 178 to help widen the lanes, add safety pull off areas, and add paved shoulders. Ms. Eastland explained that as far as she and NCDOT representatives know there have not been any projects funded yet for US 178, including the one discussed. Committee Member Harold Paxton asked about certain projects for Rosman Highway and why they weren't done all at once. Ms. Eastland explained the projects were originally all one, but to get the project funded they needed to break it up into separate projects. Committee Member Aaron Bland asked Ms. Eastland to explain the scoring that is tied to the projects in the green and orange. Ms. Eastland explained that projects scoring close to or around 40 in both categories means they would more than likely be picked up by NCDOT and funded. The categories do revolve around Regional Impact and Division Needs, so the ones without a score in one category means the project is not considered a part of that category in STIP (as explained above).

Then Ms. Eastland went over the remaining projects that need to be selected as part of the 7 spots to be considered for funding as part of Prioritization. Ms. Eastland explained why each project was chosen and the reasoning behind the project, as well as the ability for it to be funded. Out of the remaining projects Ms. Eastland explained that SPOT ID projects H190748 (Greenville Hwy to Wilson Road Modernization) project and H190385 (Asheville Hwy to Northern Termini, Fortune Cove Modernization) project would be too expensive and the possibility of them being picked up/funded is very low. She also stated

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SPOT ID project H190316 (Everett Road to Crab Creek Road) would be better to submit next STIP since it would be at a better advantage to get funded. Ms. Eastland also informed the board the last project listed is in the process of getting outside funding source and should not be submitted since it should be picked up due to the other funding source. Ms. Eastland asked the Committee to discuss the presented list and decide on which projects should be submitted by her on the County's behalf. The Committee discussed the presented projects and other projects. There were public questions to Ms. Eastland about certain projects that she answered.

During discussion Mr. Bland suggested he would like to see H192416 (Greenville Hwy to Elm Bend/Parkview Road) replacing H190748 (Wilson Road to Elm Bend Road) due to Ms. Eastland's recommendation that the former project would be more likely to be funded. There was agreement by the Committee.

Mr. Bland motioned to approve as presented with the discussed change of adding project Greenville Highway to Elm Bend Road, in place of the project of Wilson Road to Elm Bend Road. Mr. Paxton seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Before the Committee moved to the next agenda item, Mr. Steve Williams, Planning Engineer for NCDOT Division 14 gave a quick update on the current [Comprehensive Project Development List](#) and [Construction Update Report](#) for Transylvania County. Mr. Williams stated that there are still no dates for the Ecusta Trail. There were no comments or discussion by Committee Members or the public present.

B. [Comprehensive Transportation Plan \(CTP Update\)](#)

Mr. Daniel Sellers, Transportation Planning Division for French Broad River MPO/Land of Sky RPO Coordinator, presented the Committee with the survey results received for the Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Mr. Sellers started the presentation explaining that a work group was put together with stakeholders throughout the county to help begin the process of discussing issue areas (roads) throughout the county that they see as the most important to be improved. He then explained that a survey was sent out using MetroQuest, to allow the citizens to comment and give their opinion on the projects chosen as well as be able to give input on projects not listed. The projects were split into two surveys due to the size and complexity of the questions and maps used. There were 125 citizens who took both a Roads, Bridges and Transit survey and a Bike, Pedestrian, and Multi-Use Path survey. This survey opened in December of 2022 and stayed open till the end of January of 2023. There was also an in-person public workshop held in January for people to come in person to give their input. Then Mr. Sellers went through each graph and explained the results, the blue color showed the responses vote of approving the projects, the orange color showed the responses vote against the projects, and the gray color are the people who didn't answer the question. He also briefly went over the slides with the comments.

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The Committee discussed what was presented to them. Mr. Paxton wanted to have the Green Road project removed since it didn't get many votes in favor and due to his recent negative personal experience with NCDOT replacing a bridge near where he lives. Mr. Whitmire agreed with Mr. Paxton and thought the project would potentially hinder the farmlands around it, since the project would lift the road out of the floodway.

Mr. Paxton motioned to remove the Green Road project from the Comprehensive Transportation Plan. There was no second.

The Chair, Mr. Carter, suggested then removing all projects that didn't meet 30% in response rate. For clarification, Ms. Eastland asked if he meant to include King Road, NC 281, Macedonia Church Road, Fish Hatchery Road, and Green Road. The Chair said yes. The Committee then started discussing the results revolving around bicycles and the weight they should put on the survey with only 125 respondents. Committee members discussed that because the age of the county skewing older, that increasing the modes for bikes may not be in the best interest. Discussion was made with both the public and committee members, revolving around bicycles taking secondary roads. Ms. Eastland commented that most of what was presented is included in the bike plans for both the county and city. She also informed the Committee that there are some projects for bikes that have a separate path for them to go that is off the road. Committee members and the public discussed the importance of those for both bike and pedestrian throughout the county, and specifically in certain areas in Rosman where foot traffic is high, and safety is a concern.

Mr. Paxton motioned to remove the Green Road project from the Comprehensive Transportation Plan. No second. No vote.

During discussion, The Chair, Mr. Carter suggested leaving all the projects since the document is for 20-30 years, and if those still do not have the support when it comes to Committee choosing again, then it would exclude them from the list.

IV. Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

V. Committee Members' Comments:

There were no Committee Member comments.

Mr. Paxton moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. McCall seconded the motion. All present members voted in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 PM.