J. Bennett

Roadway Design Unit Staff Meeting Minutes
January 29, 2001

John Alford announced that there will be a staff meeting on March 12, 2001 for the Project Engineers to voice concerns to the staff. The meeting will last approximately 2 hours.

Debbie Barbour attended the meeting and went over several items, which were discussed, in her Branch Staff Meeting.

- Debbie thanked everyone for all their hard work in the year 2000. She said, even though we didn't quite meet our $1.2 billion goal, we did maintain over $1 billion in let projects.

- Len Sanderson attended the Highway Branch Staff meeting and discussed the issue of requesting another engineering study for salary increases. He has also formed a task force committee to see why people are leaving and seeing in what ways we can recruit and retain people.

- She discussed a report on the results of FY 2000 projects of meeting the TIP R/W and Let dates. In FY 2000, in the R/W plans we had a 63% success rate of meeting the schedules, and on the Letting, we had a 78% success rate. The total combined success rate was 67%, and in past years, the success rate was 83% for R/W and Letting, in 1998 the rate was 64%, and in 1999 the rate was 80%. We need to look for projects to send to Private Engineering Firms to balance scheduled manpower with available manpower.

- Debbie sent out a memo to Rob Hanson listing several major planning studies that was underway. The projects were for Windsor Bypass, R-2514, New Bern Bypass, Greenville southwest loop, etc. Attached is the letter listing all the projects. These projects have been in planning for a long time and are questionable. A meeting will be held to go over these projects to see what the problem is and how to resolve them.

The report from the Transportation Finance Committee is in a draft form stating that we need more funds for maintenance costs, operational efficiency, and workforce issues. What the committee wants to make sure of is that DOT is working efficiently before they change anything. John Williamson's area will examine the process of R/W acquisitions and develop recommendations to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the process. Another item on the list was to determine the additional projects that DOT can complete using the design build process and project cost savings in using the design build process. There are three projects, which were selected for design build to be Let in the fall of next year (I-3311A, U-2827C, I-4400).

The Ethics Policy has been edited to explain what would happen if the consultants doesn't obey the contract. "To avoid even the appearance of impropriety while conducting the public's business, following their employment with NCDOT, officers and employees will be restricted from accepting any employment or contractual relationship with any business entity in connection with any contract that they participated in any of the following activities:

1. Drafting the contract
2. Defining the scope of the contract
3. Selection of the business entity for services
4. Negotiation of the cost of the contract
5. Administration of the contract"

1. Plans/Design Items

Drainage Summary

Max Price and Garry Lee have mentioned that employees are not going by the drainage summary (handout #1). Max stated that we were not putting drainage structures on separate lines. The reason he wants them on separate lines is because if you have one structure on a line with the top elevation and the invert elevations, it makes it clearer to the field people when they go to stake the boxes out. John has asked Max Price if the drainage summary doesn't go to him according to this handout, to send them back to him. Down the road, Max Price will be printing out automated quantity sheets.

Design Exceptions

John has recently received a number of design exceptions about the same time the plans have been turned in to plan checking. John would like to see design exceptions sent up somewhere between the Hydro and R/W stage. Make sure you are comfortable with the design exceptions and get them through the proper channels as soon as you can so we won't have any unexpected delays at the final plan stage.

Strip Maps

It has been mentioned to John that we are not doing what we are suppose to be doing as far as putting the right information on the strip maps and forwarding them to Right of Way. Please make sure your employees are abiding by the guidelines. Dewayne will form a committee involving R/W, Location & Surveys, and Roadway. This committee will determine who uses strip maps, what strip maps are used for, and possible simplification and streamlining of the process by taking advantage of current technologies.

R/W Plans for Recordation to L&S

Charlie Brown mentioned to John that they would appreciate Roadway sending the R/W plans for recordation to them as soon as possible.

Sidewalks Estimates

John Alford addressed the Standing Operations Committee about enhancement funds that were set up for sidewalks. Roadway did not have any involvement in estimates for these funds. If Laurie Smith calls you and wants a sidewalk estimate on a job, give her all the information you can. Be careful not just to give her the square yards cost because if she is looking for one to put in the TIP, it may be that you need to add curb and gutter or grading behind ditch.

