



High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

Municipalities and Counties of
Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey

*“Serving North Carolina’s High Country with Continuing, Cooperative, and
Comprehensive Transportation Planning”*



Woodie Young, RTAC Chair

David Graham, Transportation Planner

Brantley Price, RTCC Chair

RURAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE (RTCC)

Agenda **February 15, 2023** **10:00 AM**

Action Items

1. Approval of November 16, 2022 Minutes (RTCC Chair)
2. Resolution of Support for US 421 Interstate Designation in Wilkes County (LeeAnn Nixon, Wilkes EDC)
3. Resolutions of Support for NCDOT Feasibility Study Grant Applications (David Graham)

Informational Items

4. Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) Presentation (ITRE Representative)
5. Draft 2024-2033 STIP Project Development Update (David Graham)
6. Public Transit Update (Local Transit Agency Representatives)
7. Division Engineers’ Report (NCDOT Division 11 and Division 13 Representatives)
8. Transportation Planning Division Report (NCDOT Transportation Planning Representative)

Other Items

9. Committee Member Comments/Other Business (RTCC Chair)
10. Public Comment (RTCC Chair)
11. Adjournment (RTCC Chair)

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the RTCC is May 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM.

This information is available in Spanish or any other language upon request. Please contact High Country RPO Transportation Planner at (828) 265-5434 ext. 135 or at 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 for accommodations for this request.

Esta información está disponible en español o en cualquier otro idioma bajo petición. Por favor, póngase en contacto con High Country RPO Transportación Planner al (828) 265-5434 ext. 135 o en 468 New Market Blvd. Boone, NC 28607 de alojamiento para esta solicitud.

**High Country RPO
Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC)
November 16, 2022
Minutes**

The Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee held their quarterly meeting, November 16, 2022, at 10am in the High Country Council of Governments Board Room. The following members were present:

Allen Cook- Mitchell County	Charles Hardin- Blowing Rock Chamber
Todd Moody- Town of Boone	Matthew Levi- Ashe County
Ken Noland- Town of Wilkesboro	Christy Wood- Yancey Chamber
Craig Hughes- AppalCART	Kate Gavenus- Beech Mountain Chamber
Brantley Price- Town of West Jefferson	Holly Minton- Town of North Wilkesboro
Darlene Butler- Town of Spruce Pine	Terry Smith- Town of Crossnore
Stephen Sparks- NCDOT Division 13	Phillip Barrier- Avery County
Sean Sizemore- NCDOT Division 11	Neal Winebarger- ASU
Kevin Rothrock- Town of Blowing Rock	Phil Trew- HCCOG
Randy Steskal- NCDOT Regional Engineer	Rick Owen- Town of Banner Elk

Guests present: Pam Cook-NCDOT TPD, Heather Fulghum-NCDOT ROW Unit, Dean Ledbetter-PE, NCDOT Division 11 & 12, Leigh Lane-E.L. Robinson Engineering.

The following staff members were present from High Country Council of Governments: David Graham-Transportation Planner, Julie Wiggins-Executive Director, and Victoria Oxentine-Communications Manager.

Call to Order

Chairman Brantley Price called the meeting to order.

Approval of August 17, 2022 Minutes

Brantley Price asked for motion for approval of the August 17, 2022 minutes. Motion was made by Phillip Barrier and seconded by Matthew Levi. Motion carried and minutes approved.

NCDOT Right-of-Way Unit Presentation

Heather Fulghum, NCDOT ROW Unit Manager presented a slideshow overviewing the state's Right-of-Way process. Ms. Fulghum discussed her unit's responsibilities to property owners, timeline, rights of property owners, and revised communications efforts that have been implemented.

NCDOT Project Prioritization Presentation

Dean Ledbetter, PE, NCDOT Division 11 & 12 Corridor Development Engineer presented a slideshow overviewing the complex process of Prioritization. Mr. Ledbetter discussed key components, the steps

and timelines of Prioritization. He also noted that Prioritization 7.0 scores are projected to come out in 2024 and projects have a timeline of 7-12 years.

Draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Update

David Graham noted that the STIP was reprogrammed in August 2022 with the latest revenue projections. Mr. Graham announced that Project Swaps deadline is March 17, 2023 and the deadline to request a Swap is December 1, 2022. Mr. Graham noted that the STIP is projected to be presented to RPO boards in May 2023. Mr. Graham also discussed current project highlights and updates.

Public Transit Updates

Craig Hughes discussed the AppalCART EV bus that was recently unveiled and the pros and cons of the EV bus.

Division Engineers' Report

Sean Sizemore gave updates for Division 11 and Stephen Sparks gave updates for Division 13.

Transportation Planning Division Update

Pam Cook attended to bid her farewell as she has taken a new position within the NCDOT. As noted in August, James Upchurch will be the interim HCPRO TBD Coordinator until the position is filled. Mrs. Cook discussed highlights of the NCDOT TPD Newsletter.

