DCHC MPO
GOVERNANCE STUDY

NOVEMBER 5, 2021

Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro
Metropolitan Planning Organization

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DCHC GOVERNANCE STUDY | 11.05.2021

Summary and Purpose

Synopsis: An executive summary of the purpose and findings of the DCHC MPO Governance Study.

On September 9, 2020, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO) Board authorized the Lead Planning Agency to contract with a private entity to study and make recommendations to the Board regarding (a) the MPO's governance, organizational structure, and financial management, with particular reference to its ability to play a leadership role in transportation planning for the region; (b) the findings of the MPO's most recent joint federal certification reviews conducted in 2015 and 2019; and (c) the MPO's preparedness to address–in a manner that aligns with the values of the member jurisdictions–emerging issues relating to racial equity, environmental protection and environmental justice, changes in technology, climate change, multimodal mobility, and the link between transportation planning and land use.

Like all MPOs, DCHC was created to fulfill federal requirements shown primarily under 23 United States Code of Federal Regulations 450 (23 CFR 450) / 49 CFR 613; and Titles 23.134 and 49.53 of the United States Code (additionally, with respect to transit, 49 USC 5303/5306) . These regulatory requirements have not been static over the years, with major changes occurring through passage of successive transportation acts, particularly 1991's Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the most recent (as of this writing) Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015. These and other Acts created additional requirements for coordination, performance measurement, management / monitoring of conditions, and planning focus areas.

These MPO requirements focus on the development of a long-range (20+ years) metropolitan plan for transportation and congestion; annual (or bi-annual) work program; and a program of transportation improvements and sources of financing. Beyond these base requirements, MPOs are expected to carry out these and other tasks with the cooperation of many stakeholders, emphasizing low-income / minority communities, modal providers, and federal and state transportation officials. In more recent times, North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS) also recognize MPOs and provide similar guidance to the federal requirements, adding a fiscally unconstrained Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) and partial responsibility for developing and submitting project priorities as described in the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI, 2013) legislation.

Approach

The approach taken was formed by the requirements of the Request for Proposals and subsequent contract and workplan, as well as guidance obtained by an ad hoc steering committee formed for the project. Generally, document reviews and surveys of peers and stakeholders were conducted as the primary means of understanding the processes of DCHC MPO.

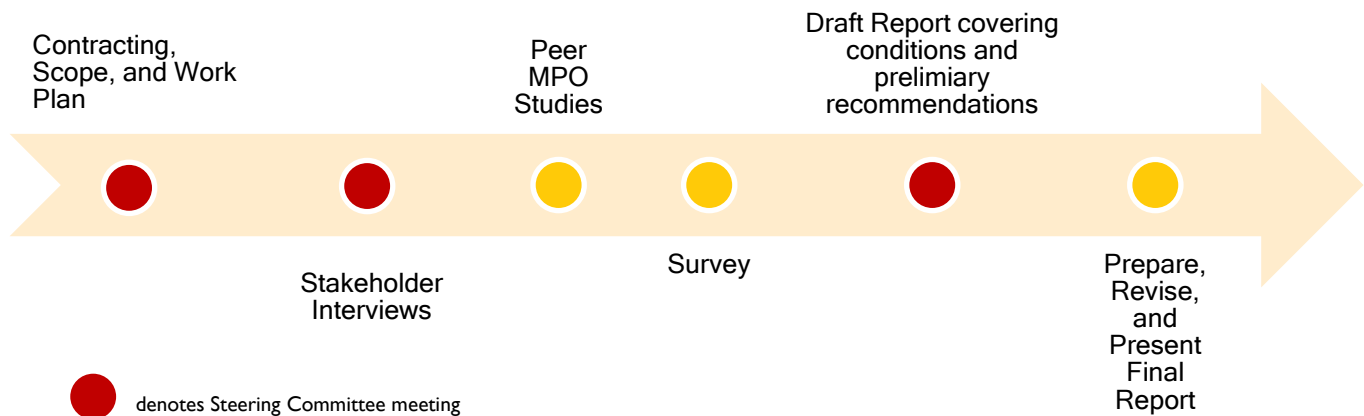The following graphic illustrates this generalized approach, and a description of each element follows.

Figure 1. General Approach to DCHC MPO Governance Study

Document Review. Information on the current organization structure and practices of the DCHC MPO came from printed materials, such as the DCHC MPO Memorandum of Understanding, committee bylaws, and the DCHC MPO Prospectus. Information relating to existing practices, concerns, and issues was gathered through discussions with a number of DCHC MPO stakeholders.

Institutional Surveys. After stakeholder interviews and peer group calls were completed, a survey was sent out to the interviewees, including NCDOT, DCHC MPO, and local staff as well as elected/Policy Board officials. Identical to the three groups, the survey covered administrative goals, MPO deliverables, expectations and priorities as identified through stakeholder interviews. The survey was administered anonymously so that results could be compared without prejudice to determine group alignment and where priorities fall short.

MPO Committee Meeting Audits. An audit was conducted of one Technical Committee and MPO (Policy) Board meeting to understand the dynamics of the meetings and to understand how the planning process plays out during these meetings.

Stakeholder Interviews. Fourteen (14) interviews with MPO member agency representatives and staff were conducted early in the process, with a total of nineteen individuals, in order to better understand existing practices, concerns and issues with DCHC structure and practice. Findings in this memorandum are restricted to summarizing issues and concerns, many of which were repeated or amplified across multiple interviewees and interview sessions. These topics are arranged at the end of this memorandum as follows:

- Compliance with statutory requirements/Certification;
- MPO Policy and Direction;
- Organizational Structure;

- Staffing;
- Regional Collaboration;
- Funding (FHWA, FTA, local programs) and Project Selection / Implementation;
- Data Sharing and Management; and
- Public Engagement.

Specific questions were posed to elected officials and staff on the MPO Board and Technical Committee, and a different set of questions put to the DCHC MPO staff for two of the interviews. These topics and questions are described below, although participants were encouraged to elaborate and add information as they deemed important or as suggested by follow-up questions from the interviewer(s). Staff (MPO) Interview topics included:

1. *Describe staffing arrangements, skill sets, and availability to the MPO (if positions are shared with the LPA).*
2. *Is the staffing adequate to meet current and future demands? If not, in what areas is there a need for more staff or staff with different skill sets?*
3. *Describe the use of consultants, both in terms of regular (recurring) work tasks as well as special projects.*
4. *Describe the MPO's relationship with the following entities:*
    o *Other City of Durham Staff*
    o *CAMPO*
    o *GoTriangle*
    o *Chapel Hill Transit*
    o *Durham Transit*
    o *NCDOT - Division Offices*
    o *NCDOT - Central (Planning, IMD, others)*
    o *TJCOG*
    o *Other important providers?*
5. *The elected and other officials on the MPO Board believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
6. *The members of the TC of the DCHC MPO believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
7. *Are there aspects of the MPO work that could be done better?*
8. *What are the strengths of the DCHC MPO, or what is the MPO doing really well now?*
9. *What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?*
10. *What would you say you need to be doing even better at your job than you are now?*
11. *What's the most important addition to the MPO in the next five years?*
    o *More Staff*
    o *More Training*
    o *New Technology*
    o *Something Else?*

TC and MPO Board Interview topics during the interviews were as follows.

1. *You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
2. *Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?*
3. *Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?*

4. *The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
5. *The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
6. *Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
   ○ *Responsive to inquiries?*
   ○ *Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done?*
   ○ *Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO?*
   ○ *Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies?*
7. *How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?*
   ○ *Very Effective*
   ○ *Moderately Effective*
   ○ *Moderately Ineffective*
   ○ *Very Ineffective*
8. *What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?*
9. *My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*
10. *If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)*

Participants were encouraged to provide additional thoughts at the end of each interview, as well as to expand on their answers or engage different topics than those suggested by the questions. Topics covered by the four peer reviews were informed by advance research on the individual MPO as well as emerging areas of interest revealed by the stakeholder interviews.

Peer Organization Interviews. Peer MPOs were selected based on a variety of criteria including population, proximity to a neighboring urbanized area and/or MPO and other socioeconomic similarities to the DCHC MPO urbanized area. Once selected, peer MPOs were contacted to identify their current MPO structure and practices and to determine alternative mechanisms used to address identified DCHC MPO issues and concerns.

Survey. After the interviews were completed, a survey of the interviewees was developed based partly on the interviewee observations. This survey was distributed electronically, and completed by 15 of the stakeholders, including three elected officials.

This report goes into detail on the governance structure, and reviews by both federal certification review teams and stakeholders in the MPO planning process contacted as part of the scope of work of this study. The main body of the report summarizes the purpose, approach, and outcomes of the study. This last includes observations on organizational structure / documentation and findings supported by the research that will be used to shape the recommendations. Each major section throughout the report includes a very brief Synopsis of that section's contents. Appendices include the stakeholder interviews were supplemented by a review of peer MPOs and a survey completed by 17 MPO staff, local government staff, and elected officials. Key recommendations are broken out into eight categories including communication of information, organizational structure, directions of the MPO. A final chapter includes a subjective evaluation of implementation priorities.

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Organizational Structure (Document Review)

Synopsis. The documents that form a MPO – Prospectus, Work Program, Memorandum of Understanding, and Bylaws – are reviewed here to understand how they might influence the structure of DCHC MPO, as well as to highlight potential areas for closer examination when formulating the recommendations.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU lays out the purpose and composition of the boards as well as basic procedures and operational elements like voting rights, quorum requirements, and agency representation. The MOU is updated infrequently, generally only when new territories and member agencies are added to one or both of the MPO boards (policy and technical advisory committees). The composition and voting structure of the MPO (policy) Board is shown in Table 1.

Agency	Representatives	Voting Weight	Proportion
Durham City Council	2	16 (total)	16/38 (42%)
Chapel Hill Town Council	1	6	6/38 (16%)
Carrboro Board of Aldermen	1	2	2/38 (5%)
Hillsborough Board of Commissioners	1	2	2/38 (5%)
Durham County Board of Commissioners	1	4	4/38 (11%)
Orange County Board of Commissioners	1	4	4/38 (11%)
Chatham County Board of Commissioners	1	2	2/38 (5%)
North Carolina Board of Transportation	1	1	1/38 (2.5%)
Triangle Transit* Board of Trustees	1	1	1/38 (2.5%)
Federal Highway Administration	1	Ex-officio	
Federal Transit Administration	1	Ex-officio	

Table 1. DCHC MPO Policy Board Composition and Voting Structure

*Now GoTriangle

The MPO Technical Committee additionally includes representation from the following voting members: Triangle J Council of Governments; Duke University; N.C. Central University; University of North Carolina; Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority; Triangle Transit (GoTriangle); Research Triangle Park Foundation; N.C. Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (NC Department of Environmental Quality). Other, non-voting members of the MPO Technical Committee not already

shown in Table 1 include: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; N.C. Department of Cultural Resources; N.C. Department of Commerce; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; N.C. Railroad Company; N.C. Trucking Association; N.C. Motorcoach Association; and Regional Transportation Alliance. The MOU language allows for adding or removing non-voting members (not USDOT) as needed without modifying the document and getting it executed by member agencies.

Observations

1. The MOU as written allows for considerable flexibility in the choice of Technical Committee members, with members added without a requirement to change and re-authorize the MOU. Given the composition of the Technical Committee and interest in transit and equitable transportation opportunities, it may be advisable to add a representative of the public school system, as that system carries many transit riders most weekdays. Given the interest of several DCHC MPO member agencies in pedestrian and bicycle transportation, 1-2 additional Technical Committee members may also be justifiable for these modal areas.
2. Some of the nomenclature should be reviewed and updated during the next update of the MOU, including names of organizations and outdated references (e.g., self-certification is mentioned but not the external federal certification review process, which is more involved),
3. The weighted voting structure and two-part quorum requirement are generally based on population of the voting members (except for NCDOT and GoTriangle/Triangle Transit), which will be updated as a result of the 2020 decennial Census estimate. Noteworthy is that it is possible to have a weighted vote invoked by any voting member; *if* weighted voting is invoked, only two parties (the City of Durham plus Durham County, Chapel Hill, or Orange County) are needed to carry a weighted vote. The potential for smaller communities to be outweighed by two of the nine voting agencies may introduce dynamics that hinder regional collaboration and mindset far in excess of the utility of having weighted voting, which is typically rarely if ever invoked. As an observer once remarked for a different MPO with a similar voting structure, "No one ever draws a knife when everyone in the room knows who has the longest knife." Tinkering with voting structures and weights is always controversial. While alternative methods can be proposed, all of them would change the balance of representation and decision-making.

Policy Framework for DCHC MPO Federal Funds. This document outlines the spending and apportionment policy of the DCHC MPO for three categories of funding: STP-DA (now STBG), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The document makes use of some naming conventions and program characteristics (e.g., seven-year MTIP/STIP) that are out-of-date, one by-product of the document not having been substantially updated since 2008.

As the STBG (referenced under an older term, STP-DA, in this document) fund is the most flexible source available and substantial in size, this source of funding is likely the most important from a policy viewpoint. Funding is broken out initially into three categories: reserve for unexpected needs (15%), routine planning / staffing for MPO-wide activities, and extra planning needs which is similar to the reserve fund. No guidelines are offered for the last two categories of funding. After funds have been spent in the first three categories, any remainder is apportioned to three separate funding bins: 25% to transit (further split between Chapel Hill and Durham transit agencies); 25% to regional bicycle and pedestrian projects; and 50% to participating member agencies on a non-competitive basis with a

minimum $500,000 for each municipality over the life of the seven-year MTIP. To access some of the competitive funds, member governments must submit project applications.

CMAQ funding procedures are not as well-developed, perhaps owing to their more-substantial level of constraint, although these funds can be and are used for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects. The DCHC MPO maintains a project tracking system to monitor the expenditures of CMAQ and STBG funds, and there are specific procedures outlined in this document for extensions for expenditures allocated to member agencies. A CMAQ project evaluation analysis policy is referenced as under development.

FTA funding procedures described in the Policy Framework document essentially follow state and federal rules and reporting requirements for Section 5307 funding (no other transit funds are mentioned specifically). Quarterly reports, UPWP updates, and fund status transmittals are sent to DCHC MPO staff, although it is not clear what happens to this information after it is transmitted or how it is used at DCHC MPO.

Observations

1. As with the MOU, the language in the Policy Framework could be updated to be more relevant to current terminology and practice.
2. PL104(f) and SPR (state) funds are not described in this document, which are normally the sole purview of the Lead Planning Agency (City of Durham) and NCDOT, respectively.
3. The details and actual practice of how these allocations work is worthy of further investigation with stakeholder interviews. It's not possible to sufficiently describe outlier project experiences, timeliness/quality of information received/distributed, or perceptions of "fairness" among the participants in the funding allocation and development processes.
4. An additional area of exploration for this type of document is the inclusion of the Strategic Prioritization Process (SPOT) funding prioritization system.

Prospectus. The Prospectus (updated 02.13.2002), along with the Memorandum of Understanding and Bylaws, is one of the documents that describe organizational structure for North Carolina MPOs. The primary function of the Prospectus is to describe the line item work categories contained in the Unified Work Program (UPWP). There are 37 work tasks, broken out into three major categories: surveillance (e.g., traffic counts, crashes, transit data); long-range transportation plan (base year data, travel model updates, bicycle/pedestrian, collector street, rail, and freight); and short-range transit planning (administration, TIP development, civil rights compliance including public engagement and elderly/disabled, incidental planning and project development, and management / operations).

There are three appendices also in the Prospectus:

8.1 Transportation Planning History, listing changes to membership and stopping in 1993;
8.2 Transportation Goals and Objectives, detailed listing of seven goals; and
8.3 Travel Model Protocol, discussing structure of the regional MPO modeling collaboration.

Observations

1. This document is out-of-date and would benefit from an update in terms of membership names, process, and other elements.
2. The Prospectus generally has lost some degree of utility over the years since the work task descriptions are often viewed as being better positioned as an appendix to the UPWP that they describe.
3. It's not clear if the Prospectus Goals & Objectives in Appendix B reflect the most-recent MTP goals or if they are in conflict. The goals in the Prospectus are not the same as the

> livability factors or 10 Metropolitan Planning Factors (derived from federal code) shown in the UPWP, for example.

4. The appendix for the TRM may not be necessary to house in the Prospectus or may need to be updated. The regional travel demand model effort has an extensive library that it maintains at the NCSU Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) site where the modeling team and travel demand model is primarily located.

MPO Board Committee Bylaws. The boards of metropolitan planning organizations operate like a formal, standing committee with independent bylaws. The MPO Board (policy board) of the MPO represents the actions of the MPO formally, and is comprised of nine members, two of which are from the City of Durham. An important function of the MPO Board is noted on the first page of the Bylaws, namely, that Board Members are responsible not only for attending and participating in the MPO's meetings but serving as a liaison between local government boards (e.g., councils and commissions), the public, and local government staff, including those serving on the Technical Committee. MPO Board representation requires a strong understanding of the MPO process, goals, and ongoing projects in order to successfully interface the MPO with the needs of local governments (or NCDOT and GoTriangle).

Triangle Transit (GoTriangle) and NCDOT (Board of Transportation) each have voting members. A quorum is reached when six members representing 20 weighted votes are present. Unlike the MOU, the MPO Board bylaws do not mention ex-officio (non-voting) members (FHWA and FTA). The responsibilities of the MPO Board and, by extension, the MPO, includes development of comprehensive and metropolitan transportation plans, unified planning work programs, metropolitan transportation improvement program, and other MPO program elements. While proxy and absentee voting are not permitted, a single designated alternate with the same qualifications is allowed to attend in the stead of the primary member. Members missing three consecutive meetings are notified with a request to reaffirm or redesignate the member position.

Observations

1. A minor issue of consistency with the MOU would be addressed if FHWA and FTA were acknowledged as non-voting (ex-officio) members of the MPO Board.

2. The allowance of three consecutive missed meetings with no further acknowledgement of the impact on quorum setting seems too permissive. An alternative would be to notify the member government / agency leadership after two consecutive missed meetings AND disallow that agency from quorum determinations until a member from the agency attends another regularly scheduled meeting of the MPO Board.

3. The requirements of MPO Board members in terms of their role as liaisons are important, requiring a strong understanding of the MPO operations and they relate to their own agency. Understanding if and how the MPO educates and trains new members, and offers "refresher" training to long-term members, would be important to accomplishing this goal.

MPO Technical Committee Bylaws. The TC Board is more extensive in its membership, including not only government agencies but modal providers. Table 2 is a complete listing of the members as shown in the reviewed version of the TC Bylaws (August 27, 2014).

Agency	Representatives
The City of Durham	5
The Town of Chapel Hill	3
The Town of Carrboro	2
The Town of Hillsborough	1
Durham County	3
Orange County	3
Chatham County	1
N. C. Department of Transportation	5
Triangle J Council of Governments	1
Duke University	1
N. C. Central University	1
The University of North Carolina	1
The Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority	1
Triangle Transit*	1
The Research Triangle Foundation of NC	1
The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources**	1

Table 2. DCHC MPO Technical Committee Composition and Representation

*Now GoTriangle
**Now the NC Department of Environmental Quality

A host of other agencies have non-voting status, including FHWA, FTA, NC Trucking Association, USEPA, US Fish and Wildlife Service (now NC Wildlife Resources Commission), NC Department of Commerce, NC Railroad Company, and Regional Transportation Alliance.

