



# US 70 Corridor Commission

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR MONTHS OF JANUARY & FEBRUARY, 2015 M. DURWOOD STEPHENSON, DIRECTOR

A fresh new year one month into its course – a time when reality forces us to admit the resolutions that seemed so promising have now faded into the past and we have decided perhaps the personal promises were not really that important after all.

Although the back to back calendar months of January and February are for this particular year, times of noticeable opposites, I have chosen to bind them as a single story. January has been identified within the meteorological world as the warmest January on record in concert with the theory of Global Warming. Those same keepers of weather history have now pronounced February as tied for the coldest February since 1887, leaving many of us – especially the residents of the Northeast wondering: where is Global Warming.

In our world of transportation advocacy, the months also are marked by contrast: January sparked rebellion, resistance and criticism of the new STIP funding formula. As we scrutinized the legislation establishing this new format, the anti-discussions transcended to acceptance, action and planning for the future.

As we discussed the realities of STIP, we learned the culprit in balancing funding between urban and rural lies not within the legislation, but rather the scoring methodologies utilized actually penalized Eastern North Carolina. In recent presentations and discussions, Secretary Tata has noted obvious incongruous assumptions opposing common sense thought. One noted detail is the failure of SPOT scoring methodology to include points for 795 because it does not physically traverse the base at Fort Bragg. Who can dispute the significance of this route to the Base?

The calendar has turned the page with December in the rear view mirror. We must now turn to a cycle of starting a fresh and getting to the real root of the transportation/infrastructure funding dilemma.

For the past several months, we have expended considerable effort and energy analyzing the new STIP project scoring process. Now that the scoring game is finalized, new conversations have begun with the elephant in the room; new transportation revenue, the main topic.

**M. Durwood Stephenson**  
Director

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The popular **60 MINUTES** news program recently spotlighted the crumbling infrastructure – our bridges and highways awash in neglect. Congress has failed for years to pass a Transportation bill choosing rather to band-aid the issue with poorly funded continuing Resolutions. The Nation is now facing a critical crossroads as Congress considers both the solvency of the Federal Highway Trust Fund and the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill passed in 2012. Forty-Two (42) state Chambers of Commerce have joined together in a formal request to Congress for a Federal Congressional commitment to once-again make investment in America’s transportation infrastructure a top priority. Our own State Chamber is among the 42. Our own State has actually reduced transportation funding in recent years. Placing a cap on the diminishing gas tax has cost the transportation dollars, millions, but the greater harm may be the failure to provide a floor on the tax – a failure that will seriously impact transportation dollars from this source during the next few months.

The General Assembly has reconvened as pundits and the media scrutinize the previous session that concentrated on revamping the state’s tax structure and reviewing regulations and programs that may be bait for elimination and/or change. The privilege tax and historic building rehab grants both fell victim to this aggressive agenda. A 37.5¢ cap on the North Carolina gas previously passed has further eroded transportation revenues.

The gas tax traditionally has been the primary source of transportation/infrastructure funding in the Nation and in North Carolina. The gas tax in North Carolina has been under attack and was capped in North Carolina by our General Assembly.

In a recent article by John Hood, President of John Locke Foundation by self-admission a fiscal conservative wrote, “The expected stream of revenue from current state and federal taxes won’t even come close to financing the job.” The article published by January issue of **BUSINESS NORTH CAROLINA** entitled **Right Way to Pay** agrees with most that, “Charge based on usage is the best way to keep traffic moving.”

Pre-legislative session discussions with legislators and public statements from legislators reflect growing concern and planned focus on transportation funding. This focus is timely and necessary. As transportation advocates, we should follow those deliberations closely and offer our support to the best of the proposed funding schemes.

Secretary Tata contacted Marc Finlayson and me suggesting we meet to plan a meeting with our respective advocacy organizations – U.S. 17 Commission and U.S. 70 Corridor Commission. He was aware that many of us in the East were critical of the new funding formula and there was widespread discontent and a strong belief that our region was not favorably rewarded by the new process. In typical military style, Secretary Tata was choosing to confront the negative discourse head-on.

