

**Minutes  
Town of Benson  
Community Transportation Plan Steering Committee  
Monday, February 11, 2019  
7:00 PM**

**Present:**

**Jay McInnis  
Mayor Jerry Medlin**

**Town Manager Matt Zapp  
Chief Kenneth Edwards  
Admin Assistant Lauren Shepard**

**Amy Adams  
Kayla Price  
Leanne Honrine  
Dana Strickland  
Scott Walston  
Dennis Jernigan**

**Commissioner Jim Johnson  
Jimmy Eatmon**

**Public Works Director Tim Robbins  
Planning Director Erin Joseph  
Reggie Holley**

**Kim Price  
Adam Leath  
John Strickland  
James Salmons  
Josh Holloman  
John Pitcher**

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

Matt Zapp introduced Jay McInnis. McInnis and his firm (Ramey, Kemp & Associates) have been contracted to lead the community transportation plan by the Town of Benson. Zapp stated that this plan could be used by Johnston County and NCDOT for future transportation planning.

**II. CTP Overview/Schedule** (*Jay McInnis, Ramey, Kemp & Associates*)

**A. Develop CTP Vision (December 2018 – February 2019)**

Develop vision and goal for comprehensive transportation plan

**B. Conduct Needs Assessment (February 2019 – April 2019)**

At the March meeting the committee should agree on visions and goals and discuss the needs assessment

**C. Analyze Alternatives (April 2019 – May 2019)**

Provide alternatives to address needs identified for Benson. These will be presented in the draft plan presented to the Town Board for approval.

D. **Develop Final Plan (May 2019 – June 2019)**

The steering committee will approve alternatives discussed at previous meetings.

E. **Adopt Plan (June 2019)**

After approval by the Town Board, the plan would be presented to the Johnston County Board of Commissioners to be incorporated in the countywide transportation plan. The Town of Benson and Johnston County can then seek funding for these projects from NCDOT via the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

III. **Purpose of Steering Committee** *(Jay McInnis)*

McInnis stated that the steering committee should guide the community transportation plan process. The committee will need to agree on vision, goals, area of needs, alternatives, and recommendations for the final plan.

IV. **Goals for the February 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting** *(Jay McInnis)*

- A. **Confirm steering committee members and set expectations**
- B. **Agree on CTP study area**
- C. **Begin Discussion on Area Transportation Needs**

V. **CTP Study Area Discussion** *(Jay McInnis)*

The study area, as currently defined, runs west from Benson to the Johnston/Harnett County line, runs north to the Byrdtown Road area then following a line to the I-40 Rest Area, and encompassing Exit 325 (I-40/NC 242). The study area will also encompass South Johnston High School, run east of Adams Road, and then cross I-40 east of Benson and run south to Dragstrip Road.

There was discussion about including areas south of the Johnston/Harnett County Line in the study area, particularly Exit 77 (I-95/Hodges Chapel Road). Matt Zapp stated that the City of Dunn has already installed water infrastructure to that interchange to service Rooms to Go. However, Benson has an industrial certified site between Exits 77 and 79 (I-95/Main Street), and potentially another large site closer to Exit 77.

There was discussion about extending the study area south to Exit 77 and include Hodges Chapel Road and other areas in Harnett County that abut Neighbors Road, Fairground Road, and US 301. Matt Zapp also stated he would verify that the study area includes the future ETJ of the Town of Benson, which will likely expand beyond its current footprint.

**VI. Benson Transportation Needs Discussion**

**a. Benson Transportation Survey Results**

**1. Worst Traffic Problem in Benson**

- Main Street
- US 301 (Wall Street)

**2. Three most congested routes**

- Main Street
- US 301
- NC 50

**3. What intersection is in the most need of improvement?**

- Main Street/US 301 intersection

**4. What safety problems exist in Benson area?**

- Pedestrian safety
- Parking

**5. What problems with truck traffic affect the Benson area?**

- Congestion
- Damage to roadways
- Trucks on secondary streets

**6. To accommodate higher traffic volumes, rank improvement options**

- Improve intersection designs by adding turn lanes and/or improving traffic signal timing
- Building additional traffic lanes

**7. How important are the general transportation objectives?**

- Reduce congestion
- Improve safety
- Economic growth

**8. Alternative transportation options**

- Sidewalks
- Greenways
- Public bus service

There was further discussion about demographics of who filled out the survey, and how it was distributed/advertised. 136 people filled out the survey, which was a high number for a town of Benson's size.