Unlike the MPO Board, the Technical Committee does not have an option for weighted voting. However, the number of representatives for the larger local governments and NCDOT creates a de facto weighted vote, assuming that everyone representing the same agency would vote similarly on any action. A quorum is achieved with 50% of voting members present and, as with the MPO Board, three consecutive absences constitute an actionable lapse. Unlike the MPO Board, however, the action taken is the removal of that member agency from voting. Voting privileges are restored when the lapsing member attends two consecutive meetings. One pre-approved alternate is allowed. Terms of office are for one year with only two consecutive terms allowed. As with the MPO Board chair and vice-chair positions are rotated among various local governments.

Materials have to be provided at least three days in advance of the TC meeting, which may be considered short for complex initiatives. Bylaw amendments have a requirement for a seven-day

advance notification and require a two-thirds majority of the total membership (not just those in attendance at the meeting) to ratify the amendment.

Observations

1. As with some other documents, cleaning agency names and nomenclature is in order.
2. The Bylaws should not include a lapsed member agency in the quorum requirement until voting privileges are restored.
3. The meeting agenda and packet should be provided seven days in advance of the meeting to allow more time for review and discussion of the items (and to offer corrections at the meeting). Seven days is also the current requirement for presenting Bylaw amendments.

Public Involvement Policy. The Public Involvement Policy (PIP - adopted 02.10.2021), is the policy and document that describes how the DCHC MPO involves the public and stakeholders within the region in their planning efforts. This policy is in accordance with Federal regulations, including the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. In essence, DCHC MPO is directed to involve residents in all stages of the transportation planning process. The Public Involvement Policy guides the MPO's public involvement efforts by identifying planning efforts that require public involvement, notification guidelines and methods as well as the level of involvement desired. This updated policy also identifies strategies that can be used to involve environmental justice communities and contains enhanced guidance on how to review the effectiveness of this policy, including new measures to evaluate the MPO's equitable engagement efforts.

Observations

1. This document is very thorough and goes beyond federal 3C planning requirements, and stands up well to other peer group PIP documents.
2. Meaningful Title VI and Equity inclusion but may want to expand and improving on the Monitoring Program formed through the State of the Region report to determine how well specific tools/processes for outreach are working and tie it back to the MPOs Goals to ensure effective outreach.
3. Strategies for meaningful outreach to underserved and underrepresented populations are well-crafted.
4. Better descriptions of the dissemination of online information and education materials would be meaningful, especially in the post-pandemic world. For example, the availability of virtual meetings is mentioned on page 5. Based on the success that this region has had with virtual platforms, the MPO may want to include the option for virtual vs. in-person format for select meetings or a hybrid based on the need for higher participation.
5. For the Objectives outlined on page 4, may want to include Climate Change and Resiliency as these are subjects cited during stakeholder interviews.
6. The table (page 7) IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is a great addition to the PIP. However, it states that "we will implement what you decide" under the Empowerment column of the table. While input can help in many areas, such a carte blanche statement is over-aggressive in stating the MPO's authority and typical responses to comment that have to include many other factors.
7. Page 9 – Describe how public notification is handled for People with Disabilities and Speakers of Other Languages.
8. Page 12 – Creative and well-described public meeting facilitation is a great addition; may want to include: Traveling Roadshows / Pop-Up events; Informal/educational Town Halls; Board Briefings and educational updates.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an annual document that clearly describes the transportation planning activities for the DCHC MPO, in accordance with 23 CFR 450.314. The UPWP details and guides the urban area transportation planning activities and deliverables for that fiscal year. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) is the most recent law establishing federal transportation policy and funding authorizations. Federal regulations implementing transportation policy (23 CFR §450.308) provide the basis for this regulation.

Observations

1. The UPWP was adopted on 2-10-21, well in advance of the fiscal year beginning 7-1-21.
2. The document includes a well-defined synopsis of planning activities and level of effort for each participating agency
3. Good inclusion of a Development Schedule on page 26. This provides full transparency to the UPWP process.
4. Good inclusion of the project 5-year planning activities for the UPWP process on page 42.
5. May want to consider establishing a Monitoring Program that determines the level of effort and cost associated with specific planning activities and products completed each fiscal year. This would address the issue presented by Policy Board representative regarding priorities and actual costs

2019 Federal Certification Review. The USDOT (FHWA and FTA) conduct a certification review of MPOs every four (Transportation Management Authorities over 200,000 in population) or five years. Certification reviews have evolved over time to become shorter in duration, typically lasting only a single day "on-site" with the MPO. The following is the verbatim description of the purpose of the certification review:

"The review consisted of a desk audit, a public comment session conducted on Monday, May 20, 2019, and an on-site review also conducted on May 20, 2019. In addition to the formal review, routine oversight, including attendance at meetings, day-to-day interactions, review of work products, and working with the MPO on past certification review recommendations and corrective actions provide a major source of information upon which to base certification findings. After the on-site review is complete, a report is written to document the findings."

Certification reviews culminate in corrective actions (which need to be addressed prior to the next review), recommendations for MPO actions, and commendations for good practices already being undertaken. Table 3 highlights the recommendations and commendations (corrective actions are somewhat rare and none were given during this review) received at the conclusion of the 2019 review.

Commendation	Recommendation
The MPO is commended for placing special emphasis on resiliency in its MTP.	It is recommended that the MPO seek best practices to improve public involvement efforts during MTP development.
NCDOT is commended for their coordination with the MPO during the SPOT process, during TC meetings, and in helping the MPO solve its transportation issues.	We recommend that the MPO update its demographic profile before finalizing its EJ analyses, due to the potential change in communities of concern.
The MPO is commended for its website, which is public-facing, and contains readily accessible and current data.	We recommend that the MPO work with NCDOT to develop a formal document or process for linking planning and the environment.
We commend the MPO for developing EJ metrics and for conducting detailed draft analyses.	

Table 3. DCHC MPO 2019 Federal Certification Review Findings

Additionally, the report noted prior areas where DCHC MPO had made significant progress, such as including all modes of transportation in its work program and plans; continue to work on air quality conformity planning and designations of projects; and focus on African-American populations due to this group's prevalence as an environmental justice community. The report details efforts made on integrating freight planning practices, congestion management process (CMP), and development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). On this last, the certification review report notes that, despite differing opinions, the MPO and NCDOT work well together and have improved the project development process over time.

The report also reviewed the board structures, noting that they "effectively and efficiently," without undue delay in passing actions. Quorums are met, proxy attendees are rare, and weighted voting seldom invoked.

Non-motorized projects received 42% of total funding; highway projects 58%. The report notes, "Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are an integral part of the MPO's goal of linking transportation and health issues. Sidewalk, bicycle, and transit projects figure prominently in the MPO's overall transportation initiatives and investments due to the MPO's demographics, which reflect a large numbers of students and persons over 65 years of age."

The MPO coordinates effectively with the public, although the public shows little interest in the dealings of the MPO unless the subject is a controversial project. NCDOT Divisions 5, 7, and 8 are part of the MPO planning area and coordination efforts. Staff from TJCOG work with both DCHC and CAMPO to develop the financial plan for the MTP.

Observations

1. The 2019 certification review did not identify any major shortcomings in the MPO planning process and relatively few minor ones. These reviews are focused on compliance with the letter and intent (performance) of federal requirements.

2. Some of the recommendations, particularly surrounding communities of concern, are commonplace and will almost always appear in certification reviews.
3. This review document does not appear to be located on the DCHC MPO website, but probably should be included on the project website.

Website. The recently updated DCHC MPO website, www.dchcmpo.org, has modernized the MPO's web presence and provides easier access to partner agencies, researchers, stakeholders, and the general public. The MPO's website provides visitors with an overview of the MPO, both its organization, history, and function, information on past and future MPO meetings, as well as completed and ongoing projects, required and special plans and studies, and important local, regional, and federal datasets. The newly updated site provides a clean user interface that is adapted for users both on desktops and mobile devices, and through its navigational functions provides simple answers to address questions that the lay user may have about the MPO.

Observations

1. Website menus for "Who we Are," "What we Do", "Resources", and "Work with Us" are oriented towards the general public's main questions and familiarize visitors to an unfamiliar organization. The MPO should amend the "Learn More" button destination on the "Welcome" image to lead visitors to an overview of the organization, rather than the list of Plans and Programs.
2. The Legistar calendar app on the main page of the website clearly displays upcoming meeting details and allows seamless management and notification of public meetings. However, key meeting details, such as meeting agenda and minutes, are missing.
3. Links to key website destinations (Agenda, Maps & Data, Current Projects, etc.) provide quick access to items that are embedded within drop-down menus. However, the order of these items should be in order of priority to convey important information to the user. Additionally, consider pluralizing "Agenda" to reflect the many committee meetings and meeting agendas hosted through the Legistar system.
4. The Search function for the MPO website does not return website pages or documents when searched for. Ensure that the search function queries the MPO site in addition to returning external sources. Additionally, there is no language menu option for English; visitors who change languages are not able to switch back to an English-language website.
5. The website does an excellent job of documenting Ongoing ("Current") and Complete projects, as well as major programs and plans and special studies. However, some projects, such as the US 15-501 Corridor Study, have multiple pages with redundant information. This creates confusion for the visitor. Consider consolidating projects and studies with multiple pages to eliminate redundancy and avoid conflicting information for these projects.

Key Takeaways & Recommendations

Synopsis. The following findings were derived from surveys, stakeholder interviews, peer MPO studies, and interaction with the Steering Committee over the course of the project. The purpose of stating these findings here is to summarize common themes and identify potential directions for broad categories of recommendations. Recommendations for actions (italicized) and supporting statements grouped into categories.

1. STATUTORY COMPLIANCE/CERTIFICATION

There is broad agreement that Compliance and Certification are achieved on an annual basis. The interviewees confirmed what the 2019 certification review said, in that the DCHC MPO is doing a sound job at core practices. *There is not a specific recommendation for statutory compliance generally or certification reviews specifically, as these are required activities for any MPO with minimum requirements being the purview of legislation. Continuing to maintain good cross-training practices and documenting the roles and practices that produce repeated products (e.g., agendas, plan updates) should continue to be updated if that is not already happening to support succession planning for staff turnover.*

2. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

This category focuses on defining and clarifying the relationship of the DCHC MPO with the City of Durham and the need to better delineate city / MPO staff responsibilities, reporting, accountability, and roles. This study noted that orientation for new Board members is very well received and that the Board collaborates very well. The MPO process encounters hardships where the members of boards, modal partners, and / or MPO staff aren't in close alignment on short-term (project) or long-term (policy) matters.

2.1. Representation. MPOs control representation in two key ways: (1) the voting structure, including membership numbers and weight of individual members in weighted voting procedures; and (2) quorum requirements that may allow suspension of a vote by a small number of members that don't attend a meeting where a vote is to be taken, thus preventing a quorum. The MPO voting structure, similar to that employed by other North Carolina MPOs, was raised by some as ineffective, which may tie back to the perceived conflict of interest for the City of Durham in key decisions. Modifying bylaws pertaining to voting procedures can be extremely challenging and politically fractious, so determining the need for this change should proceed thoughtfully and weighed against the benefits. *The combined recommendation is: (a) conduct a review of state and federal requirements or limitations on voting and MPO structures generally; (b) direct the MPO staff to draft a strategy for dealing with this matter "off-line" from the rest of this study that would include third-party mediation to develop specific alternatives for and consequences of alternative voting and quorum structures; and (c) present the strategy / scope of work to the MPO Technical Committee and MPO Board for approval before proceeding with implementation.*

2.2. Roles. Most, but not all, are comfortable with their role at DCHC MPO or their understanding of what is expected of them within the organization, in particular as it relates to policymakers. People external to the MPO do not fully understand whom to contact and work with at the MPO. *Assigning clear roles to staff and communicating them back to MPO members and stakeholders through an updated organizational chart is recommended, as is*

updating / amending new MPO Board member training to ensure good understanding of roles and responsibilities.

2.3.   City of Durham / MPO Staff Oversight. Although not identified as a significant concern during the investigation process, Durham's role as Lead Planning Agency (LPA) may be perceived as a conflict of interest by some now, a sentiment that is likely to persist over time and exacerbate concerns over equitable treatment of individual members. The best interests of the MPO planning region may not always align with the more defined interests of the Lead Planning Agency, which is responsible in this case for providing staffing, legal support, and material supplies to the MPO. This realization has caused some MPOs to either relocate to the councils of government or form an independent MPO, although the costs for doing may raise the level of financial support provided by non-LPA members.

2.3.a. There are two recommendations here: the first is to change the structure of the MPO from management by a Lead Planning Agency. The MPO should explore multiple for changes to its structure through further study, should they decide to proceed:

> *1. Consolidation of the staffs of DCHC MPO and the Capital Area MPO into a single body. The new organization would retain policy boards for both Urbanized Areas to govern separate funding sources specific to each area, but would retain a single staff.*
> *2. Management of the MPO by a Regional Planning Agency, such as the Triangle J Council of Governments. Under this structure, the MPO Policy Board is retained, with operations managed by the TJCOG.*

2.3.b: Alternatively, this concern may be partially ameliorated by distancing the reporting of staff to internal city personnel, eliminating the split time of key personnel between MPO and non-MPO functions, and eliminating any last-minute modifications to already-sent agenda packets (new items may still be added to an agenda at the outset of a meeting with the consent of members present).

3. MPO POLICY & ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION

The compliance of federal and state requirements should be considered a floor not a ceiling for an advanced, aspirational, and progressive MPO. Help is needed for the jurisdictions to find common ground and work through their issues or controversy; doesn't really seem to be the air space to find that common ground now. There should be a conscious effort to do more informal collaboration that is not purely driven by singular agenda items. There is also a need to carefully select leadership MPO staff that is important for both operational visioning of the future of the organization and translating the priorities and interests of the Board and the member jurisdictions into action. The DCHC MPO has grown past the point suggested by earlier, national research that suggests when a MPO reaches at least seven full-time employees (FTEs) task refinement and personnel specialization should occur. Organization changes generally work on a longer timescale than many would like or anticipate, particularly when those changes require retraining staff or making strategic hires.

3.1.   Alignment of Staff and Board Goals / Vision. There is a disconnect between the activities of the MPO staff and the stated goals of the Board, specifically relating to implementation of policy. There is also a disconnect within the MPO policy-makers in the overall values and priorities for transportation infrastructure versus non-motorized needs. This disconnect includes educating the Board on the framework of MPOs and what they can accommodate in North Carolina under current regulations. The MPO is starting to value more often the opinions of those elected to service in the areas of equity, environment, climate change, reducing private automobile travel (or de-emphasizing roadway widenings more often),

more bike-and-walk-friendly communities, and supported private development that also reflect these core values. Achieving a better alignment is further limited due to the lack of informal communications (i.e., those not involving a specific, "burning" issue of the moment) as well as a lack of formal involvement of the MPO Board in key hiring or budget allocations. *The multi-part recommendation is to: (1) conduct facilitated visioning exercise with MPO Board and Staff participation to jointly define vision and strategies for achieving it; (2) education for new MPO Policy Board members (and ongoing for current members) on federal & state requirements of MPO activities so that everyone understands the limitations of MPO actions; (3) institute informal meetings between MPO staff and member jurisdictions to support better flow of information, project/conflict resolution; and (4) acknowledge the lead role of the MPO Board at key points in administrative actions, such as conducting a collaborative budgeting and hiring processes.*

3.2. Meeting Preparation and Presentations. Staff was graded highly on doing a good job of sending meeting packets with sufficient time to review them prior to the scheduled meetings of the Technical Committee and MPO Board. A pre-board meeting review meeting (optional / drop-in) might offer additional utility to streamline the meetings and provide input to staff so that they can be more prepared with relevant information at the actual Board or Technical Committee meetings. Some local jurisdictions (e.g., Orange County) have already begun to conduct similar meetings between their staff and board members. Some questions might have been answered or made meetings more productive if an informal review was available to board members prior to the actual meeting for complex or controversial matters. Staff presentations need to be made more consistently clear and professional and reviewed by a third party for content, conciseness, and relevancy. There is a need to form a more consistent presentation style and understanding of how to present complex material in both written and verbal forms. *Recommendations are: (a) create a flexible presentation template to be used for every DCHC staff presentation; (b) modify the agenda format to expand the use of consent items (making it clear that an item can be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion at the outset of a meeting) and create a tiered agenda packet that provides brief, consistent summary information on non-consent agenda items in the main body of the agenda and a one-page (maximum) detailed summary on the first page of attachments; and (c) require front-line staff to attend in-person or on-line presentation training exercises at least once every two years, with the first occurrence happening within three months.*

3.3. Meeting Attendance and Engagement. While the engagement of the member jurisdictions has not been identified as an issue over the course of this study, better tracking of member participation, including warnings and reporting of attendance, should be conducted as a matter of course. *Recommendation here: develop an annual report on meeting attendance by member jurisdiction representatives and provide monthly notice of member attendance where absentee representatives are at or near an established threshold for discontinuance.*

3.4. It's important to note that while MPO Staff and Board visions aren't always in alignment, the vision of the DCHC MPO and existing state regulations mesh even less well, with multimodal infrastructure funding, especially for Division-tiered projects, receiving much less attention than many DCHC members might generally prefer. This disjoint calls into question the roll and level of responsibility of even a TMA to exercise control over state and federal resources spent in their planning areas. *The recommendations, which are challenging to implement, are as follows: (a) conduct strategy session(s) auxiliary to*

NCAMPO meeting(s), emphasizing TMAs, to determine feasibility, goals, and course of action; (b) use non-federal, member financial resources or engage with other MPOs to retain lobbying services and refine the initial strategy; and (c) conduct lobbying campaign to modify existing state law that expands local government control over priorities and improve efficient delivery of projects.

4. STAFFING

Most of the discussion on this category was along the lines of what is missing now, and how the allocation of staff resources or skills don't align with MPO Board goals as noted previously. Relative to capacities and skill sets, the MPO staff is typically responsive and has strong technical/analytic capacity but needs to grow its project management capacity, both to move projects forward and support the member jurisdictions while supporting collaborative initiatives (such as communication and collaboration between the Durham and Orange staff working groups).There are serious capacity and other restrictions for implementing meaningful policy changes. Staff resources are sufficient to get the basic MPO requirements completed. However, more staff resources/skillsets are needed to address non-basic tasks of interest to the MPO member agencies.