I felt strongly that our area RPO/MPO’s should be in attendance since they are/were on the front lines of the scoring process and were responsible for frequent explanations to our displeased leaders. Their presence would enable them to convey to Secretary Tata the concerns about possible improvements for future scoring opportunities.

Secretary Tata consented and extended the invite to area RPO/MPO's. Ultimately Marc and I met with Secretary Tata and a formal meeting was planned for February 13 in New Bern. More later.

On January 21, Jack Best invited U.S. 70 Corridor Commission leaders to join him and RPO/MPO Coalition representatives to Goldsboro for a discussion of impact of recent STIP scoring and the future path forward to improved commerce in Eastern North Carolina. A copy of the minutes from the meeting has been provided by Jennifer Collins and is attached for your information. The suggestion or plan of the group is to re-energize and expand the coalition to all 41 counties east of I-95. We will continue to pursue that idea with your help. A bill has been introduced in the current session of General Assembly to review and study the role and effectiveness of RPO's/MPO's. I have had conversations with legislators inquiring about the focus of the proposed study and why, but have not received any real answers. Perhaps it is an opportunity to improve the impact of RPO's/MPO's.

As noted in a previous report, transportation emerged as a central issue in discussions with and among legislators prior to January convening schedule. The media has seized upon the topic with a plethora of musings and speculations on the appropriate response to the transportation funding dilemma.

Patrick Gannon, a syndicated columnist for Capital Press Association in a recent article generally endorsed Governor McCrory's 2025 – Transportation Vision, but reserves end-results judgments for the future, after funding has been adequately secured.

In an article recently published locally and written by N.C. State University Economist, Mike Walden, he deftly describes the necessity and importance of transportation infrastructure. Quote....."When a business is considering moving to an area, local infrastructure is a major factor on its checklist. So insufficient infrastructure can lead to a lack of jobs and income earning opportunities."

**News & Observer** reporter, Brian Siceloff, like Patrick Gannon, complimented the Governor on his "25 Year Vision" for transportation improvements, but then in the title of the article "**How to pay our transportation bill?**" the article detailed the various funding options as noted below:

- Borrowed Money
- Gas Taxes
- DMV Title & Registration Fee
- Highway use tax on car sales
- Fund transfers
- Mileage fees
- Heavy truck fee
- Tolls
- Advertising
- Sponsorship and cost recuperate fees

Another transportation funding article written by General Jim Trogdon, former Deputy Secretary of N.C.D.O.T., raises major issues and defines the depth of transportation funding crisis.

Quote:

- \$ 3.7 billion - The projected annual shortfall in the state's transportation revenue during each of the next 25 years.
- 14,300 - The estimated number of jobs that each \$ 1 billion of additional transportation investment in North Carolina would generate.
- \$ 10.8 billion - The additional gross state product that same \$ 1 billion would add annually.

Copies of these articles are available upon request with permission from authors.

Perhaps emboldened by the continuing saga of the rural versus urban divide and the obvious disparity of transportation funding under the STIP formula, rural legislators are leading efforts to better balance economic "playing field." One measure being discussed and led by rural legislators is a change in the allocation formula for distributing sales tax revenue. The current formula favors areas that are highly commercialized with mega shopping centers. Generally the funds are distributed favorable to the origin of sales generated area: Seventy-Five (75%) percent of funds collected are returned to origin of sale; the remaining funds (25%) are distributed to counties based on population – another benefit to the more heavily populated urban centers. The argument for a change in the allocation formula as proposed by rural legislators is without question favoring the larger more urban counties where the growth in our State is evidenced. It will be interesting to observe the session in a General Assembly dominated by urban legislators representing approximately 66% of the state's population.

