

Land of Sky Regional Council  
February 24, 2021  
Regular Meeting



*Under S.L. 2020-3, SB 704, Delegates are required to state their names when moving on orders of business. Thank you!*

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order (12:30pm)
- II. Invocation
- III. Pledge of Allegiance
- IV. Roll Call
- V. Consent Agenda
  - A. Modification/Approval of Agenda
  - B. Minutes from the January 27, 2021 Regular Meeting, held Virtually via Zoom
- VI. Public Comment
- VII. Recognition of Special Guests
- VIII. Chairperson's Comments and Delegates Roundtable
- IX. Presentations
  - A. Presentation by Dr. Susan Mims, Interim CEO, Dogwood Health Trust,
  - B. Racial Disparity in the Land of Sky Region, Dr. Mary Roderick, Planner, LOSRC
  - C. LOSRC Staff Years of Service Recognition
  - D. Special Presentation by Governor Roy Cooper, Drew Christy, Director, Western NC Regional Office, Governor Roy Cooper
- X. Old Business
- XI. New Business
  - A. LOSRC Legislative Agenda
- XII. Executive Director's Report
- XIII. Important Dates
  - A. Next Virtual Regional Board Meeting via Zoom is scheduled for Wednesday, March 24, 2021
- XIV. Adjournment



## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Consent Agenda Items
- Item Number:** V. Consent Agenda
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the January 2021 Virtual Regular Meeting
- Background:**
- A. Modification/Approval of February 24, 2021 Agenda
  - B. January 27, 2021 Virtual Meeting Minutes  
Quorum was present to conduct business at the January 2021 virtual meeting via the Zoom platform and the minutes provide a recap of the of the Delegates' updates from around the region. Presentations were provided by Brittany Brady, President and CEO of Henderson County Partners for Economic Development pertaining to a collaboration between Henderson County and the City of Hendersonville regarding industrial property for development. Additionally, Clark Duncan, Senior Vice President of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce provided a presentation regarding the Pratt & Whitney Project, currently underway in Buncombe County.
- Staff Recommendation:** Recommend approval of the Consent Agenda
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom of the  
Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates

January 27, 2021

Minutes

- I. Call to Order – Chair Volk called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Invocation – Chair Volk gave the invocation.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Volk led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- IV. Roll Call – Nathan Ramsey called the roll. The following members were present: Brittany Brady, Lyndsey Simpson, William Lapsley, Maureen Copelof, Sandra Kilgore, Larry Chapman, Terri Wells, John Mitchell, Jonathan Kanipe, George Morosani, Barbara Volk, Timothy Love, Daniel Cobb, Preston Blakely, Nathan Bennett, Bob Tomasulo, Jane Alexander, Albert Gooch, Larry Harris, and Patrick Fitzsimmons  
Guests Present – Clark Duncan, Ann Bass, Brandon Priester, Andrew McKinney, Freddie Harrill, Dr. Gene Loflin, Fairley Patton, John Fargher, and Representative Brian Turner  
A quorum was present to conduct business.
- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the request for agenda approval and the minutes of December 2, 2020 was presented for approval with no modification requested.  
***George Morosani moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. John Mitchell seconded and the motion carried upon a roll call vote and without further discussion.***
- VI. Public Comment – No public comments were received.
- VII. Recognition of Special Guests –  
Nathan Ramsey recognized new members to the Regional Board including Commissioner Bill Lapsley (Henderson Co.), Council Member Sandra Kilgore (City of Asheville), Commissioner Larry Chapman (Transylvania Co.), and Commissioner Terri Wells (Buncombe Co.). Representative Brian Turner (NC General Assembly- 116<sup>th</sup> House District) was also recognized for his attendance at the meeting.  
  
Representative Turner shared appreciation for Land of Sky Regional Council and the work accomplished over the past year, and with regards to the current environment. He shared that this new legislative session will be a continuation of his work focusing on economic development, through coordination with all levels of government and the community. He communicated that he is already working with Tim Moffitt on legislation around regulatory issues in the State. Beyond the economic development work, another focus is expanding access to healthcare. Overall the work is pro-growth and pro-economic development. The Western Delegation works closely together on a number of issues. He encouraged delegates and guests to reach out to his office for any needs. (919-715-3012/ [Brian.Turner@ncleg.gov](mailto:Brian.Turner@ncleg.gov)).
- VIII. Chair's Comments and Delegates Roundtable  
Chair Volk requested that Delegates share updates and news of interest in their jurisdictions.  
Delegates Roundtable  
Terri Wells – Shared that Buncombe County is working on broadband through the Broadband Working Group headed up by Tim Love and supported by LOSRC's Sara Nichols. The Commissioner shared that currently, the County is able to assist community members with internet payments.

William Lapsley – Shared appreciation for Representative Turner’s work on Project Ranger and its regional impacts and he assured the Representative that Henderson County appreciates that project and residents will travel to that site when it is up and running. Secondly, Henderson County is totally committed to the Ecusta Trail, and the County believes that it will benefit both Henderson and Transylvania Counties. The Commissioner commented on the construction going on in the County and he noted the County has a lot on its plate in the coming months. He offered to share the good, the bad, and the ugly with regards to borrowing millions of dollars to support the construction projects.

Larry Chapman – Shared that Transylvania County’s current issue is dealing with the vaccine and he expressed disappointment that the governor has not allocated additional supply to the County. The Commissioner communicated that the County has a lot of concern about their rural hospital and they are looking for an update from HCA. He shared about the Ecusta site, which is one of the best in the County for development. The County is waiting until the property is sold before making any commitments. He noted that all of the small rural counties face significant challenges.

Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville voted in the Civil Service Board’s rules and regulations. Prior to this, the Civil Service Board had been operating without rules and regulations since 2009. As far as the hotel moratorium, Council has received a point system that would allow hotels to be fast-tracked and could offer public benefits to allocate funds towards affordable housing and living wage, among other factors. There is a meeting tomorrow to learn about additional benefits of this point system. The Council Member also shared about the Transparency Dashboard for the Police Department. A Tip Hotline is available to keep everyone updated and to report tips anonymously. These improvements are meant to bring about transparency and to benefit the community.

