

# Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization

## U P D A T E

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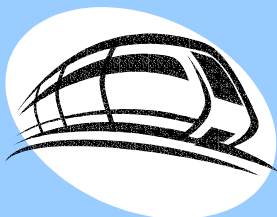


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## Charting a New Direction for NCDOT: The Board of Transportation approves Statewide Plan

At its September meeting, the North Carolina Board of Transportation approved a long-range plan that prioritizes investments in the state's transportation system for the next twenty-five years. The plan calls for greater focus on maintaining, preserving and modernizing the state's existing system of highways while improving access to alternative modes like rail and public transportation systems.

"We have a responsibility to the citizens of North Carolina to make sure that we are directing our resources to the areas of highest priority," says Board of Transportation

Member Nancy Dunn, who represents Division 9. "The plan gives us a roadmap for achieving this goal. It also underscores the need for innovative funding solutions and gaining greater flexibility with the Highway Trust Fund to make more projects eligible for available funding."

NCDOT began work on the plan in September 2000, and it will be updated every four years to ensure that it addresses emerging transportation needs.

For more information about the Statewide Transportation Plan, visit their website at [www.ncdot.org/planning/statewideplan](http://www.ncdot.org/planning/statewideplan).

## Interstate 73/74 Visitor's Center In the Works

*Contributed by Linda Brown, Executive Director, Randolph County Tourism Development Authority*

As a result of local and regional groups partnering with NCDOT, the rest area planned for future Interstate 73/74 in southern Randolph County will now be designed to include a visitor center to provide regional traveler and tourist information. The Randolph County Tourism Development Authority has signed an agreement with NCDOT to operate two visitor centers (one serving each direction), which are expected to serve 1.2 million travelers each year.

With just a handful of rest areas planned for the next several years, NCDOT is seeking to make this a 'showcase' project, and will be requesting special design features –including the use of 'green' or sustainable materials and building components.

The rest area will be located one mile south of the intersection with NC 705, and ground breaking on this TIP project should occur in the spring of 2006.

## Partnering in the Project Development Process

NCDOT has finalized procedures which formalize the involvement of the RPO as a planning partner in the transportation project development process. The RPO will now participate as a full member of the team that brings a project from TIP to construction. This process, dubbed 'Merger 01', is guided by the Project Development and Environmental Analysis (PDEA) staff of NCDOT. PDEA staff bring together various resource agencies responsible for authorizing permits and local

planning organizations to obtain 'concurrence' at specific points during the development of a transportation project.

PTRPO will participate in concurrence meetings, provide information to PDEA staff, and publicize citizen workshops and public hearings. To indicate our commitment to this process, a resolution of participation will be considered at our October meeting. Look for more details about the Merger 01 process in the next issue of Update.

**Did You Know...** In 2002, traffic jams cost US drivers \$63 billion dollars, delaying motorists 3.5 billion hours with the average driver spending 46 hours stuck in traffic.

- Texas Transportation Institute

## PART Revamps Website

The Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) website has been recently updated with a new look and lots of

new information, including service schedules and project updates. Visit PART online at: [www.partnc.org](http://www.partnc.org).



## EEP: The Ecosystem Enhancement Program

*Contributed by Tad Boggs, EEP Director of Communications*

One year after setting out on its mission to compensate in advance for unavoidable environmental damage to North Carolina's wetlands and waterways, the Ecosystem Enhancement Program (EEP) introduced its website in July.

The innovative program works to restore, enhance and protect the state's natural resources while facilitating responsible economic growth. Faced with increasing transportation project delays due to difficulties in meeting various federal permitting requirements, North Carolina made the state's environmental watchdog agency responsible for identifying projects to offset the environmental impacts of new transportation projects.

In carrying out its mission, EEP bases its mitigation practices on a solid foundation of watershed planning that goes beyond mere environmental-permitting compliance. EEP's fresh approach results in funds being invested for environmental protection ahead of the date that damage to wetlands and waterways will occur. EEP allows North Carolina to stockpile wetland 'credits' years in advance of when they will be needed to clear permitting hurdles for transportation improvements or other economic development projects.



