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METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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July 27, 2022

TO: DCHC MPO Technical Committee
 FROM : DCHC MPO Staff
 SUBJECT: FY2024-2033 Draft STIP Swap

Executive Summary

On April 25, 2022, NCDOT released its Draft FY2024-2033 STIP (Draft STIP). Due to fiscal constraints in the state's transportation budget, the Draft STIP did not include any new projects from the Prioritization 6 (SPOT 6) process that concluded in July 2021. Instead, the Draft STIP programmed existing projects in a manner that met with NCDOT's current fiscal situation. This resulted in the removal of many projects from the ten-year Draft STIP.

Following the protocol established by the SPOT Workgroup in winter 2022, MPOs could request to "swap" STIP projects. This would allow projects to either be moved up within the STIP, or for projects that were not included in the ten-year STIP to be moved into the STIP, provided that other projects were therefore removed. Swaps must meet certain criteria:

- The combined budget of projects being moved into the ten-year STIP must be within 10 percent of projects being moved out;
- Projects being swapped must be funded at the same tier; and
- The Division Engineer must concur with the swap.

DCHC MPO staff recommends the following swap:

Projects to Swap In (to the second five years of the STIP):

STIP #	Project	From	To	Description	Funding Amount
U-6120	NC 98	Junction	Lynn	Safety Improvements, Bike/Ped Facilities, Transit Accommodations	\$18,199,000
U-6118	NC 55	Meridian	I-40	Construct Auxiliary Lane	\$5,299,000
P-5736	NCRR	Royal		Close rail crossing at Royal and extend Beryl Road	\$3,196,000
TOTAL					\$26,694,000

Project to Swap Out (be removed from the ten-year STIP)

STIP #	Project	From	To	Description	Funding Amount
U-6021	Fayetteville	Barbee	Woodcroft	Widen to four lanes w/ bike/ped	\$26,000,000

Staff requests that the TC recommend that the Board release this proposed swap for public comment.

Background

In 2019, due to numerous factors such as delays in federal funding from natural disasters, rapid cost escalation on many projects, and large payouts due to lawsuits, NCDOT began to address an upcoming funding shortfall. The COVID pandemic that began in spring 2020 greatly reduced the number of vehicle miles traveled in the state, and gas tax revenues (the primary funding source for transportation infrastructure in North Carolina at the time) plummeted, exacerbating an already delicate fiscal situation for NCDOT. Prioritization 6 (SPOT 6), which was to determine which new projects would go into the FY2023-2032 STIP was cancelled, and NCDOT announced that the new STIP (which would be delayed a year to become the Draft STIP) would include no new projects. In fact, as part of a dual process of updating project costs and recalibrating revenues, some projects would be removed from the STIP.

In winter 2022 the SPOT Workgroup endorsed, and the North Carolina Board of Transportation adopted, a protocol for the development of the Draft STIP. The protocol states that MPOs have the opportunity to “swap” projects – either moving them farther up in the STIP or bringing projects into the STIP – provided that projects can be delayed or removed from the STIP within the same funding tier. In addition, the protocol states that the Division Engineer(s) must agree to the swap.

DCHC MPO staff has identified one set of projects to swap:

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Brandon Jones, the Division 5 Engineer, has indicated his support for this proposed swap.

Below is additional information about each project:

U-6120

This project was funded in SPOT 5, and is primarily a safety project. This project would add bike/ped facilities (likely sidewalks and bike lanes, but as yet undetermined) to a residential area in East Durham. This project

would also include access management and safety measures for vehicular traffic, as well as transit accommodations, such as pullouts and bus stop improvements.

U-6118

This project was submitted by Division 5 in SPOT 5. This project would construct an auxiliary lane on southbound NC 55 from Meridian Parkway to I-40, allowing for easier freeway access and less weaving providing safety benefits. This is a short segment of less than a ¼ mile.

P-5736

This project would close the at-grade rail crossing of the North Carolina Railroad at Royal Street in Raleigh, and extend Beryl Road to provide an alternate route for cars. While this project is in the CAMPO jurisdiction, there are benefits to the planned Durham to Raleigh commuter rail project by completing this closure.

