

Durham Staff Working Group
March 19, 2025
MEETING NOTES

The Durham Staff Working Group met on Wednesday, March 19, 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)	Triangle West TPO
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
Steven Schlossberg	GoTriangle
Meg Scully*	GoTriangle
Austin Stanion	GoTriangle

Quorum Count: 4 of 4 Voting Members

*Attended remotely

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 February 2025 Minutes

Jay Heikes made a motion to approve the SWG February 2025 Meeting Minutes. Ellen Beckmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Adjustment to April 2025 Meeting Date

The scheduled SWG meeting for April 2025 is at the same time as the NCAMPO Conference, which several SWG members will be attending. The SWG unanimously voted to move next month's meeting to Monday, April 14th.

iii. Sponsor Updates for Agenda Minutes

Brandi Minor asked the project sponsors if they could send a summary of their project updates to be included in the agenda minutes going forward. There were no objections to this request.

iv. Lead Agency Matrix Updates

Brandi Minor stated that the Lead Agency matrix and proposed changes were initially discussed at a previous SWG meeting. Brandi displayed the current matrix and a proposed matrix, which has Durham County listed as the lead agency on all responsibilities except one item, which will remain with GoTriangle. On this item (Templates containing minimum standards for project and financial reports), Meg Scully asked if it could be clarified to indicate GoTriangle/Tax District Administration as the responsible party since the TDA is a standalone unit now, to which Steven Schlossberg agreed. Meg also asked if the last item (Strategy for each implementation element or agreement) could be clarified or removed. Ellen Beckmann responded to say that she believes this item means that there is an identified strategy for each project that goes beyond funding but specifies what we are building or developing as a whole.

There was additional discussion on this item, including whether or not Durham County should be deciding what project sponsors are doing as it relates to engagement for projects and how the designation of project sponsors would be decided. It was also suggested that SWG should review the ILA to determine if some of the responsibilities have already been designated. Brandi stated that some clarity would be added to the Lead Agency Matrix for review by the SWG again next month.

v. Proposed New or Improved Policies

Brandi Minor stated there is a need to develop new policies and revise some of the existing policies. Brandi has identified eight (8) policies but has no expectations of getting all of these completed by the end of the fiscal year. Brandi then stated that the Amendment Policy is one she believes can be updated and approved by the end of the fiscal year, so it will be ready ahead of the next amendment cycle in FY26. Brandi mentioned that the policies would be developed in conjunction with the SWG and that their feedback would be valuable in this process. Lastly, Brandi stated that improved policies are something that the BOCC also wants to see move forward.

b. Tax District Administration

i. FY25 Q2 Financial Presentation

Steven Schlossberg provided a presentation and overview of the FY25 Q2 Financial Results, through December 2024. Steve mentioned that the sales tax revenues are lower than expected and the situation is being closely monitored. Of the \$43M budget, only \$18.95M has been collected. Steve mentioned he is hoping we will catch up to the budget, but he is not sure yet. The Vehicle Rental Tax, that came through as an amendment, has been fully paid 100%. The \$7 and \$3 Registration Fees are slightly both under 50%, but he expects some of this shortfall to be made up for in the second half of the year.

Ellen Beckmann stated that she was in a meeting earlier with the County Budget Director and it was stated that year over year, sales tax in Durham was down 5%. This seems to only be affecting Durham, and no one is exactly sure why, but it will be further discussed in the upcoming financial subcommittee meeting. Despite the Durham revenues being down, Steve does not recommend a change in the budgeted FY26 revenues yet but did state that if something extreme changes down the line, we can adjust at that point.

On the expenses side, we have spent almost \$7.7M of the \$19.8M budgeted on operating expenses. Brandi Minor stated that the ACCESS expenses for the County were low due to a payment timing issue, but the payment has been made and will be reflected in the next quarterly report. For capital expenses, the budget was \$18.5M plus the \$35.9M in carryover, for a total of \$54M, of which only \$1.5M has been spent YTD. Steve stated that we need to start spending, and he will be asking the SWG to submit year-end spending projections in April.

For the cash balance, as of 12/31/24, after the required minimum cash balance and other committed cash requirements, we have \$100M available, but this is not the fund balance. GoTriangle is still putting together their ACFR (Annual Comprehensive Financial Report), and fund balance will be finalized once the audit is completed.