Jonathan Kanipe – Shared that the Town of Biltmore Forest continues to deal with COVID as best as can be expected and is currently focusing on vaccinations. In addition, the Town is working with Duke Energy on a targeted underground project for power reliability purposes, which is anticipated to be about a five-year project.

Larry Harris – Shared a brief comment regarding Town Manager Josh Harrold’s pride on the Upper Swannanoa River Water Management Plan. He noted that LOSRC’s Erica Anderson was instrumental in 2015 in securing the grant funds to get that project underway. Mayor Harris noted that the banks of the streams have been restored and there have been storm water control issues addressed through other grants, and in total, all of these things have brought cleaner water to the Swannanoa River. He noted Duke Energy’s involvement in a project to restore additional riverbank. All in all, it’s a good story of cooperation between LOSRC and a Member Government.

Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard is opening a new playground this coming Saturday. This is in the Silversteen area and the Council Member communicated that community involvement was instrumental in this effort. Construction has begun on the new dog park.

Albert Gooch – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock has two Council vacancies that need to be filled.

Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher is searching for a new police chief and the new Town Center project is going well. Lastly, in mid-December, Low Impact Technologies, a manufacturer of renewable energy equipment announced its new facility in the Town, which plans to create 60 jobs by 2025.

Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville had its topping-off ceremony for the new Police Station and the new Police Chief is starting February 15. The City looks forward to welcoming him.

Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River is a busy place these days and the park has had a lot of people enjoying the outdoors. In addition, the Town has received a grant award to develop a bike/ped plan. Work is continuing on the Comprehensive Plan, and in a few weeks, the Planning Board should be able to review the draft. The Town has exceeded permit levels for all of 2019 and is on track to exceed the 2020 levels. Most everyone is looking forward to warmer weather ahead.

Jane Alexander – Shared that the Town of Montreat is moving along as best as possible, with regards to the current environment, the Town has a lot of visitors and signage is posted with the COVID restrictions. The new Town Hall is completed, too.

George Morosani – Shared that Low Impact Technologies is going in on Cane Creek Road and all areas of real estate seem to be very busy.

John Mitchell – Shared that the bidding has completed for the BRCC project and the Commission has approved the successful bidder. The successful bid has an approved rate of \$250 per square foot. He also shared appreciation that Chairman Lapsley was present at this meeting.

Bob Tomasulo – Shared that the Regional Aging Advisory Council (RAAC) met on January 14 and received a presentation from AARP/Rebecca Chapman. The RAAC is interested in growing the partnership between the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and AARP.

IX. Presentations –

A. Henderson County Industrial Development

Brittany Brady, President and CEO of the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development (HCPED) and the Economic Development Representative for the County on the Board, shared about industrial development in Henderson County, fostered through a collaboration between the County and the City of Hendersonville.

In about 2016, with regards to the future of HCPED, it became clear that there were limits on industrial property in the County. A study was conducted to develop a pot of money specifically for project development. The Economic Investment Fund (EIF) of Henderson County was the result of that effort and it is meant to lessen the burdens of government by protecting and advancing Henderson County's quality of employment and tax base capacity through product and workforce development. The EIF improves the County's competitive position for quality jobs, improving the lives of its citizens through poverty alleviation, stimulating activity in economically challenged areas, and providing opportunity for unemployed and under-employed persons. The fund employs a product development strategy, securing the future through industrial site development, which recognizes that industrial-zoned sites are limited due to competition for land. Also included in the study was distribution of industrial and commercial sites and a building inventory update. Brittany Brady shared that there needs to be willing land owners and more public/private partnerships. She reviewed Garrison Industrial Park, which was identified in 2019 and has entered into a 2-year purchase agreement. In early 2020, Project Wheel was looking for 13-20 acres. Soon, 18.62 acres was presented for consideration and due diligence. Work began with the City and County on logistics of approved purchase incentives and GoldenLEAF funds were committed. A three-party and interlocal agreements were executed. Jabil announced in December 2020 committing to 150 jobs with the project, A 150 thousand square-foot, \$38 Million investment resulted. This was the first economic development project of this caliber that the City has participated in. This project pulls in the necessary infrastructure to the industrial park, which should lead to additional economic development. From a project perspective, the Jabil project was treated as a traditional incentives project. The three party land agreement includes tax dollars to purchase the land, which will lead to large pay backs for the community. The EIF is hoping to continue to replicate these efforts across the community. Work is well underway with land owners to secure and offer more industrial sites.

B. Pratt & Whitney Project

Clark Duncan, Senior Vice President of Economic Development with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce shared about the new Pratt & Whitney project, currently underway on 100 acres in the southern part of Buncombe County at the Biltmore Park West site. He presented this project as a case study of the AVL 5X5 Strategic Plan. He noted that the average wage in Asheville lags the state and national averages. A pretty stubborn 12% of the county, lives in poverty, led by being left out of economic opportunity. Economic development remains the common ground. The Pratt & Whitney announcement was made possible by a broad and diverse collaboration including the Buncombe Commission, GoldenLEAF, Duke Energy, and LOSRC, etc. The Pratt & Whitney project plans a \$650 Million investment in Asheville and the region. They are a Fortune 30 employer, and this project anticipates bringing an additional 800 jobs to the region with a \$68,400 average wage. They are building a new 1.2 million square-foot building on a 100-acre site at Biltmore Park West, planned to open in January 2022. Pratt & Whitney are committed to greening the Turbine Engine sector and rapidly modernizing the Aero-Space sector. Clark Duncan noted that every job brings dignity to the region. The Economic Development Coalition of Asheville-Buncombe County (EDCABC) is committed to wage growth, economic mobility, economic balance, STEM employment through

