

**Watauga Intergovernmental Retreat
October 11, 2012**

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners attended an Intergovernmental Retreat on Thursday, October 11, 2012 at 5:00 p.m. The Retreat was held at the ASU Athletics Center in Boone, NC. Items discussed were the Watauga Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP); and Consolidated Dispatch Service. In attendance from the Town of Blowing Rock, Town of Boone, Watauga County, Appalachian State University, Beech Mountain, Town of Seven Devils and NCDOT were the following:

Town of Blowing Rock

- Mayor: J.B. Lawrence
- Commissioners: Dan Phillips, Doug Matheson and Jim Steele
- Staff: Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Town Clerk Sharon Greene

Town of Boone

- Commissioners: Lynne Mason, Andy Ball, Bill Bailey and Allan Scherlen
- Staff: Town Clerk Kim Brown and Public Works Director Blake Brown

Watauga County

- Commissioner: Vince Gable
- Staff: County Manager Deron Geouque, EMS Director Jeff Virginia, Planning Director Joe Furman and Clerk to the Board Anita Fogle

Town of Seven Devils

- Mayor Pro Tem: Brad Lambert
- Commissioner: David Ehmig and Kay Ehlinger
- Staff: Town Manager Ed Evans

Town of Beech Mountain

- Commissioner:
- Staff: Planning Director Jes Scott

Appalachian State University

- Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs: Greg Lovins
- Director of External Affairs & Community Relations: Susan McCracken
- Physical Plant Director Mick O'Connor
- _____ Jay Cox

High County Council of Government

- Director of Planning & Development: Phil Trew

- Transportation Director: Craig Hughes

NCDOT

- Pam Cooke, Cooper Sellers and Ivan Dishman

Watauga County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)

After introductions, Mr. Phil Trew of the High Country Council of Governments welcomed everyone and introduced Ms. Craig Hughes, Transportation Planner with HCCOG who discussed the CTP process. Major points included:

- The last Thoroughfare Plan for Watauga County was completed in 2002 and the last Thoroughfare Plan for Boone was completed in 1991
- CTP developed by NCDOT and RPO staff, under guidance of Steering Committee
- Steering Committee members included:
 - Lynne Mason
 - Greg Young
 - Joe Furman
 - Tim Futrelle
 - Kevin Rothrock
 - Jim Steele
 - Rick Owen
 - Jes Scott
 - David Ehmig
 - Ed Evans
 - Mike O'Connor
 - Mike Salzano
 - Mike Hall
 - Dan Meyer
 - Chris Turner
 - Blake Brown
 - Dean Ledbetter

CTP makes recommendations for all modes of transportation

- Recommendations are based on Traffic Counts, Population & Employment projections, the plan's goals and objectives (which were approved by all local governing boards), and local planning documents
- They are long range (30 year) plans
- It is a vision plan and no funding is attached
- The CTP does not finalize any new locations. It can reflect the preference of an alignment by the local governments, but all alternatives will still need to be considered as a project goes through the planning and permitting process.

- Projects in a mutually adopted CTP are easier to justify for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- The plan will be available for public comment until November 13th
- A survey has been made available to collect public comments at www.surveymonkey.com/s/WataugaCountyCTPRec
- A public workshop will be held on November 8th from 4-6 at the High Country Council of Governments to allow additional public input.
- The final draft will be forwarded to the local governing boards for consideration.

Cooper Sellers, Transportation Engineer with NCDOT, reviewed the following recommendations from the Draft CTP:

Watauga County Intergovernmental Retreat CTP Project Recommendations

US 321-421: TIP# R-2615 (Proposed US 421 Bypass to Vilas)

US 321-421 is currently over capacity and is projected to remain over capacity in 2040 from the proposed US 421 BYP to US 321 in Vilas. The purpose of this project is to relieve congestion on the existing facility and to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) D on the facility.

US 321-421 is the primary route between Boone and the western portions of the county. It is currently a two lane facility with a speed limit of 55 miles per hour (mph). Lane widths vary from 11 to 12 feet. The facility is currently over capacity with an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume of 15,200 vehicles per day (vpd), compared to a LOS D capacity of 12,100 vpd. Approximately 19,500 vpd are projected in 2040.