Some have called the escalating economic divide between urban and rural fortunes perplexing. Not really! It's educational opportunity, its quality of life – but most significantly – its infrastructure deficiencies.

The counter arguments to the rural claims of unfairness says the real issue is not a contest between rural-urban, but a lack of commerce development opportunities within the rural communities. I do not disagree with that characterization, but the arguments of our leaders of a disadvantaged region also have merit. The STIP funding formula favors population; the allocation of sales tax revenue also favors the greater population centers. The superior infrastructure also favors commerce and has a greater opportunity to attract development.

Economic incentives legislation as requested and proposed by Governor McCrory may become a victim of the historical inequities and past use of incentives. Incentives that have failed to energize commerce in rural North Carolina. Legislative staff has noted that 86 percent of monetary value of JDIG grants for the past two years has been awarded to developments in Mecklenburg, Wake & Durham Counties. The North Carolina Justice Center reports that only 9 percent of JDIG funds awarded through 2013 went to companies locating in rural counties. The Governor has in eleemosynary words cited pejorative unemployment in rural North Carolina. In his recent State of the State address, Governor McCrory said his plan (Quote) “recognizes the importance of economic strength in all regions, but emphasizes support to areas of high unemployment.” The Governor consistently expresses wish and need for a State in economic balance.

The 2015 session of the North Carolina General Assembly may determine if our 34 percent representation can cobble together a sufficient number of dissenters to the status quo for progress on rural community economic advancement. As advocates for rural Eastern North Carolina, it is our duty and responsibility to assist our representatives in their efforts. They and “we” face overwhelming odds, but not impossible odds.

On February 4, the U.S. 70 Work Group met at Highway Building in Raleigh for a review by Rob Hanson and staff of major U.S. 70 projects. Following a review of projects, Colin Mellor gave an interesting and informative presentation on Croatan Mitigation.

Innuendo implies a highly perceptive individual or team struck a deal in acquiring the site that has greatly benefitted DOT’s environmental concurrence in this region for an extended period of time.

At the request of Secretary Tata; U.S. 117 Commission Executive Director, Marc Finlayson and I met with the Secretary; Deputy Secretary, Nick Tennyson; Chief of Staff, Bobby Lewis; Chief Engineer, Mike Holder; Governor’s Eastern Field Director, Steve Keen and Secretary Tata’s assistant, Vicki Stanley and Beau his speech writer. The purpose of the meeting was to plan a visit for the Secretary on Friday, February 13 in New Bern to review STIP projects scoring and methodology. Area RPO’s/MPO’s will also be in attendance with an opportunity to express their concerns with STIP scoring methodology. Secretary Tata provided factual knowledge of the STIP process: Approx. 18% of projects funded; 3,100 projects approved as highest scoring for funding; process efficiency increased by approx. 270%. Secretary Tata also shared the results of a recent study that suggests the end results did not achieve all planned objectives; therefore, a review of the process will continue and hopefully, be factored into the next scoring/funding cycle in 2 years.

Secretary Tata proved to be perceptive and insightful as he conveyed some thoughts relative to scoring methodologies. In addition to the failure to award points for service to military bases, airports, ports, etc. because the proposed route does not lie within the specific physical boundaries of asset; peak traffic counts in lieu of annualized traffic counts improves scoring for routes to our ports and beaches.

A follow-up meeting of RPO/MPO Coalition interests was held at Wilber's Barbecue in Goldsboro on February 10, 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for Secretary Tata's visit and STIP discussions on Friday, February 13 in New Bern. The suggestions and ideas evolving from the discussions are attached and were presented to Secretary Tata (Copy Attached). **NOTE: The ideas/suggestions attached are not approved or endorsed by the official RPO/MPO Coalition or any of its duly elected officers.**

On February 11, the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce sponsored a luncheon titled TRANSPORTATION HOT TOPIC with NCDOT Secretary Tony Tata as guest speaker. Secretary Tata reviewed recent project scoring and funding citing the 3,100 projects that have been selected. He reminded us again. The increase in number of projects represents a 270% increase in funding efficiency. With the continuing decline in transportation revenues, efficient use of sparse dollars is more important than ever to accommodate a rapidly growing population.