4.1 Staffing Levels. *Additional staff that were suggested include the following; the recommendation is to hire one or more of these positions as the Board and financial limitations direct. The specialization of MPO staff and tasks as reflected in the positions identified here does not suggest that current and future MPO staff should not be proficient in other aspects of the MPO's operations. All MPO personnel should, at minimum, be informed on and supportive of MPO goals and objectives, multimodal commitments and jurisdictional needs, be competent in the processes and functions of the MPO, and conversant with both member jurisdictions and the general public on these matters. Additional staff recommended here reflect the region's growth and MPO needs in support of member agency tasks of interest that are not basic to the MPO's role.*

4.1a *Transit Planner – this is in increased demand for transit planning services (as well as micromobility, MaaS, and technical solutions to mobility) and has complex issues associated with regional collaboration and federal/ state funding;*

4.1b *Bike-Ped Coordinator – shared positions are difficult to track performance and accountability, and inherently have the perception of fairness in applicability to the LPA and smaller jurisdictional members of the MPO; the increase in demand for these types of projects will continue, justifying a full-time position or initially a position that incorporates transit and other active modes (e.g., bicycling and walking);*

4.1c *Public Relations/Engagement Officer – better understanding underserved populations. Help manage quality and consistency of staff presentations and managing the website and public information;*

4.1d *Project Management – to help facilitate and administrate projects, in particular for the smaller jurisdictions;*

4.1e *Funding Administrator / Financial Specialist (independent) – to administer and manage the various funding programs/grants being utilized at the MPO to implement projects; OR*

4.1f *The Financial Specialist / Project Manager positions could cover both organizational and engineering aspects with one person (note also that CRTPO (Charlotte MPO) gave glowing reviews to their staff person, in large part because*

the work helped solidify relationships with MPO members outside of regular board meetings), although the time devoted to pursue outside (e.g., grant) funding would become more limited.

4.2   Address Funding Level Allocation Policies. The current practice and additional opportunities for in-kind labor and resources needs to be revisited, especially from smaller jurisdictions; the actual application may vary on a case-by-case basis depending on the capabilities / capacities of the managing jurisdiction. A related area is the MPO practice of providing MPO funding to jurisdictions to subsidize staff salaries for participating in the MPO planning process; paperwork requirements and accountability related to this practice make it highly desirable for review and change. *The two-part (these issues are intertwined) recommendation is to discontinue the practice of using MPO funding to support staff participation in the MPO process unless it is for the express purpose of conducting work that the MPO would have to undertake, such as project management. Simultaneously, the allowance and documentation for in-kind services to match state / federal funding should be clarified and revisited, including with TPD / NCDOT.*

5. REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Regional Collaboration recognizes the various productive work arrangements both good (e.g., TJCOG, CAMPO) and in need of improvement (GoTriangle). Regional cooperation can be difficult, as evidenced by several people that referenced the NC 54 West project. It's also worth mentioning again that there is no consistent emphasis on informal collaboration opportunities to help strengthen long-term partnerships and communication channels. It would be good if there were more pre-meeting discussions on controversial or multi-jurisdictional matters, although it is harder to do with limited staff and staff turnover.

5.1   Transit Oversight. The MPO could, and probably will, play an expanded role in regional transit oversight and management, including better oversight to GoTriangle specifically as well as more direct involvement and staff resources applied to transit planning generally in part to incorporate more local voices. *The recommendation, apart from making a key hire as noted in the previous category, is to consciously work with GoTriangle to improve coordination and communication, especially in both formal and (recommended) informal interactions with the MPO Policy Board.*

5.2   Multimodal Interactions with NCDOT. With multimodal initiatives being a premier goal of DCHC Board and Staff, improved collaboration with the NCDOT IMD (Integrated Mobility Division, including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modal planning) needs to improve. This situation has been exacerbated by staff turnover and shortages at IMD but is improving rapidly. Nevertheless, having an advocate within NCDOT for multimodal transportation would likely be viewed as a positive to present a more balanced NCDOT perspective on projects and policies that arise. *The recommendation is that IMD should be encouraged to attend and participate at more MPO meetings to help refine and implement the strong position that DCHC MPO wants to take in these practice areas.*

6. FUNDING

The state restrictions on funding limits for active mode transportation projects including SPOT are felt keenly at DCHC MPO. Some additional attention needs to be paid to developing both SPOT-compliant projects and alternative sources for active mode projects to meet that demand, as well as approaches to effectively advocating for policy changes / flexibility in state regulations. SPOT

misalignment (prioritization / MOE's) with the MPO's active mode goals and aspirations was not mentioned often, but it is clearly underlying issues with DCHC MPO achieving a more multimodal set of implementation priorities. Other issues include insufficient state / federal funding levels at the Division Tier especially and bicycle / pedestrian projects generally; small jurisdictions find the 20% match requirements daunting; management of projects that carry along significant federal or state requirements is challenging for many jurisdictions; and more assistance is needed in many cases for jurisdictions to identify problem statements, conduct alternatives analyses, and generally craft good (and SPOT-favorable) projects. *Recommendations include the following.*

6.1   Staff Resources. *Devote MPO staff resources to improving project competitiveness for limited state funding, especially for smaller jurisdictions. Whether through a new project manager position or existing staff time, MPO staff should engage the project development process before and during NEPA processes to better integrate member jurisdiction multimodal needs into system design.*

6.2   Consider Funding as a Major Function of the MPO. Traditionally, MPOs have not engaged directly with procuring or managing funding sources beyond a basic accounting role. There is some evidence that this is changing, as long-term funding shortages have compelled some MPOs to more directly address funding / financing more directly. *Improve available funding resources, including when considering on making key hires and allocation of staff resources.*

6.3   Create New Funding Sources. This action would require state authorization but might be compelling as a model to reduce state burdens on secondary road projects and non-highway mode projects. *A more involved but ultimately perhaps game-changing measure would be to create a new or modified regional organization to manage a new funding source.*

6.4   Reward (more) Cross-Jurisdictional Projects and Collaboration. The DCHC MPO needs to incentivize cross-jurisdictional projects, including those that have strong local benefits, in part to reward and improve collaboration overall. *This action might include the staff support for management / development mentioned in 6.1 or relaxing rules regarding the allowances for in-kind (or reduction of) state match requirements.*

6.5   Clearly Define Systems-Level Projects. This would give greater clarity to projects prior to design and construction. *Recommendation is to give clear statements of purpose and need for all projects, with analysis of alternatives and results of public engagement to bolster support for preferred design treatments.*

7. DATA SHARING & MANAGEMENT

MPO staff are strong in data collection and technical analyses, but the tasks staff undertake often are not aligned with the information Policy Board and Technical Committee members need or want to make informed decisions, such as development of the travel demand model. This results in an imbalance of allocation of staff resources relative to the desired outputs of the MPO, and Policy Board members without information that is relevant for decision-making processes.

Progress has been made by the recently reformatted DCHC MPO website, which provides access to numerous data sources, dashboards, and maps, which serve members of the general public, academics and researchers, and support MPO members and staff in various planning activities. The

MPO provides data access through a Data page, consisting of links to datasets; and the Maps page, which provides information on GIS as well as providing links to maps from external agencies and its Mobility Report Card. These data sources provide key information about the region, not merely limited to transportation characteristics, but also including demographic information on vulnerable populations, and broadly support the MPO's transportation planning activities, including (1) special studies and (2) the Congestion Management Process.

Through the data tab, site visitors can access both demographic data, traffic data for both the MPO and its partners, as well as MPO-maintained transportation performance dashboards pertaining to the national Transportation Performance Measures (TPM), the Congestion Management Process, and the Transportation Improvement Program. Projects listed in the TIP are limited to the current four-year program and the dataset does not extend to the long-range MTP and CTP documents prepared by the MPO and regional partners. At times, there is a disconnect between the data that the MPO collects / produces, and the data needed for decisions by the MPO Board. The MPO's work on the TRM is excellent, but Policy Board members seek additional data not reflected and/or modeled in the TRM. Finally, the travel demand model doesn't do a good job with bike, pedestrian, and transit flows. Other sources may be more effective to supplement multimodal travel, including third-party data resources.

While improvements have already occurred, and more improvements will occur organically over time, the following recommendations for guiding these changes are strongly supported by the findings of this study.

7.1   Ease Website Access for Stakeholders. People, especially non-technical consumers of information, are readily discouraged by non-intuitive interfaces, and have become used to tailored user-focused on-line experiences. *This recommendation would focus on improving accessibility of information for general public by (a) improve data visualization tools (website) by transitioning data visualization to a consistent tool, e.g. ArcGIS Online; (b) make basic transportation information and area characteristics easily accessible from home page of website – no more than a one-click separation from the landing page; and (c) update publicly available datasets to ensure most recent information is depicted (e.g. Mobility Report Card 2014 / 2019).*

7.2   Ease Website Access for Members. *Improve overall accessibility of all datasets by (a) build and maintain data dashboards for spatial datasets relevant to member jurisdictions, including transportation, economic and demographics characteristics; (b) create a data portal for researchers, transportation planning professionals, and member jurisdictions for planning activities, focusing on refreshing rates and notices sent to users of that information when a refresh is conducted; and (c) transition all datasets to spatial data and eliminate use of non-spatial data sources (e.g. PDF spreadsheet).*

7.3   Long-Term Improvements for Public Access. Continue to improve website accessibility and clarity of information, especially relevant as website updates continue to roll out. The MPO website needs to continue to modernize (the website has recently undergone a major redesign) and the content needs to be made more relevant to the stakeholders and those benefiting from the MPO's role as a regional forum for discussion and data dissemination. *Suggestions include: (a) prioritize most basic information for website visitors, such as linking "Learn More" to DCHC MPO's "About" page rather than work products; (b) eliminate hyperlinks that do not function, readily achieved through user settings or one-time link-checking tools; and (c) improve accessibility of important studies,*

> *plans, and information by reducing nested links and deeply embedded information (e.g. US 15-501 Corridor Study).*

7.4   Include Non-Technical Consumers of Information. While DCHC MPO is very strong in data collection and internal management, the preceding recommendations will help shore the member agency technical staff access. However, elected officials, and the ones that form the core of the MPO process, typically would like to see access to information at a different, more summarized level. *In order to achieve this goal, the MPO should ensure the right data is presented to the Policy Board for decision-making purposes using graphics, succinct (one-page, maximum) text summaries, and jargon-free language.*

Additionally, the Stantec staff conducted a review of the MPO website as it existed at the time of this reporting. The following observations should also be considered for specific modifications.

- MPO pages for Maps and Data provide similar content; in fact, the Mobility Report Card maps on the Maps page are related to the same Congestion Management Process as the CMP portal accessible through the Data page. To reduce potential confusion for site visitors, the MPO should consider augmenting the Maps page to provide more Maps, with the Data page providing access to datasets, or the two pages should consolidate.
- Dashboards employed by the MPO for tracking and displaying performance measures, both for the TPM, CMP and TIP programs, are excellent. Data is clearly represented for the entire MPO area and easily interpreted by both the general public and transportation professionals. The MPO should provide direct links to these dashboards from the Home page to improve accessibility.
- While the Data page provides a link to the 2019 Mobility Report Card, the 2014 Congestion Management Process data is linked on the Maps page. Update these dashboards with more recent data to provide visitors with the most relevant information on travel characteristics.
- Particularly for demographics data, hyperlinks to data sources lead to data sets or partner websites that may present navigability challenges for unsophisticated users. The MPO can improve overall accessibility of all data sets by presenting it with modern data visualization tools, such as ArcGIS Online (which the MPO already uses) or Tableau.
- MPO Products/ Deliverables, Data & Performance Measures: the news here is better, but the data is generally inaccessible to the local governments and other program participants. While the State of the Region Report and the Mobility Report Card (MRC) dashboards are public-facing for collection, data presented to the public appears outdated (e.g. MRC 2014 data is currently presented as the most current) or is nested underneath subpages accessible through the Data page. Other metrics, such as demographic or economic statistics supportive of MPO products and local agencies but not required of the MPO, are inaccessible through the website, and may be provided in inaccessible formats through partner agencies (see, e.g. demographics data).

8. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Issues here include lack of dedicated personnel, although this situation is improving but resources and emphasis on the region's very diverse populations are needed. This topic includes both conducting effective engagement and understanding performance metrics to gauge progress; a prior recommendation addressed staffing capacity.

8.1 Articulate and Execute an Improved Public Outreach Paradigm. Under-represented populations can be challenging to engage at the regional/ MPO level, with different levels of emphasis placed on diversity and equity, but there is a widespread interest to increase the MPO's efforts in this arena; equity, diversity and public engagement are more important now. Reaching the various demographics and responding to inquiries is critical. This effort is supported by: (a) conducting research on best practices to identify and engage underserved populations; develop preferred strategies; (b) partnering with TJCOG and / or NC Central University to maintain accessible database of contacts and data, including quarterly meetings with other partners; and (c) updating the Public Participation Plan and Title VI actions / language to address LEP / aged / low-income / minority and other populations. One local example for such best practices and strategies is the City of Durham's [Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint](). *Recommendation: MPO adoption of formal principles for equitable engagement and community engagement strategies.*

8.2 Implement Performance Measures for Public Participation. Performance measures for public participation are challenging, since the connection between the action (e.g., a public meeting) and the reaction (attendance) are confounded by the level of controversy of the issue being addressed, choice of venues, timing, and past history of engagement. Ideally, engagement with the planning communities happens continuously, not just when there is a major event like a draft plan or corridor study rollout, to establish and strengthen these relationships between the MPO and its various communities. *The following are suggested to help achieve this action: (a) Clearly articulate target populations for outreach, including environmental justice populations, and identify communities of concern; (b) identify and develop clear benchmark standards for achievement, both endogenous (MPO operations) and exogenous (external impact on communities); and (c) report back to MPO Board and TC Board on results; include in MPO Performance Dashboard - preferably on the MPO website but initially as a brief, graphically compelling summary sheet.*

8.3 Create and Apply Equity Assessment Tools. The MPO is required to consider Environmental Justice populations, but how that is done is largely left to individual MPOs. A consistent application of rapidly evolving equity tools like FWHA's STEAP or USEPA's EJScreen, would be informative during project evaluations and selection processes. Additionally, health impact assessments (HIAs) can be done faster now thanks to vulnerable population assessments facilitated by such tools as ESRI's Business or Community Analyst or BroadStreet, as both are affordable third-party tools that help assess impacts. Finally, there are well-documented procedures for addressing the impacts of policies, not just projects, such as the eight-step process presented by Eugene Bardach (note: also consider William N. Dunn's seminal treatise, "Public Policy Analysis: An Integrated Approach, 2018). *The specific recommendation is that the DCHC MPO begin to present a consistent and robust impact assessment of project, policies, and priorities, including those actions undertaken by consultants, member agencies, and external partners.*

Implementation Priorities

Successful implementation of the recommendations suggested by this Study recognizes both limitations on resources and the MPO's desire to most effectively improve its performance as an organization. Federal and state infrastructure funding has become less predictable over the past decade even as the needs to maintain and grow transportation networks have increased. In order to best effect the desired changes in the MPO's organization and function, priorities must be drawn among the recommendations generated here.

The table below summarizes the evaluation factors and method developed to prioritize amongst the recommendations developed through this process. Evaluation factors consider both the costs and benefits of each recommendation, recognizing both the level of effort and input necessary to undertake a given improvement as well as the magnitude of impact. For cost factors, a lesser the cost to the MPO, the higher the score a project receives; conversely, for benefit factors, the greater the impact to the MPO, the higher the score (refer to Table 4).

Cost Factors:

- **Cost of Implementation:** the anticipated financial impact of a recommendation, typically in dollars, including external & contracted expertise
- **Administrative Cost:** anticipated burden upon MPO staff
- **Political Challenge:** the anticipated level of political engagement necessary to achieve the desired outcome

	LEGEND	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
COST FACTORS (high is bad)	Implementation Cost	2	1	0	-1	-2
	Administrative Cost	2	1	0	-1	-2
	Political Challenge:	2	1	0	-1	-2
BENEFIT FACTORS (high is good)	Project Delivery:	-2	1	0	-1	2
	Equity:	-2	1	0	-1	2
	Operational Performance:	-2	1	0	-1	2

Table 4. Cost / Benefit Factors and Scoring

Benefit Factors:

- **Project Delivery:** the degree to which the delivery of projects is made faster, cheaper, or is otherwise improved
- **Equity:** the degree to which the positions of smaller member jurisdictions *or* underserved populations are improved through access to information and informed decision-making
- **Operational Performance:** the degree to which the recommendation facilitates the improved delivery of MPO technical products or services

The next page graphically (Figure 2) summarizes the subjective evaluation of all recommendations.