U-6021

This project would widen Fayetteville Street from two to four lanes, with bike/ped accommodations, from Barbee Road to Woodcroft Parkway. While this project would connect the two four-lane sections of Fayetteville Street, it is considered a lower priority than U-6120.

Issues

The DCHC MPO Board, in the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), adopted goals and objectives that prioritize safety over increased capacity on the roadway network. U-6120 is primarily a safety project, and is vitally needed in an area experiencing increased traffic volumes. While there are safety benefits embedded in U-6021, this is foremost a vehicular capacity project. Though there would be bike/ped accommodations in the project, the American Tobacco Trail parallels this section of Fayetteville Street and provides a safe alternative for those users.

Because U-6021 is only eligible to be funded at the Division Needs tier, and that is the project being swapped out, all three projects being swapped in must also be funded at the Division Needs tier. Both U-6120 and U-6118 are eligible to be funded at the Regional Impact tier (though U-6120 was originally funded at the Division Needs tier), and P-5736 is eligible at the Statewide Mobility Tier. The Division Needs tier is the most competitive tier for funding in the SPOT process.

NCDOT informed MPOs on July 13, 2022, that the FY2023 adopted state budget provides additional funding for transportation above what was previously budgeted in the Draft STIP (see attached email). This funding may render the proposed swap moot; however, that and whether or not the swap deadline will be postponed were not known prior to the agenda deadline for the July DCHC MPO TC meeting.

MPO staff discussed two other potential swaps with local jurisdictions and NCDOT. They are:

Churton Street Widening and I-85 Interchange

The widening of Churton Street to four lanes (U-5845) is scheduled in the Draft STIP for right-of-way and utilities in FY27 and construction in FY29. This makes U-5845 a committed project in the Draft STIP. However, improvements to the interchange of I-85 and Churton Street (I-5967) are not scheduled until FY29 or later, which makes I-5967 not a committed project and therefore subject to reprioritization in the SPOT 7 process. It seems improbable that a widening of Churton Street through the I-85 interchange could take place without significant work done on the interchange itself. MPO staff requested, in consultation with local staff, to accelerate I-5967 so that the right-of-way and construction timelines of the two projects are in synch.

MPO staff discussed this issue with NCDOT Division 7 and central office staff, and they are aware of this issue. No Statewide Mobility highway project in Division 7 was identified and supported by NCDOT to be delayed so that I-5967 could be accelerated. MPO staff informed NCDOT that I-5967 was a top highway priority for the additional funding that is going to be included in a revised Draft STIP.

NC 54 and US 15/501

MPO staff spoke with local staff from the Town of Chapel Hill about ways to potentially direct money in the Draft STIP towards North-South Bus Rapid Transit (N-S BRT), which remains the top priority of the Town and MPO staff. One option was to swap NC 54 improvements in Chapel Hill (U-5774B), which is the second half of the Draft STIP, with improvements to US 15/501 (U-5304A), which is no longer in the ten-year Draft STIP. Because of the cost differential, there would potentially be funds available for N-S BRT.

Unfortunately, the only project in the current STIP for N-S BRT is U-5119A. U-5119A is \$200,000 for alternatives analysis for N-S BRT. It was not programmed through the SPOT process, and is therefore not eligible to have its programming increased through the swap process. Therefore, doing the swap would not provide funding for N-S BRT. Since U-5774B is farther along in the development process, and a new corridor study for US 15/501 is delayed, MPO and NCDOT staff recommends not doing a swap of these projects.

Recommendation and Next Steps

The current deadline for swaps in the Draft STIP is September 30, 2022. Board Chair Weaver has directed that any potential swaps be released to the public for a minimum 21-day public comment period. Therefore, in order to approve the swaps at its September 14 meeting, the Board needs to release the swap for public comment at its August 10 meeting.

Staff recommends releasing the proposed swap for public comment, and requests that the TC recommend the same.

Attachment

Email from Van Argabright re: Additional Transportation Funding