C/A Fence at Noise Walls

John was called out to an Operations Staff Meeting. There are some places that noise walls are being placed 30 to 40 feet off the right-of-way line. Some communities have asked that we tie the fence to the noise wall so that they can have a bigger back yard. If the noise wall is within 5' of the R/W, we generally tie the fence to the noise wall. If the noise wall is offset more than 5', we can consider tying the fence to the ends of the noise wall; fencing the R/W and leave openings for the property owners to get back there so they can keep it landscaped.

C/A at Interchanges

Mike Cowan called John about the C/A at interchanges and he is concerned that as fast as we build interchanges, the –Y- lines develop. He would like for us to buy 1000' of control-of-access from the ramp each way. This is not practical in most cases so try to place an island along the –Y- line and limit the access within this 1000' to right-in and right-out.

1. **Plans/Design Items**

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.025 SE East of I-95

Just a reminder to your people that most projects do have .025 SE East of I-95. See the attached letter from Tom Shearin concerning use of the .025 pavement slope.

2. CADD/Electronic Items

D&C Manager

Your employees should be using D&C Manager on all projects now. Later on, without using D&C Manager automated quantities will not be possible.

Jimmy Norris Items

- Jimmy has sent out questionnaires to everyone to get their comments about one of the suggestions that was made to put their word documents inside a TIP directory. We have had some real problems in the past several months with the backups of our machines. Jimmy explained the situation and how it would work.

- Microstation J and GEOPAK 2000 update training will take place February 19, 2001. We cannot install the new versions until we have replaced 17 of 133 computers in Roadway. These machines are on order.

- On some projects we are not using proper file naming conventions. We need to make sure that when we send these projects out to other units we clean up the jpg files.

- The User group meetings will start again. Jimmy's group has obtained most of the names to be representatives for this group.

- Dewayne Sykes and Jimmy Norris had a meeting last week with R/W on the process of sending electronic plans to R/W. John Alford had sent out a letter in November on the two-phase process that we are going to try to follow. In the first phase, we were doing basically a Dual Process, and hopefully by the first of March, we will be able to drop the hard copy of R/W plans. What we have to address now is the overall plan distribution list for R/W plans. Continue to send hard copies of plans and electronic versions out as we doing now with one exception, you need to send ½-size detail sheets. You no longer need to send a hard copy of the rad files. You need to continue to make changes to the rad files and if R/W needs a hard copy, they will print it. Jimmy and Dewayne will continue to pursue with R/W and others the electronic transfer of R/W plans. We can expect additional changes in the process.

3. Administrative and Personnel Items

Family Leave/Community Service Policies

An employee is eligible for FMLA if they have been employed for at least one year and has been in pay status at least 1250 hours during a 12-month period. This will entitle them to 12 workweeks of paid or unpaid leave during any 12-month period for a qualifying condition. Pages 2-6 of handout #2 explains about the two categories more in-depth (Child and Serious Health Condition). Also on page 6, it explains about who is responsible for paying the employees insurance during this time. Page 8 explains whom the "Immediate Family" covers for this policy. There are also several forms, which need to be filled out by the employee and his/her doctor. These forms are to be turned in to Dianne to keep up to three years and to make sure that if the condition goes longer than one year, another form gets filled out by the doctor. **Note:** *Each medical condition will need a separate form filled out by the doctor and the employee gets 12-workweeks of FMLA for each case.* Any time taken off for medical reason due to any condition which a person has a form filled out, needs to be written on the FR-01 in the "Remarks" section the number of vacation or sick leave hours taken and it will be deducted from the 12 workweeks for the year.

The Community Service Leave Policy replaces the Child Involvement Leave Policy, Community Involvement Policy, and the Volunteer Participation Leave Policy, and it allows 24 hours per year for qualifying employees. The 24 hours will be credited to each employee on January 1 each year, unless they are mentoring/tutoring. If an employee comes in during the year, they will receive times as follows:

- Employees who work 15 days or less will earn 1 hour of CSL for that month.
- Employees who work 15 days or more will earn 2 hours of CSL for that month.

If an employee chooses to tutor/mentor in a school, they will receive one hour per week up to 36 hours per year. If the employee chooses to change options during the calendar year, the maximum hours that may be granted is the maximum allowed under the new option chosen minus the amount already used.