Category	#	Recommendation	Cost of Implementation	Administrative Cost	Political Challenge	Project Delivery	Equity	Operational Performance	IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY
			COST FACTORS (high is bad)			BENEFIT FACTORS (high is good)			
Statutory Compliance &	1	Maintain current compliance procedures, including documentation, especially during succession of key staff.	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Organizational Structure	2.1	Formalize a review process for assessing options and modifying voting structure and/or quorum requirements to assess fairness to smaller jurisdictions. Improve meeting preparation, and more clearly define MPO staff roles and LPA roles.	Low	Moderate	Very High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	-2
	2.1a	Review State and Federal compliance laws, and obtain legal opinion on flexibility.	Low	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-4
	2.1b	Evaluate methods permitted by law, including Sphere of Influence, District Voting, Re-weighting, Dual Weighted/Unweighted Voting.	Low	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-4
	2.1c	Enact transition to new voting, quorum schema (if necessary).	Low	Moderate	Very High	Moderate	High	Moderate	0
	2.2	Improve new Policy Board member orientation and update organization chart to better understand / communicate organizational roles and objectives.	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	1
	2.3	Conduct a review of Lead Planning Agency (City of Durham) oversight and authority; identify areas of modification to ensure objectivity and efficiency.	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	0
MPO Policy & Organizational Direction	3.1	Better align MPO goals and vision between MPO staff and MPO Board.	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	3
	3.1a	Facilitated visioning exercise with MPO Board and Staff participation to jointly define vision.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-6
	3.1b	Conduct "refresher clinic" on MPO responsibilities, limits of authority, and purposes under federal and state law and practice.	Low	Low	Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	-2
	3.1c	Institute informal meetings between MPO staff and member jurisdictions to support better flow of information, project/conflict resolution.	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	2
	3.1d	Conduct pre-Board meetings conference calls for items with cross-jurisdictional and complex / controversial impacts.	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	1
	3.1e	Conduct collaborative efforts between MPO / LPA senior staff and MPO Board representatives during budgeting and key staff hiring processes.	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	3
	3.2	Improve consistency of presentation materials to MPO Board.	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	0
	3.2a	Develop presentation templates and guidelines.	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	4
	3.2b	Modify MPO Board and TC Board agendas to include (1) an expanded consent agenda and (2) a high-level (one paragraph) summary of other agenda items.	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	1
	3.2c	Require training for front-line staff on best presentation practices with updates every two years.	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	0
	3.3	Change policy at State levels to align MPO requirements with Policy Board Vision	High	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High	0
	3.3a	Conduct strategy session auxiliary to NCAMPO meeting, emphasizing TMAs, to determine feasibility, goals, and course of action.	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-5
	3.3b	Use non-federal, member financial resources or engage with other MPOs to retain lobbying services and refine strategy.	Moderate	Low	Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-4
	3.3c	Conduct lobbying campaign to modify existing state law that expands local government control over priorities and improve efficient delivery of projects.	High	Low	Low	High	High	High	4
Staffing	4.1	Hire additional staff to improve range and capacity of MPO staff complement.	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	1
	4.1a	Transit Planner/Coordinator to provide leadership in relationship with GoTriangle.	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	1
	4.1b	Full-time Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator to handle full responsibilities of MPO, member jurisdictions for bicycle & pedestrian planning needs.	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	High	3
	4.1c	Public Information Officer to provide leadership and improve effectiveness in public engagement, outreach to underserved communities.	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	1
	4.1d	Project Manager to assist member jurisdictions with project delivery.	High	Moderate	Moderate	Very High	Moderate	High	2
	4.1e	Financial Specialist to improve effectiveness of MPO with securing state dollars through strategic prioritization process.	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	1
	4.1f	OR Consider Project Manager/Financial Specialist position: merging roles may improve effectiveness in role.	High	Moderate	Moderate	Very High	Moderate	High	2
	4.2	Clarify use of in-kind matches and discontinue the practice of using MPO funding to subsidize staff for participation in the MPO planning process.	Very Low	Very Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	6
Regional Collaboration	5.1	Improve collaboration with GoTriangle and encourage better participation on the Policy Board.	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	2
	5.2	Encourage Integrated Mobility Division to be more participatory in MPO meetings, processes and activities.	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	4
Funding	6.1	Devote staff resources to improving project competitiveness for limited state and federal funding (including grantsmanship).	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	-1
	6.2	Improve on available funding resources and implementation resources for member jurisdictions to support bicycle and pedestrian projects.	Low	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate	3
	6.3	Consider creating a separate MPO funding source to support member jurisdictions' project implementation (consider bonds, sales tax – will require legislative approval).	Low	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High	2
	6.4	Coordinate efforts among jurisdictions to support cross-jurisdictional projects.	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	2
Data Sharing & Management	7.1	Improve accessibility of information for general public.	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	2
	7.1a	Improve data visualization tools (website) by transitioning data visualization to a consistent tool, e.g. ArcGIS Online.	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	2
	7.1b	Make basic transportation information and area characteristics easily accessible from home page of website.	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	3
	7.1c	Update publicly available datasets to ensure most recent information is depicted (e.g. Mobility Report Card 2014 / 2019).	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	1
	7.2	Improve overall accessibility of all datasets.	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	2
	7.2a	Build and maintain data dashboards for spatial datasets relevant to member jurisdictions, including transportation, economic and demographics characteristics.	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	1
	7.2b	Create data portal for researchers, transportation planning professionals and member jurisdictions for planning activities.	Moderate	Moderate	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	1
	7.2b	Transition all datasets to spatial data and eliminate use of non-spatial data sources (e.g. PDF spreadsheet)	Low	High	Very Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	1
	7.3	Continue to improve website accessibility and clarity of information.	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	3
	7.3a	Prioritize most basic information for website visitors. Link "Learn More" to DCHC MPO's "About" page rather than work products.	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	2
	7.3b	Eliminate hyperlinks that do not function.	Very Low	Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	3
	7.3c	Improve accessibility of important studies, plans, and information by reducing nested links and deeply embedded information (e.g. US 15-501 Corridor Study).	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	1
	7.4	Ensure the right data is presented to the Policy Board for decision-making purposes.	Low	Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate	2
	7.5	Continue the practice of purchasing StreetLight Data, Inc. datasets, including bicycle and pedestrian options.	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	4
Equitable Engagement of Public and Stakeholders	8.1	Articulate and Execute an improved process for effective and equitable public outreach.	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	High	3
	8.1a	Conduct research on and develop best practices to identify and engage underserved populations (example: Durham Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint).	Low	Moderate	Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	-4
	8.1b	Partner with TJCOG and / or NC Central University to maintain accessible database of contacts and data, including quarterly meetings with other partners.	Moderate	Very Low	Low	High	High	High	5
	8.1c	Update Public Participation Plan and Title VI actions / language to address LEP / aged / low-income / minority and other populations.	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Very High	High	5
	8.2	Implement performance measures for the public participation efforts of the DCHC MPO.	Low	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	High	4
	8.2a	Clearly articulate target populations for outreach, including environmental justice populations, and identify communities of concern.	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Very High	Moderate	4
	8.2b	Identify and Develop clear benchmark standards for achievement, both endogenous (MPO operations) and exogenous (external impact on communities)	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Very High	High	5
	8.2c	Report back to MPO Board and TC Board on results; include in MPO Performance Dashboard.	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High	5
	8.3	Create equity assessment tool(s) for projects, such as STEAP or EJScreen, and integrate into project prioritization and evaluation.	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	3

Figure 2. Prioritization of Recommended Actions.

Appendices

A.   MPO Committee Audits
B.   Stakeholder Interviews
C.   Stakeholder Surveys
D.   Peer Organization Interviews

A. MPO Committee Audits

Synopsis: MPO technical committee and MPO (Policy) Board meetings were audited to better understand the information presented, meeting flow, and dynamics at these meetings. The following are observations obtained during these listening sessions.

MPO BOARD MEETING (APRIL 14, 2021)

Flow of meeting was smooth, without any obvious difficulties in understanding information provided.

Not much discussion on TIP Amendment, even though it was for funding for new projects. No obvious backup information on that item.

Good update / coordination with CAMPO transit plan (presented by Bret Martin, CAMPO). The presentation was long and detailed, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Wendy Jacobs: "Thank you; an incredibly impressive presentation."

This was followed by a presentation on a transit study / survey from Durham.

MPO TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (APRIL 28, 2021)

The login to the Facebook live feature was not as smooth as that experienced for the MPO Board meeting (initially, only the first two minutes were showing until the screen was relaunched several times to access the live meeting).

Agendas and agenda packets are included on the DCHC MPO website but not at the same location as the video.

Presentations included one on public transit alignments (Andy Henry) that included some back-and-forth on right-of-way protection through the CTP-designated alignments. One map error was pointed out during the discussion. A second presentation on the deficiency analysis actually referenced the CAMPO mapping application that has "everything on it."

The presentations included an overview of the STBG funding and an overview of the submittals received, which amounted to twice the $1.3million available.

Observations

Overall, the quality of the Facebook live application is good with clear audio and video transmission. Functionality could be improved if meeting agendas / packets are accessible in the same location as the video. Bilingual translation of the proceedings was not located.

The Facebook live viewing does not allow for "chat" or other live comments to the proceedings (messages are sent to a staff member, but that is only mentioned at the outset of meetings). Participants in the Zoom call (which is televised via Facebook live) can "raise a hand" and be acknowledged by participants. Adding a feature for the public to comment outside of what would be the case for in-person meetings may not be desirable, and would need to be moderated.

It became clear during the transit ROW discussion that legal representation would have been helpful prior to the meeting and development of the agenda item or during the meeting which led to an impasse. It might also have been helpful to conduct a preliminary meeting to flesh this topic out prior to the TC meeting.

The resolution on some maps (deficiency analysis) was too low, and in one case (transit ROW discussion) was inaccurate. Otherwise, staff took pains to make technical information accessible to a broad audience.

It might be good for those speaking, particularly staff, to have their video image shown while they are speaking instead of presenting a non-speaking person (e.g., the body chairperson).

It would be worthwhile as a follow-up action to get a walk-through of how the competitive funding (STBG) is conducted.

From a procedural standpoint both meetings were conducted smoothly, with a balance of formal and informal tenor that facilitated open dialogue (which may have run a little long in some cases after it was clear that a resolution could not be achieved).

B. Stakeholder Interviews

Synopsis: Stakeholder interviews were conducted around a set of questions (different for DCHC staff) but were allowed to wander to topics of interest to each interviewee. Interviews typically lasted about one hour and were summarized during the meeting and cleaned for consistency and formatting immediately afterwards. Interview responses figured heavily in the development of the subsequent survey (see Appendix C) and peer MPO studies (Appendix D).

INTERVIEW #1: NISHITH TRIVEDI & JAMEZETTA BEDFORD (ORANGE COUNTY)
Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 1:00pm

The meeting was hosted by Mike Rutkowski (Stantec), and Scott Lane (J. S. Lane Company). Mr. Trivedi noted that Orange County should be on the advisory group for this study, which he had requested.

Ms. Bedford (JB) noted that GoTriangle Advisory Board is poorly run (JB). She has served three years as an Orange County Commissioner and, until recently, was connected with the Burlington-Graham MPO. She is still learning some of the MPO nomenclature, and credits Mr. Trivedi with helping her along, as needed.

Mr. Trivedi (NT) said that he is a former Chair of the Technical Committee, and is very experienced with MPO matters.

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Mr. Trivedi is very comfortable (agree); he has helped Jamezetta (agree), but the packets are very thorough and she reads them before the meetings. Opportunity to speak with Mr. Trivedi and other Orange County elected representatives to walk through the agenda is very helpful. Five different governments, two MPOs and one MPO requires more and more coordination.

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- Focus on pedestrian and bicyclists (JB)
- Focus on BRT and coordination with CAMPO (JB)
- (NT) Staff gets into the weeds and technical underpinnings in the model, performance, regulations, and policies including tying back to the work of TJCOG and CAMPO; very fact- and science-driven
- Don't inject politics, which is a very good thing (NT and JB)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- (JB) County was divided on light rail transit (Jamezetta opposed cost but supported the project)
- (JB) The political entanglements confound climate change and transit initiatives
- The presentation of the data is not as good as the data itself (now using common-source data that everyone agrees with) (NT)
- (NT) Some projects that are completed call for a Phase II of work – why should that be? (NC 54 study as one example) – need to define success first in these studies

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (JB) – we get it before the weekend; meetings on Wednesday so usually have 4-5 days including the weekend to review the packet
- Agree (NT)

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (JB) – very timely, very concise
- Agree (NT) - try to keep their presentations short, clear, and concise

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree (JB and NT); includes all staff for different things (NT)
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Agree (JB and NT) – very skilled, very experienced and they handle difficult situations well
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Agree (NT); Not Sure (JB); if there were more staff not sure what they would do; Ann has a strong public engagement background as exemplified by the recent environmental justice report
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? (NT) – this MPO is doing a great job already, and not necessary to learn from other MPOs;

Mike Rutkowski noted that lessons can still be learned from other MPOs. He noted that there is not a 20% match available in Orange County due to lack of local government resources – proposing to match with in-kind services

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a.   Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- (NT) Find better ways for local jurisdictions to be more involved and not just at TC and sub-committees including providing in-kind labor instead of hiring more staff for a proposed project (e.g., study); for example the upcoming US 70 will be managed by Mr. Trivedi with the MPO handling the contract; be nice if there were resources available to do LAPP-like program at DCHC MPO.
- (JB) Not sure; so little funding that the project list did not include any projects for SPOT 6.0; there are places where we need sidewalks in North Carolina and is behind in basic street infrastructure;
- (NT) noted that CRTPO and CAMPO is getting more sidewalk, pedestrian, and bicycle projects completed

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree (JB) because of weighted voting structure; conflict within Orange County about what the future of Orange County should look like in the future (NIMBY-ism)
- Disagree (NT) because much of rural Orange County is not covered in the MPO planning boundary; rural roads are now cut-throughs for regional roadways because local jurisdictions don't want to improve regional corridors (JB concurs)

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Not Sure (JB), probably, but not sure if it would be right!
- Agree (NT), they honor and exemplify the Three-C process

INTERVIEW #2: KAREN ALLEN HOWARD (CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSIONER) AND CHANCE MULLIS (CHATHAM COUNTY TC MEMBER)
Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 2pm

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Struggled the first couple of years (KH)
- Agree, been at it for three years some uncertainty (CM)

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- A bridge that has been flooding was moved up significantly in record time with staff working together (KH)
- Having a good working relationship and answering questions; willingness to meet (CM)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- The big failure has been the Light Rail Project after so much work went into it (KH and CM)
- They compete with Durham, Chapel Hill, Orange County and their projects tend to have higher priority

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree (KH); there is a lot to review in those packets, and she and others sit on other boards that compete for their time
- Agree (CM); they always have the packet, which are lengthy, one week ahead; he creates high-level memos to cover the highlights for his members; a pre-board meeting review meeting (optional / drop-in?) might be useful; some questions might have been answered if an informal review was available to board members prior to the regular meeting

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree, generally (KH); sometimes the text is pretty small, now that she understands all the acronyms
- Agree (CM); it does take time to review and its often full of acronyms and technical material

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree (KH and CM); very prompt in their response
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Agree (KH and CM); we have excellent technical staff and helpful to have NCDOT engineers present to answer questions [note: could a staff engineer be useful?]
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Not sure (KH); seems to be done on time; Not sure (CM); a few more staff members to divide things up might be helpful with more people to help Aaron Cain (it works now but could be better)
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? Not sure (KH); they seem to be spread a little thin; Disagree (CM); basic needs are met and more staff could be useful in this regard and to help the transition to move from rural to urban to get more opportunities

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

- One missed opportunity initially but then responded to it quickly for an issue involving federal funding (KH and CM)
- Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- It is starting to value more often the opinions of those elected to service in the areas of equity, environment, reducing cars (not just making bigger roads), more bike-ped-friendly, and supported private development that also reflected these same values so that they aren't coming back all the time to fix things (KH); love to see land use / development happen in concert with transportation development more often
- Bridge the connection between urban and rural planning at the MPO, especially when the rural areas are really expanding quickly, e.g., getting transit to rural areas (CM)

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Not Sure (KH); the place Chatham County has in the MPO is appropriate for 15 years ago but not now given the degree to which it is tied into the rest of the MPO area – opportunities for growth and expansion haven't happened but could have
- Not Sure (CM); need to explore moving (expanding) the MPO planning area; perhaps addressed in 2020 Census boundary adjustments?

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree (KH)
- Agree (CM); pretty good idea of what the MPO does and its technical side, but it's hard to explain it to others

Additional Comments: KH loves the thought that CM had shared about having a bigger role and a more participatory role in the MPO to score projects higher and get more done to get ahead of the coming growth; this is a disservice to people here and the MPO.

Better bridging the urban/rural areas in the planning process; adding more staff to tackle some of the increasing number / complexity of issues facing the MPO; and pre-agenda review meeting he really liked (CM)

INTERVIEW #3: ELLEN BECKMANN (DURHAM COUNTY / TC CHAIR)
Friday, May 7, 2021 at 11:30am

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Not Sure; the MPO staff brings things forward and it is reviewed ahead of time. However, there needs to be a better definition of what's happening and where things are going. There isn't much of a role for chiming in as the TC Chair; the MPO staff is really the lead for presenting the MPO viewpoint.
- Ms. Beckmann used to have Aaron Cain's position working for the MPO; she took over a new City transportation planner position in order to separate the City and the MPO, which allowed her to advocate for the City of Durham more comfortably. There is even less potential for conflict with the MPO at her role at the County.

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- The MPO fulfills its basic responsibilities, which is good.

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- The policymakers want a more aggressive pursuit of goals (e.g., climate change) than the framework of MPOs can accommodate in North Carolina. Mapping that out and applying resources, prioritizing projects, and then doing is where the process falls apart.
- The 15-501 study is an example of where the priorities of the MPO and those of NCDOT came into conflict.
- There is some conflict across jurisdictions, but it has evolved so that Durham City is more accepting of change and addressing equity issues than Chapel Hill, which has become more wealthy and less accepting of change.

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Not Sure; sometimes things are too far into the weeds, such as the travel demand model – but some people like that level of discussion; need to be better about making technical content clear to non-experts in those areas and making connections between technical data and policy priorities could be done better.
- There is a lot of work being done on the technical stuff that may not really matter; an example is the CMP document where she has commented on the lack of connection between the massive technical data and what the MPO does (how can it be used); the CMP itself should be inserted into and part of the MTP, which is the MPO's ultimate source of power and other things should be coordinated with and support the MTP.
- There should be more subcommittees and more proactive discussions with TC members prior to the TC board meetings on items that are multi-jurisdictional or obviously will engender detailed discussion or disagreement

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree; she has good relationships with everyone at MPO
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? The policy side is sometimes weak; the technical stuff is sound but no one is strong with higher level policy needs of the MPO
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Disagree; more people should be dealing with MTP, SPOT, working with local jurisdictions which can be a little short; the model side could be de-emphasized
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? Keeping up with and moving forward federally funded projects is a problem for every jurisdiction and it would be great for the MPO to help with that and speed up project delivery, especially smaller jurisdictions

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- Helping smaller jurisdictions get through federal review processes (see #6)

Transit planning process is undergoing some change and a governance study of its own; GoTriangle has most of the authority now because of light rail but that focus may have shifted now – should it be at the county level, at the MPO, or somewhere else?

- Needs to be more of a local voice than is currently the case. The MPO could play a different role in transit oversight and management, it will likely be an increasing emphasis here and it is moving along in a good direction.
- There is a lot of emphasis in the City of Durham about engaging the public, especially traditionally under-represented populations, but doing this is harder at the whole MPO level with different levels of emphasis placed on diversity and equity – but it would be great if they did that more often
- While the MPO could spend more resources trying to get more projects from SPOT they might be projects that few people want at the MPO

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Weighted voting is almost never invoked but was done for light rail funding; Durham could use it more often but wants to get along with other members of the MPO; something besides weighted voting is needed to accommodate the different compositions of the MPO (e.g., Durham is much more diverse)
- NCDOT has five voting members on the TC but seldom votes or participates; they don't feel that they have to participate since they control state roads and SPOT/STI; three different regions for STI and three different NCDOT Divisions makes it not well-adapted for the purposes of MPO agreement.
- The NCDOT Division has submitted projects through SPOT that have gotten funded that the rest of the MPO doesn't know about or doesn't agree with (e.g., improving Durham Freeway through downtown Durham). Projects submitted really need study first to determine problems and priorities, not just submitting a project first.
- Would love to have someone from IMD attend more often given the interests in multimodal planning at the MPO

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree, although the MPO may not always be in the place it should be. It would be great if there was better participation at the TC meetings.

Some positions are partially city, county, and / or MPO and that needs to end, sometimes making clear communication difficult (e.g., bike/ped planning). Suballocation of UPWP planning (STBG) funding still happens now, and it isn't the most efficient use of resources which could be applied towards more projects (e.g., bike/ped projects). The cities and towns will still participate in the MPO, and it may be good to identify how changing this would impact project development.

INTERVIEW #4: JENN WEAVER AND MARGARET HAUTH (HILLSBOROUGH, NC)
Friday, May 7, 2021 at 1:00pm

Has been part of the MPO planning process and current vice-chair of the MPO Board (JW). Has been with the town for 30 years, which is about when the town joined the MPO, and went to some MPO Board meetings previously (stopped in 2005 going regularly) to support her MPO Board representative (MH).