The CTP proposes improving this section of US 321-421 to a boulevard. This would be accomplished by widening to four lanes, adding a median, and 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

US 321 (Blowing Rock Rd/Hardin St)

US 321 is projected to be near or over capacity in 2040 from US 421 (King Street) to the proposed US 421 BYP. The purpose of this project is to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) D on the facility.

Existing US 321 from US 421 (King Street) in Boone to Fairway Drive (SR 1602) has four 12 foot wide thru lanes, a speed limit of 35 mph, and a center turn lane. From Fairway Drive (SR 1602) to the proposed US 421 BYP, US 321 changes to a 4 lane undivided cross section. The 2010 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume ranges from 18,000 vehicles per day (vpd) north of NC 105 to 41,800 vpd south of NC 105, compared to a LOS D capacity of 25,400 vpd and 26,600 vpd respectfully. Approximately 24,000 to 61,700 vpd are projected in 2040.

The CTP proposes converting US 321 to a boulevard by removing the center turn lane, providing a median, and bicycle accommodations.

NC 105 Bypass

NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) is projected to be near or over capacity in 2040 from NC 105 to Caldwell Community College. The purpose of this project is to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) D on the facility.

Justification of Need NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) from NC 105 to US 321-421 has two 12 foot lanes and a speed limit of 55 miles per hour (mph). The 2010 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volume ranges from 10,600 to 13,500 vpd, and has a capacity of 13,500 vpd (LOS D). The estimated 2040 traffic volume ranges from 10,200 to 16,000 vpd.

The CTP proposes improving NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) to a boulevard. This would be accomplished by widening to four lanes, adding a median, and 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

NC 194 (US 421 to Howards Creek Road)

NC 194 is currently near or over capacity and is projected to be over capacity in 2040 from US 221-421 to Howards Creek Road (SR 1306). The purpose of this project is to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a Level of Service (LOS) D on the facility.

Within the Boone municipal limits, NC 194 is a two lane facility with a speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph), lane widths of 10 feet, an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume of 10,500 vehicles per day (vpd) and a capacity (LOS D) of 9,400 vpd. Outside the Boone municipal limits, NC 194 is a two lane facility with a speed limit of 55 mph, lane widths of 9 feet, an AADT volume of 8,600 vpd and a capacity (LOS D) of 12,200 vpd. NC 194 is the primary route between Boone and the northern portions of the county. Approximately 12,800 vpd are projected in 2040.

The CTP proposes improving this section of NC 194 to a boulevard. This would be accomplished by widening to four lanes and adding a median. Additionally, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations are recommended along the proposed project.

US 221, TIP No. R-2915 (Deep Gap to NC 88 in Jefferson)

US 221 from US 321 in Deep Gap to NC 88 in Ashe County is projected to be over or near capacity in the Ashe County section. The 2012 – 2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes project R-2915 that is intended to address this deficiency.

The TIP project includes widening US 221 to a four lane boulevard with bicycle accommodations. This project is currently scheduled for construction in 2015 according to the 2012-2018 TIP.

US 321, TIP No. R-5016 (Vilas to Tennessee)

US 321 from Avery County to US 421 in Vilas does not meet future mobility needs. This facility is intended to provide mobility in Watauga County and, ultimately, connectivity between Johnson City, TN and Gastonia, NC. Additionally, US 321 from US 421 in Vilas to Rominger Road (SR 1121) is projected to be near capacity by 2040.

US 321 from Avery County to US 421 in Vilas is recommended to be upgraded to an expressway (4 lanes with median) with bicycle accommodations. As development occurs along this corridor every effort should be made to limit access in order to maintain mobility.

US 321 (Proposed US 421 Bypass to Blowing Rock)

US 321 from the proposed US 421 BYP south of Boone to US 221 north of Blowing Rock does not meet future mobility needs. This facility is intended to provide mobility in Watauga County and, ultimately, connectivity between Johnson City, TN and Gastonia, NC. Additionally, a portion of this facility between the proposed US 421 BYP and Niley Cook Road (SR 1532) will be near capacity by 2040.

This section of US 321 is recommended to be upgraded to an expressway (4 lanes with median). As development occurs along this corridor every effort should be made to limit access in order to maintain mobility and connectivity.

US 321, TIP No. R-2237

US 321 from US 221 north of Blowing Rock to Caldwell County does not meet the future mobility needs in western North Carolina and into Tennessee. This facility is intended to provide mobility in Watauga County and, ultimately, connectivity between Johnson City, TN and Gastonia, NC. The 2012 – 2018 TIP includes project R-2237 that will address this problem.

