



**Executive Committee**

**February 22, 2023**

**Hybrid Meeting In-Person at Land of Sky Regional Council office and Remotely via Zoom  
11:00 am**

**AGENDA**

**Consent Agenda**

*Consent Agenda items are considered routine and noncontroversial in nature, and are considered and approved by a single motion and vote. If any member of the Executive Committee requests an item be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration and action that item will be placed under the Business, Updates and Discussion section of the agenda.*

A. January 25, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

**3. New Business**

- A. Safe Routes to Schools Resolution
- B. Board of Delegates meeting format

**4. Other Items**

A. Executive Director Report

**6. Adjournment**

**Land of Sky Regional Council  
Executive Committee  
Regular Meeting  
January 25, 2023**

**Minutes**

Land of Sky Regional Council's Executive Committee held a meeting at the Buncombe County Public Safety Training Facility located on the campus of A-B Tech/Woodfin that included access through the Zoom platform on Wednesday, January 25, 2023. Executive Committee members participating in the meeting included Chair Patrick Fitzsimmons, Barbara Volk, Matt Wechtel, Sandra Kilgore, and Bob Tomasulo constituting a quorum.

Land of Sky staff participating in the meeting included Nathan Ramsey, Emily Nicholson, Patricia Rosenberg, Christina Giles (Zoom Host), Vicki Jennings, Erica Anderson, LeeAnne Tucker, Renee Boyette, Terry Albrecht, and Glenda Brown, and Zia Rifkin (Minutes). Land of Sky's Legal Counsel, Susan Russo-Klein was present, too.

**Call to Order** –Chair Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at approximately 11:00 am.

**Approval of Consent Agenda** – The consent agenda composed of items A. November 2022 Executive Committee Minutes; and B. Budget Amendment #4 was presented for approval with no modification requested.

***Barbara Volk moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Sandra Kilgore seconded, and the motion carried unanimously upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

**New Business**

**Audit Presentation FY 21-22**

Nathan Ramsey introduced Finance Director, Patricia Rosenberg for the presentation of the FY 21-22 Audit by Anderson, Smith & Wike, LPC staff.

Anderson, Smith, and Wike staff shared that the FY21-22 LOSRC audit was conducted without issue with LOSRC management. The audit report shows an unmodified opinion, showing that all financials were appropriately presented. The review of the FY 21-22 audit included information that there were no issues with the fund balance, and that the fund balance increased during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. Additionally, it was noted that there are adequate financial controls in place to enable the securing of funds and the proper utilization of same. Land of Sky Regional Council is properly using the federal funds allotted to it and no issues were found. The same was noted for the State funding in the control of LOSRC.

Nathan Ramsey gave a shout-out to the Finance Team for their work managing the funds for LOSRC.

***Barbara Volk moved to approve acceptance of the FY21-22 Land of Sky Regional Council Audit as presented. Bob Tomasulo seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

**NEMT and Mountain Mobility Salary Adjustments**

Vicki Jennings shared that Land of Sky operates both Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) and Mountain Mobility through contracts with Buncombe County. The recent resignation of a NEMT staff member has led to increased workload for the remaining four case workers, and due to the current transition of Medicaid recipients to Managed Care, LOSRC and the County have agreed not to replace staff members at this time. The case load of the exiting staff member will be redistributed among the remaining case workers. Two of the current staff members will also take on more administrative responsibilities.

Mountain Mobility staff salary adjustments are made possible by the earlier restructuring of Vicki Jennings' salary as she transitioned to the role of Director of Strategic Initiatives. All Mountain Mobility staff have taken on additional responsibilities to allow Vicki to oversee other projects.

Vicki Jennings shared that the salary adjustments as proposed, fit within the current contracts with Buncombe County. Nathan noted that the NEMT contract is generating significant indirect for Council and the County has been incredibly supportive of the work done through the NEMT contract by the organization.

Discussion occurred regarding the proposed salary increases and whether those would be supported by lapsed salaries or contract amendments with the County and it was shared that the NEMT increases would be supported through lapsed salary and the Mountain Mobility increases would be supported by the reduction in the level of compensation drawn by Vicki Jennings as she has moved into the role of Director of Strategic Initiatives freeing up Mountain Mobility funding.

***Matt Wechtel moved to approve the salary adjustments for NEMT and Mountain Mobility staff as proposed. The motion received a second, and carried upon a roll call vote, without further discussion.***

#### EQV Strategic Contract

Nathan Ramsey shared that EQV Strategic is a governmental relations firm in Raleigh, NC. The firm represents the NC Association of Regional Councils of Government (NCARCOG). The engagement by Land of Sky Regional Council will help support local projects in the region for the benefit of local governments and economic development. EQV Strategic will provide support for LOSRC's local governments and advocate funding for space at the Asheville Regional Airport to establish a Port of Entry/Foreign Trade Zone. The proposed fee is \$1,500 per month. The term of the contract would be seven months starting February 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. The funding source would be local government dues.

***Barbara Volk moved to approve the governmental relations contract with EQV Strategic as presented for the term February 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, and to authorize staff to enter into the governmental relations contract with EQV Strategic. Bob Tomasulo seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) Fee Schedule

Renee Boyette, FTZ Coordinator shared that Western North Carolina is one of the few areas of the State not covered by a Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ). An FTZ is an important economic development tool as it could support new and existing businesses in our region. This tool would allow local businesses to save money and be placed on a similar level with foreign competitors. The purpose of the Fee Schedule is to generate sufficient revenue so the FTZ can be operated at no cost to taxpayers. LOSRC has funded the effort to establish a FTZ and anticipation is that the total cost could exceed \$100,000 in start-up expenses. LOSRC has used fund balance appropriations to pay for this expense. Currently, the organization is in a financial position where this effort could be subsidized initially but long-term the FTZ must be self-supporting. Renee Boyette noted that final approval of the FTZ is within a few weeks away.

