

**IREDELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PRESENTATION &
BRIEFING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 20, 2001**

The Iredell County Board of Commissioners met for a presentation on Rural Transportation Planning Organizations at 4:30 p.m., and a Briefing Session at 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday, November 20, 2001, in the Iredell County Government Center, 200 South Center Street, Statesville, NC.

Present: Chairman Sara Haire Tice
Vice Chairman Steve D. Johnson (arrived at 5:05 p.m.)
Tommy E. Bowles
Karen B. Ray
R. Godfrey Williams

Staff Present: County Manager Joel Mashburn, Finance Director Susan Blumenstein, Planning Supervisor Ron Smith, Planning/Inspections Director Lynn Niblock, County Assessor Brent Weisner, Support Services Director Jim Vernon, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Administrator Terry McLain, GIS Analyst Lee Ann Owens, Asst. Jail Supervisor Terry Beck, and Clerk to the Board Jean Moore.

CALL TO ORDER by Chairman Tice.

RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (RPOs):
Planning Supervisor Ron Smith said that in North Carolina, RPOs were organizations composed of between three to fifteen counties. He said the total population of a certified RPO had to be at least 50,000 people. Smith said areas included in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) could not be included in an RPO. However, an MPO could be in the center of an RPO as long as the population stipulation was met. Smith said a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) needed to be signed by all of the municipalities and counties included in an RPO. Mr. Smith said Frank Johnson, a member of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Board, had been instrumental in creating an RPO consisting of Cleveland County and its 15 municipalities, a portion of Gaston County and two of its municipalities, Iredell County with its five municipalities, and Lincoln County with its one municipality. Mr. Smith said the RPO had been named the Lake Norman Rural Planning Transportation Organization. Smith said it would be beneficial for Iredell County to be included in an RPO. He said the North Carolina Secretary for Transportation had appropriated \$100,000 a year, for the next three years, for each approved RPO. Smith said this money could be used for a full time staff person, along with planning services and equipment. He said that recently, the counties of Alexander, Caldwell, Burke, and Catawba had agreed to establish the Unifour RPO. He said the Unifour counties all shared the same council of governments and this agency would provide the administrative guidance, or be the lead agency. Smith said a similar arrangement could be developed using the Centralina Council of Governments (COG), out of Charlotte, NC, for the Lake Norman RPO. Mr. Smith said an RPO would aid in:

1. Developing long-range local and regional transportation plans.
2. Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process.
3. Assisting in the development and prioritizing of projects for North Carolina's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
4. Providing transportation information to local governments and other interested parties.

Smith said that in addition to the \$100,000 funded by the state, each municipality or county would allocate \$500 or \$1,000, respectively, toward a local match, plus any remaining allocation would be based upon the percentage of the total RPO population that was included in the member's jurisdiction. He estimated that \$5,150 would be required from Iredell County each year. He said that if the commissioners were not ready to enter into an MOU, they could approve a resolution just stipulating an interest.

Smith then shared a draft MOU. Mr. Smith said he had concerns about some portions of the MOU. These concerns were:

1. That one member of the Centralina Council of Governments' Executive Board serve on the RPO Technical Advisory Committee. (Smith said that if this occurred, the person should be an ex-officio member.)
2. That municipalities pay \$500 and counties pay \$1,000 for membership towards the local match, with the remaining allocation to be based upon the percentage of the total RPO population. (Smith did not feel this was fair.) Also, the MOU stipulated that only one annual block of membership hours (free) could be used. (Smith felt the governing bodies should be allowed to use more membership blocks.)
3. That the voting structure allowed one vote per jurisdiction. (Smith said the counties with the most municipalities would have more votes, e.g., Cleveland would automatically have 16 votes compared to Iredell's 6 votes.)

Commissioner Williams said that in the past, Rowan County had been considered as a possible partnering county. He asked what happened to these discussions.

Smith said this possibility had not been eliminated. He said, "We are still looking at them (Rowan County)."

Williams asked if Rowan could be included at a later date.

Smith said yes.

County Manager Mashburn said NCDOT Board Member Johnson had met with the Rowan County officials about the RPOs.

Commissioner Bowles asked if Iredell County could be removed from the RPO, if it desired to do so in the future.

Smith said yes.

The commissioners agreed to approve a resolution in support of participating in the Lake Norman Rural Transportation Planning Organization, but declined to approve the MOU at this time. It was requested that the staff meet with the relevant person(s) at Centralina and DOT Board Member Frank Johnson about the various MOU concerns.

PRESENTATION FROM ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS REGARDING THE IREDELL COUNTY GOVERNMENT BUILDING – SOUTH (Formerly, the Lowrance Hospital/Lake Norman Regional Medical Center Building): Mashburn said the General Statutes allowed local governments to negotiate with architectural firms on the design of governmental facilities.