an innovation economy and a sustainable tax base. He shared insights on the Pratt & Whitney project by looking at the direct human impact: the average wage is above the area average, and could bring \$54 million in new local payroll. It's 60% above the county average and these jobs include benefits and education. These jobs may bring economic mobility. The EDCABC is an inclusive hiring partner and AB Tech training facilities will be onsite. BRCC, Haywood C.C., and Mayland C.C. are also training partners, who will connect local residents to employment opportunities with Pratt & Whitney. The Pratt & Whitney site will be accessed by a bridge that is being funded collaboratively by the developer and GoldenLEAF. The facility is under development and pursuing LEEDS certification. All this is occurring even as there is inflated cost and competition for sites in the western region of the state. This developer could have profited, but the leadership of Biltmore Farms were concerned about finding the highest impact use for the property. At full build out, nearly \$3 million in property tax revenue is anticipated. Economic development should advance prosperity and the Pratt & Whitney project includes \$76 million in new direct, indirect and induced labor income, labor market growth, manufacturing growth, innovation economy and global reputation. Construction alone is expected to support over 1000 jobs and many millions in payroll. Clark Duncan shared appreciation to the Board and noted that the Pratt & Whitney announcement was a collaboration that was years in the making among the economic development organizations, local jurisdictions, etc.

Discussion occurred regarding alternate access to the site and it was noted that over time, there should be benefits to the area through lessened traffic on NC 191.

X. Old Business

XI. New Business –

A. Nominating Committee –

Chair Volk shared that the bylaws indicate that the Board shall appoint a nominating committee of three delegates, not currently serving on the Executive Committee, to develop a slate of Officers/Executive Committee members to submit at the Annual Meeting in March. The Chair called for three volunteers.

Nathan Ramsey communicated that he would send out an email request following today's meeting to secure the required three volunteers. He also explained the purpose of the Executive Committee, which oversees the LOSRC operations.

Discussion occurred about the purpose of the Executive Committee, and it was noted that Executive Committee meets at 11am on the same date as the Board meeting. Staff handle a lot of the work. The main time commitment is the monthly meeting. Chair Volk noted that the time commitment for the nominating committee is around 1-3 hours and a couple of email meetings.

XII. Executive Director's Report

Available in the agenda packet. Delegates and guests are encouraged to reach out to Nathan Ramsey with any questions or comments regarding the report.

XIII. Important Dates

A. Wednesday, February 24, 2021 is the next regularly scheduled Board of Delegates meeting.

XIV. Old Business

XV. Adjournment – Chair Volk adjourned the meeting, as there was no further business.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

**Subject:** Report on Racial Disparity in the Land of Sky Region

**Item Number:** IX. Presentations/Recognition; Item, B

**Responsible Party:** Dr. Mary Roderick, PhD

**Attachment(s):** None

**Background:** Land of Sky Regional Council's Economic and Community Development staff developed a report on racial disparities in the LOSRC region based on eight key metrics, including population, income, poverty, homeownership, educational attainment, health and technology. The purpose of the report is to highlight racial disparities in order to foster a regional conversion based on the most accurate data available.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4378eb31075b4732ab90c28d0cf538cb>

**Staff Recommendation:** N/A

**Suggested Motion(s):** N/A



## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** LOSRC Employee Service Awards
- Item Number:** XI. Presentations/Recognition; Item, C
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Interim Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** None
- Background:** Each year, the Council recognizes employees' years of service milestones. This year, the following employees are being recognized:
- |                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| LeeAnne Tucker     | 20 Years |
| Christina Giles    | 15 Years |
| Sherry Christenson | 15 Years |
| Erica Anderson     | 10 Years |
| Zack Schmitt       | 5 Years  |
- Staff Recommendation:** N/A
- Suggested Motion(s):** N/A





## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Legislative Priorities
- Item Number:** XI. LOSRC Legislative Priorities
- Responsible Party:** Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates
- Attachment(s):** NCARCOG Legislative Priorities
- Background:** LOSRC Strategic Plan recommended the Council take a more active role in relationship building and advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels (Goal 2.3). The strategic plan recommended the creation of a Legislative Relations Committee (Goal 2.13) and the development of a Regional Legislative Priority List (Goal 2.15).
- Draft LOSRC Legislative Priorities
1. **Broadband Expansion:** Broadband expansion is the top priority of the Council. The Council supports legislation that will expand broadband in our region, that allows local governments to enter into partnerships with private providers and that commits additional funding to increase access to broadband.
  2. **Local Government Sales Tax Flexibility:** Local Governments currently have sales tax options that are contingent on voter approval. The Council requests that the existing sales tax authority be more flexible to meet the needs of local government but that the additional sales tax flexibility be subject to voter approval from voters within the respective local government jurisdiction.
  3. **Sustainable Transportation Funding for NC and our region:** Additional funding is required to address the immediate and long-term transportation funding model. The Council does not take a position on how to generate additional transportation revenues. The Council endorses the NC Chamber of Commerce Destination 2030 plan and will join as a coalition member. The NC First Commission has recently released their report and the Council requests that the NC General Assembly to seriously consider the options proposed in the report. The Council does not take an official position on how to raise the additional revenue needed.
- Staff Recommendation:** Enact Regional Legislative Priorities pursuant to the LOSRC Strategic Plan.
- Suggested Motion(s):** Motion to approve the draft LOSRC Legislative Priorities.



# 2021 Policy Agenda

## NCARCOG Overview

The North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Governments (NCARCOG) represents 16 regional councils of governments (COGs), and it advocates for regional solutions to address multi-jurisdictional issues or opportunities, coordinated state and federal program service delivery, and building strategic partnerships to improve the prosperity of rural and urban North Carolina.

## Policy Priorities

### 1. Modify rules, regulations, or legislation to include COGs as eligible entities for state and federal grants.

The federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular 2 CFR 200. 64 (I) identifies a Council of Governments (COG) as an eligible local government for the purpose of applying for and receiving federal grant awards. NCGS 160A-475(1) and 153A-395 allow COGs to apply for, accept, receive, and dispense grants made available to it by the State of North Carolina, the United States of America or any of its agencies, any local government, and any private or civic agency. Some program rules and grant applications, at the state and federal levels, do not list COGs as eligible program administrators, applicants, or sub-recipients. These limitations prevent COGs from applying for regional based grants, and/or delivering regionally significant programs in each COG service area.