*Local stakeholders help identify priority EEP restoration projects*

In the Piedmont Triad, EEP is carrying out watershed planning in cooperation with local communities in the Troublesome and Little Troublesome Creek watersheds. EEP has also partnered with local land trusts to preserve open space on the Haw River at the Cone Swamp site in Guilford and Rockingham counties.

Local communities and landowners may participate with EEP on efforts to restore, enhance and protect the state's wetlands and waterways in a variety of ways through local watershed planning; wetland, stream and buffer restoration and open-space preservation.

EEP came into effect on July 22, 2003 through a memorandum of agreement among DENR, NCDOT, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The agreement directs EEP to merge

various wetlands restoration and mitigation programs housed in each department over a two-year period. As a result of this unique partnership, North Carolina won an Environmental Leadership Award from the Federal Highway Administration last year.

For more information about EEP, visit their new website online at [www.nceep.net](http://www.nceep.net).

## NCDOT Launches 511 Travel Information Line

In late August, Federal Highway Administrator Mary E. Peters joined Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippett and Board of Transportation Chair Doug Gaylon to launch NCDOT's newest travel information line with the push of just three buttons on your telephone.

The 511 service is part of a nation-wide effort to provide travelers with convenient, real-time travel information by phone. The voice-activated, computer automated system provides callers with emergency travel warnings, construction updates and information

about public transportation services, tourism information and links to travel information for other states. Since being authorized by the FCC in July 2000, 21 other states, highway corridors and cities have brought a 511 system on-line.

511 can be reached from any land-line or wireless phone twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week by dialing 5-1-1, or 1-877-511InNC (4662).



511...Where Your Travel Information Begins

## Surface Transportation Act Extended ... Again

As the federal fiscal year draws to a close, the fate of the next six-year transportation bill remains in limbo. The conference committee, chaired by Senator James Inhofe (Oklahoma), appears to be nearing a compromise on the two bills totaling \$299 billion dollars over six years, in hopes of avoiding the President's veto.

Meanwhile, with just hours left on the current TEA-21 extension, The House passed STEA04,

Part V (HR 5183) by a vote of 409-8 on September 30. Later in the day, the Senate passed the same language extending TEA-21 an additional eight months – the sixth extension of the bill. President Bush signed the bill later in the day. While final action on a new bill may be slated for a 'lame duck' post-election congressional session, the extension into the next congressional term would indicate otherwise.

## Addressing the Transportation Needs of the Elderly

*Blair Barton-Percival, Aging Program and Care Giver Specialist, contributed to this article*

The elderly population in the US is growing - both in numbers and percentage of the total population. According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey, 21 percent of seniors (6.8 million) aged 65 and older do not drive, leaving them seeking for rides from family and friends or alternative forms of transportation. As this segment of the population continues to grow, demand for a wider range of transportation options will increase. Suitable access to 'senior-friendly' transportation is critical to help individuals maintain independence as they age. The characteristics of senior-friendly transportation services can be described with the five A's:

- **Availability** – services go to desirable places at convenient times
- **Accessibility** – vehicles are accessible to people with disabilities, and stops are pedestrian friendly
- **Acceptability** – services are safe, clean and user-friendly
- **Affordability** – rates are subsidized for those who need it
- **Adaptability** – services are flexible enough to accommodate multiple trips or specialized equipment

An array of federal programs address the transportation needs of the elderly and other 'transportation disadvantaged' populations by making federal funds available to state and local agencies which provide transportation services. A recent study of these federal programs by the Government Accountability Office (GOA) found that while these programs are attempting to make transportation available, accessible and affordable to seniors, many transportation needs are not being met.

With multiple providers in PTRPO area, what can the RPO do to help?