Additionally, the Land of Sky Foreign-Trade Zone would require a Land of Sky official to sign documents, letters, etc. that must be filed with the US FTZ Board. A resolution provides this authority to the Executive Director or his designee, and is submitted with a request for approval.

***Matt Wechtel moved to approve the LOSRC Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) Fee Schedule and Resolution authorizing the Signatory Official, as presented. Sandra Kilgore seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) Position

Terry Albrecht, WRP Director, shared that Waste Reduction Partners is a partnership between the NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) and Land of Sky Regional Council. This program helps businesses, governments, and other organizations statewide reduce energy use and increase efficiency. The program utilizes volunteer engineers, scientists, architects, and business professionals. The Energy Program Manager would supervise these volunteers. This is the only program at LOSRC which serves all 100 counties in NC. The Energy Program Manager would be a part-time position and this position would be funded with grant funding. Terry Albrecht shared that upon approval of this position, it would be posted immediately.

***Sandra Kilgore moved to approve the Waste Reduction Partners part-time Energy Program Manager position as presented at a salary of \$68,875 consistent with the Land of Sky Regional Council Pay and Classification Study at Grade 26. Barbara Volk seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### LOSRC GOPLACES Positions

Nathan Ramsey shared that LOSRC has received an almost \$4 million USDOL grant to serve at-risk youth aged 16-24 in two census tracts in the City of Asheville and additional census tracts in East Tennessee, Knoxville and Cocke County. This grant required a multi-state application that has led to a partnership with East Tennessee Development District. The Project Director and Project Coordinator positions are not currently in the LOSRC Pay and Classification Plan. LOSRC administrative staff are requesting that the Board create two new positions to execute this grant. These positions would report to the LOSRC Strategic

Initiatives Director. The Project Director will be Grade 32 at a salary of \$85,000 and the Project Coordinator will be Grade 26 at a salary of \$55,000.

Vicki Jennings shared that LOSRC is excited to work with its partners at ETDD. LOSRC is the administrative entity for the grant and has responsibility for hiring the project director and coordinator. These positions would be funded entirely by the USDOL grant and would generate indirect.

Discussion occurred regarding the active life of the grant and Nathan Ramsey shared that the grant has a 3.5 year life and these positions are time-limited and would end when the grant ends.

***Sandra Kilgore moved to approve the GOPLACES project director and project coordinator positions consistent with the LOSRC Pay and Classification Schedule as presented. Barbara Volk seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### TransFR VR Contract

Nathan Ramsey shared that A-B Tech, and the NC Community College System has requested support from Mountain Area Workforce Development Board to provide pre-employment training for Pratt & Whitney and other employers in the region. They have requested TransFR virtual reality (VR) training that is web-based as the tool for the pre-employment training. The NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions has approved this procurement as a sole source procurement. The procurement would include 25 headsets at a cost of \$2,000 per headset, the total cost of the one-year license agreement would be \$50,000. Nathan Ramsey noted that this product would also be made available to the local public-school systems and others to increase the awareness and use of this training modality.

Land of Sky Regional Council's Procurement policy requires the governing board's approval of this purchase.

***Sandra Kilgore moved to approve the TransFR VR contract and for the LOSRC signatory to execute the document for the one-year term in the amount of \$50,000. Barbara Volk seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### LOSRC P20 Position

Emily Nicholson, P20 Executive Director, shared that the Land of Sky P20 Council Community Engagement & Data Management Specialist would be a position supporting the Land of Sky P20 Council reporting to the Land of Sky P20 Council Executive Director. The purpose of the position is to assist the Executive Director with the operations of the P20 Council. The Land of Sky P20 Council is funded by grants from the John M Belk Endowment, Duke Energy, USDOL and other sources. This funding has allowed the P20 Council to grow and this position is necessary to assist in the data management requirements of the initiative. This is a time-limited position.

***Barbara Volk moved to approve the Data Management Specialist position for the P20 Council consistent with the LOSRC Pay and Classification Schedule as presented. Bob Tomasulo seconded, and the motion carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.***

#### Other Items

##### Executive Director Report

Nathan Ramsey shared that his current report is included in the agenda packet, and he encouraged Executive Committee members to reach out with any questions or comments regarding the report.

Nathan Ramsey shared that LOSRC has released its Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 2022. A QR Code will be shared to access the report. He gave a shoutout to the staff at LOSRC for all the work undertaken to assist the region.

Nathan Ramsey shared a shoutout to the Finance Team for their efforts to manage the many grants and maintain the LOSRC fund balance. He noted that most of the local dues are currently going to support matches for AAA and ECD grants. Over time, the match requirements have increased but local dues have not.

Nathan Ramsey shared that the organization has realized over \$300 thousand in cost savings due to not filling positions, the IT managed services contract expense reduction, etc. this has provided a lot of flexibility and to increase capacity, a new position has been added to the Finance Team for accounts receivables.

Nathan Ramsey shared that the NADO Legislative Conference is coming up in March and Executive members are encouraged to attend. Please reach out to Nathan for more information.

