



## **RESEARCH TRIANGLE REGION JOINT MPO TRANSPORTATION FUNDING LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

The Research Triangle Region, which is served by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO), is a major economic engine for our state and continues to grow in population and employment. The combined Raleigh and Durham-Chapel Hill metropolitan areas are projected to be home to over two million residents in the next twenty years, a twenty percent increase from our current population. In order to continue the growth and prosperity our region has experienced in recent decades, we must have a transportation system that meets the needs of the residents and businesses of the Triangle. To meet those needs, not only will additional funding be necessary, but also holistic changes to funding formulas that can help both urban and rural areas.

Therefore, the elected officials representing the boards of both CAMPO and DCHC MPO respectfully submit the following initiatives to our representatives in the North Carolina General Assembly for their consideration:

### **Additional Funds to Meet the State's Transportation Needs**

For the 2017 fiscal year, North Carolina's transportation operating budget is approximately \$4.4 billion. Of that, just over \$2 billion was provided through the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law. However, funding available through the STI law is insufficient to construct the projects identified in the CAMPO and DCHC MPO fiscally-constrained Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The Boards of CAMPO and DCHC MPO encourage the North Carolina General Assembly to investigate the following options:

- A statewide transportation bond to inject new capital to address major critical infrastructure needs; and
- Creation of a new funding source for rural economic development/transportation needs that will not draw on current funding sources that benefit both urban and rural counties.

### **Exempt STBGP Funds from Strategic Transportation Investments Formula at the Division Level**

While additional transportation investment is necessary in North Carolina's urban areas to continue the economic growth that has seen the Triangle region thrive, a change can be made to the STI formula that does not require additional funding and would benefit both urban and rural counties. Currently, Surface

Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP, formerly STP-DA) funds are exempt from the Regional funding category under STI, but not Division level projects. Exempting these funds from the STI formula at the Division level as well would allow for funding to be more evenly distributed throughout the Division, let rural counties better compete for funds, and increase the amount of money flowing to divisions with large MPOs.

#### **Remove the Ten Percent Cap on Statewide Funding within a Corridor**

As part of the STI funding formula, no more than ten percent of funds can be allocated to any one project at the Statewide level within a Division or in adjoining Divisions over a five-year period. While intended to geographically disperse funding throughout a Division or Region, this provision can prevent necessary roadway improvements in larger metropolitan areas. For example, while both managed lanes on Interstate-40 and interchange improvements at Interstate-40 and NC-54 both scored at the top of the STI rankings, only one of these improvements could move forward due to the funding cap within this Division 5 corridor.

#### **Remove the Ten Percent Cap on Light Rail Transit Funding**

CAMPO and DCHC MPO members believe the Strategic Transportation Investments program is an appropriate method for distribution of state and federal transportation dollars. However, one glaring outlier from that formula is the ten percent cap on commuter rail, intercity rail, and light rail transit projects. Both the ten percent cap on overall project costs and the ten percent cap on regional funding allocation should be removed so that these projects can compete with all other transportation requests and be funded on their merits.

#### **Allow for State Funds to be Directed to Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects**

The Boards of CAMPO and DCHC MPO consider bicycle and pedestrian projects to be an appropriate use of state transportation funds. The STI currently prohibits the use of state transportation funds for independent, stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects. Prior to the passage of STI, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) had used state funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects and provided the match for federal funds. In North Carolina, pedestrians and bicyclists represent approximately 15% of all motor vehicle crash fatalities.