US 421 Bypass, TIP No. U-2703

Currently, US 421, US 321, and NC 105 in Boone experience congestion. This is a result of the mix of through traffic trying to connect between NC 105 to the southwest and US 421 to the east and heavy traffic to destinations downtown (King Street) and along US 321. TIP project U-2703, the proposed US 421 Bypass, is intended to address this deficiency.

The proposed project includes constructing a bypass south of Boone. The proposed bypass is recommended to be constructed as a freeway (4 lanes with median).

US 421, (West of Boone)

US 421 from US 321 in Vilas to Tennessee is projected to be near or over capacity by 2040. Improvements are needed to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP Committee also recommended and intends to pursue the inclusion of US 421 from US 321 in Vilas to Tennessee as a boulevard on NCDOT's SHC Vision Plan. The CTP proposes widening US 421 to a four lane boulevard with bicycle accommodations from US 321 in Vilas to Tennessee.

US 421. (East of Boone)

US 421 from the end of the existing divided section east of Old US 421 (SR 1416) to NC

194 is projected to be over capacity by 2040. Improvements are needed to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes improving US 421 to a boulevard (4 lanes with median) from NC 194 to Old 421 (SR 1416) and to an expressway from Old 421 (SR 1416) to the end of the existing divided section by removing the center turn lane and providing a median.

NC 105. (Current 4 lane section)

NC 105 from NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) to US 221-421 is currently over capacity. Improvements are needed to relieve existing congestion and to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes improving this section of NC 105 to a boulevard (4 lanes w/median) by removing the center turn lane, providing a median, and bicycle accommodations.

NC 105. TIP No. R-2566 (Boone to Avery County)

NC 105 from NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) to Avery County is projected to be over capacity by 2040. TIP project R-2566 is intended to address this deficiency.

Bamboo Road

Bamboo Road (SR 1514) from Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523) to US 221-421 is currently over capacity. Improvements are needed to relieve existing congestion and to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes widening Bamboo Road (SR 1514) to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles. Additionally, intersection improvements are recommended at Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523).

Deerfield Road

Deerfield Road (SR 1522) from State Farm Road to Bamboo Road (SR 1514) is currently over capacity. Improvements are needed to relieve existing congestion and to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes widening Deerfield Road (SR 1522) to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles from State Farm Road to Bamboo Road

(SR 1514). Additionally, intersection improvements are recommended at Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523).

Wilson Ridge Road

Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523) from Deerfield Road (SR 1522) to Bamboo Road (SR 1514) is projected to be near capacity by 2040. Improvements are needed to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes widening Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523) to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles. Additionally, intersection improvements are recommended at Deerfield Road (SR 1522) and Bamboo Road (SR 1514).

Presnell School Road (SR 1125) Extension

The only access point to Beech Mountain from the Watauga County side is via US 321. An alternative access route between Beech Mountain and US 321 is desired for emergency purposes.

The CTP proposes extending Presnell School Road (SR 1125) to Cherry Gap Road in Beech Mountain. This new location facility would be 2 lanes and have 4 foot paved shoulders. The proposed new location would attempt to utilize an existing local road bed.

Bodenheimer Drive

By request of the Town of Boone, Division 11 has begun an investigation into a new location facility connecting Homespun Hills Road (SR 1148) and Bodenheimer Drive west of Appalachian State University (ASU). This would require a minimum of 200 feet of new location to connect the two facilities. Making this connection will open up a new tertiary access point between ASU and NC 105.

Seven Devils Road

An alternative access route between Seven Devils and the surrounding network is desired for emergency purposes.

The CTP proposes building a new facility between Seven Devils Road (SR 1151) and NC 105. This new facility would be 2 lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders.

State Farm Road

State Farm Road from NC 105 to Deerfield Road (SR 1522) is projected to be over capacity by 2040. Improvements are needed to accommodate projected traffic volumes in order to maintain a LOS D on the facility.

The CTP proposes improving State Farm Road to a three lane cross section with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

MINOR WIDENING IMPROVEMENTS

The following facilities within Watauga County do not have capacity issues, but were identified as candidates for upgrading to NCDOT design standards. Implementation of the proposed projects should be coordinated through NCDOT's Highway Division 11 office.