Lastly, Steve stated that the ICES (Increased Cost of Existing Services) has been recalculated for GoDurham and will be sent to the City of Durham within the next couple of days.

c. Public Engagement and Communication

i. Draft FY26 Work Program

Brandi Minor stated that the final public engagement report was included in the agenda packet. Brandi provided a brief overview of the report and thanked the GoTriangle staff for their assistance during the tabling sessions. Brandi also stated that she felt this was a successful engagement period and she looks forward to continuing to improve this process. Meg Scully mentioned that the in-person engagement received a strong response from the actual passengers, which she thinks is good. Jenny Green mentioned that she enjoyed reading the targeted questions, specifically as it related to the Bus Stop Improvements. Lastly, Brandi Minor stated that the report will be shared with the BOCC when she presents the final recommended Work Program.

ii. Transit Tracker Updates

Curtis Scarpignato stated that he had a productive conversation last week with many of the SWG members about the Transit Tracker. Curtis also stated that he sent out a link so people can have a deeper dive into it the tracker. Curtis asked the SWG to submit any feedback by next Wednesday. Lastly, Curtis stated that things were moving along, and he thanked everyone for their assistance.

5. Work Program

a. FY25 Work Program

i. FY25 Q4 Amendments

Brandi Minor provided an overview of the Q4 amendments, which included three amendments, with a proposed net increase of \$40,000 to the FY25 budget. Brandi stated that the action for today was only to approve the release of the amendments for public comment. There was a lot of discussion on the amendments, as summarized below:

1. Transit Assistance Program (TAP) – this amendment was submitted by GoTriangle. Austin Stanion provided an overview and stated that this amendment as proposed will increase TAP and reduce Youth GoPass and Fare Collection Improvements. During the discussion, it was noted that TAP was not originally in the Transit Plan and that it would be best to seek Board direction on how to move forward with this project. It was also stated that the SWG will need to fully understand the financial implications of this project for the future, and that we may possibly need to amend the Transit and/or Vision Plan.
2. Paratransit Expansion – this amendment was submitted by GoTriangle. This amendment increases the FY25 budget by \$40,000 to cover the year-to-date and anticipated usage of paratransit services.
3. Direct Investment in Mobility Equity (DIME) Grant – this amendment was submitted by the City of Durham. They are requesting additional funds due to increased ridership. Discussions on this amendment centered around the fact that this project was submitted as a one-time subsidy for the lost fare revenues, and that the City providing more trips than anticipated should not matter since the project sheet specifically states funding is only available until it is exhausted. It was also mentioned that the expansion services are already paid for by the Transit Plan. There was also concern expressed regarding the City's request to reduce the budgets of Routes 16 and 13 to help offset their DIME amendment request as well as what implications this amendment might have on the FY26 budget. Based on the SWG discussion, the City revised their amendment to remove the decreases to Routes 16 and 13.

Before the vote, Jay Heikes mentioned for clarity, today the SWG is only voting to release for public comment. He then stated that there's still a lot of guidance we need from the boards and the City, so the SWG can understand what the FY26 impact will be and any ongoing request for the DIME program. Lastly, Jay stated that he does not believe the interest from the public and the boards in making our transit service affordable is going to go away. Ellen Beckmann stated that she agrees with Jay. Ellen also stated that she believes this is calling into question how we hold project sponsors accountable for projects with local shares that are communicated one way, then submitted and approved by the SWG in the Work Program. Ellen asked if this is something we will be open to changing because there are other projects with local shares.

Doug Plachcinski made a motion was made to release the FY25 Q4 amendments for public comment, with the revision of removing the reductions for Route 13 and 16 from the City's amendment. Jenny Green seconded the motion. The motion was not unanimous, as Ellen Beckmann voted against.

b. FY26 Work Program

i. Last Steps for Finalizing the Work Program

Brandi Minor stated that the final Work Program is not being voted on today and provided some next steps to finalizing. Brandi mentioned that all final edits must be submitted to the graphic designer by March 31st. She then stated that any remaining project schedules or implementation metrics needing updating should be completed ASAP. Brandi also stated that cost shares for applicable projects must be included on the project sheets as stated at previous meetings. Brandi also stated that the project budget revisions deadline has passed and noted that the submitted budget revisions would be shared with the SWG at the next meeting. She stated that the Project Closeout List has been completed and confirmed with all project sponsors. Lastly, Brandi stated that she needed each project sponsor to confirm that the exhibits as shown on SharePoint in the Final Recommended folder are accurate as this is what will appear in the final Work Program. She reiterated that the exhibits she uploaded are the exact same as the exhibits that appeared in the draft – and to make any final edits directly to those files as soon as possible to avoid delays in receiving the final Work Program.

ii. Review Schedule and any upcoming tasks for next month

Brandi Minor reviewed the schedule and upcoming deadlines.