#### Action Requested:

NCARCOG requests the members of the North Carolina General Assembly add Councils of Governments to the list of eligible entities for state and federal grant programs. In addition, NCARCOG requests the members of the North Carolina delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate also add Councils of Governments to the list of eligible entities for federally funded grants and programs.

### 2. Establish COGs as the entity to develop regional pre-disaster hazard mitigation plans, and to perform regional resilience planning and coordination.

Smaller units of local governments within each COG region may have a limited capacity to apply for emergency management grants, and successfully manage all the training and compliance requirements for the duration of the grant. North Carolina COGs have successfully managed regional disaster and recovery efforts and have extensive experience with emergency management grants. The COGs could serve as designated grant recipients, grant administrators, provide regional communication and coordination activities, and provide the necessary technical assistance to ensure grant compliance standards are met. COG involvement would enhance recovery and resiliency efforts and allow more local governments to participate in funding opportunities.

COGs have coordinated, planned, and delivered planning and programming services on a multi-jurisdictional basis for the past fifty years. Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation (PDM) plans, now called the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program require local government leaders from multiple cities and counties to develop a coordinated plan to identify goals, action steps, and projects to limit the impact of natural and man-made disasters. COGs are already engaged in resiliency planning efforts within their regions, and each COG is engaged with local government leaders on a multi-jurisdictional basis. PDM/BRIC plans are required to be performed every five years, and regularly assessed to determine progress towards implementing the plan. COGs can provide planning professionals to work with local government leaders to develop BRIC plans, and to work with local governments to implement the high priority projects to limit the impacts from future disasters.

## NCARCOG Contacts

Tim Ware, Executive Director | [ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com](mailto:ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com)  
Don Rains, NCARCOG Forum Chairman | [donrainsnc@gmail.com](mailto:donrainsnc@gmail.com)

Lee Worsley, NCARCOG Chairman | [lworsley@tjicog.org](mailto:lworsley@tjicog.org)  
Robert Hiett, Legislative Chairman | [rhiett@ucpcog.org](mailto:rhiett@ucpcog.org)



# 2021 Policy Agenda

## Action Requested:

NCARCOG requests legislative and policy authorization for the North Carolina Department of Emergency Management to use COGs to provide BRIC planning services, training, grant administration, grant application assistance, or any other service requested by a qualifying local government in order for it to utilize Federal Emergency Management Agency funds.

### 3. Build partnerships and capacity for COGs to provide financial administration for local governments.

Local governments must meet audit, budget, and internal control requirements established by the NC Local Government Commission (LGC), and many have done so successfully over the decades. An entire generation of local government officials is leaving the workforce due to retirement, and some areas of the state may find it difficult to find the qualified professionals needed to remain compliant with LGC standards. COGs are an extension of local government, with professional finance staff, that are uniquely qualified to assist local governments in need of temporary financial services. COGs have the ability and authority to partner with the LGC, North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM), and North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) to meet the audit, compliance, and financial administration needs of local governments.

## Action Requested:

NCARCOG requests the LGC's consideration for policy changes to allow COGs to serve a stronger role providing financial administration services to local governments in need of such services. In addition, NCARCOG requests consideration from the members of the North Carolina General Assembly to set aside funding to create a financial administration program to assist small local governments and municipalities with returning to a compliant status.

### 4. Support the expansion of high-speed broadband throughout North Carolina.

The availability of high-speed broadband, defined by the FCC a 25 megabits per second download speed and 3 megabits per second upload speed, is critical to the economic resilience of local governments throughout North Carolina. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to increase availability of high-speed broadband to ensure continuation of local government services, local economies, education, workforce training, and nearly every other aspect of private or public operations that rely on internet connectivity to function.

## Action Requested:

NCARCOG supports legislative and policy that increases the availability of high-speed broadband throughout North Carolina and urges the members of the North Carolina General Assembly to continue to provide funding to study, build, and upgrade broadband infrastructure to ensure the private and public entities across the state are able to function and compete in the global economy while maintaining safe and effective public services vital to the health and welfare of North Carolina citizens.

## NCARCOG Contacts

Tim Ware, Executive Director | [ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com](mailto:ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com)  
Don Rains, NCARCOG Forum Chairman | [donrainsnc@gmail.com](mailto:donrainsnc@gmail.com)

Lee Worsley, NCARCOG Chairman | [lworsley@tcog.org](mailto:lworsley@tcog.org)  
Robert Hiett, Legislative Chairman | [rhiett@ucpcog.org](mailto:rhiett@ucpcog.org)



## 2021 Policy Agenda

### 5. Advocate for additional funding for aging, community development, infrastructure, and workforce programs.

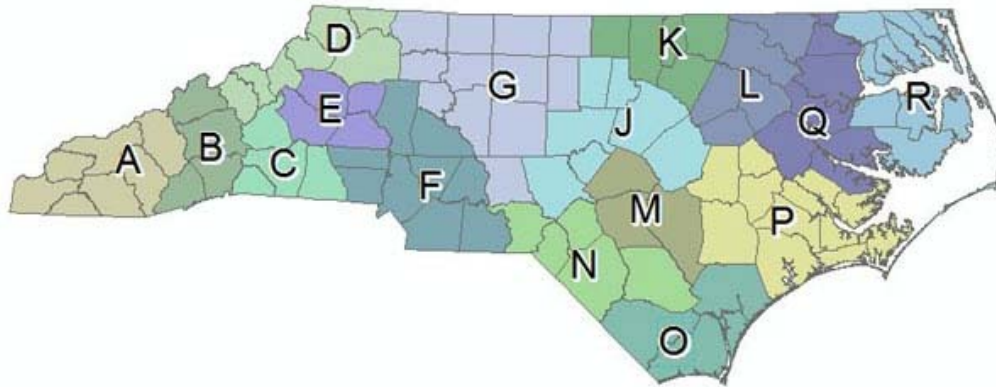
COG regions across the state are working with local government leaders to plan and coordinate services and programs for a rapidly increasing older adult population, expand or upgrade water and sewer capacity to accommodate growth and development within each region, developing partnerships to improve access to workforce housing, and coordinating workforce and/or economic development opportunities with area employers to provide the skilled workers needed for economic growth.

