

**Minutes
Town of Benson
Community Transportation Plan Steering Committee
Monday, April 8, 2019
7:00 PM**

Present:

**Jay McInnis, Ramey, Kemp & Assoc.
Jerry Medlin, Mayor**

**Matt Zapp, Town Manager
Erin Joseph, Planning Director
Tim Robbins, Public Works Director
Jacob Parente, GIS Technician
Braston Newton, Johnston County Planning
Lauren Shepard, Admin Assistant**

**Dale Parker, Parker General Contractors
Dale McLamb, South River Electric
Varinder Bhardwaj, Exxon Gas Station**

**Dennis Jernigan, Resident
Kim Price, Dynamite Trailers**

**Kayla Price, Resident
Matt Clarke, NCDOT
Scott Walston, NCDOT
Amy Adams, Acera Wealth Management
Leanne Honrine, Berry Global
William Neighbors, Board of Commissioners**

**Jim Johnson, Board of Commissioners
James Salmons, Upper Coastal RPO
Mike Dart, Four Oaks-Benson News**

I. Welcome and Introductions (*Matt Zapp, Town of Benson*)

Matt Zapp welcomed the committee, and led group introductions. Matt reminded the committee that the two goals for tonight's meeting is to continue discussion on Benson's transportation needs, and review the public involvement plan.

Action items for this meeting are to provide:

- Map of study area outside of the ETJ identifying utilities with an overlay of industrial improvements
- Traffic counts and algorithmic data
- Developmental map showing where current structures of businesses are located

The goal is to have a rough draft of the CTP to present to the Town Board by the end of May.

II. Approval of March 11, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Scott Walston commented on a correction to the minutes. On page two the minute's state "Scott Walston stated that NCDOT needs a plan that addresses transportation efficiencies..." this should be changed to "deficiencies".

Action: Dale Parker made a motion to approve the March 11, 2019 meeting minutes. Dennis Jernigan made a second to the motion. Approved unanimously.

III. Initial CTP Alternatives Summary *(Matt Zapp/Jay McInnis, Ramey, Kemp, and Associates)*

Jay McInnis identified that there are five new maps displayed

- Map 1 - industrial zoned areas around Benson
- Map 2 - a draft of potential new roads that could be a part of the CTP
- Map 3 - the 2017 volume to capacity ratio for Benson area
- Map 4 - 2017 average annual daily traffic
- Map 5 - environmental features in the area as well as Benson ETJ. Area wetlands, streams, floodplains, properties that might potentially have hazardous materials, and historic properties are also included on this map.

Jay McInnis reminded the committee that the Google Maps presentation are just concepts for a long-range plan. Additional studies and potentially different alternatives would be examined if any of these concepts were funded for construction in the future.

Jay McInnis presented a potential roadway alternative for new connectivity between Railroad Rd. and Banner Elk Rd. This would provide a North/East connection around the north side of Benson that would connect NC 50 and NC 242 N. The concept is for a two-lane road with a 45 to 55 MPH speed limit.

Dennis Jernigan stated that he had suggested this alternative. Mr. Jernigan mentioned that the elementary school is on NC 50 and NC 242 provides access to I-40 . By adding a roadway between Railroad Rd. and Banner Elk Rd, the Town would be planning for future development of this area and offer an east/west connection for the north side of Town.

Matt Zapp asked Braston Newton, Johnston County Planning Department, approximately how many buildable lots are in the queue for Johnston County. Braston Newton stated that there are over 11,800 current valid lots with 2,087 approved from 2018.

Matt Zapp stated that Mr. Jernigan has a valid point since we are seeing a lot of growth in the area around Banner Elk Rd and Railroad Rd. The goal is to avoid what happened at NC 210 and at the I-40/NC 42 interchange when looking at roads for future build out. The committee should look at future and immediate needs to help relieve some of the congestion in Town.

Scott Walston asked if the committee should be agreeing on the problems before discussing solutions. Mr. Walston stated that the committee is talking about solutions when not everyone is all together on the problems. Mr. Walston mentioned the committee should come up with the list of problems and then a solution to each problem.

Jay McInnis stated that the committee had talked about the problems.

Matt Zapp stated that the committee has identified hot spot zones with the exercises conducted at the last meeting. Mr. Zapp commented that he had yet to receive feedback contrary to those findings from a committee member. He feels comfortable with the feedback received thus far. Mr. Zapp asked the Commissioners and Mayor if they have received any feedback from the community.