Committee Member Comments/Other Business

David Graham discussed RTAC membership terms that will be up in December 2022. Mr. Graham also noted that there could be a potential presentation/resolution in February regarding Interstate Designation in Wilkes County. Mr. Graham announced a Carbon Reduction Program with applications for funding. Mr. Graham presented Pam Cook with an Award of Appreciation for her 10 years of service to the High Country RPO.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

Brantley Price adjourned the meeting with there being no other business.

Brantley Price, Chair

David Graham, Secretary



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MEMORANDUM

To: RTCC & RTAC

From: David Graham, Transportation Planner

Re: Wilkes County US 421 Future Interstate Designation

Date: February 1, 2023

In August 2022 Wilkes County and the Town of Wilkesboro passed resolutions of support to designate a portion of US 421 as a future interstate (see attached map) and have requested that the High Country RPO to pass a similar resolution of support.

The resolutions of support passed by Wilkes County and the Town of Wilkesboro state in part:

“Designating this segment of U.S. Highway 421 as a Future Interstate is a clarification and logical extension of the congressionally-adopted 2021 legislation that designated a segment of U.S. Highway 421 as a Future Interstate in the Piedmont Triad/Carolina Core counties of Guilford, Randolph, Chatham, Lee, and Harnett”.





“U.S. Highway 421 is the “spine” of the Piedmont Triad/Carolina Core, a 17-county region with a population of more than 2.4 million people”.

“The region’s growth continues, adding thousands of vehicles to the current infrastructure”.

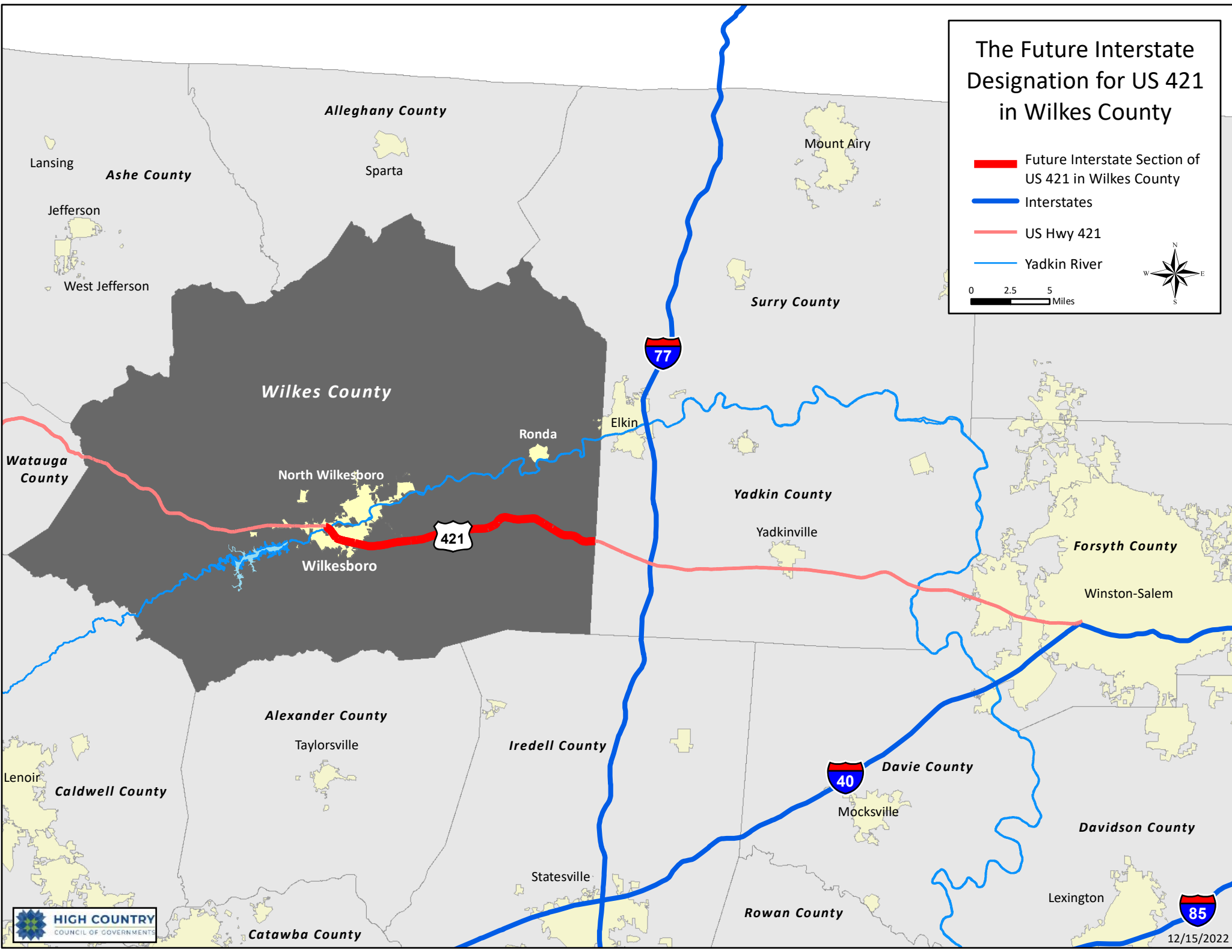

“The upgrade to Interstate status for U.S. Highway 421 in these three counties would increase safety, mobility, and economic development”.