Secretary Tata also discussed the Governor's 25 Year Vision for Transportation. On the heels of the Strategic Transportation Investments Plan (STIP), Governor McCrory unveiled his 25-Year Vision for Transportation – "Our transportation system serves as the backbone of our State and plays a critical role in our future," the Governor said in releasing the plan. In Secretary Tata's remarks he said, "North Carolina is one of the fastest growing States in the nation, and we have to make investments in our infrastructure to support this growth."

Governor McCrory cited the assessment and objective our Commission has promoted: Connectivity. In his words, "Our vision for helping rural areas is through connectivity."

In his Goldsboro appearance, Secretary Tata cited the importance and potential of our key ports at Wilmington and Morehead City. To be successful, the port at Morehead City must establish and maintain a depth of 50 feet and the port at Wilmington must be dredged and maintained in the words of Secretary Tata, "as deep as we can afford." Federal funds for dredging seaports is like other transportation funds on the decline. In retrospect, it appears our region has not focused on securing funds for dredging: Another task we must assume is to educate, advocate and promote through our Congressional Delegation.

Just two days later on February 13, Secretary made his second appearance in Eastern North Carolina to face critics of STIP and defend projects selections, but also to listen to ideas for improving the process. The meeting was well attended by U.S. 70 Corridor Commission Directors and U.S. 17 Commission Board members. Although invited, few RPO/MPO representatives attended. Division 3 Engineer, John Rouse and Division 4 Engineer, Tim Little attended and provided general information and status of several key agenda projects. As Secretary Tata stated, the U.S. 70 Corridor Commission fared well in this initial funding cycle.

On February 16, Lockwood Phillips scheduled and conducted a telephone interview that was broadcast over Radio Station 107.1 in Morehead. The program titled Viewpoints has continued to provide good communication with area citizens.

The interview consisted of no-holds barred questions from Mr. Phillips. He generally focused on U.S. 70 agenda projects and STIP funding assessment. Although Mr. Phillips was not an advocate for our Transportation agenda but also not an adversary, he did provide the opportunity for us to communicate with area citizens alerting them to the plan to improve the safety and efficiency for movement of goods and services in our region.

Following the interview, I was contacted directly by several listeners expressing interest in the U.S. 70 Corridor agenda; some with ideas for promoting this agenda and suggestions to improve our website. Mr. David Forrest suggested we consider engaging Economist Mike Walden to prepare study to validate the importance and impact of a free-flowing U.S. 70 Corridor. I informed Mr. Forrest that a study has already been completed. The Governor's office utilized excerpts from the Cambridge report in a handout sheet to our congressional delegation in promoting a future Interstate designation for U.S. 70.

Another listener suggested our website add major project status, progress and programmed schedule. As you may have noticed, Marcia Wilson has added that to our website. I have been complimented for the additions – Thanks to Marcia.

The State's business leaders have turned the spotlight on an issue that has been festering for years and, like most of the Nation, has now become a crisis. Infrastructure is critical to economic prosperity, but a declining revenue stream is an escalating problem that continues to escape resolution. The N.C. Chamber under the direction of President Lew Ebert has led an effort to expose the seriousness of the state's crumbling infrastructure. You may have seen one or more of the alarming failure ads on T.V. The Chamber also commissioned a study by N.C. State University seeking ideas for a reliable transportation revenue source.

The work of the Chamber in concert with numerous transportation/infrastructure organizations, i.e., NCGO, Major Metropolitan Mayors Association, U.S. 17 Commission and our own U.S. 70 Corridor Commission and others have joined together to promote the funding issue.

The P.R. campaign and the Governors agenda has attracted the attention of legislative leaders as transportation has emerged as one of 2015 top issues.

