

Durham Staff Working Group
November 17, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

The Durham Staff Working Group met on Monday, November 17, 2025, at 1:01pm 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:

Ellen Beckmann (Chair, Voting Member)	Durham County
Colleen McGue (Vice-Chair, Voting Member)	Triangle West TPO
Jenny Green (Voting Member)	City of Durham
Jay Heikes (Voting Member)	GoTriangle
Brandi Minor	Durham County
Caroline Lamb	Durham County
Curtis Scarpignato	Durham County
Bharat Mehta*	City of Durham
Neisha Reynolds	City of Durham
Eric Simpson*	City of Durham
Paul Black*	GoTriangle
Brandon Carey*	GoTriangle
Kelley Smith*	GoTriangle
Logan DiGiacomo*	GoTriangle
Paul Kingman*	GoTriangle
Steven Schlossberg	GoTriangle

Quorum Count: 4 of 4 Voting Members

*Attended remotely

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Ellen Beckmann called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. All voting members were acknowledged to be in attendance.

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

Chair Ellen Beckmann asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda. Brandi Minor stated there were none.

3. Public Comment

Chair Ellen Beckmann asked if there were any public comments. Brandi Minor stated there were none.

4. Administration

a. SWG Administration

i. Approval of September 2025 Minutes (Timestamp: 00:22)

Colleen McGue made a motion to approve the September 2025 Meeting Minutes. Ellen Beckmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Approval of October 2025 Minutes (Timestamp: 1:04)

Colleen McGue made a motion to approve the September 2025 Meeting Minutes. Ellen Beckmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

iii. Bylaws Amendment Overview (Timestamp: 1:48)

Brandi Minor opened the discussion on the bylaws, noting that the SWG had the opportunity to review the current bylaws and submit proposed revisions. She stated that the SWG would not be finalizing the bylaws at today's meeting, but that she will instead schedule a separate, workshop-style session to review and discuss the proposed changes in more detail. Brandi will send out a Doodle poll to gather availability, with the goal of holding the workshop no later than early December, considering the upcoming holiday season. She also proposed bundling the revised bylaws, the Work Program amendment, and the FY27 Work Program into a single package for approval by the governing boards, rather than seeking separate approvals. This approach is intended to streamline the process and reduce the number of presentations required. Brandi noted that the draft Work Program is scheduled to be presented at the February work session, with final approval anticipated in May. This timeline allows for any necessary adjustments to be made prior to submission.

iv. Transit Plan Amendment Update (Timestamp: 5:20)

Durham County staff provided an update on the Transit Plan Amendment, which is intended to advance in coordination with the FY27 Work Program. The amendment addresses significant capital investments and may require defunding existing projects, prompting the need for governing board input on key trade-offs, such as prioritizing implementation-ready projects versus preserving funding for long-term regional infrastructure like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

Members emphasized the importance of clearly presenting financial assumptions and trade-offs to the governing boards. While some modeling has been done, broader reallocation scenarios between project types have not yet been explored, pending board direction. There was also discussion about updating outdated financial assumptions, particularly regarding federal funding for BRT projects, and ensuring that local funding commitments are in place to support grant applications.

The SWG acknowledged that a full vision plan update is expected to begin in late 2026 or early 2027, but the current amendment is necessary to address immediate priorities. Coordination between city, county, and regional partners will be critical to ensure alignment between short-term needs and long-term planning goals.

b. Tax District Administration (Timestamp: 37:47)

i. Revenue Forecast Update

Steven Schlossberg provided an overview of the revenue assumptions for the Durham Transit Plan as part of the FY27 Work Program development. He noted that the FY27 financial model will be based on updated revenue projections, with a recommendation to keep the half-cent sales tax revenue flat compared to FY26 due to recent underperformance. Specifically, Article 43 revenues came in slightly below budget in FY25, largely due to a significant refund request from a tax-exempt institution, which impacted monthly collections.

The FY26 adopted revenue was \$44 million, and while early FY26 collections have been strong, the recommendation is to maintain a conservative estimate for FY27. This adjustment resets the baseline for future growth, potentially reducing long-term revenue projections by \$10–15 million over a decade. The Tax District recommends using Moody's previously issued pessimistic growth forecast of 2.21% for FY28, returning to a baseline growth rate thereafter. This approach is supported by similar projections from NC State's Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE), which has modeled comparable growth trends.

Steven emphasized that while the current outlook is not alarming, the drop in revenue from FY24 to FY25 reflects broader economic shifts, including the end of pandemic-related spending surges. Other counties and municipalities are also taking a conservative approach to revenue forecasting. The recommendation to hold FY27 revenue flat is intended to avoid overcommitting funds in a period of uncertainty.