Adjournment

***Chair Fitzsimmons adjourned the meeting upon unanimous consent, as there was no further business.***

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin

DRAFT



## **BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM**

- Item Number:** 3A – Safe Routes to Schools
- Nature of Item:** Action requested.
- Attachment(s):** Memo and Draft Resolution
- Background:** NCDOT released a Non-Infrastructure Transportation Alternatives Program Call for Proposals in late December, 2022 with applications due February 6, 2023. A resolution of support from the Land of Sky Regional Council is required as part of the application but is allowed to be provided following other materials that were sent in at the deadline.
- Responsible Staff:** Tristan Winker, French Broad River MPO Director and Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Suggested Motion:** Motion to approve the resolution as presented.

To: Executive Committee  
From: Tristan Winker, Director, French Broad River MPO  
Subject: Safe Routes to Schools :

NCDOT released a Non-Infrastructure Transportation Alternatives Program Call for Proposals in late December, 2022 with applications due February 6, 2023. A resolution of support from the Land of Sky Regional Council is required as part of the application but is allowed to be provided following other materials that were sent in at the deadline.

**The purpose of this program:**

- Enable and encourage K-12 children and teens, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
- Make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age
- Facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools

**Ineligible Activities:**

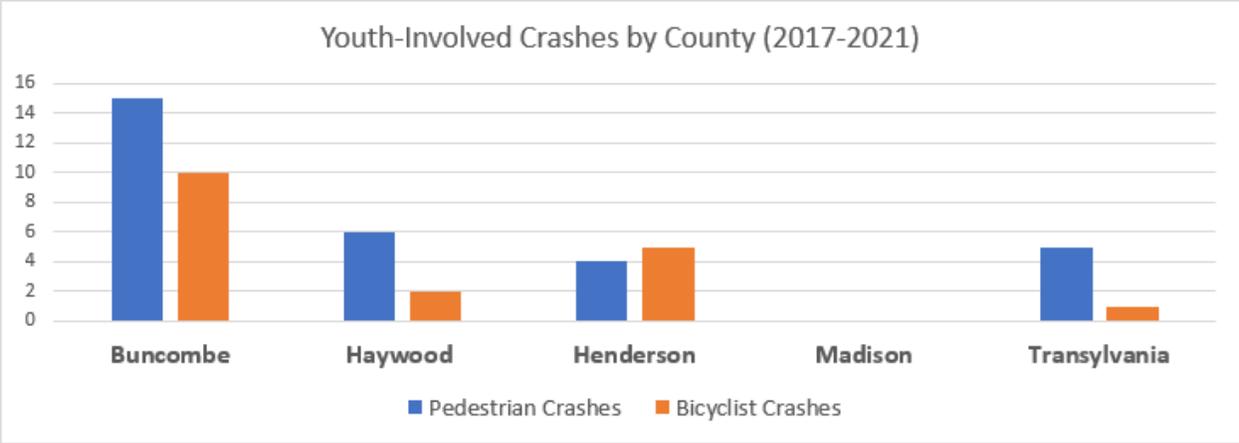
Although funding for SRTS is flexible to allow for creative partnerships and solutions, there are certain activities and projects that are ineligible for funding. Ineligible expenses include:

- Programs and activities that do not specifically serve the stated purposes of the SRTS Program (see Purpose of SRTS).
- Projects that focus on pick-up and drop-off areas or procedures in order to make it more convenient for the drivers rather than to improve child safety and/or walking and bicycling access.
- Education programs that primarily focus on bus safety.
- Purchases of promotional or incentive materials that do not serve a training purpose.
- Purchases of bicycles, bike trailers or other equipment that does not comply with the Buy America Act

**Local Match Requirements:** 0% match is required but may be requested if the amount of funding requested throughout the state exceeds what is available.

**Regional Background:** the region used to have two Safe Routes to School Coordinators- one that covered Buncombe, Henderson, and Madison counties (in addition to others); another that covered Haywood and Transylvania counties (in addition to others.) The position that coordinated activities in Buncombe, Henderson, and Madison has been vacant since 2018. The position that covered Haywood and Transylvania expired in 2022 and was out of the Jackson County Health Department. Both positions helped to coordinate Walk to School activities, Bike Rodeos, and Safety Audits, among other activities.

Crash data suggests that youth-involved pedestrian and bicycle collisions are a notable problem in our region. In the five-county region, 30 youth-involved pedestrian crashes have occurred between 2017-2021 and 18 youth-involved bicycle crashes have occurred over that same time period. A Safe Routes to School Coordinator could help improve traffic safety in and around schools but also provide education to students to help them travel more safely while making other trips around their communities.



**Application Proposal:** the Land of Sky Regional Council sent in an application for a new Safe Routes to School Coordinator position that would provide Education, Encouragement, and Evaluation activities to help improve student biking and walking safety in the French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO Planning Areas. This would include Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. The application includes a request for three years of funding with additional funding to provide for the purchase of materials and attendance at trainings, workshops, and conferences.



**RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL GRANT APPLICATION TO NCDOT FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FUNDING**

**WHEREAS**, THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HAS MADE NON-INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROJECTS UP TO THREE YEARS; AND

**WHEREAS**, COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS ARE ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS FOR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL FUNDING THROUGH THE NON-INFRASTRUCTURE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM; AND

**WHEREAS**, SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAMS HELP TO IMPROVE SAFETY BY PROVIDING EDUCATION, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND DRIVERS; AND

**WHEREAS**, THIRTY PEDESTRIANS AND EIGHTEEN BICYCLISTS UNDER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN WERE INVOLVED IN CRASHES IN BUNCOMBE, HAYWOOD, HENDERSON, MADISON, AND TRANSYLVANIA COUNTIES BETWEEN 2017-2021; AND

**WHEREAS**, NUMEROUS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA HAVE STATED GOALS OF IMPROVING SAFETY FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** THAT THE LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTS THE APPLICATION TO NCDOT TO IMPLEMENT SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN BUNCOMBE, HAYWOOD, HENDERSON, MADISON, AND TRANSYLVANIA COUNTIES.