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Mostly yes (JW);
- Agree (MH)
- The processes are very confusing and will ask MH for help occasionally; greatly appreciate how the MPO does an orientation for new Board members (JW)

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- There have been a lot of improvements in moving forward on multi-modal projects, climate change, and equity (JW)
- Meeting together with CAMPO a couple of times per year has been good (JW)
- Work towards better complete street policy has yielded results (JW)
- Having differentiation for the leadership of the TC (big jurisdiction, city / county) and forces people to stay more plugged into the process (MH)
- Weighted voting is good to have although it is used very infrequently (MH)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- The biggest failure, although not all under control of the MPO, was the failure of light rail after going as far as it did. This made the officials more cautious but improved communication with GoTriangle to encourage their more outward-facing communication with the public. (JW)
- Unfortunate that light rail was stopped because of Duke, which seldom participates in TC meetings
- Regional cooperation can be difficult (e.g., NC 54 West discussions)
- It would be good if there were more pre-meeting discussions on controversial or multi-jurisdictional matters, but it's harder to do with limited staff, staff turnover (MH)

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (JW and MH); staff capacity may be presenting some minor issues

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (JW); very good, and very thorough but there is a lot packed into the meetings and agenda, often going to three hours in length with presentations often too long but elected officials are talkative and like to ask questions, too. Detail is typically appropriate but sometimes there is a disconnect (e.g., 15-501 corridor study) between some project objectives and the goals of

> > the MPO since the options presented (well) were not something of interest to the MPO members
> > - Agree (MH); staff should not read off the slides or information already presented in the packet to some degree; could make better use of consent agenda

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

Responsive to inquiries?   Agree (JW and Jenn); including recent same-day responses

Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Agree (JW)

Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Agree (JW); seem to be meeting deadlines; some staffing changes are fast to happen and occur without much warning

Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies?   Regional model team agreement is invaluable for getting regional work done and leveraging help, but this region demands a lot for transit, biking, walking modes (MH) but may not be enough work to justify a whole new position or could be attributed to current vacancies (MH)

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements? a.   Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

- As effective as we can be; seem to be meeting deadlines, not missing out on pots of money (JW and MH)

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- There may be better ways of leveraging federal dollars; there is a misalignment between state and federal priorities; not sure how much is driven by the state process and the MPO (JW)
- Help the jurisdictions find common ground and work through their issues or controversy; doesn't really seem to be space to find that common ground (MH)
- Some boards need to have more than one person but it's hard to get anything done if there are too many representatives (MH)

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- There are bonkers situations where small projects (e.g., circulator bus) are competing with or are sacrificed to BRT or light rail projects.(JW) Could transit, and bike-ped, projects be developed into three tiers? (MH)
- They do feel that Hillsborough is fairly represented in her tenure, part of which is due to a positive attitude on the part of the staff to make sure that help is provided where it is possible and the process (and funding constraints) allows; does wish that there was more funding for bike/ped/transit needs – her view is more regional (JW)
- Small projects may be transformational to a smaller community like Hillsborough but there isn't enough money at the state level to go around, and the majority of the money is often tied to roadway improvements that they may not want to do (JW)
- The MPO has had the town's back on decisions about widening roadways that NCDOT wants but that the town doesn't want; has provided financial assistance at times and flexible as well – the paperwork isn't sufficiently worthwhile to get MPO planning financial assistance; the Riverwalk Greenway was built with parks/recreation funding instead of transportation dollars because of cookie-cutter guidelines dictating expensive requirements for width and bridges on

the greenway; it isn't the 20% match that is the biggest barrier to local participation but that the state doesn't prioritize biking, walking, and transit (MH).

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (JW and MH)

Additional comments. Not really interested in having a retreat; the MPO Board members have a good, shared understanding now; think that the MPO staff is great and that they know what the MPO Board wants to do but may be hamstrung by state law or NCDOT. This study is about what else could we be doing, or what can we be doing better to manifest the regional transportation system that we desire; is there a better way to structure the MPO? (JW)

It's good to examine processes otherwise they get too entrenched, this study is about getting people to stay plugged into the planning process which has been functional for over 25 years. The boards go back and make very different recommendations and that isn't getting reconciled appropriately (MH)

INTERVIEW #5: MEG SCULLY & JAY HEIKES (GOTRIANGLE)
Wednesday May 12, 2021 at 12:00pm

Mike Rutkowski introduced the project and purpose of the interviews, noting that they are not being recorded but we can share our notes, if desired.

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; Worked at the MPO for six years, and serves as the TC alternate to JH; total of nearly 12 years of experience with the MPO (MS)
- Agree; JH is the voting member to the TC, worked on land use development review / code writing, now works on transit centers, rail studies, etc.; the MPO is the administrator of the transit plans in Durham and Orange counties, including updates and annual spending allocations (JH)

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- DCHC MPO is unique in the state with interactions in transit planning, a fact verified during a quadrennial certification review; they are also very involved with bicycle and pedestrian planning (MS)
- The Triangle is unique in the country because the MPOs are parties to the sales tax interlocal agreement ($9m for Orange, $30m for Durham, $100m for Wake) (JH)
- DCHC does a good job involving local staff at the TCC and subcommittees
- MTP and CTP development and amendments have been smooth and consensus-driven processes (JH)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- Firewall established between MPO and City of Durham staff but the MPO staff are being required to report to the city that may compromise the ability of the DCHC MPO to serve all parties and not exhibit favoritism to the City of Durham; CAMPO physically separated from the City and obtained separate legal council; concerned about some structural influences going forward; the hardest thing is to separate the financial structure (MS)
- The weighted voting structure may be done differently and more successfully (JH)
- A project was taken off the CTP or is in the process of being done; another CTP amendment is more substantive that would remove a BRT project in the same alignment as the former light rail project (JH)
- Recommend removal of weighted voting because it seems counter to the purpose of a regional organization when two members can over-ride the rest of the region; they are more of a collaborative-minded MPO than others that she has seen but because of a recent change with the City of Durham including a recent funding action where the City had lined up its member to form a weighted vote (MS)

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (MS)
- Agree (JH), but City of Durham has started sending objections to MPO recommendations days or even hours to the TC which is causing a lot of staff issues and time (JH)

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (MS and JH); the staff do a phenomenal job

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries?   Agree (MS and JH);
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Agree (MS & JH), but it would be useful to have a transit expert at the MPO; MS gave some of that expertise when she was at the MPO; GoTriangle does that now
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Agree (MS and JH)
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies?
    - o   Disagree – transit (MS and JH);
    - o   distribution of federal funds similar to CAMPO (e.g., LAPP) is not something she would want to see since it allows more control by local governments, investments in bike/ped/transit; and other projects that local members want to implement; the City of Durham is pushing for reconsideration of that allocation and how the money is getting allocated (more to the City of Durham);
    - o   LAPP is perhaps more effective than DCHC program because CAMPO jurisdictions favor roadway projects – bike/pedestrian are not as favored by NCDOT; small jurisdictions like Hillsborough can implement these funds well (MS)
    - o   More technical support in terms of supporting smaller governments meet federal requirements is generally good, but LPA staff should not be expected to break through local decision-making bottlenecks (MS)

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a. Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- The MPO Board will often tell the staff to achieve things that the MPO has set as goals but the board members will return to local projects, so that it's up to them to push that regional agenda – it's not a staff action that ensures that the Board makes decisions that achieves their own goals and objectives which happens frequently but not consistently (e.g., discretionary funds to roadways instead of bike/ped projects)
- May be a lack of understanding about how constraints impact what the MPO can and cannot do; no more than 10% can be spent on non-highway modes of travel (JH)

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- MPO board meetings could be rotated around to other jurisdictions to implement better regional mindsets; more residents participating fully that way (MS)

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (MS & JH)

INTERVIEW #6: WENDY JACOBS (DURHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS), BERGEN WATTERSON (TRANSPORTATION PLANNING MANAGER FOR CHAPEL HILL / TC MEMBER), AND MICHAEL PARKER (CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL AS GOTRIANGLE REPRESENTATIVE)

Wednesday May 12, 2021 at 1:00pm

Mike Rutkowski Introduced the project and noted that the MPO is doing good at the core tasks, and meeting certification requirements but the group wants to take the MPO functionality to the next level in certain areas, e.g., staffing, transit. Good to look at the meetings to see the dynamic there (WJ).

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (WJ, MP, BW), not sure roles are always well defined

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- The Board members are very active and engaged, pushing collaborations with CAMPO including policy issues and joint policy board meetings (WJ)
- Pushed the complete streets policy that NCDOT has adopted (WJ)
- The MPO has pushed transit, walkability a lot (WJ)
- The NCDOT Board Member (Lisa) is very engaged and the relationship with NCDOT is very strong right now with staff, too, including escalation of issues to higher levels (WJ)
- Good at checking the boxes and getting plans done (MP)
- The MTP goals are reflective of those of our community (WJ)
- The TC works together well (BW)
- The DCHC MPO isn't as staff-driven and MPO Board members are more engaged (WJ)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- Poor at doing big things, in part because of constraints placed upon them from law or policy; the board is fairly united from moving away from cars and more to multimodality and there are constraints on that desire (MP)
- Staff has struggled to make the same transition to multimodal projects as the MPO Board, e.g., performance measures are all about cars; 15-501 study was all about cars (MP)
- Still focused on projects but have not yet moved into policy advocacy and lead in these areas rather than react as is the case now (MP)
- The report templates should be using a new template for the staff reports at MPO Board meetings which aligns with the new goals; these goals haven't been fully integrated into decision-making yet; came up today at the Board Meeting with the deficiency analysis and performance measures (WJ)
- Need to take a hard look at staffing and asking if we have the right people in the right places, skill sets, and backgrounds; reporting falls short of what CAMPO is doing and what they're presenting (WJ and BW)
- We (DCHC MPO) needs to be more proactive, especially given state funding policies and we need to be pushing back against (WJ)
- Include member jurisdictions in the work plan each year and some of the work (e.g., data collection) the staff doesn't care about as much (BW)
- Wonder if there is the critical mass of staff to take on the big things that they need to take on, including regional transportation initiatives with CAMPO – there is not a Triangle-wide transit

plan, for example, so local plans are sometimes disjointed with each other; transit needs are beyond a county of 140,000 people because of the major employers (MP)

- MPO presentations need to be shorter and more to the point; more training is needed, perhaps (WJ)

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (all)

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree; too much time spent on staff presentations and too little devoted to discussion and input from the MPO Board; make them 10-minutes, maximum (WJ)

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree with some staff; some others behind the scenes not as much (BW); Not sure (MP); Agree (WJ)
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Agree on the basics for what is being done now – and transportation is really complicated; they do a great job on monitoring, analyzing data; addressing visionary things, disagreements, or access to more resources (WJ / MP); some positions are underutilized (BW)
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? Agree (MP); Not sure who does what and how the funding works; monthly meeting with Jenn, Felix, Ellen Beckmann once per month (WJ); MP has only had one meeting; more prep meetings might be useful on controversial or complex questions (WJ); some members are getting briefed by their technical staff on issues to advocate for a position and it led to getting blind-sided in some cases (WJ)
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? Not sure; not sure how many staff we have dedicated to the MPO; weird mixture of staffing and who they work for on any given day; part of the role of a Board Member is to focus on results not what is going on with staffing decisions or their roles – that's the job of the head of the agency to deliver on the Board's needs (MP and WJ); health issues of lead staff has made it difficult currently and some blurring of who does what; the importance of this governance study is in part related to defining staffing and not be bloated at the staff level, either, since it's expensive (WJ); Disagree, not sure how to understand what is going on in the front of the house and the back of the house with the focus of leadership at MPO being focused on modeling more so than the MPO boards; capacity and skills could be better aligned to MPO Board goals and serve the needs of local governments (BW)

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a. Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- The Board votes on lots of things but makes no decisions of import; the MPO Board hardly ever disagrees so how are things getting better (MP); disagreement from WJ – for example to make the 15-501 study more transit and bike/ped focused or when they asked for more communication on project criteria (WJ)

- Need to spend more time discussing land use policies and policy decisions that have the impact on traffic that our infrastructure investments are not having (MP)
- Staff person or two help out with locally administered projects including conduit between NCDOT and local government staff for smaller jurisdictions or even co-manage the projects (BW)
- When transit or transportation issues surface the MPO should be the first place people go for answers; RTA for example has established a reputation for being thought leaders on transportation matters (MP)
- May need to have more one-on-one and staff meetings to develop the relationships necessary to be a first-responder for transportation matters (WJ)
- CAMPO is really ambitious for getting SPOT projects in place and they push BRT aggressively, which requires staff capacity (WJ)

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (MP and WJ)

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree (WJ, MP, BW)

INTERVIEW #7: JOHN HODGES-COPPLE (TJCOG)
Wednesday May 12, 2021 at 2:00pm

Mr. Lane introduced the project and that the goal is to try and make the MPO better in any way that they can that seems feasible, in accordance with what they're learning here.

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree, TJCOG provides a lot of value-added discussion on land use matters, particularly housing issues; they also fund two major programs out of TJCOG: growth forecasts, project consistency, joint MPO document, air quality conformity process, facilitate ITS (next year), policy priorities each year, MTP performance metrics, and manage TRM effort – also MPOs chip in money for regional TDM

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- The DCHC MPO gets its basic (core) work done, but it generally isn't above and beyond what you would see from an average MPO, much less a MPO of this size and complexity

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- The DCHC MPO falls short in some areas or struggles with getting good closure on bread–and-butter project (e.g., 15-501 study)
- The role of DCHC MPO needs to be more independent from the City of Durham and that the MPO Board makes the decisions; should be separate from the City Transportation Department
- Need to have a strong director that is both competent and have a very good, trusted report with the MPO Board and be a peer for each of the lead transportation members in each jurisdiction – part of the role is to challenge these peers and ask technical questions
- The staff competencies are misaligned with what the MPO Board and TC members need, leading to a lot of waste for number-crunching and analysis for little purpose and leaving a small number of staff to do 90% of the work that the MPO cares about; CAMPO does a much better job at getting money through SPOT
- They do not move things quickly

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; pays attention to certain parts of long packets and not others; likes the option of digging down into an issue
- Need something between the big agenda and the three-page agenda; people need more choices about how much information they are presented

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Generally agree; there is some inconsistency depending on who is presenting the information but don't spend an extra cycle on getting all the details perfect before bringing it to the board members; the focus should be on getting the information that is needed to make decisions at the right level; there needs to be a good relationship between the time allotted for an item and

how much of it is devoted to presentations; there is too much rehashing of issues that have already

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? Not sure; several staff have to wear multiple hats and be a generalist; Dale McKeel (TDM, bike/ped expertise) is an exception but it is a shared position which potentially is messy if he didn't walk the line that well; you need a transit expert
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO?   Agree; get all the deliverables required done on time but need more time on SPOT deliverables and variations to get the most money (e.g., "working the system")
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? A little short, but more of a question of distribution of responsibilities than bodies in seats; judicious use of consultants, trade off of work assignments with TJCOG, GoTriangle and other partners remains important

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a. Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

- They get it done, but is it always done well is a question

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- Need to be sharper on SPOT/STI and communicate clearly to the Boards that they have two options: submit projects that won't get funded, or submit on projects that will get funded and save their resources for projects that they do want (more opportunity for money swaps)
- Do less but do it better: target resources so that you start it, get it done, and move it to funding (get things right on the 15-501 corridor); get into design to work out hard decisions – concept plans are when you don't know what you want to do and that is seldom the case at the DCHC MPO

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree
- The barriers to DCHC MPO being what it can be are (1) organization structure and how it functions as an independent body; (2) needs a strong director; and (3) the expertise of staff are misaligned with the MPO Board needs and desires.

It's a little silly to have two MPOs although there are some reasons for having two MPOs although having a single staff may be preferable or continue to build on what the two MPOs have done and house particular responsibilities at a single location. A casual assessment reveals the benefits of having a single travel market represented by two different MPOs. Either MPO could dismantle that current arrangement on a whim; having a more firm system would be desirable to survive such an occurrence.

The MPO should not fund technical staff at local governments just to participate in the basic MPO process and participation – their community should realize the obvious value in being a part of the MPO discussion.

INTERVIEW #8: DAMON SELLS, MPO BOARD AND TINA MOON, TC MEMBER (TOWN OF CARRBORO)

Thursday May 13, 2021 at 1:00pm

A lot of things happening now (bike share initiative, comprehensive plan, equity planning) in Carrboro (TM). Mr. Rutkowski introduced the purpose of the study to understand enhancements that could be happening at the MPO Board. The MPO wants to take the next leap to work with the MPO Board's goals (transit, multimodal, underserved populations).

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Steep learning curve for MPO Board members, but largely settled into it; previously served as Chair and Vice-Chair of the MPO Board (DS)
- Planning Administrator for the Town since 2012, part of the role was supervising the transportation planner; concurs with learning curve, particularly understanding the funding mechanisms; there is really only one transportation planner and her so they have to cover a lot of ground with limited capacity, but the good part is that 1-2 people understand the whole process (TM)

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- Very good relationships among MPO Board members and a lot of shared values (DS)
- Good working holistically across modal providers and local governments (TM)

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- Mark Ahrendsen's retirement marked a notable shift in terms of leadership, expertise, and something we need to get back to (TM and DS)
- Can be challenging to present to boards why projects aren't getting funding; sometimes feel like staff isn't pushing some projects hard enough (TM)
- Some feeling that Carrboro isn't getting projects funded to the same degree as the City of Durham; probably because projects in Carrboro can't compete typically, and they don't have the resources as the City, but the MPO should be viewed as a place where the smaller local governments are being taken care of (DS)
- The formal STIP process considers projects that could get funded, and sometimes jurisdictions trade off projects from cycle to cycle; would like to identify every bit of municipal funding before moving into the next call for projects - submitting projects like that (without identifying all funding) makes them nervous (TM)
- Part of the reason for this study was project management and staffing; managing complicated projects is probably beyond their typical capacity or competency (TM); Mr. Lane described the CRTPO project manager position hired a year ago

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Usually agree and summaries are usually good for complex items but there is something in the middle (maybe adequate orientation is needed); the values that the MPO Board and local governments articulate (e.g., bike/ped/transit) may not be reflected back to the decision-making at the staff level (DS);

- Agree; the packet sometimes includes lengthy reports but can zoom into key parts; sometimes need to read a lot which can be challenging (TM)

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; PowerPoints and some staff personalities that assemble and give presentations are very helpful in pulling out important points; need to consider presentations that are given to people that know less about the topic than the staff (layman language) (TM)
- There has been a quantitative difference in presentation and communication styles between various directors and staff; some periods where it's difficult to know whom is the right point-of-contact within the MPO; and trying to find their legs a bit in some situations (DS and TM agrees with that comment)

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries?   Not sure; not always sure of whom to contact (DS); TM reaches out to Aaron and Anne, who are excellent (TM)
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? From a technical / analytical side, yes, but a gap on management (DS); Generally so, but the structure of the MPO has changed a bit that can make it difficult to find a contact person, may be related to COVID-19 and fewer subcommittee meetings (TM)
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? In terms of compliance, yes (DS, TM); used to have a meeting to develop the STIP and what their obligations were for federal reporting requirements coming up for the year which was VERY helpful to understand data needs from the local governments; not being done as much now (TM)
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? Disagree, it is one of the primary considerations for going through this study process (DS); so much work keeping the required elements moving forward, call for projects for SPOT, etc. may be too much for the current staff (e.g., equity, Vision Zero, funding for certain kinds of projects) (TM)

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a. Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- There is a missing executive leadership role right now (DS)
- There is a missing part about how the MPO Board and governments can do to achieve their goals; right now they are just getting a data dump without connectivity to the MPO goals (DS)
- Assistance with project management especially for smaller governments (TM)
- Guidance on how locals can lobby effectively for change (DS)
- Need to pause in a project timeline and identify the disconnect apart from meeting the deadlines (TM and DS agrees); recent presentations are missing that piece about how to change the outcomes that are shown to them (DS)

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Because of the structure Durham will always be the bigger player and have a commensurately larger role (DS); Generally yes, especially at the policy level; can only recall one specific project where there were challenges at the staff level (TM)
- Mr. Lane asked if some complex or controversial items get enough attention before the meeting to make sure that they are "ripe" for discussion…Mr. Sells agrees, and cited the 15-401 corridor study that was really important but the product was really disappointing because it didn't reflect the interests of the MPO Board. The MPO's ability or capacity to do visionary kinds of projects is too small and projects get into the usual run-of-the-mill without a deeper examination (DS)
- The whole point of the MPO Board is to shape the world around us, not to move as fast as possible through a planning process (DS)
- There have been some cases where the staff has been clear on the project scope and the consultant didn't deliver; some of this has to do with the role of NCDOT; instead of what we wanted we got assumed projections from NCDOT or the TRM (TM); other interests are at play that can place staff and consultants in a very odd position (DS)

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

Agree (DS and TM)

INTERVIEW #9: ANDY HENRY, ANNE PHILLIPS (DCHC MPO STAFF)
Friday, May 14, 2021 at 2:00pm

Describe staffing arrangements, skill sets, and availability to the MPO (if positions are shared with the LPA)

- There are 10.5 staff positions at the MPO now; soon to be 12 (two shared)
- The fiscal program manager is funded by the MPO; bike-ped position is ½-time with the MPO. One modeling person spends two days/week at ITRE (AH)
- No other positions funded by MPO (AH)

Is the staffing adequate to meet current and future demands? If not, in what areas is there a need for more staff or staff with different skill sets?