WATA0012-H: NC 194 from Howards Creek Road (SR 1306) to Castle Ford Road (SR 1333) – Widen to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

WATA0013-H: Bamboo Road (SR 1514) from Deerfield Road (SR 1523) to Friendship Church Road (SR 1525) – Widen to 12- foot lanes with 4- foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

WATA0014-H: Broadstone Road (SR 1112) from NC 194 to NC 105 – Widen to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles.

WATA0015-H: Greenway Road from Wilson Drive to Leola Drive – Widen to 12 foot lanes.

WATA0016-H: Meadowview Road from US 221-321 to US 221-321 – Widen to 12 foot lanes.

WATA0017-H: Leola Drive from Greenway Road to US 321 – Widen to 12 foot lanes.

WATA0018-H: Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) from Rivers Street (SR 1163) to NC 105 – Widen to 12 foot lanes.

WATA0019-H: Rivers Street (SR 1163) from Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) to US 321 (Hardin Street) – Widen to 12 foot lanes.

Unaddressed Deficiencies

The following deficiencies were identified during the development of the CTP, but they remain unaddressed.

- **US 321-421 (King Street) from US 321 (Hardin Street) to Hodges Gap Road (SR1104)** in downtown Boone is currently over capacity. Because of physical constraints, no method of improvement was found to be acceptable to Boone at this time. Central business district storefront development prevents any additions to the current pavement width. While the existing pavement width would be sufficient to provide four travel lanes, Boone prefers to keep the existing arrangement of two 12 foot travel lanes and roadside parking.
- **US 321 BUS from US 221 to Globe Road (SR 1537)** in downtown Blowing Rock is projected to be over capacity by 2040. Because of physical constraints, no method of improvement was found to be acceptable to Blowing Rock at this time. Central business district storefront development prevents any additions to the current pavement width. While the existing pavement width would be sufficient to provide four travel lanes, Blowing Rock prefers to keep the existing arrangement of two 12 foot travel lanes and roadside parking.
- A small section of **Deerfield Road (SR 1522)** is projected to be over capacity by 2040. This section begins at the intersection with State Farm Road, and extends 250

feet to the northeast. The primary cause of this congestion is the reduced capacity resulting from a 25 mph speed limit around Watauga County Hospital. At this time, locals prefer to maintain the speed limit zone.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

AppalCART currently operates fixed bus routes in the county. Out of county services are provided by the Mountaineer Express. During the development of the CTP, one new route was identified as a strategic new expansion for AppalCART.

A new bus route is recommended between Boone and Blowing Rock utilizing US 321. Additionally, seven locations were identified for potential park and ride lots. They are proposed at the following intersections:

1. US 221 and US 321 in Blowing Rock
2. US 221-421 and Brookshire Road (SR 1328)
3. US 321 and US 421 in Vilas
4. US 321-421 and NC 105 BYP (SR 1107)
5. US 421 and Old US 421 in Rutherford
6. US 421 and US 221 in Deep Gap
7. NC 105 and Shulls Mill Road (SR 1557) in Foscoe

Out of county services provided by the Mountaineer Express connect Boone with the regional hubs of Charlotte, and Greensboro. Both the East/West and the North/South routes are projected to need additional service capacity by 2040.

BICYCLE

In accordance with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), roadways identified as bicycle routes should incorporate the following standards as roadway improvements are made and funding is available:

- Curb and gutter sections require at minimum 4 foot bike lanes or 14 foot outside lanes.
- Shoulder sections require a minimum 4 foot paved shoulder.
- All bridges along roadways where bike facilities are recommended shall be equipped with 54 inch railings.

Bicycle improvement to the following existing facilities are recommended:

1. US 221 from Caldwell County to Blowing Rock municipal limits
2. US 221 from US 321 Bus to US 321
3. US 221 from Ashe County to US 421
4. US 321 from Caldwell County to US 221
5. US 321 from Avery County to US 421 in Vilas
6. US 321 from US 421 to Deerfield Road (SR 1522)
7. US 321-421 from Vilas to the proposed US 421 BYP
8. US 321-421 from the proposed US 421 BYP to Junaluska Road (SR1102)
9. US 321 BUS from US 321 to US 221

