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Wednesday, September 29, 2021

12:00 p.m.

Virtual | Microsoft Teams

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**Board members present** | Will Allen III, Corey Branch, Michael Fox [left 1:00 p.m.], Brenda Howerton, Sig Hutchinson, Valerie Jordan [left 1:56 p.m.], Vivian Jones, Michael Parker, Renée Price, Charlie Reece, Stelfanie Williams [left 12:44 p.m.]

**Board members absences** | Jennifer Robinson

Chair Michael Parker officially called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. A quorum was present.

**I. Adoption of Agenda**

**II. Closed Session | Personnel**

**Action:** On motion by Price and second by Howerton the Board voted to adopt the agenda and enter into Closed Session at 12:04 p.m. pursuant to NCGS §143 318.11(a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of a prospective employee and NCGS §143 318.11.(a) (5) to establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract. Upon vote by roll call, the motion was carried unanimously.

**Action:** The Board returned to open session at 12:26 p.m.

Parker stated that this would be his last meeting as Board chair. He thanked staff for making the job easy and a pleasure.

**III. Update on Greater Triangle Commuter Rail Project**

Chair Parker said it is important that the Board pay close attention to commuter rail and provide oversight by asking hard questions and challenging assumptions. He thanked staff for providing this opportunity to inform the Board.

President/CEO Lattuca stated that today's presentation will focus on engineering problems and challenges and the solutions that are being worked on. The presentation is attached and hereby made a part of these minutes.

Eggleston explained that a new passenger rail service within an existing corridor that already carries freight and intercity passenger service has the benefit of requiring less acquisition of private property than otherwise would be needed for a project in a new corridor but there are tradeoffs with the construction of additional tracks to accommodate increased train traffic. She said the team is working to complete the technical work within local control to complete this phase of study but the results of the parallel railroad capacity modeling study underway by Norfolk Southern are needed. She added that no feedback has been received on that work to

date and there have been no discussion of their progress. Allen noted that by this point there should have been an initial iteration of the modeling provided.

Eggleston said for a major project like commuter rail at an anticipated cost of over \$1 billion it is critical to secure federal funding to leverage local investment. Federal grant programs can fund up to 50% of the cost, and an early part of planning is to make sure the project would be eligible for federal funds. The first phase completed last year looked at a Mebane to Selma corridor and the two possibilities most likely to be successful for funding were Durham to Garner and Durham to Clayton. The current study is looking at the feasibility of both these potential project limits and is focused on efforts in three categories:

- Rail Analysis | including the work Norfolk Southern is doing in parallel with GoTriangle's work to support confirmation of the project definition to be carried forward for further effort coming out of this study
- Opportunity Analysis | studies being conducted by TJCOG and the consultant team around economic development
- Engagement | it is critical for the project to be developed on a foundation of strong public engagement and buy-in

The key focus areas, captured in the MOU which was signed by the study partners, are:

- railroad coordination
- local engagement
- assess feasibility in key areas
- evaluate decision-making metrics
- monitor Federal funding eligibility
- facilitate cost-sharing discussions
- build capacity for implementation

Eggleston then introduced Monica Barrow, project manager, and Moriah Ellington, engineering lead, of STV to discuss the planning study status.

Barrow summarized the objectives of the phase two feasibility study:

- refine the project concept
  - service - stations, train schedule [assumed 8-2-8-2 or 40 trains per day]
  - what to build/buy - 40 miles of additional track within existing right-of-way, 40+ bridges, 34 at-grade crossings, 14 stations, ADA requirements, train storage and maintenance facility, rolling stock
  - Durham goals - improve clearance under rail bridges; improve pedestrian/cyclist mobility; preserve connection between transit center and train station; minimize impacts to roadway, traffic, historic structures; comply with Norfolk Southern and NCDOT requirements
  - Cary goals – provide compatibility with plans for new multimodal facility; improve pedestrian/cyclist mobility; minimize impacts to roadway, traffic, historic structures; comply with Norfolk Southern, CSX and NCDOT requirements

- estimate economic benefits of the project – model refined and approved by FTA
- update ridership and cost estimates and potential for FTA funding
- document risks

Ellington shared aerial views in Durham and Cary to demonstrate issues and challenges.

Barrow stated that discussions with partners and stakeholders in Durham have led to refinements and two concepts that can best meet the goals in Durham with the fewest impacts. For Cary, there are two acceptable concepts and work now focuses on traffic analysis and visualization tools.

Heikes discussed the proposed station areas and Liz Raskopf discussed public engagement efforts to date.

Tom Henry explained the FTA requirement to identify all third-party agreements during project development and to early on create an “understandings paper” or outline of agreements. Currently an MOU [signed April, 2020] outlines the roles and responsibilities of key partners. The RTC modeling agreement [signed May, 2021] commits Norfolk Southern to perform modeling. Upon completion of modeling work term sheets will be developed to assist in the development of future agreements for commuter rail transit implementation. Henry then shared the numerous agreements required in the categories of general, planning/design/property, construction and operations.

Sandra Freeman and Steve Schlossberg discussed the cost-share analysis and the financial assumptions related to capital, operations and maintenance. Durham and Wake counties are in discussion about cost share. The current Durham Transit Plan includes a 20% share of the non-federal share for the commuter rail project; Wake’s adopted plan includes 67%. In order to fully fund the project, Wake Transit could carry greater costs in the early years of the project to be off-set by Durham Transit over time. Other options include different splits for operating costs and capital costs or a different FFGA reimbursement allocation than the capital cost split. Wake Transit may also need to revise its financial policies.

#### IV. Adjournment

**Action:** Chair Parker adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m.

Prepared by:



Michelle C. Dawson, CMC  
Clerk to the Board