- Publicize information about available transportation services
- Identify and evaluate current and emerging transportation needs
- Coordinate with the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and local transportation providers

The full GOA report can be found online at:

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-971](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-971)

Aging issues related to transportation will be the focus of the upcoming October RPO meeting.

## Meet Wayne C. Davis, NCDOT Triad Unit Head

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Wayne C. Davis to the Triad! Dr. Davis has worked at NCDOT on and off for more than 16 years and became the Triad Unit Head in July, following the retirement of Jerry Dudeck earlier this year. Dr. Davis received a BS and ME in Civil Engineering from Howard University, and his PhD in Civil Engineering from NC State University.

Dr. Davis resides in Raleigh with his wife, Anne Marie and two children who are both nationally ranked runners.

As Triad Unit Head, Dr. Davis will serve as our liaison to the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch, providing technical expertise and staff support for local transportation planning projects in the RPO area and the MPOs in our region.



### Wanted: bicycle enthusiasts!

Are you into biking? County-level planning committees are now being formed for the RPO Regional Bicycle Study.

Committee members will help identify suitable bike route in and around their community. Training will be provided for the project.

If you (or someone you know) would like to participate, contact Randy Billings at [rbillings@ptcog.org](mailto:rbillings@ptcog.org) or (336) 294-4950.



**Dr. Wayne C. Davis,**  
NCDOT  
Triad Unit Head

## Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization

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Piedmont Triad  
Council of Governments

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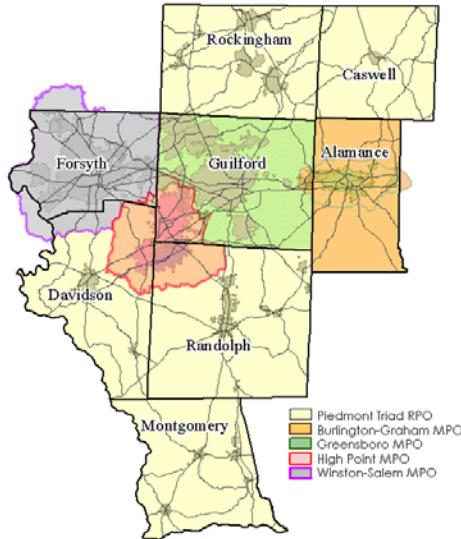
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**Visit Us on the  
Web at:  
www.ptcog.org**

## The Rural Planning Organization



### PTRPO Transportation Advisory Committee

Nate Hall	Caswell County
Cindy Akins	Davidson County
Dolon Corbett	Montgomery County
Robert Davis	Randolph County
David Isley	Rockingham County

Talmadge Baker, Chair	City of Asheboro
Larry Beck, Vice Chair	City of Lexington
Carolyn Collins	Town of Madison
Chris Watkins	Town of Troy
Curtis Davis	Town of Yanceyville

J. Douglas Galyon	NCDOT Board
Sandy Carmany	PART (ex-officio)

The Rural Planning Organization is responsible for:

- Developing long range transportation plans for the region
- Providing transportation related data to local governments
- Developing and prioritizing projects for the TIP
- Providing a forum for public involvement in the transportation planning process

## About the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments

The Piedmont Triad Council of Governments (PTCOG) is a voluntary association of local governments, enabled by state law to promote regional issues and cooperation among its members. The PTCOG has worked to address the diverse urban and rural issues in our region for nearly 35 years.

The PTCOG provides technical assistance to member governments including: facilitation, personnel studies, land use, transportation and environmental planning; interpretation of census data through the Regional Data Center and services for thousands of seniors through the Area Agency on Aging.

Piedmont Triad Council of Governments  
Wilmington Building, Suite 201  
2216 W. Meadowview Road  
Greensboro, NC 27407-3480

**Mark Your Calendar!**  
**Upcoming RPO Meetings:**  
**October 20<sup>th</sup>      December 15<sup>th</sup>**