10. US 421 from Tennessee to US 321 in Vilas
11. NC 105 from Avery County to NC 105 BYP
12. NC 105 from NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) to US 221-421
13. NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) from US 321-421 to NC 105
14. NC 184 from Beech Mountain to Avery County
15. NC 194 from US 221-421 to Howards Creek Road (SR 1306)
16. NC 194 from Howards Creek Road (SR 1306) to Castle Ford Road (SR 1333)
17. NC 194 from Castle Ford Road (SR 1333) to Ashe County
18. NC 194 from US 321-421 to Avery County
19. Bamboo Road (SR 1514) from US 221-421 to Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1323)
20. Bamboo Road (SR 1514) from Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1323) to Deerfield Road (SR 1522)
21. Broadstone Road (SR 1112) from NC 194 to NC 105
22. Deerfield Road (SR 1522) from US 221-321 to State Farm Road
23. Deerfield Road (SR 1522) from State Farm Road to Bamboo Road (SR 1514)
24. Deerfield Road (SR 1523) from to Bamboo Road (SR 1514) to Bamboo Road (SR 1514)
25. Faculty Street, from NC 105 to Holmes Drive
26. Hill Street from Holmes Drive to Rivers Street (SR 1163)
27. Holmes Drive from Faculty Street to Hill Street
28. New Market Boulevard from NC 194 to US 221-421
29. Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) from NC 105 to Rivers Street (SR 1163)
30. Rivers Street (SR 1163) from Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) to US 321
31. State Farm Road from NC 105 to Deerfield Road (SR 1522)
32. Water Street from Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) at Rivers Street (SR 1163) to US 321-421 at Junaluska Road (SR 1102)
33. Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523) from Deerfield Road (SR 1522) to Bamboo Road (SR 1514)

Multi-Use Path Facilities:

Multi use paths are facilities physically separated from motor vehicle traffic that is either within the highway right-of-way or on an independent right-of-way. Multi-use paths include bicycle paths, rail-trails, or other facilities built for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Multi-use paths from the Boone pedestrian plan, Walk Boone 2011, were incorporated into the CTP Boone. Additionally, the following multi-use path project was identified to serve the needs of Watauga County.

Middle Fork Greenway

The envisioned Middle Fork Greenway would run between Boone and Blowing Rock, a distance of about 6.5 miles. The greenway would connect the existing Boone Greenway with Shoppes on the Parkway at the intersection of US 221 and US 321 in Blowing Rock. The Middle Fork River is part of the headwaters of the New River and as such is important to watershed, trout streams, and wetlands found in the vicinity. Watauga County Pathways is a non-profit organization working towards the preservation and eventual construction of this corridor.

PEDESTRIAN

Boone has an existing pedestrian plan entitled “Walk Boone 2011” that was utilized in the development of the pedestrian element of the CTP. The Walk Boone 2011 plan was cooperatively developed by Boone and NCDOT’s Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation. The Town of Beech Mountain Streetscape Plan was developed in 2010. The information from these pedestrian plans was incorporated into the CTP. Additionally, pedestrian improvements are recommended in the following locations.

New Facilities:

1. US 321 from US 221 to Goforth Road (SR 1536)
2. Chestnut Drive from US 321 BUS (Main Street) to Morris Street
3. Chestnut Street from Wallingford Road to US 321 BUS (Main Street)
4. Morris Street from Chestnut Drive to Morris Street
5. Ransom Street from Sunset Drive to US 321
6. Wallingford Road from Laurel Lane to Globe Road (SR 1537)
7. US 321-421 from NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) to Boone municipal limits
8. NC 105 BYP (SR 1107) from NC 105 to US 321-421
9. Poplar Grove Road (SR 1102) from NC 105 to Water Street

Improvement to Existing Facilities:

1. US 221 from US 321 BUS to Chetola Lake Drive

New Off Road Facilities:

1. From Clark Street at Old Stable Lane to US 221 at Cone Road (SR 1571) opposite the Bass Lake parking lot.

Blake Brown recommended including improvements to the intersection of College and King Streets in Boone in the CTP

Consolidated Dispatch

Vince Gable, Watauga County Commissioner, presented information on the consolidated dispatch system. Major points included:

- Issue was first discussed in the 1980s
- July 1, 2012 – Watauga County’s new consolidated dispatch system became effective
- New County Department, run by Jeff Virginia
- Recent emergencies have illustrated value of consolidated dispatch
- Next Steps
 - meet with Town of Boone Officials rest
 - Add stations

- Make facility improvements

ADJOURN

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

MAYOR _____ **ATTEST** _____
J.B. Lawrence **Sharon Greene**