

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: J.B. Culpepper, Planning Director
David Bonk, Long Range and Transportation Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization Request for Planning Funds

DATE: May 18, 2009

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Council with information about the request from the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization for funds, totaling \$60,000, to support several regional planning projects. (Attachment 1) The attached resolution would authorize the Town to participate in the NC54/I-40 Study.

BACKGROUND

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for developing and implementing Long Range Transportation Plans as required by federal and State regulations. In order to support the development and implementation of these plans the Metropolitan Planning Organization periodically initiates planning studies intended to enhance the capabilities of the regional transportation model, fulfill federal or State planning requirements or provide more detailed analysis of different components of the Long Range Plan. The Metropolitan Planning Organization typically utilizes federal funds provided through the Surface Transportation Direct Allocation program to fund these projects. These federal funds require a 20% local match. The Town of Chapel Hill is a member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and has been asked in the past to provide a portion of the local match for these planning projects. Over the past several years the Town has provided a total of \$52,514 in local match towards regional planning projects.

DISCUSSION

The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization is proposing to undertake three planning projects in the next fiscal year. These projects include:

NC54/I-40 Study: This study will assess existing congestion and evaluate the impacts of future transportation demand along the NC54 corridor between Fordham Boulevard in Chapel Hill and I-40 in Durham. The project will also analyze problems with access from I-40 to NC54. Consultant selection has been completed and the total negotiated cost of the project is \$300,000. Chapel Hill's share is proposed to be \$20,000.

Staff Comment: The Council has previously supported this project and agreed to participate in the local match along with Durham and Durham County although the scope of the project (Attachment 2), total cost of the project, and the distribution of the match have only recently been finalized. We believe the scope of this project will address concerns identified by the Council about the impact of development along the NC54 corridor. While we believe the proposed Chapel Hill share, \$20,000, is appropriate if only Durham, Durham County and Chapel Hill participate, we think that the North Carolina Department of Transportation and Triangle Transit have an interest in the evaluation of the NC54 corridor and should be asked to provide funding for the local match. The attached resolution would authorize the Town to participate in the NC54/I-40 Study in an amount not to exceed \$20,000 to come from funds appropriated for planning consultants.

Congestion Management Process (Update): The Congestion Management Process is required by federal transportation regulations and is intended to monitor and identify congestion throughout the urban area. The projected cost of this study is \$450,000 and Chapel Hill's share is estimated at \$20,000.

Staff Comment: The Congestion Management Process is intended to provide the same type and level of information and analysis as the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Mobility Report Cards. The Report Cards, prepared in 2001, 2003, and 2005 provided an in-depth assessment of existing transportation conditions for all modes of travel and identified areas of concern. The Congestion Management Process is proposed to replace the Chapel Hill and Carrboro Mobility Report Cards and is expected to provide the same level of information for the entire Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Urban Area to meet federal planning requirements.

A scope of work has not yet been developed for the Congestion Management Process and it is unclear whether the project will be able to provide transportation information and analysis consistent with the Mobility Report Cards. If we can ensure that the Congestion Management Process does provide the same level of detail we believe this study would update the previous Mobility Report Cards, which the Council and community found helpful in evaluating existing transportation conditions. We also believe that if the proposed Congestion Management Process is intended to provide similar information and analysis throughout the urban area, then Orange County, Hillsborough and Chatham County should also be asked to provide a portion of the local match.

The current proposal included hiring permanent staff at the metropolitan planning organization to undertake data collection throughout the region. Although federal transportation planning funds will be used for 80% of the cost of these staff the future requirements for providing the 20% local match need to be resolved. We believe that much of the transportation information for the Chapel Hill area could be provided through the updating of the University main campus transportation management plan and the anticipated revisions to the Carolina North transportation impact analysis. Both are expected to collect data in the fall of 2009.

Parking Study/Survey: This study proposes to undertake an extensive survey of existing parking conditions and utilization focused on downtowns, local universities and medical centers, to assess the impact of parking pricing and availability on individual travel behavior. This information would then be used to make improvements to the regional transportation model to

allow the model to better represent existing and projected changes in travel behavior. The estimated cost of the project is \$250,000 and Chapel Hill's share of the local match is estimated at \$20,000.

Staff Comment: We believe this project can provide an important benefit to the Town in future transportation evaluations by improving the ability of the regional model to more accurately reflect University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill parking policies. The regional model will be used as part of future studies for possible federal funding for the implementation of bus rapid transit or light rail in Chapel Hill and the region. The anticipated improvements to the model to better assess parking impacts should provide a more accurate estimate of potential transit ridership and improve the potential for federal funding.

No scope of work for this project has yet been developed. We believe that the scope must address the issue of parking availability as well as pricing to be useful in evaluating existing or future parking policies for the University main campus and Carolina North. We also believe that the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and Triangle Transit will benefit from the proposed enhancement to the regional model and should be asked to participate in funding the study. This study could be delayed until next fiscal year.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Council approve the attached resolution, authorizing the Town to participate in the NC54/I-40 Study and provide \$20,000 in local match for the completion of the NC54 Corridor Study. These funds could be provided from monies appropriated for planning consultants.

Regarding the Congestion Management Process, we recommend that Town staff work with regional staff to clarify the anticipated approach to completing the study. These discussions could include the development of a scope of work and the possible incorporation of data from anticipated updates to the University main campus and Carolina North studies. Once these tasks have been completed we suggest that the Council consider providing the \$20,000 local match from FY2009-2010 funds designated for planning consultants.

We recommend the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization undertake the completion of the parking study in FY2010-2011.

ATTACHMENTS

1. March 17, 2009 DCHC letter
2. NC54/I-40 Scope of Work.