On Wednesday, February 11, the state Senate gave preliminary approval to legislation that would cut the gas tax this year and place a floor on predicted future drops in gas tax. The media has described SB20 as a huge tax increase which is totally incorrect.

Under current law the gas tax is 37.5¢ per gallon until July 1. Predictions are a decline of 6¢ to 8¢ because there is no floor on tax rates although a cap was enacted last year. SB20 would reduce the tax on March 1 to 35¢ per gallon and establish that as a floor to prevent the

tax from falling the 6¢ to 8¢ as predicted. The 2.5¢ reduction would cost DOT approximately \$33 million this year. However, the 35¢ floor would save an estimated \$ 1.2 billion over the next 4 years. The legislation would also change the tax-rate calculation formula to multiply the average wholesale fuel price by 9.9% instead of the 7% now law.

Another provision that is troubling for DOT is the terminating of 500 employees. In expressing opposition to the layoffs, Secretary Tata reminded legislators that more than 2,100 jobs have been cut during the past five years. A staff of more than 18,000 has been reduced to approximately 13,000 in recent years. Arguments you should stress to your respective legislators.

The House did not concur with SB20 and on Thursday passed their own version that costs only 50 DOT positions, 48 of which are now vacant. However the floor established at 36¢ was only temporary.

It appears the legislation is headed for conference. At this juncture, we are not promoting either the Senate or House version, but are encouraging each of you to engage in communication with your respective legislators with a message refuting the measure as a tax increase, but an effort to preserve a declining transportation/revenue stream. We should also discourage eliminating additional DOT staff beyond existing vacancies. The recent ice storm proved the work staff is "thin." The case for revenue has been well documented and confirmed by Governor McCrory and Secretary Tata.

The Governor's 2015-2017 biennium budget commits nearly \$5 billion to support the 25-Year transportation vision. In his State of the State address, he suggested a \$ 1.2 billion transportation bond, an amount State Treasurer, Janet Cowell says is reasonable and prudent.

The bond issue would provide funds for accelerating some of the projects that are near "shovel" ready, many of them in rural and small urban areas. As transportation advocates, we should actively support the idea of "selling" investments in our state's assets and preserving earlier investments.

As mentioned earlier, Legislation (H.B. 74) has been introduced TO STUDY THE OVERSIGHT OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING. A committee will be formed and a report filed with my proposed legislative changes to the 2016 Session of the General Assembly. If the legislation is passed, we will carefully monitor their progress and agenda. As you are aware MPO's were established by Federal Legislation. RPO's are a product of the state.



We are all too familiar with the NEPA process that increases costs and puts DOT on a tortuous, lengthy route to road construction. The NEPA process emerged from the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969 and the Clean Water Act. A proposal is being advanced to expand the reach of Federal Authority under the Clean Water Act that would broaden the term "waters of the U.S." This new authority would require costly (and time consuming) federal permits for most ditches and streams that only flow when it rains and could extend jurisdiction to virtually any wet spot on a property. It represents another imposition or denying of property rights.

Congressman Rouzer serves on Transportation/Infrastructure Committee and is working to oppose the granting of additional authority under Clean Water Act. The North Carolina Farm Bureau, the North Carolina Association of Realtors and the Business Alliance for a Sound Economy (BASE) have formally joined with Congressman Rouzer in opposing the rule change. I have personally conveyed my support to Congressman Rouzer and will be with him next week to seek his advice in appropriate course of action to continue the opposition. I solicit the support of the Directors of U.S. 70 Corridor Commission in this effort.

For the past several months the U.S. 70 Corridor Commission has been working in concert with Rob Hanson and his staff to continue to push forward to final selection and approval for "let" the Havelock Bypass. Several Resolutions of Support have been approved including:

- Pine Knoll Shores
- Wayne County Board of Commissioners
- Town of Morehead City
- City of Havelock
- Craven County Board of Commissioners
- Swansboro Board of Commissioners

Carteret Board of Commissioners and U.S. 70 Corridor Commission are currently working on approval of a Resolution of Support.

