

Mayors, Governor Unite to Improve Transportation

With the support of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, the North Carolina League of Municipalities and municipalities across the state, Gov. Bev Perdue was successful during the short session in creating the N.C. Mobility Fund, a new pool to fund critical transportation projects across the state. Perdue included the fund in her proposed budget, and the final version signed into law included \$58 million in recurring funds by 2014 to seed the innovative strategy.

In today's global economy, quality infrastructure is critical to attracting and retaining good jobs; the Mobility Fund will provide an innovative way to keep North Carolina's transportation infrastructure up to date. Across all transportation modes – including highway and bridge, aviation, transit, rail and port projects – there are needs of statewide and regional significance that enhance the movement of people and freight, but currently place an unrealistic funding burden on current transportation funding formulas. The fund seeks to address these needs and the Equity Formula's shortcomings.

In May, Gov. Perdue held a press conference to advocate for the fund's creation and to explain its importance. "North Carolina's economy is stuck in neutral when traffic gets bottled up on our highways or when businesses don't have access to railroads, airports and seaports," she said. "In these tough budget times when we are stretching every single penny, we must find creative ways to fund N.C.'s critical

transportation needs that can make the difference in our economic recovery."

Members of the Coalition attended the press conference to demonstrate their support for the proposal, kicking off a sustained drive by mayors in support of the fund. Concord Mayor Scott Padgett spoke at the press conference and highlighted the importance of additional transportation funds targeted to real needs in North Carolina.

Mayor Bill Bell, Coalition Chair, explained the group's support: "As our state's population growth continues to skyrocket and our revenue sources decline, initiatives such as the Governor's N.C. Mobility Fund are critical to continuing to attract jobs to our state. We believe infrastructure spending such as this will both create jobs and address the urgent congestion needs in our state."

The mayors' efforts helped launch activities across the state in support of the fund. Sixteen groups and municipalities passed resolutions in support of the Mobility Fund. Major newspapers,

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Concord Mayor Scott Padgett speaks at Gov. Perdue's press conference in support of the Mobility Fund.

Local governments are key to NCDOT success

By Gene Conti, N.C. Secretary of Transportation

Recently, NCDOT and the Metro Mayors Coalition jointly conducted a survey of local transportation planners in which we asked: "What does NCDOT not understand about your agency that you wish they did?"

Among the answers was this: "That we want to be more of a partner with NCDOT than a customer... A partnership would place us at the table together, sharing information, finding answers and solutions collaboratively."

Surprise! You mean we're not already partners? Well, yes, unfortunately too often in the past it's been a matter of DOT talking and local government listening, and we know that one-way communication is not an effective way of doing good policy-making.

One of my top goals as Transportation Secretary is to bridge that communications gap, and I think we've made good strides toward that goal. The first thing

we did when we launched our Transportation Reform effort -- to remove the politics from project selection -- was to send out a survey to 1,500 MPOs, RPOs and local governments asking how we should change the process. The Work Program that we submitted to the Board of Transportation in August was in large measure a product of that crucial input.

Shortly after we took office, Chief Operating Officer Jim Trogdon and I determined that a priority should be improving communications between the state and the local levels. The result of that was creation in June 2009 of the Transportation Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Group to -- as we said at the time -- "reshape the



**Guest Column
by Secretary
Gene Conti**

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Chairman Column

Fresh off the General Assembly's short session, I thought it was appropriate that we reflect on the gains that we have made as a coalition, our successes and our plans for the future.

As mayors of the state's largest cities, we have always represented a very important constituency. After all, more than a quarter of the state's citizens live in our neighborhoods and communities. We hear their concerns firsthand; we live with the realities of the policies enacted in Raleigh; and we know what our communities need to thrive.

Today, our voices are being heard louder and clearer. We are better organized. We are working together to address complex policy issues. We are at the table when policies are being enacted, and we are working proactively to move our agenda forward.

Working with the N.C. Department of Transportation, we have helped change the way that transportation policy is created. We have opened and strengthened the lines of communication between the department and our cities. Our director, Julie White, serves on the NCDOT Intergovernmental Advisory Committee and co-chairs the communications work group with NCDOT Deputy Secretary Ted Vaden.

As an organization, we are visible in Raleigh, around the state and in the media. In my role as chairman, I am regularly sought out by the state's media for comments on local government issues.

And this session's successes are evidence that our commitment and our strategies are paying off. Working in partnership with the North Carolina League of Municipalities, we ensured that no local revenues were taken to balance the state budget, and together we fended off both broadband attacks and anti-annexation efforts. I led off as the first speaker at the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee on the Equity Formula,



Message from
the Chairman

Mayor
Bill Bell

demonstrating the importance of providing adequate transportation funds to our cities.

