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Considering Community and Transportation Assets for the Future

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION IN LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Alena R. Cook, PE, CPM, NCDOT
NCDOT: 1554 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1554
919-707-0910
arcook@ncdot.gov

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Transportation Planning Branch identified an opportunity to improve coordination between natural and cultural resource agencies and long-range transportation planners, in advance of project development. NCDOT's Transportation Planning Branch contracted with the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University to provide assistance in the development of an Interagency Coordination Protocol ('Protocol'). The purpose of this guidance is to document best practices for how data sharing and coordination can occur during the development of a long-range transportation plan. The goals of developing a consistent approach to agency coordination include improving the quality of transportation planning decisions, enhancing the usefulness of transportation planning products (both for long range planning purposes and in project development), and potential benefits and efficiencies for all agencies from sharing data and meaningful coordination.

The Protocol is applicable to a variety of transportation planning processes, including the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), which is required by state law for all areas in North Carolina, as well as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) developed based on federal requirements in MPO areas. This guidance is intended for use by NCDOT's Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) and process partners, such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs), FHWA, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), environmental resource agencies, local governments, land use agencies and other entities participating in the development of a long-range transportation plan.

The Protocol was developed through a multi-year process that included extensive outreach to numerous agencies. Telephone interviews, webinars, workshops, meetings, and surveys were utilized to gather information and develop the best practice recommendations. Development of the Protocol began with education of all resource partners on transportation planning. Additionally, the resource agencies were able to discuss information, plans, and data available to support transportation planning. The agencies were then engaged to discuss what kind of information should be shared and how it could best be shared in order to get their input in a way that is both meaningful and as efficient as possible, given limited staff resources and time constraints. The resulting Protocol describes the best practices for engagement of agencies throughout the transportation planning process. It identifies at what points in the planning process it is most important to coordinate, as well as the information to be shared and methods for obtaining input.

The readers will learn about the best practices described in the Protocol for coordination with various agencies during the long-range transportation planning process. The benefits of meaningful coordination, as well as challenges and critical success factors in implementing a standard method of coordinating, will be described.