In addition to the strong interest and need for this project by military, there are commercial implications. Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Development has advised of plans to develop a 1,700 acre multi-use project. The project as envisioned would include 400 acres of light industrial use with rail and road access, commercial and neighborhood sites, large tracts of land for single and multi-family development, medical facilities and community amenity sites. The type and size of development that has been predicted to come with a free-flowing transportation Freeway. Havelock City Manager says, "It's extremely exciting with a lot of potential for our Town, but obviously, it's based on the ultimate approval and construction of the bypass."

The Havelock Bypass is not yet a “given” therefore, we must continue to promote and assist NCDOT’s efforts and plan, currently scheduled for construction start in 2018. NCDOT engineers have identified this project as the second most difficult project approvals ever in Eastern N.C., ranking only behind the battle for Bonner Bridge. We must commit ourselves and our resources to construction of this project as soon as possible, preferably prior to 2018.

The month of February has been extremely hectic and action at the General Assembly has been lively and unpredictable making the completion of this report difficult.

The rural-urban divide has become more evident with competing interests battling for their constituency and regions. As advocates for Eastern North Carolina, we must applaud the persistence and determination of our representatives in their attempts to improve opportunities for rural North Carolina.

In addition to our partnership and commitment to NCDOT, it may be time to devote more attention and effort to Federal action. There are four (4) specific agenda items that have been generally identified and noted in this report that merits our full attention:

- Designation of U.S. 70/795 as Interstate
- Clean Water Act expanded authority
- Funds for dredging seaports
- Surface Transportation Legislation

Our Congressional representation is supportive of the region and our agenda. We must lend our voices and support to educate and inform them of actions that are in the best interests of Eastern North Carolina.



## EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA MPO/RPO SMALL GROUP COALITION MEETING

A small group of the Eastern North Carolina MPO/RPO Coalition met on Wednesday, January 21, 2015 at 11:15a.m., at Wilber's Restaurant, Goldsboro, NC. The following people were present:

Anthony Prinz, Jacksonville MPO  
Rob Will, Eastern Carolina RPO  
Ted Godwin, Hwy 70 Commission  
Gus Tullos, NCDOT Board Member  
Jack Best, Hwy 70 Commission  
Chuck Allen, Goldsboro MPO  
Patrick Flanagan, Down East RPO  
Daryl Vreeland, Greenville MPO  
Bryan Buck, Mid-East RPO  
Justin Oaks, Peanut Belt RPO  
Jennifer Collins, Goldsboro MPO  
Gene Hodges, New Bern MPO  
Donald Baumgardner, Hwy 70 Commission  
Tom Mark, Hwy 70 Commission  
Durwood Stephenson, Hwy 70 Commission

Mr. Jack Best began the meeting with opening remarks and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reviewed the agenda and encouraged everyone to provide comments on their concerns with STI and projects/goals they wish to achieve. Mr. Best stated he felt the purpose of the coalition was to "bridge" Eastern North Carolina together.

At this time Mr. Best opened the floor to each attendee to provide comments and concerns they may have regarding their individual project status since the release of the draft STIP and any concerns they may have the coalition moving forward.

Individuals in the room each spoke regarding how their respective MPO or RPO projects played out under the new Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law. Final scores were released last fall and scores were used to help create the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which schedules projects that will move forward across North Carolina over the next 10 years.

Patrick Flanagan began the discussion with stating Jacksonville MPO did really well under the new law and recommended all MPOs/RPOs reach out to Anthony with Jacksonville MPO to understand the process they used and what worked for them and didn't work. Patrick also reminded the group not forget about non-highway modes of transportation and remember that big dollars are currently being spent in Eastern North Carolina.