- It would be helpful to have an engineer help on SPOT / priorities (AP)
- It would be useful to have a dedicated person for public engagement (AP)
- Doing public engagement has increasing expectations and requires more time than the current staff and expertise possess (AH)
- It would be good to have a junior planner; there are a lot of technical-oriented folks but they are hard to get involved in the rest of the MPO planning process (AH)
- There is a LOT of data collection, and the big data isn't connecting very much (AH)
- It would be great to have someone (engineer) to be a project manager to help smaller jurisdictions navigate; now the projects tend to fall behind schedule (AP, AH)
- Andy spends 2/3rds of his time on transit, including developing route modeling; sometimes getting GoTriangle to do some of the work (AH); should be Aaron's position and not his background; he's also really busy; probably need a dedicate transit professional (AH, AP)
- The degree of specialization can be seen at Friday morning regional meetings (TJCOG, DCHC and CAMPO). CAMPO has Chris, Alex, Gerald, Kenneth, Tim and Mike (6) and sometimes Bonnie or Shelby (2). TJCOG has John, Ben, Kaley and Jenna, (4), and sometimes Matt (1). DCHC has Andy and Yanping (2), and sometimes Anne or Aaron (2).

Describe the use of consultants, both in terms of regular (recurring) work tasks as well as special projects.

- Consultants are brought in for corridor studies (AH)
- Need to redo scoping template, since too much time is spent to collect data but is there less time to assist the decision-making process at the end (AH)
- Need consultant immediately to help with specialized work to do MTP and public engagement (AH)
- Felix hires the consultants and sometimes does it in isolation (tube counts) and the CMP which is way overblown now in terms of resources spent (AH)
- Staff gets a lot of questions about using consultants on the on-call lists but at least one person thought it was too expensive (AP)
- The Board seems to get what they want out of the corridor studies; a big problem is that NCDOT will come up with corridor alternatives during TIP project development that conflict with the corridor study's preferred option. There needs to be lanes added on 15-501 due to new developments; NC 98 study answered important questions about the feasibility of doing a road diet (AH)

Describe the MPO's relationship with the following entities:

- Other City of Durham Staff
- CAMPO: good relationship with Triangle Bikeway Study, 5310 committee; TRM modeling, MTP development, SE Data development, several studies (e.g., Tolling; Freight; ITS)
- GoTriangle: share regional interests and have a positive working relationship
- Chapel Hill Transit: Not sure
- Durham Transit: Not sure
- Orange County Transit: Information when it's needed
- NCDOT – Division Offices
- NCDOT – Central (Planning, IMD, others)
- TJCOG: relationship is very tight, meeting every other Friday and are working frequently on a number of important projects
- Other important providers?
- Local Governments: could be stronger with Chapel Hill and Chatham County; would help more to know about local government; infrequent collaboration informally (AH); good relationships with the City of Durham because of past employment there, met with folks from Chapel Hill and Carrboro more recently; feels like there is a sense of neglect by the MPO from smaller jurisdictions (AP)

The elected and other officials on the MPO Board believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Disagree; the Board wants to see the MPO push further and be a more defined agenda beyond federal requirements, something that has changed perhaps in recent years; the Board wants staff to be more advocacy-oriented and she isn't sure how that happens inside a MPO (AP)
- Disagree; on issues with public input from EJ communities is insufficient, emphasis on transit/bike/ped projects is insufficient; on the 15-501 study someone pointed out that they are adding a lane which points away from reducing automobile travel (AH)

The members of the TC of the DCHC MPO believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Not sure (AP)
- Not the level of disappointment from the TC as from the Board; a lot of experience has left the staff serving on the TC (Ahrendsen, Bonk) and now they can rely less on the expertise of the TC now and they now rely on the MPO staff a lot but they don't understand much about the process now (AH)

Are there aspects of the MPO work that could be done better?

- Public engagement could be done better (under-resourced) (AP)
- Better alignment with the needs of the MPO Board and staff (AH)

What are the strengths of the DCHC MPO, or what is the MPO doing really well now?

- The data is great but it is not well-understood how to access it by others on the TC (AP)
- Integrating data and planning (AH)

- Broad range of capabilities at the MPO; jack of all trades now; collect the data, make the presentation, present it to the board (AH)

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- Need to address the perception that smaller jurisdictions aren't getting the attention that they deserve; there is not a lot of support for regionalism so the MPO needs to push the idea that regionalism is important (AP, AH)

What would you say you need to be doing even better at your job than you are now?

- Strengths are communication and public engagement which she did at first as she was on-boarded and is now doing more technical work that needs to improve; likes the technical work and working on the TIP / SPOT (AP)
- Way overloaded now, especially with the MTP and alternatives; deadlines for boards; CTP problem statements; a bit overwhelmed; trying to get people to help out and they are helpful but they are new and interns and they have to be trained (AH)

What's the most important addition to the MPO in the next five years?

a.   More Staff   b. More Training   c. New Technology   d. Something Else?

- More staff; more independent organization model like CAMPO (AP)
- More staff, not a lot but with different skills, missing public input, need another planner for LAPs (AH)

Additional Comments. The staff working group is GoTriangle, Durham County, MPO and the city wants to play a bigger role now. There is no choice about who gets to be the representative to that working group. The staff working group makes recommendations for the transit tax. Needs someone with a strong finance background and transit experience. (AP) The voting representation is set out by law, but the other difficult thing is that there are just three voting members which sets up confrontations. (AH) Really feel strongly that the DCHC MPO needs to be a more independent organization that will fulfill a regional mission and assist smaller jurisdictions better. This is a great place to work and love working with the MPO (AP)

INTERVIEW #10 : FELIX NWOKO AND DALE MCKEEL (DCHC MPO)
Friday, May 24, 2021 at 1:00pm

Mike Rutkowski introduced the project and purpose; Mr. Lane noted that the interviews are not being recorded and can be made available for review, if desired. Mr. McKeel asked about a steering committee; Mr. Rutkowski noted the informal steering committee composition (Beckmann, Nwoko, Egan, Trivedi, Sells). Mr. Nwoko noted that the MPO Board changes periodically, and it wants to know how the MPO should adapt to new legislation and emerging issues.

Describe staffing arrangements, skill sets, and availability to the MPO (if positions are shared with the LPA)

- Mr. McKeel's position is supposed to be a 50/50 split between the City of Durham and MPO needs; in reality there are peaks and valleys of demand that are addressed through weekly balancing of those needs. This is the only split position within the MPO. (FN)
- Balancing the city / MPO needs is challenging; some other jurisdictions might wonder if they're getting a fair share of Mr. McKeel's time – they are, but maybe hasn't been communicated as well as it could have been historically. Does there need to be a full-time bike/ped person for the MPO that is beyond the original compromise that balanced city / MPO funding allotments from 20 years ago? Some jurisdictions feel like the MPO should be helping more with implementing projects, which are very complex; Hillsborough has a good person at project management and generally does a very good job; less turnover as well. (DM)
- There is also a need for a dedicated financial person that reports to the MPO (reports to another person within the City Transportation Department). She is full-time dedicated to the MPO (not split) but reporting to the City may be an issue – she has only been working there for two weeks at this point. (DM) The independence of the MPO is at issue and has been suggested to be brought up to the MPO Board (the position is noted in the UPWP) and the MPO staff is not privy to that decision. The position has been in place for 10 years (formerly held by Meg Scully).

Is the staffing adequate to meet current and future demands? If not, in what areas is there a need for more staff or staff with different skill sets?

- The bike/ped position was mentioned already. A lot of demand is cyclical in accordance with federal requirements; a lot of work right now going on with transit planning. There was a question about who would manage a US 70 planning study, and the staff didn't have the time for it. Specialized studies do create additional peak demand that goes beyond what is the ongoing work plan. (DM) That skill set (project management) was or is in the modeling program of the MPO; others are very new and not experienced but would do well at managing projects. (FN)
- Doesn't think that there is a need for additional positions. Over time the transportation plan was not developed by NCDOT, but by the MPO. This generated the need for a new position. Member jurisdictions clamored for more bike/ped/TDM planning. The MPO is organized in accordance with the demands of the jurisdictions, and there is not a capacity concern at this time in those areas. SPOT / STI created a life of its own over time – an unfunded mandate. Demands for data created a GIS / website position. (FN)

Describe the use of consultants, both in terms of regular (recurring) work tasks as well as special projects.

- The idea of using on-call consultants was born from the need for a corridor study. It is important to use consultants because (1) extension of staff capacity that addresses work peaks; and (2) in cases where the expertise doesn't exist within the staff. (FN)
- Some stakeholders don't like the recommendation coming out of studies at times. One of the frustrating things about the DCHC MPO is that sometimes decisionmakers aren't always objective or data-driven, or they just don't like the outcome of studies. Consultants are also frustrated but have to be diplomatic.
- For the 15-501 study, the staff wasn't sure what was really wanted and the MPO Board may not know what they want, either. The Boards want more pedestrian-friendly roadways but then approve high-traffic generation developments. More time is needed to help define success and understand trade-offs. (FN)
- There may have been some issues with public engagement events not being as well-attended as would have been liked; at the tail-end of the project business owners and developers made more of a showing. (DM)

Describe the MPO's relationship with the following entities.

- Other City of Durham Staff: Development review; stormwater / drainage;
- CAMPO: Regional modeling; SPOT; MTP; TDM; Bike-Pedestrian planning
- GoTriangle: Transit is one of the issues that the MPO really cares about it was fundamental that the MPO evolve those relationships and work with them (all transit agencies); can be hard to disentangle their work managing GoDurham and their participation at the DCHC MPO; worked on several regional transit issues including a regional call center. Loss of revenue from RDU airport was offset by CAMPO but not offset at DCHC MPO. (FN)
- Chapel Hill Transit:
- Durham Transit:
- Orange County Transit: The MPO is involved in the county transit plans, in part due to the failure of regional light rail to move forward; this includes a transit governance study
- NCDOT – Division Offices: The Division Engineers work now in better synch with the MPO – they hear us, including during the SPOT process where they work hand-in-glove to promote projects likely to see funding (FN)
- NCDOT – Central (Planning, IMD, others): A lack of staff at IMD has precluded having a closer relationship with that NCDOT Unit; ultimately they will have a person that will be more involved going forward (FN/DM)
- TJCOG: Have used them pretty extensively, including joint MTP (with CAMPO); help managed Travel Demand Model (land use) (DM)
- Other important providers: Resource agencies asking about the (purpose and) need for a project, and communications with them have changed and improved (FN)
- Local Governments: Close technical relationship with staff on specialized projects that is active depending on the need or project

The elected and other officials on the MPO Board believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; the MPO is effective; Mr. McKeel (for example) put together an excellent summary of federal funding that the Board liked and appreciated though it might be beyond their comfort zone; it should be kept in mind that there are 80% new members and they conduct training exercises for new members (FN)

- Agree; there are some instances for some studies where the process or result was not appreciated by every MPO Board Member; some are new; some have goals that aren't meshed yet with the MPO's work (DM)

The members of the TC of the DCHC MPO believe that the DCHC MPO is effective. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree (FN / DM)

Are there aspects of the MPO work that could be done better?

- There is always room for improvement in every area (FN)
- One specific area for improvement is the MPO website to improve it, which is underway now (DM)

What are the strengths of the DCHC MPO, or what is the MPO doing really well now?

- The joint planning with CAMPO is a real strong point (DM)
- The MPO taking the lead on initiatives depends on the issue at hand; on ITS it was their idea to do a regional study though it is required by federal statutes; same for a regional freight planning (FN)
- In the case of CommunityViz it was originally brought to the attention of the (prior) CAMPO Executive Director (FN)
- The GIS mapping portal was the idea of the DCHC MPO, as was the regional modeling effort leadership (FN)
- In other cases, like the MTP or TDM the TJCOG has agreed to lead those efforts, and for anything that is regional it is discussed at Friday technical meetings (FN)
- The Triangle Bikeway Project started as a CAMPO-only project but their elected officials contacted the DCHC MPO officials to extend the project into the DCHC MPO (DM)

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- There is a lot of frustration about how much is spent on bike/ped/transit as opposed to highways. With SPOT the priorities have been turned on their head, with the result that the MPO has given up on funding active mode types of projects (DM)

What would you say you need to be doing even better at your job than you are now?

- There is a lot of paper-pushing, financing, etc. involved at the MPO – would like to do more blended engineering-planning; demographic profiles/trends; more involved with national AMPO and peers (FN)
- Frustrated that project development, especially bike-ped projects, take so long and would love to find ways of implementing projects faster (DM)

What's the most important addition to the MPO in the next five years?

a.   More Staff   b. More Training   c. New Technology   d. Something Else?

- Absorbing lessons from COVID-19 and how those changes impact future transportation processes (DM; FN concurs)
- At the outset, and circling back, the MPO has done well in making sure that it is innovative and issues affecting the public. In moving forward, new issues like micromobility and applied research / technology, demographic changes, etc. need to know how the MPO can be

positioned better to address. Some of these issues, like inequities and racial tensions, are very complex and hard to adapt to. Lastly, the MPO Board, perhaps brought about by changes in composition, can make 180-degree changes that be hard for the MPO staff to adjust. Sometimes policy changes can tie the hands of future members and decisions. (FN)

INTERVIEW #11: JULIE E. BOGEL, (NCDOT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DIVISION)

Tuesday, June 1 at 11:00am

She has been with the MPO since 2009, and with NCDOT since 2004. She was in two district offices before 2007.

You are comfortable with your role at DCHC MPO, and you understand what is expected of you within the organization. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- She reviews all the invoices, UPWPs (draft) , CTPs, reviews scopes of work for consultant contracts, and other minor tasks.
- Agrees with understanding of her role. They should include me a little more, at the beginning of things; whatever is a little different or special studies (e.g., 15-501 study).

Where have there been notable successes (things are working well)?

- Everything is done in a timely matter for regular matters.
- They do well with MPO Board concerns, and even anticipating some concerns.
- It seems like they communicate pretty well internally.
- Good public outreach practice.

Where have there been notable failures (things can / should be improved)?

- Most of the process improvement would be involving her more at the beginning of new projects or issues where NCDOT is typically involved or is required to be involved because of funding protocols.
- Not as comfortable with developing the CTP, as it is supposed to be more of a joint effort with NCDOT as opposed to the MTP where they are the lead (with CAMPO). The current update process (amendment) was slowed down in 2020.

The agenda and meeting packet are sent to you with enough time to review the information. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; agenda packet could sometimes be shorter but overall its very helpful information.

The presentations to the TC / MPO Board meeting are clear, graphics legible, etc. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree

Is the MPO staff…(Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Responsive to inquiries? Agree for Andy / Aaron; Felix Nwoko is a little slower to respond
- Possess appropriate skill levels commensurate with the work being done? She thinks they are good
- Sufficient to meet basic tasks required of the MPO? They did hire a new grant manager which will help with invoices and UPWPs which the director was taking on previously
- Sufficient to address non-basic tasks of interest to you and other MPO member agencies? Not Sure; seems like they work more hours than 40 per week

How effective is the DCHC MPO at carrying out their federal requirements?

a. Very Effective   b. Moderately Effective   c. Moderately Ineffective   d. Very Ineffective

What else should the MPO be doing that it isn't doing now?

- Not sure

My organization is fairly and accurately represented at the DCHC MPO. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- There is a lot of respect for the NCDOT Divisions; appreciate updates on current projects.
- Not sure about TPD, since they only review the funding and that can get onerous for the relationships.
- Only very occasionally gets contacted by board members directly; some interactions during the meetings.

If asked, I could give a clear and concise description of the DCHC MPO and its mission, values, and products. (Agree, Not Sure, Disagree)

- Agree; fairly

Additional Comments: She hears a lot about the MTP in terms of its performance measures and how to improve upon them, track them, and monitor them to feedback into the planning process. Not sure if they need more help or if it's gone as far as it can go. There is one person that directly works with the ITRE travel demand modeling staff and DCHC modeling staff; she uses the model if she needs to do so (traffic forecasts, sometimes from the NC Division Offices or Feasibility Studies - she has stopped doing those lately; done by another group or consultants).

C. Stakeholder Surveys

Synopsis: After stakeholder interviews and peer group calls were completed, a survey was sent out to the interviewees, including NCDOT, DCHC MPO, and local staff as well as elected/Policy Board officials. In total, 15 survey responses were received. The following is a summary of the results and key takeaways.

Q1. The Survey Respondents

A total of 24 respondents completed the survey, with the majority being local government staff that participate in the MPO process. Nine elected officials also completed the survey.

Question: Although our survey is anonymous, we would like to know how you are affiliated with the DCHC Metropolitan Planning Organization. Sample=24

- Elected Official
- Local Government Staff
- NCDOT Staff
- DCHC staff
- Other
- UNC staff
- Appointed Official
- Unknown
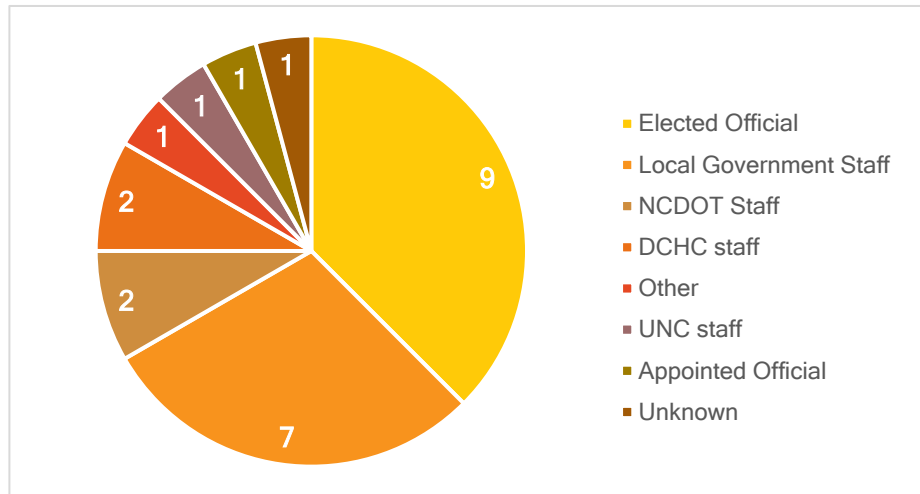
Q2. Most Important Policy Goals

Based on prior inputs, the research team was able to develop a list of policy objectives that formed the basis of this question. While there was not a clear "winner," the option of getting more roadway capacity projects implemented was the lowest-ranked option, closely followed by implementing technology-based solutions. Bicycle/pedestrian projects, transit projects, and improving public engagement were roughly equal in terms of being the most-important policy objectives.

