

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA  
AUGUST 21, 2017**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a work session on Monday, August 21, 2017 in the Community Room at the Public Safety Building.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Cecil Perry, Chairman  
Dr. William R. Sterritt, Vice-Chairman  
Jeff Dixon  
Lloyd E. Griffin, III  
Joseph S. Winslow, Jr.  
Frankie Meads  
Bettie J. Parker

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Rodney Bunch, County Manager  
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney  
Shelley Cox, Planning Director  
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

The work session was called to order at 3:00 PM by Chairman Perry. He thanked everyone for coming. He introduced Allen Moran, NCDOT District I Representative and Jerry Jennings, NCDOT Division I Engineer.

**1. DISCUSSION ON CURRENT AND FUTURE ROAD PROJECTS:**

Mr. Jennings introduced Allen Moran who is the new Board of Transportation member for District I, which covers fourteen counties in the northeast. He stated that Mr. Moran is from Dare County. He covers a big area from Lake Gaston, west of I-95 in North Hampton County all the way down to Ocracoke Island. He said he is trying to get around and meet various local officials and understand their concerns. He introduced Randy Midget, local engineer for NCDOT who can help answer questions.

Commissioner Lloyd Griffin noted that he asked Angela Welsh, Planning Director at the Albemarle Rural Planning Organization. He said County Manager Bunch invited Shelley Cox, County Planning Director and our partners from the City of Elizabeth City.

Mr. Moran said he has been trying to meet with all the counties and municipalities in his district and find out what their needs are. He said there are a lot of projects going on that he is trying to familiarize himself with. He opened the floor for questions.

Commissioner Griffin asked Ms. Welsh to provide an update on what projects we asked for over the next couple years. Ms. Welsh stated that the county finally has a CTP after six years. She said the County has a lot of Highway 17 projects in the CTP. She explained that the Highway 17/I-87 projects are in the CTP for scoring, but once the feasibility study comes out they will have to be tweaked some.

Mr. Jennings explained the I-87 process. He said there are currently two feasibility studies going on. One of the studies is for the US 64 portion from Raleigh to Williamston. He said that section is more clear cut, with controlled access. The improvements there are much less extensive than will be needed on the US 17 portion that takes you from Williamston to the state line where the other feasibility study is ongoing. The draft study will be released sometime late this year. He said it will provide us with better information on options, impacts, and costs for the various segments of the highway to bring it up to interstate standards. He noted that the Elizabeth City Bypass is very close to interstate standards and it will not take much. Other areas like Windsor, Williamston, and Hertford will require decisions on what is the best course of action to minimize impacts to the community, but still provide the freeway facility through there. He explained that the study will provide a range of options in those various areas. He said it will suggest how to best segment the projects along the whole corridor and provide them with a better sense of costs for the various segments and how to best segment those for programming purposes. However, once the study comes out, the individual segments will still have to compete through the prioritization process on their own merit. He said we will have influence on which projects rank higher than others through the RPO and through the local input process, which is

ultimately how projects get funded and get programmed into our 10-year Transportation Improvement Plan.

Mr. Jennings said there is currently one project programmed in the STIP along the corridor now, which is the section from the Morgan's Corner area all the way to the state line. It was just programmed in the latest update to the document that was approved by the Board of Transportation last month. He stated that \$187 million has been approved for thirteen miles, but it is not programmed for construction until 2027, with right-of-way in 2025. He noted that every segment along the corridor will have to be in effect prioritized and programmed and stand on its own merit, unless special money, federal funding, or some other process comes along to help us fund it. The study will help us to better inform the process moving forward.

Commissioner Dixon asked if there will be an overpass in Morgan's Corner. Mr. Jennings said to bring the road to interstate standards there can be no at-grade driveways. Every access onto and off of the highway will have to be at an interchange. In effect, there will be interchanges and service roads in order for it to meet interstate standards. He indicated there will be a lot of effort put into the design to minimize the impacts and will require a lot of community involvement in the process. He explained that once a project is first programmed and the planning begins there will be a lot of opportunities to receive feedback on what design options they have, what works best, and what minimized impacts.