#### Action Requested:

NCARCOG requests consideration of additional funding for the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) to support growing older adult populations, an increase in funding for water and sewer infrastructure projects, policy flexibility to increase opportunities to partner with workforce housing agencies or organizations, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to support local workforce development boards in developing innovative approaches to training citizens for skilled jobs within each region.

### 6. Build strategic partnerships to improve regional delivery of services.

COGs were established by units of local government, rural and urban, coming together to solve local and regional issues. COGs play a role in convening leaders within each region and coordinating with multiple types of organizations to deliver programs, projects, or services. COGs are best positioned for the delivery of federal, state, and local programs or services on a regional basis due to the ability to scale a service or program to meet the needs of each region, or to work cooperatively across multiple regions when needed or required.



#### Action Requested:

Advocate for an increase in the use of COGs to administer and/or implement governmental services and programs that are intended to be delivered on a multi-county basis. Advocate that COGs serve as the default mechanism to delivery regionally based services. Oppose the creation of new regional offices or regional service areas that split COG regions.

#### NCARCOG Contacts

Tim Ware, Executive Director | [ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com](mailto:ncregionalcouncils@gmail.com)  
Don Rains, NCARCOG Forum Chairman | [donrainsnc@gmail.com](mailto:donrainsnc@gmail.com)

Lee Worsley, NCARCOG Chairman | [lworsley@tjicog.org](mailto:lworsley@tjicog.org)  
Robert Hiett, Legislative Chairman | [rhiett@ucpcog.org](mailto:rhiett@ucpcog.org)



## BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

**Subject:** Executive Director's Report

**Item Number:** XII. Executive Director's Report

**Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director

**Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for January 27, 2021

**Background:** The Executive Director's Report provides updates and relevant information from LOSRC Departments/Agencies.

**Staff Recommendation:** N/A.

**Suggested Motion(s):** N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council  
Executive Director Report  
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey  
February 24, 2021

1. Economic & Community Development/Transportation
  - a. Planning Services
    - The Grey Mill Apartments in Hendersonville has been awarded a NC Main Street award for best Adaptive Reuse project. LOSRC applied for and administered NC Commerce Neighborhood Revitalization Program funding (\$500,000) for the project.
    - Erica Anderson joined a panel on Regional Resilience & Innovation for **ReCONNECT for the Future, the Institute for Emerging Issues' virtual Emerging Issues Forum** held on February 15-18.
    - Staff are preparing to review draft Census data in anticipation of Apportionment Data and the Redistricting data later this summer. Please connect with us if you would like to discuss the 2020 Census data timeline.
    - LOSRC launched the Regional Stormwater Services Program to support small MS4s and interested communities with stormwater management and MS4 stormwater compliance.
    - LOSRC is kicking off the Regional Resilience Advisory Board in February to guide the continued development of the regional resilience assessment and action planning.
    - WestNGN hosted a Digital Inclusion Planning Kickoff event with approximately 150 participants. This event brought in partners in education, government, healthcare, non-profits, providers, and citizens to start looking at assets and opportunities for Digital Inclusion in the region. If you missed this event or want to start a conversation about what needs to be in the plan contact Sara Nichols at [sara@landofsky.org](mailto:sara@landofsky.org). This project is part of the BAND-NC grant from the Institute of Emerging Issues.
    - Town of Mars Hill awarded Downtown WIFI project from ARC. This project also partners with Madison County and Hometown Strong to start creating more public places to connect.
    - The annual Broadband Leadership Forum is going to be March 2nd. This event will bring in local, state, and national level leaders to discuss changes in policy, funding, and technology that may occur in 2021.
    - Clean Vehicles Coalition hosted 2 Virtual Site tours, one for the City of Hendersonville with Dominion Energy, and second with MB Haynes with Alliance AutoGas. These site tours help people learn about alternative fuels from organizations that have made the switch to a cleaner energy source. Events were recorded and can be found on the LOSRC YouTube page.
    - WestNGN is working on getting better broadband data to help leverage more broadband investment to the region. We have been working with Dogwood Health Trust and Southwest Commission on putting outreach materials and marketing for the NC Broadband Survey. This project involves a video series

released on Fridays through the month of February that can be found on the Land of Sky Economic and Community Development social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and other social media content. Please help by sharing these materials with your network so we're ready for the next rounds of funding. Contact Sara Nichols at Sara@landofsky.org for more information about where the missing data for your community may be.

- ARC Community Center WIFI is making progress! We have public Wi-Fi access set up in the Leicester, Balsam Grove, and Broad River Community Centers! These sites have been identified as areas with gaps in widespread broadband coverage and are addressing needs for business, education, telehealth, and more.
- LOSRC and its Waste Reduction Partners program are hosting an 11-week training course for municipal wastewater treatment operators presented by USEPA. The course covers optimization of nutrient removal and energy savings. More information here
- The 5-Year Strategic Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan has been completed and submitted to HUD for the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium to guide the use of HOME funds for the region and CDBG funds for the City of Asheville.
- LOSRC is leveraging this experience to support the newly formed HOME Consortium in Region A, and launching their consolidated planning process in January.
- NC DEQ 205j funding has been awarded for stormwater system inventories for the towns of Fletcher and Woodfin, as well as for an integrated Inspection and Maintenance documentation system.
- LOSRC has been selected to participate in USEPA's Greening America's Communities program, which will provide a conceptual level design for a hazard mitigation project.
- Phase 3 of the Regional Resilience Assessment has been completed, which includes a vulnerability and risk (V/R) assessment for residential properties and flooding, landslide and wildfire hazards. Both hazard exposure and V/R for multiple types of land uses and community assets can be explored via the interactive web application AccelAdapt (<https://landofsky.acceladapt.com/>).
- Received \$22,250 grant from DHT for broadband survey marketing support for Land of Sky and Southwestern Commission.
- LOSRC has received technical assistance awards from EDA and ARC totaling \$316,538.
- Submitted CDBG-Infrastructure grant application for the City of Brevard.
- Completed and submitted the regional Housing Analysis and Plan to HUD for the City of Asheville.
- Assisted in the submission of several GREAT broadband applications on behalf of our region and providers. Two projects in the region were selected for funding – Transylvania County and Buncombe County!
- Submitted multiple competitive grants to EDA, ARC, FEMA, and DEQ, including reshoring manufacturing focused on the outdoor gear sector in

collaboration with Southwestern Commission and High Country Council of Governments.