Matt Zapp identified the data the committee collected between the first two CTP sessions as:

- NC 242 corridor
- I-40/NC 242 interchange
- the demand of truck traffic in center of town;

- the importance and need of improvements of I-95 expansion from 4 to 8 lanes
- the demand and push from north to west side of town
- the need for the fly-over bridge at S. Market St. and Cub Rd.

Scott Walston commented that besides some of the items the town wants, we need the data to support the solutions. For example, will there be more traffic in 2045 than we have now, what is the volume to capacity ratio. To get funding for a transportation project you need to have more than “I want,” you need data.

Jay McInnis stated that he understood Mr. Walston’s comment. Mr. McInnis stated that he has worked on dozens of projects where he has had to establish the needs for the projects. He feels comfortable with where the committee is.

Jim Johnson mentioned the cameras placed around Town have numbers that showed the high traffic areas. Mr. Johnson mentioned at the first meeting the Market St extension, Cub Rd, and Chicopee Rd as a concern primarily due to trucks coming into the downtown area. The data to support the concerns are there from the cameras that have been set out at the intersection of US 301 and NC 50.

Matt Zapp, stated that the two cameras have been moved to the Fayetteville and Dunn St. intersection and are pulling data in real time. There is at least 90 days of data and that data will be available to the team.

Matt Zapp also mentioned that additional data to look at is permit data. An overlay from most recent permits issued and where future build outs are. The Town of Benson is expanding out of our ETJ into the Johnston County jurisdiction. The committee also should consider where the water and sewer lines are running because that is where we’ll see future development.

William Neighbors stated there is no current availability for rental properties, commercial properties or residential homes. Mr. Neighbors commented that the growth is coming in-between Benson and the McGee’s Crossroads area at NC 210. Mr. Neighbors stressed that we need to look at what the current community wants and then plan ahead. He feels we have one shot before the development starts and we need to capitalize on it now.

Jay McInnis’ next display from the Google Maps presentation was at the I-40/NC 242 interchange. Mr. McInnis suggested realigning Woodall Dairy Rd. so that it is moved 1,000 feet away from the I-40 ramp. He then suggested taking Federal Rd. and connecting it back into the realigned Woodall Dairy Rd. This realignment would help to protect the interchange so it will operate more efficiently.

Dennis Jernigan stated that typically, the NCDOT’s desirable distance between an interchange ramp and the first driveway or other access point is 1,000 feet to function optimally.

Matt Zapp could see the benefits from a developmental standpoint. He asked for feedback from committee members that frequent this I-40/NC 242 area. Mr. Zapp stated that this is an opportunity when looking at serviceability for this interchange stressing the importance of changes and improvements to exit 325.

Dale Parker stated that eventually, Federal Rd Ext. could extend into future development adjacent to the I-40 rest area and continue to connect into Elevation Rd. Eventually, S. Walden Pond Rd. and N. Walden Pond Rd. could be joined and traffic would come out there instead of coming out NC 50. Mr. Parker stated that future development would be warehouse and small industry. The tract of land that surrounds the I-40 rest area already has a 20,000-

gallon capacity sewer line from the Town of Benson going back down NC 242. Mr. Parker said he believes there is already 18,000 to 20,000 gallons of sewer capacity for that area for mixed-use business. Mr. Parker mentioned that when the original I-40 study was completed approximately 18 to 20 years ago, it showed how NC 42 would develop and would grow until it outgrew its stability. NC 210 was next for development. This area didn't show as much demand as NC 42 but did show it would also grow to plateau. What the study showed for NC 242 in the Benson area was similar to growth in Wilmington. The study showed that there was a lot of retail business to support the residential growth at NC 42 and NC 210, but no municipal government to support that growth. Benson has potential residential growth but also has the Town structure and all the utilities so that long-term growth could outpace NC 42 and NC 210. Benson is a city that can raise taxes and govern itself. Benson is not dependent on the County like areas near the NC 42 and NC 210 interchanges. The old I-40 study also showed the areas that had the greatest 45-minute population. Raleigh/Garner ranked number 1 and Benson was #2. This was three times the 45-minute population that Wilmington had. Mr. Parker pointed out that this town has done some great things in the past and has been very forward thinking.

Matt Zapp commented that the town had looked at more up to date information for a 45, 30, and 15-minute radius. The town then went with a 5, 10, and 15-minute radius. All the studies show a demand of a customer base. Daytime population numbers are higher than nighttime population numbers. When marketing Benson to outside firms with warehousing, logistics and transportation, keep in mind that the Town also needs convenience and ease of access, a place to fuel, a place to feed those people, and access to workforce. When folks can work here, they will shop in Benson. The daily population numbers have increased with Dynamite Trailers, Berry Global and the new Hampton Inn, which is the second highest grossing hotel in Johnston County and it has been open since June 15, 2018. Mr. Zapp stressed that this is where the data is coming from and it can be supplied on a spreadsheet or reports if needed.