Commissioner Dixon asked if the rest stop on US 17 will only be accessible from southbound traffic once the road is upgraded to interstate standards. Mr. Jennings said there is also a secondary road there that will have to be serviced. There could be an overpass and it could be served over or under US 17 at that point. He stated that there are a lot of different design options. The feasibility study will lay out some potential options. It will not be the end all by any means, but will lay out some possibilities. Then, as individual projects are programmed they will look at the full course of options, including environmental impacts.

Commissioner Parker asked the time frame for the feasibility study. Mr. Jennings said the draft study will be out later this year. Once the draft comes out, there will be opportunity for local governments to comment. The final document will be out sometime next year. He reminded the Board that it is only a document and there is no funding or commitments associated with it. It is information to inform local decision makers in planning going forward and prioritization of projects.

Chairman Perry asked if there will be another road to allow residents to enter and exit their homes. Mr. Jennings stated that they will have to be served by some other means other than directly from the highway. He noted that each situation will be different.

Ms. Welsh stated that the RPO submitted five projects for the County and the Oak Stump Road Project has been funded. Mr. Jennings said it is programmed for right-of-way acquisition in 2020, with construction in 2021. He said he does not know what it will look like at this time, but they are aware that it needs attention and it is programmed in the STIP, which will allow DOT to hire a firm to initiate planning to look at a variety of options to see what can be done to improve functionality of the intersection. He noted that it was approved last month and planning activities will be initiated in the coming months. Ms. Cox stated that the Hughes Boulevard Expansion is also included. Ms. Welsh added that there are some biking trail projects as well, but a lot of those do not get funded. She said most of the money that we are receiving from the Federal Government is for aviation, highways, ferries, public transportation, and biking paths. She said there is also another northern connection to the bypass in the CTP as well. Ms. Cox noted that this scored very low in the past and she does not anticipate us scoring very high this time. Also, there are several US17/I-87 projects and a few projects in the city.

Ms. Welsh stated that two months ago they met with Division IV (Rocky Mount area) who we are partnered with for one pot of money and they agreed to back off of the congestion criteria so we can receive some of the state money. She explained that there are three pots of money; statewide, regional, and division. She noted that almost all of our projects are funded out of the division money, which is the smallest pot of money. She said there are fourteen counties included in the division.

Commissioner Griffin asked how much money is going into ferries at the current time. Mr. Allen said the passenger ferry is funded through a federal grant and ferry replacement comes out

of division money. He said if we could get ferries out of the division money and put them into capital improvement or some other fund, it would serve the division well because the division could do more road projects. He said all of the ferries that are in service are starting to peak out at 30-40 years old and their maintenance costs make it insensible to keep maintaining them. Commissioner Griffin noted that the three bridges that are about to come online will require a considerable amount of money to maintain. Mr. Jennings said fortunately the Oregon Inlet, Rodanthe, and Pea Island Bridge projects were just ahead of the curve when the new STIP legislation came about so they are considered transition projects. They were not subject to the new criteria.

Mr. Jennings explained that there is about \$20 billion statewide over the 10-year STIP. He said Bonner Bridge alone cost \$250 million and when you add the I-87 project and the I-40 project it takes away a lot of money. Forty percent of the funds are dedicated for the statewide mobility funds. Those projects are your interstate projects and your US routes. He said US 158 and US 17 qualify for that money, but they have to score high enough to be prioritized. Those projects are scored 100% based on data. He said there is no local input. He explained that the data is congestion, benefit cost, safety, and economic competitiveness. He said there is a lot of data that goes into scoring the projects, but it is 100% data driven. US 17 and US 158 have not scored well on the statewide criteria because we are competing with projects across the state. He said we have not gotten any of those projects scored at the statewide level. When a project is eligible at that level, but do not score at that level they cascade down to the next level and so forth. The next level is the regional level. The regional level is basically two highway divisions. For us, our regional partner is Region IV, which is west of here and includes Rocky Mount, Wilson, Goldsboro, and Roanoke Rapids. Thirty percent of the funds in the state are distributed to the regions based on population and within the region they compete (70% based on data and 30% based on local input). He said there is a data component to it, but it can be influenced by local input coming from the Rural Planning Organization or the Municipal Planning Organization and from the Division. Fifteen percent comes from the RPO, 15% comes from the DOT Division, and 70% is data driven. He said we are competing against projects in the Wilson, Rocky Mount, Tarboro, and Goldsboro area.