- Waste Reduction Partners has been hosting webinars on COVID-19 reaching over 500 participants.
- Partnering with the AAA team to assist administer the CARES Act funds.
- Submitted a \$160,000 grant application to the FEMA BRIC program through NCDPS in partnership with several entities.
- Partnering with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
- Facilitating the Regional Solid Waste Managers Forum and Recycling Program.
- Contracting with several towns for zoning and mapping assistance including Flat Rock, Marshall, Mars Hill, Andrews, and Montreat.
- Working with regional partners to identify Affordable/Workforce Housing opportunities for short- to mid-term solutions.

b. Transportation Services

- RPO and LOSRC staff have supported Transylvania County Public Transit now known as Transylvania in Motion, (TIM's) with the development and mapping of their new fixed route.
- RPO staff continues to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development
- RPO staff serving as NCARPO Association President, the NCARPO is the statewide organization representing Rural Transportation Planning Organizations in NC
- RPO staff working with SWRPO, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Staff and LOSRC staff on the development of CMAQ, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, funding applications. These funds support ongoing air quality education and outreach programs in the Smoky Mountain Region
- RPO staff served on the FTA 5307 Urban Transit Funding selection committee for Haywood County
- RPO staff is serving on the steering committee for the FBRMPO Regional Transit Study
- MPO staff is participating on NCDOT's Statewide Resiliency Planning Workgroup to help identify how resiliency challenges to transportation infrastructure (rockslides, floods, wildfires) can be incorporated into the planning process to evaluate transportation needs and planned improvements
- MPO staff is participating on a VMT reduction work group with NCDOT. The work group is looking at the potential efficacy in a number of efforts to reduce the amount that people drive in metropolitan areas in North Carolina.
- The MPO is in the process of approving more than \$300,000 in FTA Job Access Reverse Commute Funding (JARC) to transit providers in the region
- The MPO held a training session for Locally Administered Projects management for jurisdictions that have been awarded federal transportation funds through the MPO on February 18, 2021.
- The MPO is continuing to work through a Regional Transit Feasibility Study. /



- The MPO held its final design workshop on the Hendersonville Corridor Study on February 10, 2021. <http://frenchbroadrivermpo.org/regional-transit-feasibility-study/>
- MPO staff assisted with the procurement of transit services for Haywood County as it transitions to an “urban” transit provider under FTA rules and regulations.
- The MPO is currently programming a number of projects into the Transportation Improvement Program, utilizing its direct allotment of federal transportation funds. These projects includes:
  - Engineering and Construction for three phases of the Ecusta Trail
  - Construction funding for improvements on Coxe Avenue
  - Additional funding for construction of the North RAD Greenway
  - Engineering and Construction for the Clear Creek Greenway
  - Construction funds for bike/ped upgrades on Haywood Road in West Asheville
  - Construction funds for an extension of sidewalk on Broadway Avenue
  - Construction funds pedestrian improvements at the I-240/Charlotte Street Interchange
  - Construction funds for pedestrian safety improvements at various sites around the City of Asheville
  - Construction funds to add a signal at Biltmore Avenue and White Fawn Drive
  - Additional construction funds for the Riverwalk Greenway in Black Mountain
- Continuing to work with the City of Asheville on the Close the GAP Plan (Greenways, ADA, and Pedestrian)

## 2. Workforce Development

- We have made several board staffing changes to reflect that we will not hire a Workforce Director and the Executive Director will continue to serve in this role. Barbara Darby has been named Assistant Workforce Director/Business Services Leader, Melissa Wright has been named Workforce Operations Specialist and Zia Rifkin has been named Workforce and Accounting Specialist. Not filling the Workforce Director role will save our board significant annual funding.
- Christy Cheek, Education and Work-Based Learning Coordinator with MAWDB, was a presenter at the NC Apprenticeship Accelerator 2.0 event. This event is a partnership between ApprenticeshipNC, NC Department of Public Instruction, and ACT Work Ready Communities.
- Barbara Darby made a workforce development presentation to Leadership Asheville.
- We are making a special effort to help the counties in our region become “Work-Ready Certified”, currently only Transylvania County has secured this designation.
- We have released a RFP for NCWorks Dislocated Worker Outreach to connect more dislocated workers with our region’s NCWorks Career Centers and community colleges to support them with education, training and employment.