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Patrick Fitzsimmons

Chair, LOSRC Board of Delegates

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ATTEST: Nathan Ramsey

Executive Director, LOSRC

## 1. Finance

- Accounting staff will attend MIP financial system training in Austin, Texas
- Finance training provided to LOSRC staff
- Work is underway preparing for the FY22-23 budget
- Finance office is undergoing renovations to accommodate an additional finance staff member

## 2. Economic & Community Development & Transportation Planning

### Kudos!

- Congratulations to Rosman and Mars Hill for completing the RC2 (Rural Community Capacity Building) Program through NC Commerce and their recent awards for small planning grants.
- Congratulations to Rosman for an RTFG award for a pedestrian bridge connecting their Town Park to the Elementary School.
- Congratulations to Brevard for receiving a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for engineering and design for Ecusta Trail in Transylvania County.
- Congratulations to Madison County for Building Reuse for Highland Metalworks.
- Congratulations to French Broad Electric Co-Operative for their GREAT grant in Madison County
- Congratulations to Zitel Broadband for their GREAT grant in Transylvania County
- Congratulations to City of Asheville for their \$4.2M Low-No grant to support clean transportation fleet technologies.
- Congratulations to French Broad Electric Co-Operative for their CFAT grant in Madison County
- Congratulations to VW Grant Awardees in the region:
  - Transylvania Economic Alliance
  - Transylvania Habitat for Humanity
  - Town of Waynesville
  - Town of Hayesville
  - Buncombe County Sustainability
  - EGolf Ford of Brevard

### Announcements

- The Racial Disparity Analysis has been updated with current data:  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/34c9390316874caeab288d332dac3b12>
- We are assisting residents sign up for discounted internet service (ACP) in Buncombe County. Please contact [ian@landofsky.org](mailto:ian@landofsky.org) for more information.

### Upcoming Events

- 3/1- Quarterly Managers Meeting @ LOSRC
- 3/1 - Regional Health Forum @ LOSRC
- 3/12-15 NADO & DDAA Washington Policy Conference in Arlington, VA
- 3/20-21 Rural Summit 2023 at the Raleigh Convention Center
- 4/26-28 NCAMPO Conference *Transforming Transportation* in Greenville, NC
- 7/14 Housing Forum

**COGWorks:** Please visit <https://www.landofsky.org/cogworks.html> for more information and registration links. Courses are added as details become available.

April - North Carolina's Transportation Prioritization Process  
May - Housing and Accessory Dwelling Units in North Carolina  
May - Transportation Grants  
June - TIPs and STIPs  
July - Green Growth Toolbox, Wildlife Crossings, and Related Planning Efforts  
August - Ethics Cases of the Year  
October - Rural Road Safety

## **Transportation**

1. MPO & RPO staff continue to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development.
2. Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
3. RPO staff is also serving on the new NCDOT EV/Clean Energy Committee.
4. RPO, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IJA Discretionary Funds.
5. MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.
6. The MPO is providing funding to several special studies in the region getting ready to begin in FY 2024: The Woodfin-Weaverville Trail Connection Study and the Fletcher Cane Creek Greenway Study.
7. Haywood County adopted their Greenway Master Plan at their February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting
8. The MPO is providing funding for on-going studies at the City of Asheville, including the purchase of bicycle and pedestrian counters, the Reed Creek Greenway Extension Study, and the Patton Avenue Corridor Study.
9. MPO & RPO staff are serving on a Locally Administered Projects Program committee with NCDOT to provide policy recommendations to achieve better success rates and more on-time delivery of LAPP projects.
10. MPO & RPO staff continue to update local governments on NCDOT's financial situation and the Draft 2024-2033 STIP. A public survey is planned to be distributed by the MPO in November.
11. The MPO & RPO were awarded a Safe Streets for All Planning Grant from USDOT to cover Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties
12. The City of Hendersonville was awarded a feasibility study grant through the NCDOT Paved Trail Study program for the Above the Mud project.
13. The City of Brevard was awarded a feasibility study grant through NCDOT Paved Trail Study Program for the Old Hendersonville Hwy Shared Use Path.
14. The MPO was awarded a feasibility study grant through the NCDOT Paved Trail Study program for a small section of the Swannanoa Greenway near Meadow Road
15. MPO New Member Orientation is scheduled for Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

## **Broadband**

1. LOS partnered with NC DIT and the Division of Rural Health to distribute hotspots with 12 months service and digital literacy training for telehealth programs in WNC. To date 146 hotspots have been distributed to programs in three counties.
2. LOS is partnering with the Institute of Emerging Issues and Dogwood Health Trust to assist development and implement Digital Inclusion Plans in WNC with COGS across the region.
3. LOS received funding from Buncombe County to provide Wi-Fi in several Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA) residential buildings. Staff received an update from the sub-consultant, Elawuit, that installation is proceeding as scheduled.

## 1. Finance

- Accounting staff will attend MIP financial system training in Austin, Texas
- Finance training provided to LOSRC staff
- Work is underway preparing for the FY22-23 budget
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2. Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
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4. RPO, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IJA Discretionary Funds.
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3. LOS received funding from Buncombe County to provide Wi-Fi in several Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA) residential buildings. Staff received an update from the sub-consultant, Elawuit, that installation is proceeding as scheduled.