Question: The research team has learned a lot from you about some of the goals that are important to you (and those whom you represent). Please rank order the most important policy goals for the DCHC MPO to undertake in the next few years. (1=Not Important; 5=Important)
*Sample=15*
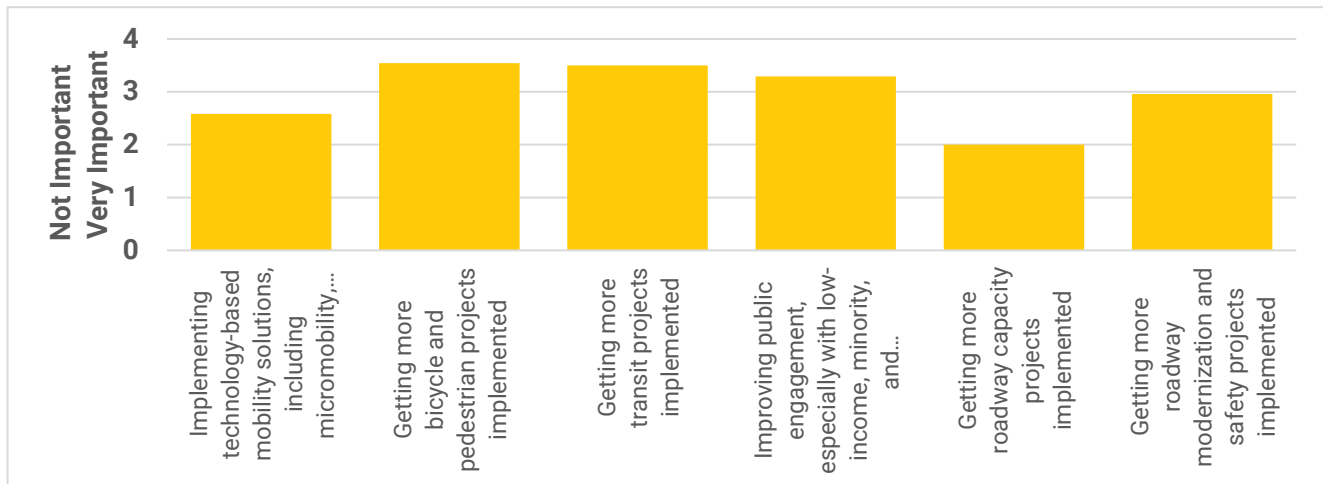
Q3. Alignment of MPO board goals and DCHC products

An important note brought up by several interviewees was ensuring that the products being developed by the DCHC MPO staff are in alignment with the stated objectives of the MPO Board and Technical Committee. Although sometimes these objectives may shift with new information being presented or due to turnover in board seats, the question came up enough to warrant a survey response. The responses were not differentiated by who responded: both the elected officials (3) and staff reported a "7" or "8" as their response – most of the time the products aligned with what the Board wants to see. However, there may some additional room for improvement.

Question: In your opinion, how often do the DCHC MPO planning products align with the goals of the MPO Board?
Sample=24
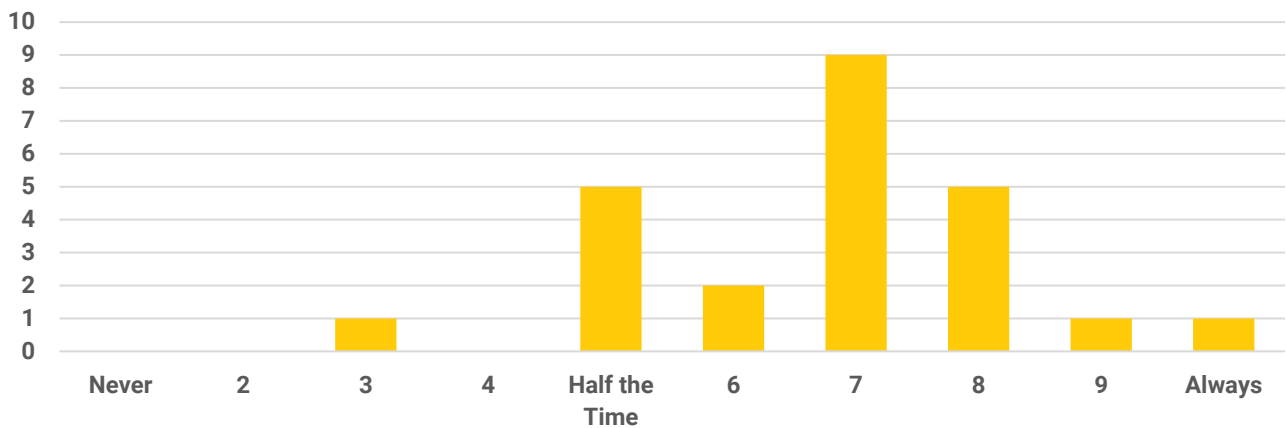
Q4. Most Important Areas for MPO Committee Meeting Improvement

When asked which areas of improvement could be made to make MPO committee meetings more effective, the top choice was making presentations more "to the point" and graphic. The spread on these options was significant: the top choice (improve presentations) had nearly twice the score of the lowest option (getting agenda packets out sooner). Again, the elected official respondents (3) did not differ from the overall respondents, with presentation improvement getting the first or second choice for improvement for every elected official that responded to the survey.

Question: What are the most important areas of improvement that could be made to MPO committee meetings (MPO Board or Technical Committee)?
Sample=24

Value	Improvement
	Presentations that are consistently more to the point and convey information more graphically
	Agenda packets that have different levels of detail so that I can get into the details or get a good summary
	Reevaluate or eliminate weighted voting procedures
	Receiving better information, context, and data to help directly with decision-making
	Improve "on-boarding" training for new committee members, including refresher opportunities and training in technical subject matters
	Discussing complex or controversial issues before the main committee meeting to create a smoother meeting and process
	Conducting a pre-meeting drop-in session for all members that walks participants through the agenda before the meeting occurs
	Nicer-looking presentations (better graphics, design enhancements)
	Getting the agenda packets sooner to have more time to review them
	UPWP development process that is more interactive / educational with the MPO Board and the public

Q5. Most Important new staff position

Several commentors during the interviews discussed staffing levels in relation to meeting the demands of a diverse and growing metropolitan planning organization. Prior studies have suggested that at 7 - 8 employees a MPO begins to substantially specialize its staffing resources. The respondents for this question expressed very little differentiation from top to bottom, suggesting that there is not a clear preference for a single type of new staffing position. Transit planning, funding / program grants management, and project management for local assistance received near-equal values, with public relations and bicycle / pedestrian planning falling only a little behind the top three responses.

Question: Several people discussed staffing levels and skill sets during our interviews. Please rate the importance of the following staff types to improve the outcomes at DCHC MPO.
*Sample=24*

Value	New Position
	Transit Planner
	MPO Funding and Grants Manager that ensures maximum funding opportunities are explored for project development and administration
	Project Manager to help with local projects funded through the MPO
	Public Relations / Engagement Officer
	Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner dedicated solely to MPO work

Q6. Focus on Getting More Funding Even Without Top Priorities

While somewhat more complex, this question was raised with respect to (a) the stated desire to get more bicycle / pedestrian / transit projects funded which conflicts with (b) the current state laws (STI) and policies that substantially dictate modal allocations. When asked if more funding was, in effect, more important than getting top priorities funded first, the clear response was, generally, a mixed bag.

Question: Like many, if not all, MPOs, project funding is a premier topic. Please rate your agreement with the following statement: "The DCHC MPO should focus on getting the most funding into our planning area, _even if it means that the top priorities of our member governments aren't done in favor of projects that are more likely to be funded through state, federal, and grant sources." (1 star to 5 stars)
Sample=24
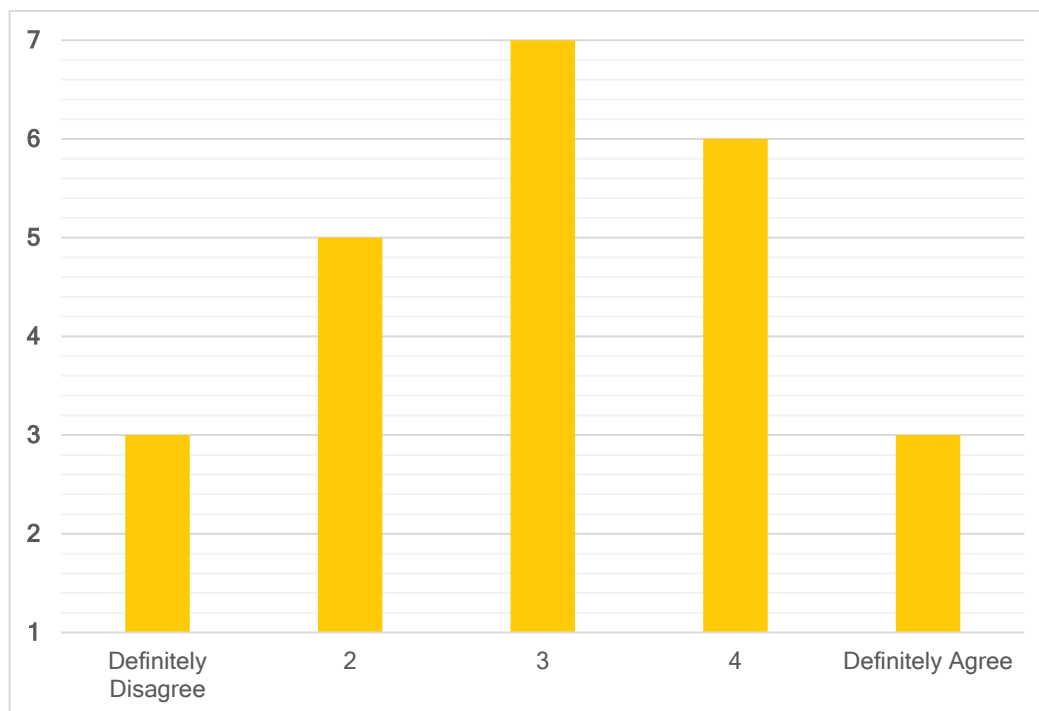
Q7. Partnerships and Relationships

MPOs in North Carolina are substantially successful because of partnering arrangements with many other organizations, including Councils of Government, local governments, and NCDOT. When asked, respondents noted that TJCOG and GoTriangle were partners in the best standing. Private sector partners, NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division (IMD), and local transit providers were cited as partnerships that needed improvement by the most respondents.
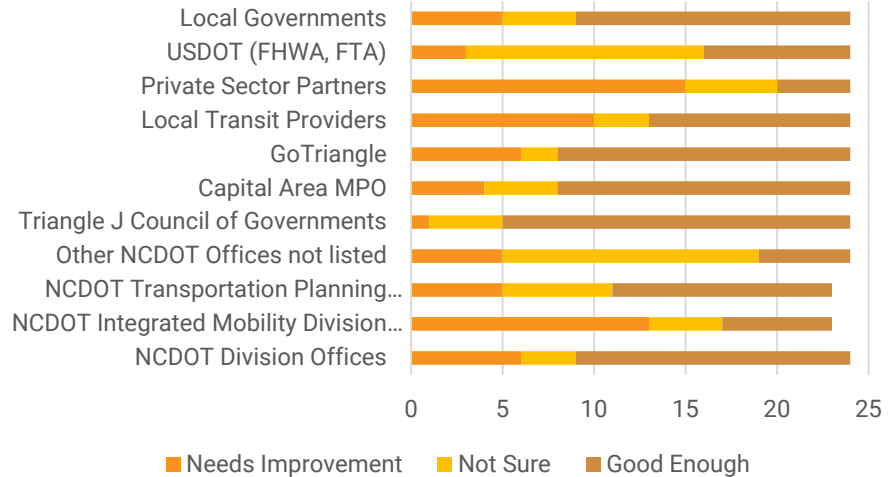

Question: MPOs are all about partnerships, and their success depends heavily on how well they leverage those arrangements. For each of the following partners, please describe if you think that the DCHC MPO's relationship is good enough now, needs improvement, or you aren't sure.
Sample=24

Q8. Staff Training

Survey respondents said that public engagement techniques and tools were the most important areas for DCHC MPO staff to train in the future. Somewhat further behind were alternative project financing methods, project management, and meeting facilitation / presentations / consensus-building. Additional technical skills was ranked the lowest priority; several of those interviewed noted the strong technical skills that already exists on the DCHC staff.

Question: The current staff received a lot of compliments during the research team's interviews, but everyone wants to improve. What's the most important area that you would suggest more training be offered to, or more attention be asked of, the current MPO staff?
*Sample=24*
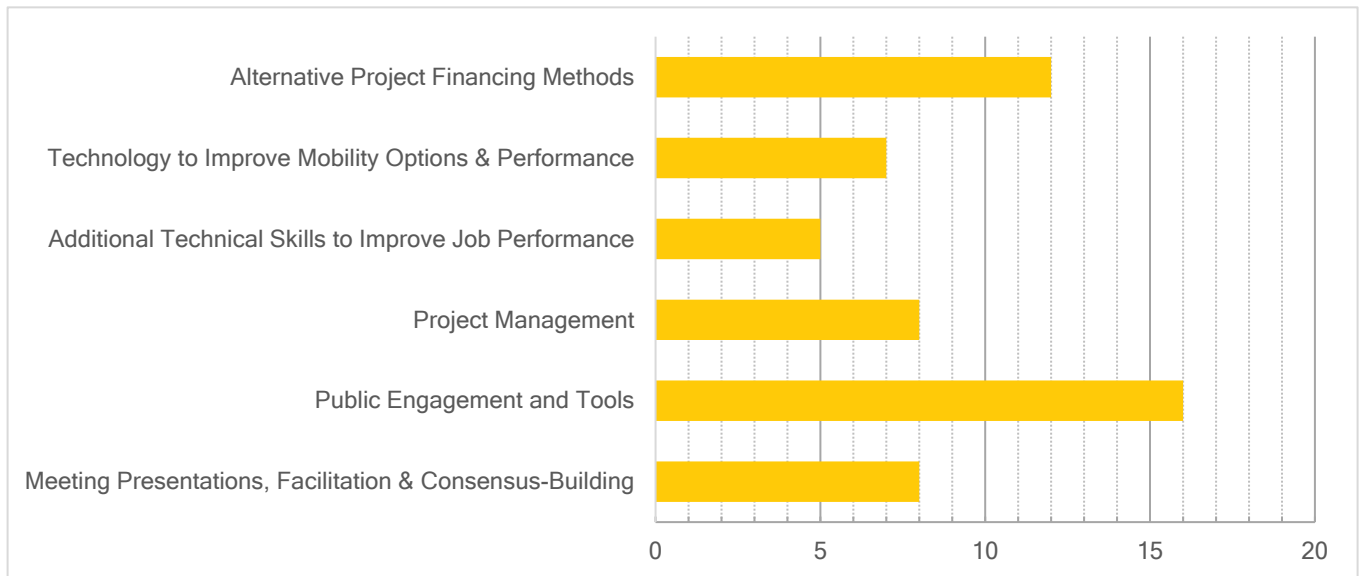
Q9. Visionary actions

Much of the MPO world revolves around fixed schedules and accompanying deliverables: board meetings / board agendas, annual work programs, quadrennial certification reviews, improvement program updates, and so forth. The options to be prioritized (respondents could choose two) were developed based on some of the interview comments received. Changing state laws that restrict programming options and making a clearer separation between the LPA (City of Durham) and the MPO were the two dominant responses, and were also cited by elected officials taking the survey.

Question: We heard a lot of ideas about how to improve the DCHC MPO operations at a more visionary level. Choose up to two options below for game-changer priorities to tackle.
Sample=24
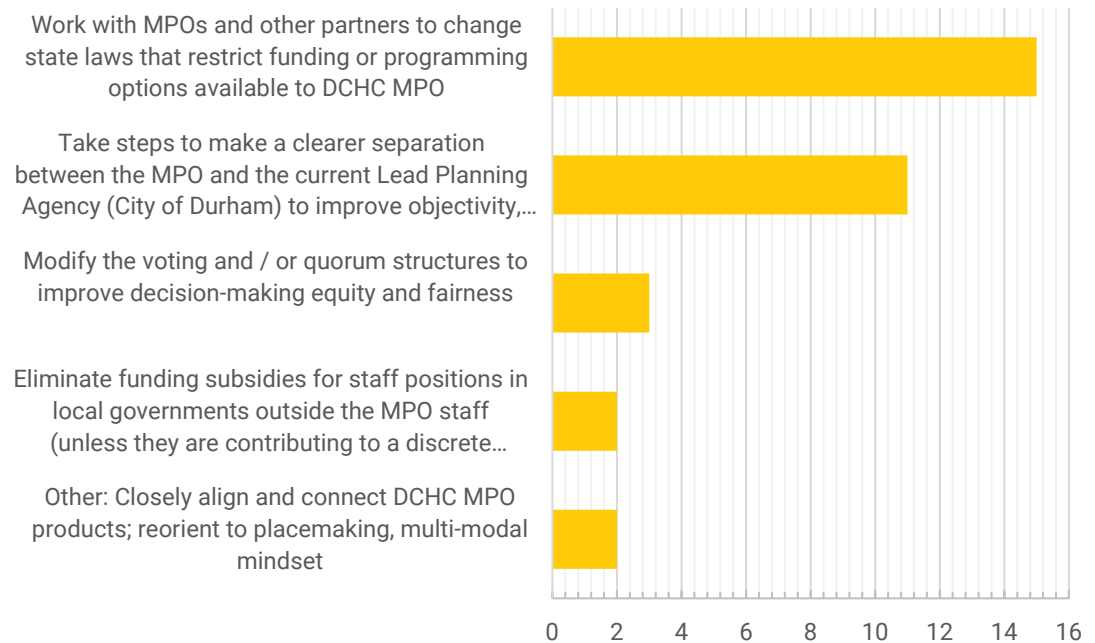
Q10. OTHER COMMENTS

Survey participants were also offered the opportunity to provide additional comments or clarification. These comments are shown in their entirety, below.

Question: Our questions were purposefully restrictive to give us some succinct input to the research team conducting the MPO Governance Study. If you have other ideas or comments, please feel free to share them with us in the space provided below.
Sample=7

- Need better communication with local government partners.
- Consensus building/ mutual agreement and understanding different views are good skills to develop when have many partners. Planning that focuses on problem and data analysis.
- TJCOG is great. I suggested improved coordination as its regional perspective, ability to be more candid, and ability to coordinate among the parties are all valuable and would be great if its role could be expanded even more.
- The City of Durham currently has too much influence over the MPO's operations and activities. In order to serve all the MPO's member agencies better, the MPO needs to operate more independently. Additionally, weighted voting on the MPO Board needs to be reconsidered. No single jurisdiction should be able to sway the vote in a regional organization – this seems counter to the MPO's goals as a regional organization. Finally, the MPO is understaffed. The MPO needs staff dedicated to transit planning, project management, and public engagement to better meet the stated goals of the MPO Board. Perhaps the MPO can divert some of the funding it uses for modeling staff on some of these other needs.
- Appreciate moving items to the consent agenda to streamline meetings.
- We need to include racial and climate crisis awareness more in decision-making.
- Need stronger and clearer leadership at the MPO. Not clear who's really in charge. There is no compelling public face of the MPO.