- We have released a RFP for outreach to support the Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative which is our region's postsecondary credential attainment effort aligned with My Future NC. This effort is funded by the John M Belk Endowment. Our region is the pilot in North Carolina for a regional postsecondary credential attainment effort.
- We have received positive news from the ARC for a grant application in partnership with Southwestern Workforce Development Board for \$500,000. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Inspire (Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems) grant will support recovery to work. Dogwood Health Trust provided a professional grant writer for this project and they have agreed to match the grant award (1:1) from ARC if we are successful.
- Our Board staff are working closely with multiple partners, including but not limited to the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, NC Community College System and AB Tech, to support the Pratt & Whitney project. Mountain Area Workforce Development Board provided workforce studies, letters of support and other assistance to this project over the last 18+ months during the recruitment phase. Now the hard work really begins. Kevin Kimrey, AB Tech Director of Economic & Workforce Development will make a presentation at the January board meeting on the status of this project and the workforce development efforts to support the talent needs of Pratt & Whitney.
- We have submitted a request to the NC Department of Commerce to authorize expenditures for virtual training platforms and outreach to support Pratt & Whitney.
- We are in the early stages of planning the spring 2021 WNC Career Expo. We are planning an in-person hiring event in the spring consistent with COVID19 restrictions. There will also be an online component to the career fair in addition to the in person career fair.
- Despite the tens of thousands of layoffs impacting our region, we still have many employers hiring. Our career center managers are indicating demand for talent by employers is now as great or greater as it was prior to the pandemic. Our board is maintaining a list of current job openings to highlight that there are still jobs available. This list is in addition to the thousands of job opportunities in our region available through NCWorks.gov. We are trying to share the news that despite a historically elevated unemployment rate, many employers in our region are now hiring.
- We have developed a professional NCWorks newsletter that is being sent to over 18,000 individuals in our Local Area registered on NCWorks.gov. This is one of our most effective and least costly ways to reach job seekers.

### 3. Administration

- NC State University's Rural Works internship program has reached out to us about the opportunity to host a NC State University student this summer as an intern. The internship will be paid for by a grant from the State Employees Credit Union (SECU).

- Continuing to host weekly COVID19 calls on Thursday at 1:00 pm, next call on Thursday, February 25 will feature Agustin A. Velasquez, Partnership Specialist, Atlanta Regional Census Center, Field Division – North Carolina, US Census Bureau. We have hosted calls recently featuring NC Department of Public Instruction Superintendent Catherine Truitt and NC Department of Labor Commissioner Josh Dobson.
- Hosted a retirement event for Bill Eaker to celebrate his 40+ years with Land of Sky Regional Council, the event featured an online meeting with 60+ participants and a clean vehicle drive by.
- Hosted the NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments (NCARCOG) Forum meeting which included representatives from our state's 16 COGs.
- Christina Giles is representing the Council on a statewide team to create a NCARCOG Impact Report. We anticipate we will create a regional impact report based on this template.
- Made a presentation to the Hendersonville Rotary Club on our region's economy.
- Made a presentation to the Council of Independent Business Owners (CIBO) about how the pandemic has impacted our region's economy.
- We have selected Epsilon as the Council's IT Managed Services provider following a procurement process. Epsilon will save the Council over \$40,000 annually.
- Hosted mandatory staff training for our Council's "The Manual"/Handbook held in partnership with Craft HR Solutions and the Council's Legal Counsel.
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee is continuing to meet biweekly with support from Craft HR Solutions. The committee is focused on staff training, external outreach, review of our personnel policy and employee handbook, hiring practices among other efforts. One goal of this effort is by 2022 our staff will reflect the diversity of our region.
- We offered collective impact training to staff on January 14 and 15. Leslie Anderson provided the training. 20 LOSRC staff participated and 5 staff from Southwestern Commission joined us.
- We have contracted with Deborah Miles to provide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training to staff. Deborah was selected based on evaluation from the Council's EDI committee.
- Submitted a request to the John M Belk Endowment (JMBE) for \$200,000 to support the Land of Sky Education & Workforce Collaborative. JMBE has already provided \$200,000 and they have been very pleased with the work of our region.
- Made presentations to the Buncombe County Commissioners and the Transylvania County Commissioners.
- Monthly staff evaluations are in process following the tool developed with the assistance of Craft HR Solutions.
- Danna held new employee orientation meetings for new staff members
- Supporting staff telework needs and many virtual meetings.
- Hosted multiple meetings on behalf of the NC Association of Regional Council of Governments (NCARCOG).

- Met with Triangle J COG to assist in development of regional EDI training for local government staff.
- Working with Susan Russo Klein on moving forward with the LOSRC nonprofit “Friends of LOSRC“, we are waiting on approval from the Internal Revenue Service.
- Working with the five Chambers of Commerce in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. The chambers would like to retain an outside firm to review the strategic plans of the chambers and local governments to determine areas of agreement for potential focus. LOSRC will assist in securing funding to support this effort and is incorporating this work into the CEDS.
- Hosted quarterly managers meeting.
- Participated in job interviews for Aging, ECD and Finance.

4. Area Agency on Aging

Upcoming Events

The Regional Aging Advisory Council will meet on Thursday, March 11, at 10:00am via Zoom. The presentation will highlight the work to establish a Buncombe County Active Aging Center, a “one stop shop” for services and activities for older adults in caregivers. Contact LeeAnne Tucker if you’re interested in attending.

Senior Tar Heel Legislature: The NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature will meet virtually on March 18 from 11:00am to 2:00pm. This will be the first meeting held in over a year.

Home and Community Care Block Grant Services: January 2021

Adult Day Care/Health Hours Provided	Meals Served	In-Home Aide Hours	Legal Services Hours	Transportation Trips	Home Improvement Projects
3,163	76,762	13,530	459	17,934	10

**Health Promotion/Disease Prevention: Welcome Brea Kuykendall to Land of Sky Regional Council! She was hired in February as the new Aging Program**

Specialist. Brea is a lifelong resident of the Asheville area. She has degrees from Western Carolina University: BS in Business Administration and Law and a Master’s in Health Sciences. Her research project proposal was “The Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health for Rural Communities.” She has extensive experience with Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and commercial/private insurance, and is well versed in HIPAA compliance.

**Family Caregiver Program:** We are launching a second *Harnessing Tech to Connect for Caregivers* in March. The Division of Adult and Aging Services has received funding from the CARES Act to purchase Trualta, an online program that prepares & supports families to extend the length of time that seniors age-in-place by building skills to help families manage care at home. This program will be accessible to Land of Sky’s Family Caregiver Program.