4. LOS is working with NEMAC to develop a broadband planning tool. The tool is aimed to consolidate many of the various data sources into a project planning catalyst for future broadband projects in the region.
5. LOS staff worked to set up public WIFI in the Broad River area of Buncombe County. Staff partnered with fire department and Skyrunner to implement this project.
6. LOS staff supported providers in the region with GREAT grant assistance leading to 21 applications across the region. To date award announcements in Madison, Transylvania, Buncombe, and Henderson have been made. We are hopeful to gain additional awards in the coming weeks. If your community wants to start working on CAB, please get in touch with Sara Nichols.

### **Community Development/Water, Sewer, Stormwater Infrastructure**

1. Staff is continuing to support Fletcher, Laurel Park, Montreat, Weaverville and Woodfin with their MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system) permit compliance. Updated stormwater management plans have been completed for Weaverville and Laurel Park in February and submitted to DEQ.
2. Weaverville's 205j-funded stormwater system inventory and green infrastructure planning kicked off in January, and field work is underway.
3. Brevard has requested assistance with a stormwater system inventory as well and work will begin in late Spring.
4. Final design has been completed for a 319-funded bioretention system at TOBM public works.
5. Staff is evaluating and synthesizing water and sewer system needs throughout the region, starting with Transylvania County.

### **Housing**

1. Staff submitted two pre-applications to Dogwood Health Trust for housing programs. One was invited for a full application, and one was deferred to the next round.
2. Staff has begun reaching out to Local Governments and Housing nonprofit providers to gather information and data for the Housing Asset Inventory and determine needs.
3. LOSRC was awarded a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, matched with a grant to Southwestern Commission from the Dogwood Health Trust, to create a WNC Housing Asset Inventory for the western 15 counties. This project will be completed through a multi-COG effort.
4. LOSRC was awarded a grant from Cares at the UNC-CH School of Social Work in partnership with North Carolina Money Follows the Person (MFP), for the initiative titled Building Capacity for Home and Community Based Services through Collective Impact. The project is called Remain at Home - Accessibility Assessment Program, in partnership with the Institute for Preventative Care and Advocacy, Mountain Area Health Education Center, RL Mace Universal Design Institute.
5. Staff set a LOSRC Housing Forum date of July 14, 2023

### **Economic Development/Workforce**

1. Staff submitted the I26 Interchange/Access Road application to EDA to request \$2 million in funding on behalf of NCDOT. Staff assisted NCDOT receive \$2.5 million from ARC's Access Road fund.
2. The Creative Manufacturing Sector Development plan is final! Please contact us for a copy of the plan.
3. The reports for the Regional Economic Collaboration and Analysis led by the Region's Chambers of Commerce and business sector are complete:
  - a. Regional Resiliency and Strategic Plan Alignment Presentation
  - b. Regional Resiliency and Strategic Plan Alignment Report
  - c. Labor Shed and Target Industry Analysis
4. Staff and partners have completed the analysis and final products with Outdoor/Recreation Sector manufacturers to determine opportunities in supply chains, workforce and economic diversity

in cooperation with High Country Council, Southwestern Commission and Riverbird Research.  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/291e98f0291643c49a6462395ec3e6e5>

5. We continue to partner with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
6. The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
7. LOSRC's Waste Reduction Partners program is providing free water-use management assessments for large customers of the City of Asheville's Water Resources Department. These on-site assessments help identify utility costs savings for the City.

### **Resilience/Hazard Mitigation**

1. LOSRC is supporting the development of the Domestic Preparedness Region 9 THIRA/SPR through the COG Disaster Recovery Grant and will start with Buncombe County to develop an information base and process that can be used across the 12 counties in DPR 9 (Regions A & B, as well as Polk County from Region C).
2. The LOS Regional Resilience Assessment Phase IV kicked off in January, also funded in part with through COG DRR, and includes new features and data in AccelAdapt to support resilience planning, and well as training and user group support.

### **Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles**

1. Clean Cities Program is assisting local governments prepare for VW Settlement projects. During the first round of settlement funding released in 2020, the Land of Sky Clean Vehicles Coalition helped the region bring in more than \$4.1 million in grant funding to support purchases of new clean vehicles and EV infrastructure. During the second round of funding, all of the applications that LOS staff assisted with under the Level 2 Public Access Program were funded. Staff also assisted with applications for the DC Fast Chargers and Level 2 Multi-Unit Dwelling programs. Please contact Sara Nichols with questions on how to apply for more than \$68 million in state funding available for clean fleets: [sara@landofsky.org](mailto:sara@landofsky.org)
2. LOS received CMAQ funding to continue support of air quality outreach initiatives in WNC.
3. Staff supported applications for the EPA school bus rebate for Buncombe and Madison County Schools.
4. Cherokee Clean Vehicles participated in the first electric school bus in North Carolina ribbon cutting, including a visit from Governor Cooper and Administrator Reagan. Staff recently helped with a training for school leadership including a school bus drag race.
5. Staff are partnering with the Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club to host an electric vehicle car shows on April 22<sup>nd</sup> in Hendersonville, and April 30<sup>th</sup> in Asheville.
6. Staff are working on developing a EV planning map for the region.
7. Staff are working on their annual clean cities report for the region. This report quantifies the grant funding, public engagement, and greenhouse gas emission reductions in the region for 2022. Please contact Sara Nichols ([sara@landofsky.org](mailto:sara@landofsky.org)) and Ian Baillie ([ian@landofsky.org](mailto:ian@landofsky.org)) if your municipality or organization use an alternative fuel vehicle or equipment, replaced any diesel vehicle or equipment, implemented any idle reduction technology, and/or have a work from home policy.