Mr. Jennings went on to say when projects do not score at the regional level, they can cascade down to the division level, which is also 30% of the funds. He said that 30% is distributed equally to the fourteen divisions. He noted that the majority of our projects are coming from this fund. He explained that at this level 50% is based on data and 50% is local needs. He said we have more influence on which projects are selected much more heavily than we do at the regional and statewide criteria.

Mr. Jennings said we had a few projects funded last time at the regional level, but the majority of our projects stayed and were funded at the division level. Commissioner Parker asked who scores the projects. Mr. Jennings said the data comes from a lot of different places, but it is managed by DOT in Raleigh. He said there is an office that pulls the data from a variety of sources. He said the numbers are online if anyone is interested in the details. Commissioner Meads asked if anyone monitors the number of bikers using the bike trail on US 17 North. Mr. Jennings said Camden may have data because they own and operate the facility.

Commissioner Winslow said he knows there is too little money for too many projects, but to us Highway 17 being upgraded to I-87 is a lifeline in this area and he wants to make sure that those in Raleigh who are assessing this situation understand the economic importance of upgrading the highway to I-87. He stated that it will open the door to development in this area.

Commissioner Griffin said the STIP formula is politically driven. He said in order to get the interstate done it will need to come from the federal level, because we do not have congestion in this area. Mr. Moran assured him that things have gotten a little better for the rural areas. Hopefully, funding can get away from congestion, which will be more beneficial to northeastern North Carolina. He said the mountains are fighting the same battle.

Commissioner Parker asked if there is data other than congestion that can help us. Mr. Jennings said there are nine criteria that legislation says can be considered. At the state level, 30% is based on congestion. The other 70% is on other criteria. Every two years the weights are adjusted through a workgroup process made up of a variety of stake holders throughout the state. He said the legislation does not change and you are still bound by the same criteria, but the legislation allows for a work group to adjust the weighting of the criteria. However, the work

group is made up of stakeholders who make up the rural areas and the urban areas across the state. He explained that it is a wide section of individuals who make the decision. Typically, you see some tweaks each time. Last time, it was to our benefit, but typically you will not see any drastic changes come out of the process.

Commissioner Dixon said he is fearful of Perquimans County and Bertie County holding up I-87 because of the issues over there. Mr. Jennings said I-87 will be funded in individual segments as they are funded and prioritized over time. The most challenging areas may be the last to come, but it does not mean you may have a segment of it that is an interstate quality roadway already yet still be signed as Future I-87. It likely will not get the I-87 designation until the entire corridor is complete. He said one segment will not hold up other segments from being completed and brought up to interstate standards as funding becomes available.

Ms. Welsh said during the last session the General Assembly the Joint Oversight Transportation Committee was tasked with finding other sources of money. She stated that they came out with quite a few recommendations and the RPO boards looked at them. She said they wrote a letter to our legislators and informed them on what they did and did not agree with in the hope of finding more money. She said the legislation knows that they have to find money. She said Virginia started using real estate transfer taxes. She said North Carolina is only relying on gas taxes. If money is found, the projects will move up on the list. She encouraged the Board to talk to their representatives about where they plan to get more money. Mr. Moran said the Funding Committee is looking at what ideas other states have come up with. He stated that it is not new to Transportation that the gas tax is going away due to fuel economy. He said California recently came up with a plan where they charge electric vehicles a fee every year, which essentially offsets what the vehicle would spend in gas tax. He said there are countless options out there. He also encouraged the Board to talk to their local representatives and let them know our concerns. He said all of the projects, whether they are in the state, division, region, county, or city are funded through the formula. He said we need to get a funding formula stabilized so projects can be advanced. Ms. Welsh noted that we lost a lot of federal funding about three years ago.

Commissioner Meads voiced concerns about bypasses and interstates cutting off small towns.

Chairman Perry thanked everyone for coming.

The work session was adjourned at 3:56 PM

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CHAIRMAN

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CLERK TO THE BOARD