Support Services Director Jim Vernon said letters asking for qualifications were sent to six architectural firms. Out of the six, two firms were requested to attend the briefing. Vernon said the firm's representatives would discuss their ideas concerning the renovation of the former hospital; especially in regards to configuring the site into court space, probation/parole offices, law enforcement offices and health department offices. He then introduced Robert Johnson and Larry Schaeffer, with the Martin Boal Anthony & Johnson (MBAJ) Architectural firm.

MBAJ Presentation: R. Johnson said MBAJ had extensive experience in various types of public and private facilities, including courts and law enforcement offices. He said the firm had extensive experience in the rejuvenation of abandoned buildings. Mr. Johnson said MBAJ was a full-service firm that would first survey the hospital building and plan the first floor with the understanding that the entire building would be used in the future. Architect Johnson said it was important to remember the

other floors when the design work for the first phase was being completed. He said the facility's public entrance way could be maintained along with the four pipe mechanical system.

Schaeffer said the firm would be good stewards of the taxpayer's money. He said he was a resident of Iredell County, and the project would be closely monitored. Mr. Schaffer showed a cost control chart for several recent projects and noted that on average, all of the work had been accomplished under budget by at least four percent. He said one project was under budget by nine percent at completion.

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Chairman Tice asked if the Lake Norman High School project was on schedule.

R. Johnson said yes, and the project was under budget.

Commissioner Johnson said he understood that the design of court facilities had much to do with the operating costs. He asked if the firm would make use of the state officials in Raleigh who would have knowledge about court facility designs.

R. Johnson said yes.

Vernon then introduced Richard Atkinson, Jim Powell, and Ryan Gattis of the Atkinson Dyer Watson (ADW) firm.

ADW Presentation: Powell said that basically, the ADW firm did governmental work. He said the firm started with two people but now had expanded to 41 employees. He said a key component of any project was good communication. Mr. Powell said the firm would have to look at the building and determine the "realistic needs of the occupants."

Atkinson said the firm did "adaptive reuse" of existing buildings. He said the firm had a copy of the Fluor Daniel Study that was done on the hospital facility. Atkinson said his firm would "fine tune" the study and develop a program to match the money and space needs. Mr. Atkinson said the firm would develop the first phase (first floor) for easy development of the upper floors - - easy accessibility.

Gattis shared information about the firm's work on the Rowan Justice Center. He said this project entailed the conversion of an existing building into a court facility.

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Commissioner Bowles asked the firm's opinion of the Fluor Daniel layout.

Powell said it was a good start; however, all of the information would have to be verified.

The commissioners mentioned that both firms offered the expertise and qualifications needed for the architectural and engineering services relative to the design/construction of the Iredell County Government Center - South. It was decided, however, to negotiate with the Martin Boal Anthony & Johnson firm.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION DECLARING THAT IREDELL COUNTY BE DESIGNATED AS THE LEAD AGENCY FOR THE RURAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION: Ben Garrison, the Vocational Workshop Executive Director, and Chairman of the Iredell Transportation Authority, said a resolution needed to be approved designating the county as the lead agency applicant for rural public transportation funding. He said the county manager would be authorized to apply for any future funding. (In the past, the Vocational Workshop served as the lead agency.)

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO TRANSFER THE PROGRAM MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES INVOLVED WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY INTERVENTION/PREVENTION BUREAU'S PROGRAM AGREEMENT FOR RESIDENTIAL YOUTH SERVICES TO THE BARIUM SPRINGS HOME FOR CHILDREN: Dean Vick, the Regional Consultant for the Department of Juvenile Justice, and Carl Duncan, the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for Iredell County, attended the meeting. Mashburn said that by eliminating Iredell County as the program manager, Barium Springs would be able to directly apply for state funds from the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. He said the county would, however, continue to provide the local match (30%). Mashburn said the match for 2001/02 was \$50,539.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF A BUDGET TRANSFER IN THE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)/MAPPING DEPARTMENT INVOLVING THE TRANSITION FROM INFOCAD TO ArcInfo (BUDGET TRANSFER OF \$11,550 FROM PART-TIME SALARIES TO TRAINING AND \$2,750 FROM PART-TIME SALARIES TO NON-DEPRECIATED ASSETS): County Assessor Weisner, GIS Administrator Terry McLain, and GIS Analyst Lee Ann Owens explained this request. Weisner said he and the GIS employees were dissatisfied with the current software.

McLain said the current system did not allow Internet access. He said the county planning and sheriff's department already had ArcInfo. Also, the Town of Mooresville was using the ArcInfo software.

Commissioner Johnson asked the total cost of converting over to the new software.

Weisner said \$59,700. He said a part time mapping employee recently retired, and the department's supervisors felt they could utilize the unspent salary funds for the software purchase. Weisner said the department was now organized and operating in such a manner that it did not need the part-time position. Mr. Weisner said the current data in the system could be converted over to the new software.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Tice adjourned the briefing session at 6:55 p.m.

Approved: _____

Clerk to the Board