Representatives from Wilkes County Economic Development Corporation and NC Carolina Core will be providing a brief presentation as part of the High Country RPO resolution of support request on February 15, 2023.

The Future Interstate Designation for US 421 in Wilkes County

-  Future Interstate Section of US 421 in Wilkes County
-  Interstates
-  US Hwy 421
-  Yadkin River

0 2.5 5 Miles





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RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE FUTURE INTERSTATE DESIGNATION FOR US 421 IN WILKES COUNTY

Whereas, the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) is the duly recognized Transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, US 421 is a freeway in Wilkes, Yadkin, and Forsyth counties and connects Interstate 40 and Interstate 77 and these two major Interstates are critical to the region, state, and nation’s economic and transportation well being; and

Whereas, Wilkes County and the Town of Wilkesboro have passed resolutions of support for the future Interstate designation of US 421 in Wilkes County from the Yadkin County line to the end of the current US 421 freeway at the Yadkin River for the purposes of improving movement of freight traffic, better travel time reliability, increased safety, mobility, and economic development; and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation supports Wilkes County and Town of Wilkesboro efforts in pursuing the future Interstate designation of US 421 through North Carolina’s congressional delegation.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports Wilkes County and the Town of Wilkesboro in pursuing a future Interstate designation for US 421 in Wilkes County.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

Date



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MEMORANDUM

To: RTCC & RTAC

From: David Graham, Transportation Planner

Re: NCDOT IMD Feasibility Study Grant Program Resolutions of Support

Date: February 1, 2023

In July 2022, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) was allocated \$2 million in one-time funding from the North Carolina General Assembly to establish a Paved Trails Feasibility Study Program. The Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) was also awarded \$500,000 in State Planning and Research (SP&R) funds to support sidewalk and shared-use path feasibility studies. The purpose of the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Studies Grant Program is to improve the pipeline of bicycle and pedestrian projects accessing state and federal funding, resulting in successful implementation of projects led by communities prioritizing multimodal infrastructure.

The purpose of this type of study is to evaluate the technical feasibility of a project from a design, permitting, and constructability perspective.

North Carolina municipalities, counties, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit advocacy groups, Friends-of-the-Trail groups, rural and metropolitan planning organizations, and Land Conservancies are eligible to apply for the IMD Feasibility Study Program.

High Country RPO staff informed local governments of the Feasibility Study Program on November 21, 2022. As a result, the following have applied for the Feasibility Study Program:

- Town of Boone
- Blue Ridge Conservancy
- Town of Burnsville
- Mitchell County EDC
- Town of North Wilkesboro
- Town of West Jefferson
- Town of Wilkesboro

A required component of the Feasibility Study Program application is a resolution of support from the RPO. Therefore, resolutions of support for the applicants noted above are included in the meeting materials. Approval of the resolutions of support may be acted upon with one vote if the RTCC and RTAC desire to do so.



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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE TOWN OF
BOONE**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Town of Boone is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Town of Boone in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

Date



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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE BLUE RIDGE
CONSERVANCY**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Blue Ridge Conservancy with support from Ashe County is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Blue Ridge Conservancy in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

Date



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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE TOWN OF
BURNSVILLE**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Town of Burnsville is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Town of Burnsville in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

Date



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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE MITCHELL
COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Mitchell County Economic Development Commission with support from Mitchell County and the Town of Spruce Pine is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Mitchell County Economic Development Commission in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE TOWN OF
NORTH WILKESBORO**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Town of North Wilkesboro is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Town of North Wilkesboro in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE TOWN OF
WEST JEFFERSON**

Whereas, the is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Town of West Jefferson is to applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Town of West Jefferson in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

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**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION FOR NCDOT
FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT FUNDS BY THE TOWN OF
WILKESBORO**

Whereas, the Transportation Advisory Committee is the duly recognized transportation decision making body for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO); and

Whereas, the North Carolina Department of Transportation – Integrated Mobility Division has funding available for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grants; and

Whereas, the Town of Wilkesboro is applying for Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds; and

Whereas, the High Country RPO recognizes the benefits of bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities, including economic development, safety, health benefits, less vehicle congestion, and less pollution; and

Whereas, feasibility studies for bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities are vital to understanding the unique challenges, opportunities, alternatives, and cost of projects.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the High Country RPO supports the Town of Wilkesboro in applying for the Integrated Mobility Division Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant funds.