### **Waste Reduction Partners**

1. WRP engineers helped Buncombe County Schools apply for a \$2.4 million grant through the US Department of Energy Renew Americal School program to upgrade HVAC systems at 4 elementary schools.
2. WRP staff helped Henderson County with the review of a \$4 million grant application to expand both recycling and composting capacity at the county's solid waste transfer station.
3. WRP engineers will be providing an energy assessment to Ridge Haven Camp in Brevard to identify practical energy and utility cost savings.
4. WRP staff assisted Blue Ridge Event Staffing in Asheville with a food waste reduction plan.

5. Staff assisted Reems Creek Nursery in Weaverville with recycling solutions for its agriculture plastics.

### **Planning Services**

1. Staff continue to work with area communities providing land use planning and zoning assistance. Towns include Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Marshall, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, Montreat, Clyde, Canton, and Andrews. Note that we are partnering with Southwestern Commission, Region A staff to assist with communities in their region as well.

### **Grants & Project Development**

1. Staff are working with several jurisdictions to support ARPA projects and administration. Please connect with Erica if you would like to learn more: [erica@landofsky.org](mailto:erica@landofsky.org) ARPA information can be found here: <https://www.nc.gov/agencies/pandemic-recovery-office/american-rescue-plan-act-information-and-resources>
2. Staff have been working with Sister Councils of Government on ARPA, Resilience and Multi-regional projects. Partnerships include sharing ARP policies, ordinances, and guidance; grant development; developing scopes of work and project delivery for ARPA State funds; budgeting and project development for housing, transportation and broadband tech assistance.
3. Staff continues working with several local governments and partners on applications for economic development, community development, transportation, and infrastructure implementation with BRIC/FEMA, EDA, and foundations. These projects will support transportation connections, resilience, job growth, industry expansion, and place-based development.
4. The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. (i.e. Municipalities and Counties must have a “reasonably-maintained” [updated within last 5-10 years] Comprehensive Plan in effect in order to legally continue having local zoning/development regulations. At minimum, a reasonably updated Land Use Plan must be in place by July 1, 2022 as a rational nexus to zoning/development regulations. (see Town of Canton’s phased-approach, Phase 1: Land Use Plan by July 1, 2022; Phase 2: Other Comprehensive Plan elements to be included after July 1, 2022)  
Please contact [erica@landofsky.org](mailto:erica@landofsky.org) if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.

## **3. Aging**

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

- Kim Ward, Aging Program Specialist for ARPA funding, has moved into the position of Accounts Receivable Clerk in the finance department. Her duties will be taken on by Zack Schmitt who is the current Aging Specialist in charge of Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) funding.
- Monitoring of ARPA funded providers continues moving forward.

### **Family Caregiver Support Program**

- Staff and volunteers helped facilitate in-person caregiver and care receiver support groups in Hendersonville. There were 7 caregivers and 4 care receivers who participated in 2 meetings.
- Staff continue to offer \$500 Respite Vouchers to family caregivers in Transylvania County. So far there are 8 caregivers who have received a total of \$5,500 in vouchers.
- Staff are working with AARP and MountainCare on developing a presentation to give to employers on how they can assist their employees who are caregivers.

- Staff is co-sponsoring with AARP, “Powerful Tools for Caregivers” online. This is a 6-week training to assist caregivers. There are 13 caregivers registered.

#### Foster Grandparent Program

- Number of active volunteers: 31 volunteers are working one-on-one with children ages infant to 8 years old.
- Number of volunteers waiting on paperwork, placement, etc.: 4 volunteers are waiting for their school to reopen to volunteers so that they can return to service.
- Number of active stations (schools, day cares, etc.): 11
- Number of stations waiting to sign MOU, volunteer placement, etc.: 1 of childcare centers have not yet allowed volunteers to return to service.
- Recruitment efforts (press releases, presentations, etc.): Volunteer recruitment efforts are beginning now that the majority of Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) stations have reopened. Recruitment efforts include a recruitment bonus offered for FGP volunteers that refer someone, staff participated in the Junior League Volunteer Expo in February and plan to start running some articles and ads in local media.
- In-service/training update: On February 14, Foster Grandparent volunteers attended in-person in-service training at Land of Sky Regional Council. Volunteers learned about different “Love Languages” and how they show the children they work with love through their own love language and how the children show love through their own love language. Upcoming in-services topics will be as follows:
  - March 14- Stewards of Children-Sexual Abuse Prevention
  - April 18- WNC Fall Coalition will be presenting and doing fall screenings

#### Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Staff have seen an increase in volunteer involvement for evidence program delivery. Additional leaders have received training or will be starting early March, including several A Matter of Balance Master trainers and Living Healthy trainers, and two returning volunteers that will be recertified in the Living Healthy Programs.
- Staff continues scheduling evidence-based programs in community including Living Healthy in Madison County, Tai Chi and A Matter of Balance in Buncombe, as well as Tai Chi in Transylvania County.
- Staff will deliver a “Fall Risk and Prevention to Jewish Family Service” volunteers.
- Staff continues close collaboration with the North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness working on initiatives that include Referral Pathways for falls reduction, A Matter of Balance-Parkinson’s Pilot, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in evidence-based programming.
- Staff have completed Mon Ami training, a program designed to manage all evidence-based programs and events in one platform. March 1st is the targeted “go-live” date.
- Staff is working with Jewish Family Services to address recommendations resulting from the Aging in Place Assessment project.
- Staff is working with Blue Ridge Pride Generation Plus to present “Eldercare with Pride.”
- Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers have been diligent in addressing social isolation through social opportunities for residents. November through January there were 42 social engagements with 461 overall participants attending.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA, Trader Joes, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In January, 102 bags of groceries were distributed to residents, and 308 “Neighbor Knock” visits were conducted.