Durwood Stephenson indicated he believes the MPO/RPO Coalition is a good thing for Eastern North Carolina and recommended this group to continue to think regionally.

Anthony Pinz stated connectivity is a major concern for Eastern North Carolina and STI doesn't address this concern. He suggested the coalition staff take a look at SPOT 4.0 scoring modal and see how the coalition fits into the new law.

Rob Will indicated he felt the MPO/RPO Coalition was "floundering" right now and suggested for coalition staff to take a step back and revisit the priority project list that was identified early on when the coalition was formed and continue to think regionally.

As others continued to express their support for the coalition it was noted several times for the coalition to continue to think regionally and focus on scoring and connectivity. Many expressed their concern for Ports and indicated we are either going to support ports or not...a decision needs to be made.

Mr. Gus Tullos spoke in favor of the coalition and indicated to the group the Legislators have heard about concerns are he feels changes will be made. He indicated Secretary Tata was scheduled to visit with members of the Hwy 70 Commission and Hwy 17 Association regarding a review of the STIP and has requested feedback from the members. He encouraged the coalition to begin the discussion with successful bullet points, start positive and then follow with concerns and direct points. He concluded with suggesting ask Secretary Tata how he could help us as a coalition to help Eastern Carolina.

Durwood Stephenson indicated he has requested that MPO/RPO staff be invited to the meeting with Secretary Tata on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the New Bern Riverfront Convention Center and is waiting to hear from the Secretary's office.

Chuck Allen and Jack Best both suggested for coalition staff to revisit the priority project list and identify four to six projects that are obtainable prior to discussions with Secretary Tata.

The meeting was concluded with this group getting back together for a small group meeting on February 10, 2015 at 11:30a.m. at Wilber's Restaurant to discuss coalition staff's project recommendation to ensure everyone was in agreement before addressing Secretary Tata at the February 13, 2015 meeting in New Bern upon invitation.

Patrick Flanagan concluded he was a representative who sat on the SPOT 4.0 Workgroup and indicated their next meeting was scheduled for February 2, 2015 and at the conclusion of that meeting he would contact MPO/RPO Coalition Executive Director, Justin Oakes, to arrange a

meeting with Coalition Staff to discuss the current status of 4.0 and details of the Coalition project list prior to meeting with this group on February 10, 2015.

Jack Best indicated the next meeting would be held on February 10, 2015 at 11:30 at Wilber's Restaurant and reminded everyone to continue to think as one region and ask for something obtainable.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

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Jennifer Collins, Goldsboro MPO

Organization				Planner		
Name	Area	Name	Phone	E-mail	Name	Ph
Eastern Carolina RPO	Wayne, Greene, Lenc Rob Will		252-229-4990	<a href="mailto:rwill@eccog.org">rwill@eccog.org</a>	Bennie Heath	252-747
Jacksonville MPO	Jacksonville, Onslow	Anthony Prinz	910-938-5292	<a href="mailto:aprinz@ci.jacksonville.nc.us">aprinz@ci.jacksonville.nc.us</a>	Michael Lazzara	910-938
Down East RPO	Carteret, Craven, Jon Patrick Flanagan		252-229-4332	<a href="mailto:pflanagan@eccog.org">pflanagan@eccog.org</a>	Trace Cooper	252-222
Mid-East RPO	Beaufort, Martin, Pitt Bryant Buck		252-974-1844	<a href="mailto:bbuck@midestat.com.org">bbuck@midestat.com.org</a>	Dempsey Bond	
Greenville MPO	Greenville, Whiteville	Daryl Vreeland	252-329-4476	<a href="mailto:dvreeland@greenvillenc.gov">dvreeland@greenvillenc.gov</a>	Allen Thomas	252-325
Upper Coastal Plains	Edgecombe, Johnston	James Salmons	252-459-1545	<a href="mailto:jsalmons@ucprpo.org">jsalmons@ucprpo.org</a>	Kenneth Jones	919-934
New Bern MPO	Bridgeton, Craven, N. Maurizia Chapman		252-639-7589	<a href="mailto:chapmanm@nbamdp.org">chapmanm@nbamdp.org</a>	Steve Tyson	252-514
Goldsboro MPO	Goldsboro, Walnut	C. Jennifer Collins	919-580-4327	<a href="mailto:icollins@ci.goldsboro.nc.us">icollins@ci.goldsboro.nc.us</a>	Chuck Allen	919-731
Peanut Belt RPO	Halifax, Northampton	Justin Oakes	252-974-1843	<a href="mailto:joakes@midestat.com.org">joakes@midestat.com.org</a>		
Hwy 70 Commission	Craven County	Donald Baumgardner	252-636-6618	<a href="mailto:dbaumgardner@cravencountync.gov">dbaumgardner@cravencountync.gov</a>		
New Bern MPO	Craven County	Gene Hodges	252-636-6600	<a href="mailto:mhodges@cravencountync.gov">mhodges@cravencountync.gov</a>		
Hwy 70 Commission	Craven County	Tom Mark	252-635-6448	<a href="mailto:mark@cravencountync.gov">mark@cravencountync.gov</a>		

