

Durham Staff Working Group
January 15, 2025
MEETING NOTES

The Durham Staff Working Group met on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at 1:00pm in the Durham County Admin II Building, Room 128, as well as through the Microsoft Teams platform. The following members and guests were in attendance:

Doug Plachcinski (Chair, Voting Member)	DCHC MPO
Ellen Beckmann (Vice-Chair, Voting Member)	Durham County
Jenny Green (Voting Member)	City of Durham
Jay Heikes (Voting Member)	GoTriangle
Brandi Minor	Durham County
Brooke Roper	Durham County
Curtis Scarpignato	Durham County
Sean Egan	City of Durham
Bharat Mehta*	City of Durham
Eric Simpson*	City of Durham
Paul Black*	GoTriangle
Priscilla Gilchrist*	GoTriangle
Curtis Hayes*	GoTriangle
Paul Kingman*	GoTriangle
Steven Schlossberg*	GoTriangle

Quorum Count: 4 of 4 Voting Members

*Attended remotely

**Alternate voting member

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Doug Plachcinski called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. All voting members were acknowledged to be in attendance.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair Doug Plachcinski asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. There were none.

3. Public Comment

Chair Doug Plachcinski asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

4. Administration

a. SWG Administration

i. Approval of December 2024 Minutes

Ellen Beckmann made a motion to approve the SWG December 2024 Meeting Minutes. Jay Heikes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Tax District Administration

i. Updated Financial Modeling Results

Steven Schlossberg provided an update on the financial model. The low point occurs in FY35 at \$19M and in FY36. At the last meeting, we were at a negative \$3M, but through adjustments we are now at a positive \$7M, which is still \$3M under the financial feasibility target of a \$10M minimum. To address this shortfall, we agreed to move the Bus Speed and Reliability project from FY34 to FY37. In shifting this, the low point is still FY35. Steven showed the financial tables that will appear in the draft Work Program and said they would also be available on SharePoint. Projected revenues are \$46.5M, and recommended expenditures are \$61M, which means we will need to pull \$15M from the fund balance (excess liquidity) to cover the gap. The financial model accounts for yearly fluctuations in fund balances, as some years we are able to transfer into the fund balance, and sometimes we have to transfer funds out. Ellen Beckmann asked if the \$500K Regional Connections Reserve was still available in FY26, since we used \$200K for the Small Starts Study, and also funded staffing for BRT. Steven replied that \$500K will be available in FY26, and that the BRT staffing positions were funded from the other reserve as shown in the FY25 Work Program. Steven also mentioned that the remaining \$300K from FY25 should be allocated to the fund balance if it is not used.

c. Public Engagement and Communication

i. GoForward website updates

Brandi Minor stated that she connected with Wendy Mallon regarding the upcoming public comment period. Brandi mentioned that she is currently developing and finalizing the public comment materials and will send them to Wendy to be posted on the GoForward website.

ii. Draft FY26 Work Program

Curtis Hayes, from GoTriangle, joined the meeting today. Curtis reiterated that Brandi Minor had initiated a conversation with Wendy (Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing) to ensure the GoForward website is updated with relevant information for the public comment period.

Curtis also mentioned that there will be some tabling sessions at Durham Station, and five potential dates have been identified. The goal is to have at least one or two team members available for these sessions, and it would be ideal to have a subject matter expert from both the County and City available as well. The sessions can be either indoors or outdoors depending on the weather, providing flexibility in planning. Lastly, Curtis mentioned that he is now working on coordinating schedules with everyone involved to ensure maximum participation at each tabling session. Brandi and Curtis then briefly discussed what would be the best format for the survey, and it was decided that a combination survey, with specific questions and an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback would be the most beneficial.

iii. Transit Tracker Development

Curtis Scarpignato stated that he sent out an initial data collection form to GoTriangle and GoDurham earlier this month and has requested responses by next Thursday, January 23rd. Curtis also stated that if anyone has any questions, to please reach out sooner than later.

5. Work Program

a. FY26 Work Program

i. Overview of Draft Work Program

Brandi Minor stated that the first proof of the draft Work Program includes project sheets for capital projects with funding requested in FY26, as well as the ongoing operating projects. Brandi then stated there are still several items to add, including the carryover capital projects, the MYOP/CIP, narrative, summary sheets, and the financial tables. Brandi mentioned that the goal is to send all of the remaining information to the graphic designer by January 22nd, so she will have time to refine the draft and get it ready for our review before releasing it for public comment. Brandi asked the SWG to notify her of any errors in the draft so they can be corrected.

Brandi reiterated that all materials need to be submitted to the graphic designer by January 22nd, so that she will have enough time to develop the final version of the draft from January 23rd to January 29th. County staff will only have two days to review before it is released for public comment on Friday, January 31st.