Along with the League, we helped spur the creation of the Sustainable Communities Task Force with a seat designated for a city representative. And, our support helped pass into law the Sustainable Communities Grant Fund, which has \$250,000 in non-recurring money to improve regional planning and as local matching funds for recipients of Federal Sustainable Communities Planning Grants and other federal grants related to sustainable development.

Our greatest success this session was our work to secure passage of Governor Perdue's Mobility Fund. We assisted in planning the Governor's press event on the fund, and it showcased one of our members, Concord Mayor Scott Padgett. Our efforts were critical in raising the profile of this legislation, and our lobbying work educated legislators and resulted in positive articles and op/eds. In fact, Gov. Perdue wrote me to personally thank the Coalition and our director, for all our work on the Mobility Fund.

These legislative accomplishments are evidence of the strength that we have as a coalition when we speak in a united voice for the issues that will really make a difference in our communities and for our citizens. But we all know that our work is not done. The Coalition's leadership elected will continue to work to move this organization, our cities and our state forward. The 2011 long session advocacy agenda - which we will adopt later this year - will serve as our road map for future action and success.

We are already pulling together representatives of the various state agencies, local governments and other organizations and associations this fall to build strong lobbying coalitions around resources for our overburdened court system and to address gang violence.

Finally, as a coalition, our strength is in our togetherness and we must continue to work together and to focus on the issues that matter to our citizens. Together, we will see even greater success, and we will all be better for it.

Metro Mayors Prepare for the Future at Winter Meeting

The North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors coalition held its winter meeting in Wilmington February 24th and 25th. Host Mayor Bill Saffo and his staff provided warm hospitality and showcased their city with a great dinner at the City Club and a memorable trip down the Cape Fear River on the riverboat cruise. Attendees set their sights on the future, as they tackled the policy issues facing North Carolina's citizens and established the foundation for the Coalition's continued leadership.

A press event announcing Wilmington's creation of the nation's first smart city network kicked off the meeting - a nod to the innovation taking place in North Carolina's cities. The City of Wilmington and New Hanover County have launched a white-space network, which utilizes unused pieces of TV spectrum, to strengthen city services and reduce costs. The city is deploying applications to monitor traffic, community parks and wetlands in real time, amounting to savings of more than \$100,000.

"White spaces technology can open the door to future Smart Network applications by providing government more real time information at a lower cost to our citizens and environment," said Mayor Saffo. "This is an example of technology offering us the tools to operate the City more efficiently and effectively."

In preparation for the General Assembly's short session, attendees discussed the policy issues and legislation impacting the state's metropolitan areas. Gov. Perdue was on hand to discuss policy at a special luncheon. Members of the governor's staff, Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs Marion Sullivan and Director of Government Affairs Andy Willis, also joined the mayors during the meeting, as did Jim Trogon, chief operating officer at the N.C. Department of Transportation.

The attendees had a lively discussion on a topic critical to protecting the next generation and preparing them for the future - youth, gangs and afterschool programs. Jamie Knowles with the N.C. Center for Afterschool Programs discussed the Center's work, and Mayor Kluttz shared her experience at one of their recent programs. Teresa Price with the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention discussed the Youth Promise Act, which would focus nationwide efforts on youth violence prevention and intervention strategies.

The most significant accomplishment of the meeting was the establishment of a new advocacy agenda for the Coalition. The agenda provides a framework for the Coalition's efforts in the General Assembly and across the state to build a strong future. The new agenda is to:

- Defend against attempts to shift state responsibilities to local governments and protect local revenues
- Continue to improve the relationship between N.C. Department of Transportation and local government;
- Explore ways to partner with the State to build and maintain a robust transportation system
- Reduce gang violence;
- Strengthen the state's judicial system;
- Support efforts to advance North Carolina's biotech industry and grow related jobs;
- Preserve local government ability to engage and lead in communication public enterprises;
- Maintain a cost-effective way to manage growth, provide services and ensure all who benefit from the heart of their community also share in the cost and
- Preserve local authority and decision making related to support public sector employees and oppose state and federal efforts to allow public sector collective bargaining.