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 1,611
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 118,292
- In-home Aide hours = 9,221
- Legal Services hours = 1,118
- Transportation trips = 28,575
- Home Improvement Projects = 37

#### Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion (serves 37 Western Counties):

- Staff completed in-person skilled nursing facilities providing training and materials as needed. Counties completed include: McDowell, Cleveland, Lincoln and Henderson.
- Staff provided in-person training for the McDowell County Department of Social Services. Participants included staff from the Community Alternatives Program as well as Adult Medicaid.
- Staff joined the planning committee for the 2023 *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk* helping with outreach and sponsorship procurement.
- Staff attended Transition Coordinator meeting where we discussed end-of-year transition numbers as well as referrals received.
- Staff hosted the Professional Social Workers in Long-term Care organization (PSWLTC). Land of Sky Regional Council will continue to host this group until further notice.

#### Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator

Western counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Yancey

- The western region has a caseload of 10.
- One person on the caseload has housing secured and will transition 4/1/2023.
- Nine people are waiting on housing, and some have been on the caseload for at least one year waiting on affordable, safe housing.
- January, 2023 the Transition Coordinator worked with landlords to secure housing for a person that had a Section 8 voucher. It had been extremely difficult for this person to secure housing. The first week of January, a landlord in Shelby agreed to accept the voucher. The person completed the rental application and was on his way to securing housing. On January 14<sup>th</sup> an employee found the person dead in his bed at the nursing facility. It appears people are literally dying on waitlist for housing.

Central counties: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin.

- Staff completed on-boarding phase of training and has taken over the central caseload.
- Currently, staff has 9 clients.
- Staff traveled to the Winston-Salem area to meet in person with clients and meet with PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) to work on collaboration.
- Staff also attended WISH (WNC Initiative for Supportive Housing) Collaborative event.
- Staff continues to learn about housing resources and difficulties, as lack of safe and affordable housing is an issue for 6 out of the 9 clients.

#### Ombudsman Program

- Ombudsman presented Long Term Care Placement information to Buncombe County Council on Aging Community Services Department.
- Ombudsman attended Jr. League Asheville Volunteer Expo in order to discuss volunteer options with the Community Advisory Committees in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties.
- Ombudsmen will attend the North Carolina Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Association meeting in Kernersville on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

- Ombudsman will attend the North Carolina Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Quarterly training in Raleigh, NC on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## Outreach and Assistance

- The focus for 2023 is a reboot of volunteers for all 6 different Area Agency on Aging programs (Regional Aging Advisory Council, Foster Grandparent Program, Senior Companion Program, Senior Tar Heel Legislator, Community Advisory Committee, and Wellness Volunteers). Creating flyers, informational Facebook posts, and ideas on where to reach older adults.
- Staff continues to work on becoming an option counselor to better assist when folks call for help.
- Staff are getting out into the community to be more visible and share about volunteer programs. Staff have been to Marshall Library, Mars Hill Library, Hendersonville Library and Fletcher Library to talk with folks.
- Staff attended the Junior League of Asheville Volunteer Expo which had a great turn out of community members.
- Staff created a display for Heart Health month (February) at the Marshall Library also sharing about Area Agency on Aging programs.
- Staff is working with other Area Agency on Aging programs to create “marketing material” to help inform and recruit depending on the program.

## Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

- Staff is partnering with UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy-Asheville campus students to provide in-home prescription and non-prescription medication reviews for Project C.A.R.E. enrolled caregivers and their care receivers. Eight individuals living in three homes will receive this service soon and several families are waiting for their reviews to be scheduled.
- Staff assisted three caregivers in registering as participants in a telephone-based research project designed to understand the experiences of non-immediate family members (grandchildren, siblings, nieces, nephews, and step-kin) who help a relative with dementia. This project, CareEx, is a research project of Virginia Tech and is funded by the National Institute on Aging.
- Since July 1, staff has distributed 97% of the nearly \$43,000 allotted by the State to Project C.A.R.E. for dementia caregivers who live in one of the 15 counties in Project C.A.R.E.’s western region. 75% of these funds have been utilized. The funds are for respite care services that give the caregiver time to engage in self-care activities.
- Staff is currently distributing American Rescue Plan Act funds. Since the beginning of this calendar year 13 caregivers have been awarded one \$500 voucher each.
- All caregivers receiving respite vouchers are also receiving care consultation services.
- Staff provides assistance, information, and referrals to non-enrolled caregivers and maintains a waiting list for respite funds/care consultation services. For Buncombe County alone 56 caregivers are on the waiting list.