**AGENDA**  
**February 10, 2015**  
**11:30 am**

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks
  2. SPOT 4.0 Workgroup Update – Patrick Flanagan
  3. Discussion Points for February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting with Secretary Tata
    - a. Accessibility Connectivity
    - b. Multi-modal Criteria
    - c. Hurricane Evacuation Route
    - d. Unique Formulas for Regional and Divisional Scoring
    - e. Ferry Systems
    - f. Short Line Rail
  4. Project List
  5. Adjournment
- Highway 70 & 17 Commissions Meeting w/ Secretary Tata – February 13, 2015 – 10am  
New Bern Riverfront Convention Center

- **Accessibility/Connectivity Criteria:** We feel the current way this criteria is measured does not successfully address the aim for which it was created. We would like the scores to expressly reflect providing rural areas that have few employment opportunities better connections to jobs and job opportunities, as well as expanding the focus to health care, education and recreation.  
(The work group has discussed using the new statewide model to calculate this, however the statewide model includes very few SR routes and this model would not serve Division Need projects until SR routes are included in the model. Model needs to be vastly expanded before we are comfortable using it)
- **Multi-modal Criteria:** This criteria is trying to measure too many things. In particular it is focusing on moving people and moving freight. We would like to see current multi-modal criteria split into two areas; one for people moving (rail and transit depots, multi-modal centers) which could stay under the multi-modal name and one for freight movement (agriculture, ports) which could become the freight criteria named in the STI legislation. Additionally, we would like to see military facilities considered in the multi-modal and freight criteria
- **Hurricane Evacuations:** Based on NC Gen Stat § 136-102.7. which sets the standard for any bridge or highway construction project to allow for evacuations to occur in under 18 hours we feel this need to be incorporated into the SPOT scoring process so we can ensure our planning and projects are adhering to this standard.
- **Unique Formulas for Regional and Divisional Scoring:** As a member of Region \_\_ and Division \_\_ our \_\_ PO participated in choosing the criteria and the forming of our weights, in collaboration with our neighboring organizations and Division Engineers. The ability to tailor the weigh each criteria laid out in STI counted for our highway projects was something we appreciated and would like to see that opportunity provided to us again.
- **Ferry Systems:** Given that the ferry system makes connections along Regional Impact routes and provides a unique experience for the residents and visitors of North Carolina, adding to the character and attractiveness of the coastal area as a destination, we would like to see all ferry projects eligible at the regional impact level as well as the division needs level.
- **Short Line Rail lines:** Currently privately operated rail short lines are not eligible for funds under STI. This is problematic because there are state owned short lines at both of the NC ports that are contracted for operation by private companies. These short lines being state owned and serving major state facilities should be able to compete for funds in STI.