There was discussion about the potential to revisit revenue assumptions later in the process if collections improve significantly. The timeline for finalizing the FY27 Work Program allows for some flexibility, with the final version due before the April SWG meeting and formal approval scheduled for May. This may allow for mid-cycle adjustments if early FY26 revenue trends are stronger than expected.

ii. FY 2025 Durham Transit Program Financial Update

Steven Schlossberg provided a comprehensive financial update. Steven reported that approximately \$4.3 million in unspent operating funds will return to fund balance and \$45.5 million in capital funds will carry forward, largely due to project delays and underspending across departments. While capital funds remain encumbered, only a portion is expected to be spent in the near term.

As of October, the transit fund holds \$205.6 million in cash, with about \$110 million in available liquidity after accounting for reserves and encumbrances. Investment income has contributed \$7–8 million annually, though it is not included in budget forecasts due to market volatility.

To better manage cash flow and maximize investment returns, Steven is seeking to hire a staff member to develop a cash flow model. This would align spending timelines with investment strategies and prepare the plan for potential debt financing if needed.

Steven also addressed the impact of institutional tax refunds (e.g., from Duke or UNC), which can cause revenue fluctuations, and clarified that a small commuter rail expense was related to the final wind-down of the discontinued light rail project.

5. Work Program

a. FY26 Work Program

i. Q3 Amendments (Timestamp: 1:17:41)

Brandi Minor stated that any Q3 amendments must be submitted by next Wednesday, November 26, with the deadline adjusted to account for the Thanksgiving holiday. Submissions must include a completed amendment form and a memo explaining the purpose and justification for the amendment. Brandi reiterated that the memo will be included in the materials presented during public comment and board review. Brandi stated she would resend the amendment form to the SWG for reference.

b. FY27 Work Program

i. Project Budget Sheet Review Workshop (Timestamp: 1:18:42)

Brandi Minor stated that the Project Budget Sheet Workshop will be held tomorrow at 2:30 PM. The purpose of the workshop is to allow project sponsors to explain their requests, particularly increases or scope changes, and to help all partners understand the rationale behind each submission. The workshop is also intended to begin identifying priorities and trade-offs, given that the current financial model is overprogrammed.

A key issue discussed was the confusion between FY27 Work Program submissions and Transit Plan Amendment requests. Some projects were submitted in anticipation of the amendment but were also included in the FY27 model, leading to inconsistencies. To resolve this, the SWG agreed that a consolidated model is needed, one that includes both amendment and FY27 requests, to accurately reflect total funding needs and guide decision-making.

Project sponsors will need to resubmit updated FY27 project budget sheets for any amendment-related projects they want considered in the FY27 Work Program. This will ensure transparency and allow for a more accurate financial model. The group acknowledged that only a handful of projects are driving the funding gap, and that prioritizing or deferring lower-priority or placeholder projects may be necessary to balance the model.

There was also discussion about the need for a structured prioritization process and incorporating business case justifications for major projects. Participants

emphasized the importance of understanding each agency's top priorities and avoiding decisions that could jeopardize future project implementation.

Finally, the SWG agreed that a follow-up meeting will be needed after the workshop to finalize decisions and integrate all project requests. The bylaws discussion will be deprioritized for now to focus on completing the work program by the January deadline.

ii. Exhibit A Partner Review (Timestamp: 2:02:20)

Brandi Minor stated that the Exhibit A's have been uploaded to SharePoint for review. All partners are expected to review their exhibits and update their cost share information. A new improvement this year includes aligning the subcategory descriptions with the pie chart categories, based on a suggestion from during last year's Work Program development process. The deadline to complete Exhibit A review is December 10.

iii. Review Schedule and any upcoming tasks for next month

This item was skipped in the interest of time, but the SWG is aware of upcoming deadlines.

6. Project Sponsor Updates (Timestamp: 2:03:07)

a. City of Durham

Neisha Reynolds stated that interviews were held with RFI candidate firms. They have narrowed the selections down and are in fee negotiations for Central Durham BRT.

Jenny Green stated that the Durham Station project is moving forward, and all buses are expected to move to the temporary platform in mid-December. Construction will continue for 9-10 months, followed by the finishing touches, with full completion expected in about a year.

b. GoTriangle

Jay Heikes stated that the public comment period is ongoing through November 21st for service changes.

c. Durham County

No updates provided in the interest of time.

d. Triangle West TPO

No updates provided in the interest of time.

7. Next Meeting Date – December 15, 2025 (Timestamp: 2:04:23)

Ellen Beckmann announced the next Durham County SWG meeting will be on Monday, December 15, 2025.

8. Adjournment

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.