## Senior Companion Program

- Number of active volunteers: 55 volunteers
- Number of volunteers waiting for placement: 1 and 4 in application process
- Number of active stations:7
- Recruitment efforts: Council on Aging-Henderson County, Givens Estate-Gerber Park Apartments, Vanderbilt and Battery Park Apartments
- In-service/training update:  
February: Information session  
March: Dementia Care and resources

April, May, July: Cindy Keehn-Usable Skills with Dementia Clients

June: Volunteer Celebration

August: Audrey Morris, Hoarding and Its Mental Health Impact

#### **4. Administration**

- Christina is working to complete the FY21-22 Annual Report. We plan to post the report online on our website and mail all elected officials a hard copy report.
- Christina designed LOSRC 21-22 Annual Report
- Christina onboarded 2 new employees (Wendy Frye and Halston Fisher), one intern (Elizabeth Li), and one volunteer (Kathy Poling)
- Christina trained Jane Pies on RPO website and Distribution Lists edits
- Christina worked with Buncombe County to do another round of building construction to outfit the Finance Office for one more staff member and build another closet for the Aging Department
- Christina completed the edits to the Long Term Care Directory
- Christina designed and printed the 2023 Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion calendars
- Christina preparing for the Land of Sky website redesign and update
- Christina designing logos and graphics for the Foreign Trade Zone, LOS DEI committee, and the Innovation Centers of Excellence
- Nathan attend the COG Directors meeting at TJCOG and visited the NC General Assembly in support of the Buncombe County Schools Foundation “SMART Scholars” proposal for the LOSRC region
- Nathan participated on a panel at the NC Community College Presidents meeting in Morehead City with the CEO of EDPNC Chris Chung, NC Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary Chet Mottershead and NC Community College System Vice President Dr. Bruce Mack
- Nathan and Erica met with Representative Eric Ager and Representative Lindsey Prather
- Nathan hosted LOSRC Legislative Goals meeting with NC League of Municipalities, NC Association of County Commissioners, NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce and Chris Wall with EQV Strategic
- Nathan met with YMCA of WNC CEO Paul Vest
- Nathan attended the Institute for Emerging Issues Talent Economics forum with several LOSRC employees
- Nathan is planning multi-day French Broad River tour of the region’s four counties with elected officials, local government staff and partners attending.
- Hosted monthly staff meeting with celebration of Wanda Clark’s 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a LOSRC employee
- Nathan joined Kit Cramer, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce CEO as presenters for the WNC Early Childhood Education Forum
- Nathan joined multiple P-20 Council meetings
- Nathan attended the Surry Yadkin Works apprenticeship meeting with my Future NC
- Office will be a 2024 voting location for Buncombe County and we have signed an agreement with BCBOE.

#### **5. Workforce**

- Region's unemployment rate of 2.5% for December 2022, metro has the #1 lowest unemployment rate in NC. Our region generally has more people working, more jobs and more people in our labor force than at any time pre-pandemic. There are monthly fluctuations with the data and subject to revisions.
- Philip Cooper, Coordinator of the Accelerate Buncombe program will be co-leading the Talent Economics Forum with the Institute of Emerging Issues in Raleigh, NC at NC State's McKimmon Center.
- We are planning WNC Career Expo in partnership with the Asheville Chamber of Commerce to be held March 23 at the WNC Ag Center in Fletcher. Prior to the job fair we will host high school students for career exploration with over 100 employers.
- We are in the process of planning WNC Construction Career Day on March 28 and 29 in Haywood County at the Smoky Mountain Event Center. Over 20 school systems will be participating. We have raised about \$20,000 in private funds to support this event. Vannoy Construction is our presenting sponsor.
- P20 Council met with region's school superintendents to discuss options to increase FASFA completion and held a meeting at Mars Hill University.
- Mountain Area WDB board member Steve Newman with IMS Solutions will be making a presentation at the Southeast Employment and Training Association (SETA) in Memphis TN to share our region's IT career pathways and our partnership with Guided Compass.
- Our region's IT career pathway will be endorsed by the NCWorks Commission at their May 10 meeting.
- We are working to implement grant awards for small business training, re-entry, and substance use recover.
- We participated in a statewide small business forum in partnership with several other workforce boards.
- Steve Newman with IMS Solutions and MAWDB member will make a presentation about our board's IT career pathways and partnership with Guided Compass at the Southeastern Employment and Training Association conference in Memphis, TN
- Dr. Wendy Frye, former Assistant Superintendent of Henderson County Schools will be joining the MAWDB as a part-time staff

## Strategic Initiatives

- **Mountain Mobility** – Passenger trips rebounded from the holiday month of December, increasing by almost 7% to more than 9,000 trips in January. The Trailblazer services saw modest gains across all three services as well (Black Mountain, North Buncombe and Enka-Candler), with Black Mountain showing the greatest increase over the slumping numbers of November and December. We expect to see steadily increasing numbers as the weather moderates through the Spring months.
- **INspire: Recovery to Careers** – In January, 30 new participants recovering from Substance Use Disorder were enrolled for services. Of those 30 clients, 18 have secured employment, and INspire staff provided 10 pairs of work shoes for those participants. Additionally, 22 clients were assisted with sober living housing funds totaling \$12,655. Also, three clients were referred to Certified Peer Support Specialist training through VAYA Health. We're also excited to announce we have secured additional funding through Dogwood Health Trust to ensure the program can continue through FY24.
- **Accelerate Buncombe** – Work continues on this one-year grant provided by Buncombe County ARPA funds through a partnership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. The program assists those in underrepresented communities with significant barriers to employment secure job training and/or career services. Fourteen participants have been enrolled in the Certified Production Technician Training since the program began in November. All participants (11 African-American males; 1

African-American female and 1 Caucasian female) have been justice-involved and experiencing significant barriers to employment.

- **NEMT** - Active Cases 1289, Clients Utilized Services 580, Total Number of Trips 5635
- **Healthy Opportunities** – We currently have 16 active cases of clients needing transportation through the pilot program – four (4) clients in Henderson, three (3) in McDowell, two (2) in Buncombe, and one each in Haywood, Mitchell, Burke, Rutherford, Transylvania, Jackson and Madison counties. In December, we successfully provided transportation for four (4) clients in Buncombe.