The next alternate route Jay McInnis discussed was in the I-95 and NC 50 area running on a new location west of Benson. This concept would use the Market St/Cub Rd. proposed grade separation to be built by the I-95 expansion project. The new road would connect to NC 242 and potentially NC 50 south of Benson.

Matt Zapp explained that exit 77 on I-95 has 200 developable acres at that quadrant and DOT is working on an improvement on Robin Hood Ln., which runs parallel to I-95. DOT will be moving Robin Hood Ln. east to accommodate the I-95 expansion. The question is how do you move the people and goods from the east side of I-95 down exit 77 to go southbound and how do you get them up to NC 50 so they can access I-95 and go northbound to I-40 for Wilmington or Raleigh? Something needs to be designed on the east side of I-95 because there is an 88-acre industrial developable tract of land and a 200 acre quadrant, a brand new rehab to the truck stop that's in the works, and just south is Rooms to Go. The east side of I-95 becomes the industrial buildout. Plus, you also have logistics from Barry Global and now instead of staying on the westerly side of I-95 and come through the downtown corridor by McDonalds trucks could take the fly-over, come up to NC 50 and make their way to I-95 or southbound to the truck stop. We understand that wetlands exist in that area and bridges will be costly but there needs to be a plan.

Jay McInnis mentioned that the alternate proposed road is curving and not straight due to the wetlands.

Matt Zapp stated that he will be meeting with NCDOT within the next 7 to 10 days regarding the design phase of the US 301/NC 50 roundabout.

Matt Clarke mentioned that the challenge with the Town of Benson is that there are very few State maintained roads. NCDOT wants to work with Benson to make sure the traffic is temporarily detoured properly while construction of the roundabout is ongoing.

IV. CTP Alternatives Exercise (Review Maps) (Group Activity)

V. Continue Initial Alternatives Discussion (Matt Zapp/Jay McInnis of Ramey Kemp)

Jay McInnis reminded the committee that the newly displayed maps are just drafts for roadway alternatives. Next month Mr. McInnis will have additional alternative maps to share based on comments shared at tonight's meeting. A map showing potential bike and pedestrian improvements will be included at the next meeting. The goal is to have a draft plan by the end of May.

Dennis Jernigan mentioned that a discussion at a previous meeting held last year targeted the NC 242 area as a safety concern. He stated that a number of accidents occur in the Tarheel Rd. and NC 242 area. Mr. Jernigan also asked if straightening out the curve at NC 27-50 near Pine St. could be considered for improvement.

Mike Dart asked about posting minutes on the Town of Benson webpage. Matt Zapp will be sure the January, February and March minutes are uploaded to the Town website and he will share the link with the committee.

Dennis Jernigan asked if someone should be looking at the volumes for the items that have been identified to ensure that the plan is in a position to qualify. Mr. Jernigan stated that he would hate for the committee to have held numerous meetings for a CTP together only to find out that it doesn't qualify.

Jay McInnis stated that he is looking at future volumes right now and that data should be available by the next meeting.

Matt Zapp proposed to send a link out to the committee when this information is available.

Scott Walston asked if Jay McInnis could create a capacity to deficiency map with volumes to compare year 2017 and year 2045.

William Neighbors asked Matt Clarke when the committee could receive updated maps on the NC 27-50 interchange.

Matt Clarke stated that they should be available within the next few weeks once the 25% plans are approved.

Matt Zapp mentioned that the Board of Commissioners has approved engineering services to do the utility betterment designs. This is the first process in water and sewer lines and any other improvements running under I-95. The betterment design will help to determine if water lines will be run down past Berry Global where the Town put in a new metering system and push a new water line to the east side of I-95.

VI. Wrap up/Action Items (*Matt Zapp, Town of Benson*)

1. Create an itemized list identifying areas of concern with a corresponding legend to a map
2. Proposed solutions that the committee has identified and a connectivity map
3. Identified development map with overlay of utilities and send a link with this information to the committee members
4. A map showing future traffic patterns
5. An I-95 and NC 50/US 301 25% completion map if available for the next meeting
6. Post minutes from January, February, and March meetings on the Town website

VII. Next Meeting – Monday May 13, 2019 – 7:00 – 9:00pm