

MEMORANDUM

TO: Capital Area MPO Members
CC: Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO Members
FROM: Triangle Transit Authority Board of Trustees
DATE: September 14, 2006
SUBJECT: NC Turnpike Authority and transit issues

The Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) Board of Trustees has reviewed the North Carolina statutes regarding the responsibilities of the North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) and public transportation in light of the upcoming financial feasibility study by NCTA of the proposed Wake turnpike facility. As a result of this review, TTA would request that several matters be included in the scope and objectives of this study.

In the 2002 legislation creating the NCTA, the General Assembly authorized the NCTA to study, plan and develop turnpike or toll road facilities in the state. In Section 9 of that legislation, the Authority was required to “evaluate the feasibility of encouraging mass transit and ridesharing in its proposed toll road facilities.”

It is our understanding that the NCTA has completed its preliminary feasibility study for a toll road facility under consideration in Wake County. In the next month the NCTA will begin the preliminary finance study for the Wake toll facility. Based upon the language of Section 9 cited above, it appears that there is firm ground (“shall evaluate”) for MPO members to ask that certain areas of interest or pertinent issues will be studied as a part of this preliminary finance study of the toll facility. More specifically, we would ask that the following matters be reviewed and investigated as a part of the financial feasibility study:

1. How adequate is the provision for future transit facilities: TTA has raised the question of whether the proposed toll facility or facilities would provide for possible future transit services, vehicles or facilities. An answer to this question was offered by a letter from NCTA Director David Joyner to TTA stating that the design of the toll road included an approximately 70 foot center corridor which could be available for transit use. While acknowledging that this is a helpful response, some additional clarification is needed, such as:
 - a. Will this center corridor be clearly and legally reserved for transit use in any binding manner?
 - b. Will this corridor be made available for other uses as well, such as fiber optic or other utility easements?
 - c. Perhaps most importantly, at some point in the future can this same corridor be used for future expansion of the toll road itself (from a 4 lane to a 6 lane facility)?
 - d. Will the design of the toll road and the center corridor allow for and accommodate a functional design of rail transit if that is chosen as the preferred transit alternative?
2. Does the toll facility encourage transit and ridesharing:
 - a. Will the buses of transit agencies such as TTA, CATS, and DATA be able to travel free on the toll road?
 - b. Will the regions vanpools be able to travel at no cost on the toll road?
 - c. Will carpoolers (of, say, 3 or more persons) also be able to ride on the toll road at no cost?
 - d. In what other financial ways can the NCTA encourage and facilitate transit and ridesharing on this proposed toll facility?