At the winter meeting, a new slate of officers was also selected to lead the Coalition. Mayor Bill Bell of Durham was elected chair, and he was joined by Vice Chair Susan Kluttz, mayor of the City of Salisbury; Treasurer Terry Bellamy, mayor of the City of Asheville; and Past Chair Allen Joines, mayor of the City of Winston-Salem. At-Large elected officials include Mayor Bill Knight with the City of Greensboro; Mayor Scott Padgett with the City of Concord; Mayor Bill Saffo with the City of Wilmington; and Mayor Becky Smothers with the City of High Point.

Metro Mayors In Action



Durham Mayor Bill Bell, chairman of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, speaks at the 78th Annual Conference of Mayors meeting in Oklahoma City in June.



In recognition of his leadership on green jobs training, Durham Mayor Bill Bell (left) receives a \$400,000 grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation for the Builders of Hope's Green Work Mentor Youth Program.



Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz (left), Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines (center), and Asheville Mayor Terry Bellamy discuss efforts to grow the biotechnology industry in North Carolina at a meeting with NCBIO, PhRMA and former Congressman Dick Gephardt.



Gov. Perdue, mayors and state officials speak at a press conference in support of the Mobility Fund in May.



Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz speaks to members of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition at their 2010 Winter Meeting in Wilmington.



Gastonia Mayor Jennie Stultz (sixth from left) receives first place honors in the 2010 City Livability Awards Program, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Waste Management, Inc., at the U.S. Conference of Mayors annual meeting.

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including the News & Observer, the Winston-Salem Journal and the Salisbury Post, editorialized in support of the idea.

The final version of the state budget created a Mobility Fund with recurring funding of \$58 million by 2014. The first project to be targeted is Phase II of the Yadkin River Bridge. It will be funded this fiscal year by a one-time taking of \$15 million from the Garden Parkway project, any monies leftover that were

intended for the Monroe Connector project this year only and \$31 million of what would have transferred from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund. The \$31 million from the Highway Trust Fund money will continue in 2011, and it will increase to \$45 million in 2012. The next year all transfers from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund will be stopped, and a total of \$58 million will be sent to the Mobility Fund.

The Department of Transportation will choose additional projects using a new prioritization model developed in collaboration with local governments, stakeholders and the public, including the Coalition. A preliminary report on project selection is due to the General Assembly by October 1, 2010, and the final report is to be submitted by December 15, 2010.

Quotables

“Don’t dig our hole any deeper.”

High Point Mayor Becky Smothers, warning members of a legislative panel that taking liquor sales away from local governments could result in budget problems for those already facing economic troubles. (NC Insider 3/25/2010)

Biotechnology has become “a strong part of our economy.”

Mayor Allen Joines of Winston-Salem, co-chairman of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition Biotech Committee, speaking at a meeting with former Majority Leader Dick Gephardt and North Carolina officials to discuss a new policy agenda to further bioscience innovation as a driver for the state’s economy. (Winston-Salem Journal 7/1/2010)

“We’re trying very hard by providing broadband to bring new local businesses to our community, to bring jobs.”

Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz, whose city has borrowed to build a \$30 million fiber-optic network it will begin testing in a few months, on the importance of cities’ maintaining authority to offer broadband to its citizens. (Associated Press 5/10/2010)

“Leaving this solely to the telecoms and the cable companies has not gotten us the best result we could get, and we should promote other models, including the municipal model.”

Rep. Bill Faison, D-Orange, who is leading a House committee examining municipal broadband authority. (Associated Press 5/10/2010)

“The 2008 election also showed the growing muscle of the state’s urban counties, which will likely be the key focus in the 2010 U.S. Senate race. The seven most populous counties in the state now have 37 percent of all the registered voters.”

Bob Hall of Democracy North Carolina. (The Pilot 4/18/2010)

Mobility Fund Makes News

“There’s something North Carolinians across party lines and in every part of the state agree on: they all think they’re getting the short end of the stick on money for roads. We [Public Policy Polling] find that 55% of voters think their area does not get its fair share of road money to only 23% who think their section does. 58% of Democrats and 55% of Republicans think their area deserves more money, speaking to the fact that this is something voters agree on across party lines.”

(Public Policy Polling 3/22/2010)

“North Carolina’s longstanding formula for spreading highway funds around the state, balancing east and west, rural and urban, etc., simply doesn’t allow for a painful but necessary concentration on megaprojects such as the Yadkin bridge – even though it’s key to the statewide road system and even to north-south travel from Virginia to Atlanta. When it comes to really big projects, there simply has to be a way to get ‘er done.”