**Senior Companion Program:** The program remains on pause, with our temporary stipends extended until the end of March 2021 for volunteers. Our volunteers have been

running errands for their clients, in earnest, since November 2020. Most are in touch with their clients daily and keeping the program alive, in a socially distanced environment. We have recruited 3 new volunteers who are in the process of training to become a Senior Companion volunteers. We have launched a recruitment strategy that is covering Henderson County through radio ads starting March 2 for two months. We are being interviewed on March 2, at 8:05am at WHKP. In Madison County, we have begun radio ads and have a running interview each second Tuesday of the month at 9:00am on WHBK. We are working with Transylvania County and will hopefully have advertisements on their local radio station soon. We will be spotlighted on WLOS on Sunday, May 30, at 7:55am and will have two advertisements prior to our spotlight. We are using this “pause” time to bring new folks into the fold of being a Senior Companion Program volunteer.

**Ombudsman Program:** The Ombudsmen are continuing to follow the final re-entry plan from NCDHHS which outlined the safe procedures and protocol that are to be followed when resuming facility visits. Updated regulations are also being followed. Facility visits have not been able to be completed on a consistent basis due to the County Positivity Rates and COVID-19 Outbreaks.

Ombudsmen continue to advocate for residents through phone calls, email, and video calls. Ombudsmen are also in contact with facility staff to provide information, support, and review of new regulations. Informational emails regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, activities, and compassionate care visits were sent to facility Administrators, Social Workers, and Activity Directors.

Ombudsmen stay up-to-date on facility regulations around COVID-19 by attending numerous meetings. The State Ombudsman Office holds biweekly meetings for all NC Ombudsmen, and on alternate weeks, the North Carolina Ombudsman Members meet to discuss pertinent issues. The Ombudsman Program is also holding virtual meetings to discuss issues around COVID-19 and how various states are handling the pandemic.

Other updates:

- Regulations continue to state that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) continues to be unable to visit facilities however committee meetings are being held virtually and continuing education opportunities are being provided.
- CARES Act Funding will be utilized to provide personal amplifiers to facilities. The funds have also been used to create postcards about stimulus checks. These postcards have been mailed to all facilities in Region B and will be provided to residents.
- Three Aging Sensitivity classes have been scheduled. The Ombudsmen provide the training to the Blue Ridge Community College nursing assistant students in Henderson and Transylvania Counties.
- Zakit Levine, a student from Mars Hill University, is a new intern who is working with the Ombudsman Program until May 2021. Zakit is assisting the program in updating the Long Term Care Handbook and creating new presentations that will be provided to facility staff (i.e.: resident rights, managing difficult behaviors, etc.). She is also attending meetings which will allow her to learn not only about our program but about other issues within the aging community.

**Foster Grandparent Program:** Earlier in the year, Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) released a new brand strategy for the future, announcing it will now operate as “AmeriCorps.” This rebranding is part of a larger effort to grow

awareness of service opportunities for all Americans as well as to focus resources on promoting fewer brands to support all of our programs and build on AmeriCorps' brand equity. Along with the new name, CNCS revealed a new visual identity for the agency and all its programs under the two brands – **AmeriCorps** and **AmeriCorps Seniors** – to talk about CNCS programs collectively. Senior Corps is now AmeriCorps Seniors. While the agency's operating name is "AmeriCorps," its legal name will remain CNCS. The programs, their names, and their funding streams remain unchanged.

Volunteers of the Foster Grandparent Program remain on "pause" during the COVID-19 pandemic until it is safe for them to return to service. Our federal funder, AmeriCorps, has been responsive to the impact of COVID-19 on our program. AmeriCorps has authorized a temporary stipend payment to volunteers while our programs are on hold, through March 31. Volunteers are receiving regular phone calls from staff and mailings of relevant and educational materials to keep them informed and engaged. Volunteers also attend monthly in-service calls.

Foster Grandparent Program would also like to welcome Mackenzie Warren, a social work intern from Western Carolina University. Mackenzie will be working with our Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs until May 2021.

**Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty):** Five additional dementia caregivers have been enrolled for services (and are receiving services) since last report. 98% of the State Project C.A.R.E. respite funds have been distributed to 62 caregivers across the 15-county Western Project C.A.R.E. region and 64% of what has been distributed has been utilized.

As mentioned in the last report, Western Project C.A.R.E. has a secondary funding source this year: \$17,000 from the NC Lifespan Respite Care Coalition. These funds are being distributed in \$500 increments to newly enrolled caregivers. Respite options for caregivers are limited this year due to COVID. Most are choosing to hire private in-home caregivers to provide the respite care since overnight short-term facility care isn't feasible at this time due to COVID protocols, most adult day cares are temporarily closed, and as always, in-home care services provided by agencies are significantly more costly than services provided by freelance independent contractors and often times not as reliable or trusted by the caregiver.

**MFP Transitions Program:** Money Follows the Person (MFP) is new to Land of Sky Regional Council; however, the program itself has been around since 2005. The program helps the elderly and disabled transition from nursing facilities to their own home in the community or to live with family members. The program currently consists of 13 participants with five participants close to final transitioning. One individual will transition to his own apartment in Asheville and four other participants will be transitioning home with their family members. The goal is to have these participants home by May 1, 2021.

## 5. Mountain Mobility

- Mountain Mobility is working diligently to provide transportation to COVID vaccine sites for anyone in Buncombe County who needs transportation, regardless of whether or not he/she is a current passenger. Additionally, we are working to

provide transportation for the County's displaced/homeless population to a dedicated vaccine clinic in March.

6. NEMT

- There is significant uncertainty at the state level with Medicaid Transformation and LOSRC will be prepared to support Buncombe County as needed.
- Preparing a plan to provide NEMT services in FY20-21 as needed by Buncombe County.

7. Finance

- The auditors will begin compliance work in March. The major programs this year will be Aging and the Brownfields Program.
- Interviews for the Finance and Administrative Clerk are scheduled for the week of February 24. We have four qualified candidates.
- The budget process for fiscal year 21-22 is underway. Meetings with Aging and ECD are scheduled for February 19<sup>th</sup>.
- We are waiting for the US Department of Interior to approve the indirect rate for next year. The proposal was submitted in December. The rate was approved in March last year. The current rate is 40.63% and the proposed rate for next year is 44.22%.