Sean Egan asked if the bus routes could be placed in numerical order, instead of by project ID, to which Brandi responded yes, she will make this change in the draft Work Program.

ii. Carryover and Closeout Projects Review

Brandi reviewed the potential closeout projects and stated that the list would be confirmed before the draft was released for public comment. Steven Schlossberg stated that the Light Rail and Commuter Rail projects would both be closed out and the remaining funding would be allocated to fund balance.

iii. Exhibit A Discussion

Brandi Minor initiated a discussion about what information should be included on the Exhibit A. Brandi stated that GoTriangle has added a line of text to most of their exhibits that states, "please refer to project sheet for additional information". Brandi then stated that she didn't feel this was necessary since the public or governing boards will not be reviewing the project budget sheets. There was some discussion around this matter, particularly between Brandi and Jay Heikes, but overall, the following key points were:

- The primary goal of Exhibit A should be to provide a simplified snapshot of the project details without overwhelming the public or governing boards with excessive history or technical details. Brandi's primary concern is that the project budget sheets contain a lot of additional information that might not all need to appear on Exhibit A, and may confuse our intended audience.

- The public-facing Exhibit A should remain concise, while the full project budget sheet can serve as an internal reference document for more detailed aspects, including historical project information and other technical elements.
- There was mutual agreement amongst the SWG that the information in Exhibit A should match the project budget sheet, particularly for critical items like project costs, funding commitments, and cost-sharing details.

Ultimately, the draft Work Program will be published as submitted, but more discussions will be had in the upcoming weeks to ensure consistency and clarity in the final Work Program.

iv. Review Schedule and any upcoming tasks for next month

Brandi Minor reviewed the schedule and upcoming deadlines. The draft Work Program will be finalized between January 22 – January 29. The information missing from the draft will be developed and sent to the graphic designer by January 22nd. The graphic designer will have a draft ready for review by January 29th. Brandi will follow up with the project sponsors and send a reminder email, including the project summary sheets and the SharePoint link.

Brandi stated that any FY25 Q4 amendments will be due by February 28th.

v. Upcoming Public Comment Period

The Public Comment Period will run between January 31 - February 21.

The draft will be released on January 31st for public comment and will be open for 21 days. During this time, the draft will be shared with the Board of County Commissioners at their work session on February 3rd. After the public comment period closes, the SWG will reconvene to make any necessary revisions.

The Work Program will be finalized by mid-March and the SWG will vote to release it to the governing boards for approval at their meeting in March. If the motion passes, the final Work Program will be presented to the BOCC in April.

Ellen Beckmann stated that she had written a memo proposing to delay a portion of the funding for four (4) of the City's capital projects until FY27. Ellen also stated that she would like to use the time between the draft and the final Work Program to facilitate discussions on these projects. Ellen made a motion to release the draft Work Program with the changes described in her memo.

Doug Plachcinski asked if there was support for the motion. There was none.

Jay Heikes made a separate motion to release the Work Program for public comment based on the MYOP/CIP that was presented by the Tax District Administration. Jenny Green seconded the motion. The motion also received support from Doug Plachcinski. The motion passed with three (3) affirmative votes and one (1) vote against by Ellen Beckmann.

6. Project Sponsor Updates

a. City of Durham

Sean Egan stated that the City finished its agreement with Kittleson & Associates for the Small Starts Feasibility Study. Sean also stated that utility relocation at Durham Station should occur this month and does not expect significant disruption to customers. Jenny Green stated that the next service changes are in development, and they are beginning engagement for changes that should occur in May. Eric Simpson stated that construction on Durham Station started this month, and that the groundbreaking ceremony occurred last December. On the Better Bus Project, the Fayetteville TEC is still being worked on by the consultant and they expect to receive the 30% plans by the end of the month. On Holloway, the plans are slightly delayed due to the survey, but the estimates should be coming in the next few weeks. Eric also stated that they are still looking for federal grants on the Fayetteville and Holloway TECs. On the Village project, Eric stated he was aware of the request for a cost estimate for construction plans but stated they are nowhere near construction plans but should receive a report from Kittleson by the end of this month.

b. GoTriangle

Jay Heikes stated that service changes are moving forward on March 2nd. There will be changes to Routes 800 and 805, and that both will go to 30-minute service on weekdays. Jay also stated that Route 805 will be shortened to serve UNC to Southpoint and then Route 800 will take out that section of the D4 between Fayetteville St. and the Regional Transit Center serving Hub RTP in sections of the 12 and 12B that are currently covered by GoDurham.

c. Durham County

Ellen Beckmann stated that the federal grant agreement for the REPAIR project has been approved. Ellen also stated that proposals were received for the BRT Vision Plan and there was a meeting held last week. Ellen also stated that supplemental information was sent out to the selection committee.

d. DCHC MPO

Doug Plachcinski stated that the MPO was supporting Chapel Hill's Transit study and that the five respondents qualified for interviews.

7. Next Meeting Date – February 19, 2025

Brandi Minor announced the next Durham County SWG meeting will be on Wednesday, February 19, 2025.

8. Adjournment

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.