(News & Observer editorial 5/30/2010)

“Don’t dig our hole any deeper.”
High Point Mayor Becky Smothers

“Some taxpayers would prefer to deny the need for extra money. They are, in effect, voting for congestion and bumpy roads. The bottom line, however, is that we’ll get what we pay for, and right now we’re falling way behind on our transportation infrastructure.”
(Winston-Salem Journal editorial 6/1/2010)

“The other weakness in North Carolina transportation funding is the equity formula used to divvy up highway money. Yes, that process needs to change, but projects like the Yadkin River Bridge go beyond the regional scope of the equity formula. The bridge is not a local project; it affects a major East Coast traffic corridor — much as Interstate 95 does... The mayors and the people they represent are behind your (Governor Perdue’s) Mobility Fund.”
(Salisbury Post editorial 5/30/2010)

“Governor Perdue’s proposal is a partial solution to a complaint metropolitan mayors have had for a long time: They say the formula the state uses to dole out transportation money forces cities with major freeways to spend most of their allotment taking care of those roads, rather than building new ones or dealing with smaller projects.”
(WFAE 5/26/2010)

“I don’t know of any business, both in North Carolina now and outside North Carolina, who will ever walk away from laying down jobs in this state because of what the cost of a DOT fee is or what the cost of a registration fee is. They will walk away if the infrastructure doesn’t meet their needs to do business.”

Gov. Bev Perdue speaking about the Mobility Fund. (Associated Press 5/25/2010)

The Mobility Fund “brings a new source of funding to transportation, especially when we’re talking about congested areas. I know the downside is that it has a motor-vehicle tax to fund it. But the alternative is we’re just going to get further congested in some of our critical areas in this state. The equity formula doesn’t do enough for what we’re doing.”

Durham Mayor Bill Bell, chairman of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition. (Durham Herald-Sun 5/24/2010)

“Road projects need to be built for roads that are used a lot. Building four-lane roads where there are no people doesn’t make sense.”
Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker. (Charlotte Observer 5/28/2010)

City News

Stultz Elected to U.S. Conference of Mayors Board

Gastonia Mayor Jennie Stultz was elected to the Advisory Board of the U.S. Conference of Mayors during its 78th Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City. The Advisory Board consists of mayors who have been active in the organization and in advocating policy on Capitol Hill and to the Administration. The Advisory Board also represents the nation in diversity.

Durham Honored for Leadership in Green Jobs Training

Mayor William V. "Bill" Bell was among three mayors from throughout the nation honored at the 78th Annual Conference of Mayors meeting for their leadership in Green Jobs training. The U.S. Conference of Mayors selected non-profit organizations in their respective cities to receive grants from the Wal-Mart Foundation to support and expand training programs for green jobs.

Durham's Builders of Hope's Green Work Mentor Youth program received \$400,000 to train up to 60 young parents aged 16-21 in a comprehensive and "family supportive" residential green construction and substantial rehabilitation training program.

Huntersville Builds Reputation as Sports Capital

The town of Huntersville continues to bolster its reputation as an amateur sports capital. In April, future Olympians traveled to the town to compete in the United States National Synchronized Swimming Championships at Huntersville Family Fitness & Aquatics, and the town served as a host site for baseball and soccer events for the 2010 Powerade States Games of North Carolina in June. Bradford Park, which hosted the baseball portion of the State Games in Huntersville, was recognized by the National Softball Association with a National Park Award for their outstanding support of the NSA program.

Durham, Concord Named Among "100 Best Fleets" in North America

Durham and Concord have been honored for being among the "100 Best Fleets" by *Government Fleet Magazine*. The "100 Best Fleets" program recognizes and rewards top-performing fleet operations in the U.S. and Canada.

Gastonia Named 'Most Livable' City

Gastonia Mayor Jennie Stultz was awarded first place honors in the 2010 *City Livability Awards Program*, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Waste Management, Inc. The award recognizes mayoral leadership in developing and implementing programs that improve the quality of life in America's cities, focusing on the leadership, creativity, and innovation demonstrated by the mayors. Gastonia was selected from a pool of more than 200 applicants for "Hope for Gaston," a faith-based outreach ministry serving the greater Gaston area.

Boone Designated a Preserve America Community

First Lady Michelle Obama recently named Boone as one of the nation's newest Preserve America Communities. Communities designated through the program receive national recognition for their accomplishments in preserving a number of buildings and facilities that have historic importance. The Preserve America program is a federal effort that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy America's priceless cultural and natural heritage.

Winston-Salem Named "Citizen-Engaged Community"

Winston-Salem was one of nine local governments across the country designated as "Citizen-Engaged Communities" by Public Technology Institute (PTI) for its efforts to provide the public with multi-channel access to government services and information, meeting the challenge of high standards in citizen participation, seamless service delivery and democratic accountability.

