

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. E(4)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: May 14, 2002

TITLE: 2025 Regional Transportation Plan Update

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___NO__X__
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Schedule C. Tier 3 Alternatives D. Tier 3 Projects in Carrboro	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization is currently updating the long-range transportation plan for the region. This memorandum provides a review of the status of the 2025 Transportation Plan. A resolution that accepts the report is recommended for the Board’s adoption.

INFORMATION

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) includes representatives from Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough, Durham, Orange County, Durham County, Chatham County, and the N.C. Board of Transportation.

One of the primary functions of the DCHC MPO is to create a long-range transportation plan every three years, as required by federal transportation and air quality regulations. The current long-range plan was adopted in January 2000. A new long-range plan, the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan, is being developed.

The 2025 Plan will include all road, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects that are expected to be completed through 2025, and a financial plan indicating how these projects will be funded. The 2025 Plan will be used to help identify projects for future state and local Transportation Improvement Programs. The 2025 Plan must also meet federal air quality standards under the Clean Air Act.

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is the policy-making body overseeing the development of the 2025 Plan. This TAC is made up of elected officials from the region including a representative from Carrboro. The TAC has adopted a schedule for completing the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan (Attachment B). The TAC is

scheduled to adopt a draft Plan in late June 2002. Once a draft Plan is approved, there will be a 45-day public comment period.

The schedule proposes that a final 2025 Plan will be adopted in August 2002. The final Plan will be analyzed by State and federal agencies for compliance with federal clean air standards. The federal air quality conformity regulations require that the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Urban Area must adopt a final Plan meeting all federal air quality standards by December 2002. Failure to adopt a Plan by that time may result in a cut-off of federal transportation funding to the area.

OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The 2025 Plan has been developed in three stages, referred to as “tiers.” In Tier 1, 62 different alternatives were evaluated. Each alternative consists of a different combination of highway projects, transit projects, and policy assumptions.

In Tier 2, the 62 alternatives were pared down to 14 alternatives for additional evaluation. The 14 alternatives were then evaluated using the Triangle Regional Transportation Model, a complex computer program that projects future travel demand for the region using land use, housing, and employment projections for the year 2025. The Triangle Regional Transportation Model also includes land use and transportation data for Wake County.

Each of the 14 Tier 2 alternatives was analyzed using the following criteria:

- A. Vehicle Miles Traveled: the sum of daily vehicle miles on the roadway network.
- B. Vehicle Hours Traveled: the sum of daily hours of travel on the roadway network
- C. Average Speed: The average daily operating speed on the roadway network.
- D. Network Congestion: the percentage of the roadway network experiencing traffic volumes.
- E. Transit Mode Daily %: The percentage of all daily trips in the region taken on public transit.
- F. Transit Mode Peak %: The percentage of all peak hour trips in the region taken on public transit.
- G. Local bus riders: Daily ridership on Chapel Hill Transit, Durham Area Transit and Triangle Transit Authority local transit routes.
- H. Rail Riders: Daily boardings on fixed guideway transit, including Phase I rail in Wake County.
- I. Cost (millions): The estimated cost of implementing all transportation improvements in each alternative. This includes capital, operating and maintenance costs.
- J. Measures of Environmental and Social Impacts: A combination of qualitative and quantitative measures were developed to assess environmental and social impacts of alternatives.

In addition to these criteria, the TAC has adopted Goals and Objectives that set forth the urban area values related to the overall transportation system and guide the transportation decision-

making process. The Goals and Objectives serve as a guide in evaluating transportation alternatives for the region.

Analysis of the 14 alternatives suggests that regional mobility can be improved through the implementation of improvements designed to promote alternative transportation modes. The analysis also suggests that those alternatives that focus on promoting alternative transportation modes can produce similar improvements to regional mobility as those that include extensive roadway improvements, at the same or lower estimated cost. These improvements include expansions of the local bus systems, development of high occupancy vehicle lanes, and the implementation of fixed guideway corridors. The results of the alternatives analysis also support the need to implement transportation demand management policies throughout the region and provide an extensive network of bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

The 2025 Plan is now at Tier 3. In Tier 3, the 14 alternatives have again been reduced to five alternatives for additional study (Attachment C). Two of the Tier 2 alternatives have been carried over into Tier 3 because they were found to provide the best results in meeting the criteria and Goals and Objectives adopted by the TAC. Three other Tier 3 alternatives will allow the MPO to further test the impact of different combinations of transportation improvements on regional mobility.

Note that each alternative includes an assumption that an extensive bicycle and sidewalk network will be developed within the region. It is assumed that bikelanes are implemented along principal transportation corridors and that an extensive system of sidewalks is developed. Each alternative will also be evaluated with the assumption that the region has implemented a transportation demand management program that includes carpool, vanpool, and telecommute programs, along with alternative work hour programs with compressed work weeks, staggered work hours and flextime.

NEXT STEPS

The Tier 3 Alternatives are being analyzed and results will be available in late May. These results will be used by the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to discuss and adopt a draft Plan. Once a draft Plan is approved, there will be a 45-day public comment period. During the comment period, presentation on the draft Plan will be made to the Carrboro Transportation Advisory Board and Board of Aldermen so that the Town will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution (Attachment A) receiving this report.