- Financial Subcommittee Meeting: This meeting is still in the process of being scheduled and once it has been set, she will let everyone know.
- Public Comment Period: The Q4 Amendment public comment period will open for 21 days (March 20 – April 10).
- Work Program: Following approval by the SWG at the April meeting, the Work Program will be presented to the BOCC at their May 5th work session. After approval, it will then be sent to the GoTriangle Board of Trustees in June for approval.
- Staff Working Group Meeting: We'll have our next meeting on April 14th, where we will vote to release the final work program to the governing boards for approval.

6. Discussion Items

a. City of Durham

Eric Simpson provided the following updates:

- **Durham Station Improvements (23DCICD02)**
 - The project is on track to break ground by the end of March. Efforts are underway to resolve a stormwater review issue with the consultant.

Resolution is anticipated this week.

- **GoDurham Bus Maintenance Facility (Paratransit) (25DCICD25)**
 - Transportation is collaborating with the General Services Division for project execution. A project plan is currently under development.
- **GoDurham Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility (Fay Street) (25DCICD26)**
 - Preparations are underway to secure a consultant for designing and laying out charging stations. Coordination with Duke Energy and the vendor has commenced.
- **Horton Road Transit Access (26DCICD13)**
 - Design revisions aim to minimize property acquisition needs. Two properties previously faced condemnation due to complex ownership issues.
- **Better Bus Project Overview**
 - The 30% design plans were successfully shared with stakeholders. The comment period closed on February 27th. A quarterly update meeting with the SWG occurred on March 5th at Fay Street and notes from the meeting are forthcoming. Plans are submitted to the NCDOT Review Portal for evaluation. Engagement with NCCU staff has occurred to incorporate their feedback. Comments from Durham County are under review. Ongoing feedback is encouraged through the interactive website: [Better Bus Project Feedback](#). A presentation can be provided to the SWG if requested.
- **Junction Road Transit Access (20DCICD2)**
 - Consultant is coordinating with the railroad for comments and permitting. The project's cost projection, including a 30% contingency, is \$2.9M and is advancing with 50% design.
- **The Village Mobility Hub (26DCICD14)**
 - The City has proposed the Little Caesars site for the new mobility hub. Next steps include NEPA document finalization, real estate acquisition, planning, design, permitting, and construction.
- **Holloway Street TEC (18DCICD1)**
 - Received comments on the 30% plans. The City is proceeding with 50% plans.

- **Fayetteville Street TEC (18DCICD2)**
 - Comments on the 30% plans led to developing a workshop to refine key project elements. Subsequent project budgets and schedules will be crafted. NCCU's feedback includes preferences for raised intersections and corridor branding using school colors.

Jenny Green provided the following updates:

- **Service Changes** - GoDurham service changes will occur in June 2025
- **Microtransit** – they are advertising via a mailer sent out in the water bills
- **Senior Shuttle** - they are looking to make adjustments due to some apartments closing and residents moving
- **BRT** – they had their first stakeholder meeting, and the next one will be on April 7th
- **Transit Signal Priority** project is wrapping up. It is functioning along Fayetteville Street and is making a significant difference for buses that are running two to five minutes behind schedule.
 - Comments on the 30% plans led to developing a workshop to refine key project elements. Subsequent project budgets and schedules will be crafted. NCCU's feedback includes preferences for raised intersections and corridor branding using school colors.

b. **GoTriangle** – no updates

c. **Durham County** – no updates

d. **Triangle West TPO** – no updates

7. Next Meeting Date – April 14, 2025

Brandi Minor announced the next Durham County SWG meeting will be on Monday, April 14, 2025.

8. Adjournment

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.