Accolades

- The town of Cary was named one of the "Best Places to Live" by Money Magazine and the safest place to live, work and raise a family in the southeast by *CQ Press*, publisher of the annual "City Crime Rankings 2009-2010."

- Winston-Salem was identified as one of the most affordable places to live in the world in a new study by global human resources firm Mercer. The city ranks 17th in lowest cost of living among the 214 locations Mercer surveyed—the least-expensive U.S. city in the survey and the only city in a G8 nation among the top 20.

- The city of Asheville was named one of the Best Places for Business and Careers by *Forbes* magazine. Raleigh, Charlotte, Durham and Greenville also made it on the list.

- In June, Gastonia was named an All-American City for the third time. The 61-year-old awards program recognizes neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, counties and metro regions for outstanding civic accomplishments. Gastonia's presentation included efforts to revitalize Highland, the city's largest African-American community; development of the Run for the Money event, which raises money for nonprofits; and two programs that encourage high school students to stay in school and graduate. Gastonia was also named an All-American City in 1963 and 2000.

- The Eastern District North Carolina's Project Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Task Force, which includes the Fayetteville Police Department, received the Outstanding Overall Partnership/Task Force Award for its fight

against gun and gang violence.

- The city of Durham's employee development initiative, DurhamFirst, and its Culture of Service program has been awarded an Outstanding Achievement in Innovation Award at the Alliance for Innovation's 2010 Transforming Local Government (TLG) conference.

- For the second time, the city of Concord is one of 94 of the nation's more than 2,000 public power utilities to earn Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3®) recognition from the American Public Power Association for providing consumers with the highest degree of reliable and safe electric service.

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2010 Issue Committees

Biotech	Terry Bellamy, Mayor, Asheville, Chair Allen Joines, Mayor, Winston Salem, Chair Pat Dunn, Mayor, Greenville
Public Safety	David Combs, Mayor, Rocky Mount, Chair Susan Kluttz, Mayor, Salisbury, Chair Al King, Mayor, Goldsboro Mark Kleinschmidt, Mayor, Chapel Hill Bob Misenheimer, Mayor, Kannapolis Scott Padgett, Mayor, Concord Jennie Stultz, Mayor, Gastonia
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NCDOT success Continued from Page 1

working relationship between NCDOT and local government partners in the context of a broader NCDOT transformation process.” Members of the group included representatives from the Metro Mayors, League of Municipalities, Association of County Commissioners, MPO and RPO associations, the Councils of Governments, Federal Highway Administration, the private sector and, of course, NCDOT.

The group has been meeting for more than a year and has made solid progress addressing key issues affecting our common transportation interests. Four work groups have been formed around these issues – Land Use, Census Impact on MPOs/RPOs, Communications and Education, and the Mobility Fund and Legislative Initiatives. Many of you or your staff have been recruited to help with these work groups, and we should see recommendations rolling out in the coming months.

The Mobility Fund itself is, I believe, a wonderful example of state DOT and local government working together in common cause – to generate

more resources for money-starved transportation needs. Gov. Bev Perdue proposed creation of that new source of funds in the short session of the legislature, and the partner organizations were quick to join the lobbying effort to make that idea a reality. We literally would not have won enactment of the law without the help of the local government associations in general and the Metro Mayors Coalition in particular – thank you, Julie White!

A key requirement of the legislation was that we develop criteria for selection of Mobility Fund projects in consultation with the Metro Mayors Coalition, League of Municipalities, Association of County Commissioners and other local organizations, and we of course intend to do that. We have created a new strategic prioritization process – similar to the one used for the Work Program – that involves soliciting input from these organizations. We’ll get your ideas up front, develop them into a prioritization formula, then come back to you for reaction and suggestions for change. We’ll crank that back into a final formula, all in time for

submission to the General Assembly, as required by law, by Dec. 15, 2010. This is a tight timeframe that we can meet only with your help.

Remember that NCDOT/Metro Mayors survey I mentioned at the beginning of this column? It was actually three surveys: one of local elected officials, one of local staff, and one of NCDOT staff. We got nearly 800 responses.

Here was one interesting observation: Asked to rank how good the communication is between state and local government, our staff at NCDOT gave themselves a “B” grade – 4.2 on a 5-point scale. But when the local elected officials and staff were asked to grade us, the result was a C (3.1).

So, what’s my goal for improving relations between state and local government on transportation issues? To get that local grade up to a B – or even an A!

Thanks for all your help in our first two years, and I look for an even more productive relationship going forward.