Adopted February 15, 2023

Woodie Young, Chair, RTAC

Date

David Graham, Secretary, RTAC

Date

FEBRUARY 2023 PROJECT UPDATE

(DRAFT 2024-2033 STIP)

HIGHWAY PROJECTS

US 221 (R-2915): US 421 to US 221 Business/NC 88 – Ashe County

Description: *US 221, US 421 in Watauga County to US 221 Business/ NC 88 in Jefferson. Widen to four lanes divided.*

Section A: Complete
Section B: Complete
Section C: Complete
Section D: Complete
Section E: Under Construction

NC 88, NC 88 to NC 194 (R-5832) – Ashe County

Description: *Upgrade roadway.*

Right-of-Way 2023
Construction 2025

American Emergency Vehicles Lane, Northwest Drive (HA-0006): NC 88 to Benfield Drive and American Emergency Vehicles Lane from Northwest Drive to American Emergency Vehicles Facility – Ashe County

Description: *Widen roadway and install signal at NC 88 and Northwest Drive.*

Right-of-way 2023
Construction: 2024

NC 194/US 19E Intersection (R-5911) – Avery County

Description: *Construct right turn lane from US 19E northbound to NC 194 eastbound.*

Right-of-Way 2022
Construction 2023

NC 105 (R-2566B): NC 105, Clarks Creek Road to NC 105 Bypass (Boone) – Watauga County

Description: *NC 105, Old Shulls Mill (SR 1568) to SR NC 105 Bypass (SR1107) in Boone. Widen to multi-lanes (includes R-2566BA - Bridge over Watauga River at Broadstone Road and R-2566BB – Realignment with Old Shulls Mill Road).*

Section B:	Right-of-Way	2022
	Construction	2025
Section BA:	Construction	In progress
Section BB	Construction	2023

US 421 (Daniel Boone Parkway) (R-5915B): NC 105 to US 221/321 South of Boone – Watauga County

Description: Construct freeway on new location south of Boone.

Right-of-way	2028
Construction:	2031

US 421/US 321 (R-2615): US 321/US421 Junction Near Vilas to 105 Bypass – Watauga County

Description: *Widen to Multi-Lanes*

Right-of-Way	2027
Construction	2030

SR 1522 (Deerfield Road), State Farm Road to SR 1523 (Wilson Ridge Road) (R-5830) – Watauga County

Description: *Upgrade Roadway.*

Right-of-Way	2024
Construction	2025

Bamboo Road (SR 1514); Wilson Ridge Road (SR 1523), US 421/US221 to Deerfield Road (SR 1522) (U-5810) – Watauga County

Description: *Widen Roadway to 12 foot lanes with 4 foot paved shoulders.*

Right-of-Way 2022
Construction 2024

NC 115, From US 421 to 2nd Street (R-5759) – Wilkes County

Description: *Widen Existing Roadway.*

Right-of-Way 2022
Construction 2024

NC 268 (R-2603): NC 18 to Airport Road – Wilkes County

Description: *NC 268, Multi-lanes east of NC 18 to SR 1966. Widen to multi-lanes.*

Under Construction

SR 1001 (Oakwoods Road), From US 421 to NC268 (East Main St.) (R-5772) – Wilkes County

Description: *Upgrade Existing Roadway.*

Right-of-Way 2026
Construction 2028

US 421 (U-5312): Yadkin River Bridge to Westgate Drive – Wilkes County

Description: *US 421, NC 16 to US 421 Business. Convert existing roadway to superstreet and add service roads.*

Construction 2023

NC 268 (R-5906), From SR 1966 (Airport Road) to Four Lanes West of SR 2026 Austin Traphill Road – Wilkes County

Description: *Modernize Roadway*

Right-of-Way 2026
Construction 2029

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

Yancey County Transit Facility (TA-6723)

***Description:** Construct office, training, maintenance facility.*

Construction 2023

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PROJECTS

Middle Fork Greenway Section I From Blowing Rock along US 321 to the Blue Ridge Parkway (EB-5924)

***Description:** Construct Greenway along US 321*

Right-of-Way 2022

Construction 2023

US 421 Multi-Use Path from Grove Street to Brookshire Road (EB-5983)

***Description:** Construct multi-use path.*

Right-of-Way 2024

Construction 2025

AVIATION PROJECTS

Ashe County Airport (AV-5848)

***Description:** Construct apron expansions*

Under Construction

Wilkes County Airport (AV-5894)

***Description:** Extend runway to 7,000 feet*

Right-of-Way 2023

Construction 2024