D. Peer Organization Interviews

Synopsis: Four metropolitan planning organizations were studied to further understand best practices that could be adapted to DCHC MPO. Interview questions, some tailored to the individual MPO and its conditions, accompany a summary of the MPO characteristics relative to those of DCHC.

CAMPO INTERVIEW: CHRIS LUKASINA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 1:00pm

- What is the past and current working relationship with DCHC (e.g., common projects / programs)?
  - Look for opportunities to do joint studies (Triangle bikeway study, ITS, freight, TRM/service bureau, NC 98 study, SPOT submissions, MTP coordination)
- Is that level of cooperation generally increasing, decreasing, or staying constant?
  - At a point where there aren't as many plans and projects going on right now or immediately planned (nothing in FY 2022) – just nothing going on, not systemic
  - Ideas for joint studies come more often from CAMPO, not DCHC MPO
- How could the cooperation be improved, or where is it lacking now?
  - Still have joint board meetings, joint executive meetings (recently focused on policy priorities, borderline legislative agenda matters)
  - CAMPO board is a little more pragmatic about some issues, like changing STI legislation
  - Part of the challenge is learning about the focus and stoppage of light rail program
  - CAMPO tries to go a couple of times each year to their board meetings
  - Invited to sit in on certification reviews at CAMPO (DCHC has not done this)
  - Some things invited to do jointly but did later on their own (EJ policy / report found out by CAMPO near final publication); sometimes modeling staff will do their own thing but that may have been tied to individual staff and may have been resolved with the result that sometimes scheduling is done without partnership and CAMPO has to react to that schedule
  - The CAMPO board has wanted to work together with DCHC but remain separate MPOs
- Describe your impressions of the DCHC MPO staff, MPO (policy) Board, and Technical Committee: how effective are they?
  - There is a lot more coordination between CAMPO staff and board members than in the past, and they are much more multi-jurisdictional to begin with because of the nature of the planning area; they try to work things out before it goes to the CAMPO (policy) board for a vote but people are free to vote as they will and sometimes there are "no" votes
  - Raleigh's weighted vote has gone down over the years because of external growth, but Raleigh, Cary, and Wake County could win any weighted vote; but the reality is that Raleigh may not be the most influential board member in recent years
  - The MPO staff tend to not be as proactive as some MPOs; a little too close to the City of Durham in their approach (Triangle Bikeway Study is one example); not always clear which staff person is in charge of coordination or decision-making; some actions are

> not taken in a timely fashion which has posed some challenges for inter-MPO coordination; where there is MTP-related matters it is usually Andy that participates
>   o Some changeover in leadership on their TC which is much more hands-on with things that are often dedicated to MPO staff but it's probably gotten better with time

- As much as the Policy Board drills down into issues and pose questions the Light Rail dismantling indicates that sometimes those questions don't produce the necessary insights; CAMPO focuses on working in rail ROW, achieving federal funding, and the degree of partnership with DCHC – all three are necessary; there are probably other examples where this lack of connectivity occurs; more often people are expressing concerns to CAMPO to deal with an issue that affects the whole region or a regional partner (e.g., GoTriangle)

- Not often enough a regional voice or leader to resolve issues (or he doesn't know about it) but the evidence that is seen supports that contention; there are backup plans that offer options if something goes wrong with the first option, for example, having options to problematic closures in Cary and Harrison Street Study in downtown Cary were the tools to figure out the issues among the public, rail companies, and partners – this kind of thing doesn't appear to be happening there and they need to have more community conversation about what they want for their (Durham) downtown so the scope is inadequate

- I would describe the quality and timeliness of work products from DCHC as great, good, or needs improvement.

- They seem to keep their boards informed; their technical products have received some critical comments including large amounts of money going to data collection; they are trying to do the right thing; there are some people with technically-driven personalities and others that want staff / TC to handle details; he has been called upon to answer a question on SPOT during a DCHC Board Meeting and he found himself to be almost doing a presentation

- I would describe the clarity and robustness of communications with DCHC as great, good, or needs improvement.

- Plenty of emails when they have agendas and upcoming meetings so they are not deficient in that way; Mr. Lukasina conducts periodic one-on-one meetings with board / TCC members and there has been improvement in that situation (communication) at CAMPO in recent years

- What do you hope happens at DCHC in the next five years?
  - o Continued and higher levels of coordination (but no desire to join the MPOs, or staff)
  - o Usually the two directors go out to lunch and talking together to discuss the work program, joint study opportunities, etc.; it would be nice to have the DCHC MPO staff be more responsive to invitations to participate or generate opportunities on their own
  - o Some of this may be more related to individual staff or histrionics that are changing
  - o A clear understanding of what their MPO really wants to be; in some cases the Board members don't view the MPO as capable or typically involved.

CRTPO INTERVIEW: NEIL BURKE & ROBERT COOKE
Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 9:00am

- What has changed since the 2012organizational study and the 2019 staffing study? Staffing, shared positions, board composition / rules, etc.
  - The role for Mr. Cook has stayed the same with a new title and NB moved into his prior position. His (NB) works directly with the MTIP throughout the region. Prior to the new transportation director the MPO was left alone, then an interim director that was focused on short-term issues, and the new director understood MPOs better, which elevated the stature of the MPO. They (CRTPO) are a division with the Transportation Department.
  - Staff has grown from four people to 11 people since NB joined CRTPO. He (NB) thinks that they are doing more to be a real resource to their 24 member jurisdictions.
  - New positions include a program manager (oversight of over 100 projects to ensure that they are authorized and encumbered before the funds expired, maintaining regular communication with project managers at the local level, and educating those local managers), GIS, administrative officer (office manager), public information officer, transit planner, associate planner, and a finance officer.
  - The MPO would have added another position (technical project manager that might be an engineer) but for the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about impacts on budget. There is already one engineer on staff, a position that has been there for a long time (before RC started).
  - There is also a project oversight committee that the program manager (Jennifer) staffs.
- Describe the external relationships with NCDOT (Division / Central) and neighboring MPOs.
  - Good working relationship with SPOT office, financing; TPD has gotten more rigid (financial issues?) with approving / reviewing contracts lately (NB)
  - Financial issues have complicated the relationship with the Division offices; the reprogramming that occurred last year was not done with any involvement whatsoever from the MPO; not consistent with 3C planning process at all; some projects are going into value engineering studies (e.g., Independence Boulevard) that have been worked on for 30 years that have a risk of being drastically re-scoped (NB)
  - Some MPOs have a better relationship with CRTPO than others (NB); GCL is sound, but Rock Hill is not interested in playing ball regionally, and Cabarrus-Rowan also has challenges but hope that extension of Lynx Blue Line into Cabarrus County may improve that relationship (RC)
  - Working on the transit elements of the MPO program at IMD is important; relationship with TPD is ok but TPD has had staff gutted and don't have a clear mission (RC)
- Describe the internal relationships between local governments and modal providers (transit)...have those relationships changed in their depth / frequency of partnership, funding allocations, etc.?
  - Contributed heavily ($400,000) to regional transit study, and the relationship with CATS has become less pro forma and more of a partnership; the smaller, county-level transit agencies relationship is evolving including reallocating funding that will increase dollars (Section 5307) to those smaller, human service transit providers (Mecklenburg, Iredell, and Union); the MPO will be leading the transit service planning
  - The local program manager provides a lot of local support for struggles with FHWA and NCDOT (she comes from a contracts background) and she has helped greatly at a

technical level (staff) with local communities; developed MS-Access database to help track projects; there has not been a demonstrated need for a geographic equity component after staff scores projects; target funding for bicycle/pedestrian projects; mix of quantitative and qualitative criteria that works to fund projects even in smaller towns; process has gotten more structured over time; varies from year to year, but non-capacity projects get 45% to 65% of the total projects submitted (NB)

- The 2019 Staffing & Resources Study had a lot of recommendations (pages 19-25); what has been the reaction to these recommendations, and which are likely (or already have) move forward?
    - o Proactive Planning (meeting individually with member agencies, educating board members, proactive public engagement that alters the course of plans, studies); yes, most recently with Iredell TCC members especially after the pandemic lockdown; CRTPO 101 presentations to local boards (RC)
    - o Addressing identified major challenges (population growth, balancing local / regional (and LPA) needs, integrating land use and transportation planning); Toughest nut to crack, one way that they are trying to get into it is with scenario planning for the MTIP – they want to take it beyond a MTIP exercise going forward (RC)
    - o Innovation (hiring transit planner, focusing on innovative technologies, bringing in expert speakers on specialized topics every six months, regional planning exercises, "branding" the MPO at state and national levels); Trying to use virtual environment with scheduled education sessions with guest speakers, weekly transportation staff meetings with TCC members not only for agenda items but also to create an educational opportunity
    - o The perennial issue that these past studies like to focus on is the relationship between staffing size (and work share with other City employees) and planning area. However, I think this issue is intertwined with the degree of dominance of Charlotte not only as a LPA but generally within the planning boundary and beyond MPO matters. I would like to talk about the inter-related nature of some of these organizational structures and policies, especially voting, use (or not) of "sphere of influence," and relationships with smaller MPO member agencies. Have there been discussions about migrating to an independent MPO structure or being housed at Centralina COG?
    - o While modeling is still run out of CDOT, other basic functions like contracting, financial planning are now conducted by dedicated MPO staff. Still a benefit to MPO to have that technical expertise (modeling, engineering, HOV / Tolling Study and prioritization)
    - o It doesn't make sense for CRTPO to be a stand-alone organization, and coming up with health insurance, office space, and would likely be a non-starter with the City; no major reason to disassociate with the City of Charlotte (NB)

PLANRVA (RICHMOND TPO) INTERVIEW: CHET PARSONS
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 10:00am

- 8.4 Mike Rutkowski welcomed Mr. Parsons to the call and explained the study to him. He told him that this study is about making the current process even better.
- 8.5 Great website, and it's obvious that you try hard to engage people through it and electronic means. What are some ideas you can give to others based on what you know and have experienced, including moving forward after the Covid-19 pandemic?
    - o The site is WordPress-based, and allows for little customization.
    - o They focus on how they can dumb down the process, and it's better now than it was in terms of accessibility.
    - o There is no one-size-fits-all solution, so they employ a lot of different techniques. These include Wikimaps, Zoom meetings (incl. chats), MetroQuest surveys, YouTube channel that records every meeting for the past 12 months. They don't usually get a lot of public comment, so he tries to answer every question very robustly.
- The last certification review dinged them with public engagement, including EJ communities. They are going to pursue funding a specific position to focus on engagement. That position will help PMs to disseminate information in a branded fashion.
- Part of their role is education, and to explain how the forecasting and planning processes work. They want to develop more education materials, including recorded webinars.
- What are some of the benefits that you've realized being housed within a regional planning organization (Planning District Commission)? Any disbenefits that an alternative arrangement might alleviate?
    - o PlanRVA is the umbrella organization (PDC) with a staff of 22 now; host the TPO and the employees work for the TPO / PDC.
    - o He is the director, and has 11 employees full-time with transportation, and a couple of other employees (environment, emergency management) are shared people with the PDC and emergency management alliance organization (26 counties).
    - o They have nine jurisdictions for both PDC and TPO. They are a TMA, including CMAQ.
- Describe the relationships between the MPO and the Commonwealth (state DOT).
    - o Created an authority to collect revenues to make transportation improvements (Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA). Three MPO staff service the CVTA. They generate funds through sales and gas tax, all of which started generating revenue last year. (This is similar to HRTPO but they have to use their revenues towards regionally significant projects, RVA does not – 50% goes to local authorities for smaller projects.) People got tired of funds going elsewhere (e.g., HRTPO). They would like to use the federal SmartScale to do 100% performance-based project prioritization.
    - o They have a very good relationship with the Richmond District, not many regular connections with the central office of VDOT. If there is any strain now it's because they are understaffed at the District level and are without the planning bandwidth currently.
- Describe the relationships between the MPO and county and municipal government members.
    - o The relationships are really good and the past chairs have preached collegiality and finding ways to have the smaller jurisdictions to be at the table, which is amazing.
    - o Participation from the smaller jurisdictions isn't always great because of small staff size.
    - o It is better now than it used to be (because there is more CVTA funding on the table?); elected officials used to scream at each other and walking away without budging their positions.

- o There aren't organized attempts for reaching out, but there are sincere attempts to communicate and get together informally. Most of the connection is with senior planning / engineering staff at the local level.
  - o Annual call for projects that are supported through a local projects program that has been in place since the last update in 2013. The process has been slowly improving towards a web-based application and after this year it will be using the same measures for the LRTP and be quantitative (about 15 measures). They are looking to make the process shorter so they can find alternative funding, and there will be a geographic equity component in the future.
- What are some tasks that you use consultants to conduct? What lessons have you learned in scoping out work for them, selecting and managing consultants?
  - o They have changed their use of consultants over time based in part on changes in staff composition, experience, and talents.
  - o Transit planning, MTP/LRTP updates, model development (CUBE scripts for accessibility, land use, etc.), on-call consulting capacity (including through RVA's public engagement that is being used to update the Title VI Plan for the MPO). They use a company called Replica (parent company is Alphabet) that coagulates and massages many different data sources.
- It looks like your program contemplates Complete Streets policies. Describe how the MPO works with multimodal elements (e.g., biking, walking, and transit), and how these types of projects are promoted by the MPO towards implementation.
  - o There is not good regional agreement on multi-modalism. They had to scale back the Complete Street Plan to a best practices because of differences of opinion among members for requiring some things.
  - o Relationships with transit operators are good, in part due to good personalities of leadership. A lot of work is focused now on CVTA and the 15% of funds coming to them, so they are updating their regional transit plan with the MPO being a resource on the data side. GRTC is a publicly traded company and a recent governance study is likely to ruffle some feathers, but that's necessary to address inequity and regional look at transit.
- Can you talk about the performance-based planning aspects of your program, including integration of land use and transportation planning?
  - o They are not doing a whole lot at the intersection of land use and transportation right now. A part of the performance measures include access to jobs / activity centers based on commuting patterns, job growth, and population growth.
  - o They have created some economic development metrics as well.
  - o They are wrapping up the long-range plan update in October, and they will likely start to look at a multi-year effort (5 years) to conduct scenario planning and make it more comprehensive. A year or two of engagement / education at the big picture level to understand local desires.
- Describe the various committees and how they are used.
  - o They have 13 committees now, in part because of new work (e.g., CVTA) and in part because of Covid-19 restrictions. Many are based on emerging needs or specific functions (regional transportation, public transportation) that have work to get done by the end of the year then will get disbanded.

- o Regular committees included a citizen's committee, community transportation advisory committee, policy board (and advisory executive committee that is used to pilot ideas before they go to the policy board but they don't take action that doesn't happen at the policy board), and technical board.
  - o Others like VisionZero surprised him that there would be enough interest in that topic from a diverse urban / rural constituency. They are looking at regional indicators and data development.
  - o Ultimately their goal is to have more committees run by local jurisdictions and others outside the MPO.
- The long-range plan will be less than 60 pages and web-based. They try to tell stories using Arc Story Map and is so much more effective than a large PDF file for most people. He checks everything they produce by looking at it first on the phone since that is how many people access their on-line material.
- They have a Story Map that is dashboard that helps communicate the data to their members and interested public / stakeholders.
  - o https://planrva.org/transportation/covid-19-pandemic/
  - o https://planrva.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=b2d655a0bd774a6c84dd8f1672118f08

NASHVILLE MPO: MICHELLE LACEWELL
Monday, May 10, 2021 at 10:00am

In advance of this call, we conducted a review of the GNRC/Nashville MPO website noting content, key products and announcements.

- Michelle: Executive Director for MPO. Aging and disability as well
- GNRC represents 13 counties (3 million pop)
- Member organizational guide included
- Executive Board (GNRC) meets monthly – authority over staff operations and functions
- Transportation Policy Board (tied to MPO) – handles TIP, UPWP, etc. adoptions. Directed by federal mandate. Population determines a seat on the TPB. Weighted voted was removed by State of TN. Every member gets one vote.
- MPO Membership still works well together. Locals are required to match the 20%. Limited use of "in kind" service. Instead, the County helps out.
- Each member contributes a fee per capita for planning activities. $1million from members
- Community and Regional Planning (GNRC) – represents the staff that supports the MPO. They bill their time to where they work, much like a consultant would.
- MPO work – they have approximately 15 FTE annually. But this represents several more folks total. They spend the time to budget resources needed to handle key deliverables annually
- Deliverables: RTP, STIP, PPP, UPWP, Travel model, CMP, TIP Online database (tip.nashvillempo.org) and multiple projects. All efforts are continuous and ongoing.
- TransCad model changed to ADM platform.
- StoryMaps of TIP project and Data Dashboards. "Helps us be a resource for folks outside of MPO/TDOT practitioners and agencies to build partnerships."
- No set aside for capital projects other than technology and transportation projects. This is administered through a competitive grant program.
- MPO was housed at Nashville Metro, was perceived as being too close to Nashville.
- Maury county sits outside the COG/RC but is within the MPO. TPB (aside from Maury County) has a dotted line relationship to GNRC, has authority to make its own decisions. TIP is adopted by TPB. GNRC/TPB have a sponsorship agreement.
- Under CRP department, Transportation Planning Manager is the "staff" of the MPO.
- People bill time where they work based on eligibility. Multiple planning factors (tourism, freight, e.g.) complicate this somewhat.
- Three budget years. Budget years depend upon the particular financial cycles for each grant/entity.
- What types of staff do you have?
- Marketing/Design
- Administrative Assistants
- Transportation Planners, TDM, etc.
- Deliverables: LRTP is done internally.
- LRTP and TIP are the main ones. Relevant studies and projects that come up to support them as well.
- Tipapp.nashvillempo.org
- UPWP

- Deliverables are defined by timeframe and completion date. Work on the deliverables is effectively continuous.
- CMP is effectively embedded in the LRTP. Regulations say it doesn't have to be its own document.
- Executive Summary "brochure" of the RTP is what's distributed, GNRC ArcGIS map shows both TIP, RTP, and vision projects.
- Lots of data dashboards. Equity, Demographics, Traffic Congestion – this helps us be a resource outside of just transportation.
- Data inputs – When we need others to help us put other information out, get constituents entered, we've already built the rapport that helps get participation buy-in.
- Constituency: 13 counties. How is a smaller community represented in the annual process?
- TPB members must be at least 5K plus population to have a seat (vote, voice). Smaller communities = county representation.
- How was this voting structure chosen?
- Weighted voting legislation ended that possibility.
- Balancing need for larger v. smaller communities? We are lucky that our membership has worked well together.
- Studies of regional significance" match federal dollars with dues.
- Local projects go through UPWP process, but then the local city is required to pay the match. In-kind services have kind of dropped off, but we haven't had these issues. County has come to the table and helped the smaller communities through.
- Dues: members are invoiced at per capita rate.
- Members pay in, but we get them eligibility to federal funds, we carry out activities
- Without these dues, we couldn't spend down the federal dollars these are the match dollars.
- How often does the local TIP have to update to the regional STIP?
- Frequently.
- Do you receive capital from the state to do physical projects?
- Technology and Transportation Projects (in RTP).