**b. Roadway Congestion**

McInnis presented on the areas with the highest volumes of congestion. Matt Zapp discussed the use of traffic cameras at various high volume intersections throughout town.

- I-95
- I-40
- Main Street

**c. Safety**

McInnis presented on roads in Benson with the highest numbers of crashes from 2013-2017.

- Main St
- US 301
- I-95
- I-40
- NC 50

**d. Bicycle/Pedestrian Needs**

McInnis had no data to share at this meeting on this topic.

**VII. CTP Vision/Goals Discussion**

Mayor Medlin discussed the importance of NC 242 north and south of Benson as the completion of NC 540 brings more residents and truck traffic to the Benson area. Medlin discussed the need to get truck traffic out of the Town core as much as possible.

James Salmons discussed his work with the Upper Coast Plain RPO and NCDOT to produce long-range transportation plans and prioritization lists. One of the projects listed by NCDOT was the NC 242/Tarheel Road intersection up to Exit 325 (I-40/NC 242).

There was further discussion about potential residential growth near Exit 325. Erin Joseph stated that this area is currently zoned as commercial, primarily. There is a high demand for residential growth in this area, but commercial growth is the plan for this area. Joseph and Matt Zapp discussed the amount of inquiries for properties in this area. Most want existing structures, and there is a very low vacancy rate.

Dennis Jernigan and James Salmons discussed the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and the Johnston County Transportation Plan. The County and the State have noted NC 242 improvements as a critical need, but it could be more than 5 years before any construction occurs.

There was additional discussion about the slated improvements the STIP has for the NC 210/ NC 50 area.

McInnis discussed how the Town of Benson would measure how far it has progressed in reaching the goals that will be set by this study. McInnis recommended that the Town set a 20-25 year benchmark. The STIP is done with a 10-year scope.

There was discussion about how much of the Transportation Plan should focus on immediate needs and how much should focus on long-term goals. James Salmons, Scott Walston, and Dennis Jernigan discussed how Johnston County and NCDOT would take the recommendations and findings from this plan into consideration as they develop projects that will affect the Benson area.

Commissioner Johnson and James Salmons discussed the importance of making sure the transportation plan and the future land use and zoning maps were compatible. Matt Zapp pointed out that this committee will help the Planning Department as the Unified Development Ordinance is updated. These steps will be critical to plan for the growth that is already upon us, plus what will be coming in future years.

There was further discussion on how this Transportation Plan can be updated incrementally as needs change (5-10 years), and how Johnston County will be able to incorporate it into their overall transportation plan for the entire county. This study is recommended by Johnston County and NCDOT to make sure the best, and most accurate, data/priorities for Benson are reflected on the county and state levels.

Commissioner Johnson and Mayor Medlin discussed the future potential growth on NC 242 south of Benson and the potential for the new bridge over I-95 at Market Street to service these industrial areas, and perhaps serve as a future truck route to keep traffic out of downtown.

There was discussion related to making some of the goals in this plan reflect measures in more immediate increments, and setting bench marks throughout the 25 year span projections of the study. Several members stressed prioritization of goals, as well as the ability to be flexible with any changes that occur that cannot be predicted at this time.

Matt Zapp reiterated how important it will be to consider future land use and ETJ expansion as the Town finalizes this plan. The impact on the Planning department and vice versa will be critical to how useful this study is. Zapp requested that the Planning Department prepare maps for the steering Committee to review at the next meeting: current/future land use, current zoning, 301 roundabout, and NC 540.

James Salmons also asked that the Town consider keeping the East Coast greenway map in mind through this process.

## **VIII. Wrap up/Action Items**

Matt Zapp stated that he would send out the comprehensive land use map to the group before the next meeting. Jay McInnis would also send handouts to the group to review before the March 11 meeting.