Example: 36 hours tutoring – used 15 hours tutoring
24 hours – 15 hours used for tutoring = 9 hours for remainder of year.

Read over the policy and **note** *each supervisor is to keep up with the hours your employees use.*

If there are any questions, please feel free to see Dianne for further answers.

On-Line Expense Vouchers

We will be starting to do the expense vouchers on-line. Until everyone gets trained, we will continue to do the paper version. It will add up the items, tell you if there are corrections to be made, you can approve it, John will approve it, and Fiscal will send you a check. All receipts still have to be sent for Fiscal to match up with your expense voucher before they will pay you. You can only get into your expense voucher, but certain people will have a security code in order to check or approve them.

Design Branch Staff Meeting Overview

Tom Harville discussed the English as a Second Language course. Seven to eight people have signed up for this course in the Branch. Mary Lu Garrison and Ray Tims were introduced. They are with Wake Tech and will handle the training for Wake County. The participants will be assessed to determine which level they need to begin their training.

Len Sanderson attend the meeting and went over the project delivery rate. He made the comment that our maintenance people are reactive and they need to be proactive. They don't fix a pothole before it gets bad enough to fix; they wait until it has to be fixed, and this is due to the lack of maintenance funding.

New Board Make Up

The Board will be reduced to 19 people. There will be one representative from each division plus five at-large. There will not be more than two from any geographic area. Three of the board members must be appointed from the other party, one experienced in environmental, one with port experience, non-urban area experience, and some with urban experience (MPO, mayors of towns), and one experienced in financing and accounting. Initially, the even numbered division board members will have a four-year term and three of the five at-large will have the four-year term. The odd numbered division board members will have a two-year term and the remaining two will have a two-year term. The Secretary and the Chairman of the Board of Transportation will be different people.

BSIPS

BSIPS will be complete in July 2002. They will be replacing the FR-01's, FR-11's, etc. with one system.

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AWS and Teleworking

There were no problems reported about either. Debbie said we could continue under the same guidelines for the alternative work schedule until advised differently.

Out-of-State Travel

If there is any out-of-state travel, make sure you have a 10-8 form filled out and approved. Out-of-state travel is frozen at the time.

Employee Appreciation Day

Employee Appreciation Day will be in May again. It was discussed whether to have a joint luncheon at Century Center like they do at the Transportation Building. Debbie and others were going to look into this. We will keep you up-to-date on this.

Computer Misuse

Debbie has asked that the unit heads remind their employees of the computer policy and no misuse of the computer will be tolerated.

Video Conference Room

There will be a video conference room center in Building 2 that should be ready by the spring. This will be in Margie Joyner's old office.

High Quality Wetlands

Charles Bruton's staff is working on a report to define high quality wetlands. Hopefully this will give more direction for the use of bridging wetlands.

4. Miscellaneous Items

AGC/DOT Conference Items

Kathy Lassiter, Danny Gardner, Marc Clifford, and John Alford attended an AGC/DOT conference at Wrightsville Beach last week. Comments which came out of the meetings concerning Roadway Design are:

- The Divisions are having trouble locating places to waste earthwork materials on projects. They would like for us to look at our projects to see if there are areas that we could utilize that waste.

- The Division personnel would like to have input into our proposed grades down East. They feel like they are catching a lot of heat for overrunning undercuts and adjustments to fill heights might reduce some need for undercut. The Division Construction Engineer has been added to the cc: on the "To Hydro" letter.

Correspondence

Debbie mentioned to John about the blue folders and other correspondence coming out of Roadway. Sometimes we are being too "snappy" and editorialize too much. We need to be sure we are more diplomatic in how we say things in these letters.

PMSS

John is concerned about the PMSS screens not being kept up-to-date. Please keep the PMSS dates up-to-date.

PDH's

The PDH's for courses given by DOT are on the DOT webpage. Listed below are instructions to find this website.

1. Go to "**Division of Highways Main page**" http://www.doh.dot.state.nc.us/
2. Click on **"Website Map"**
3. Under **"North Carolina Department of Transportation"** click onto **"Professional Development Hours for DOT Courses"**
4. Click on **"Year"**

If you are contacted by an attorney about a project, make sure you notify the Attorney General's office. They should contact our Attorney and then our Attorney will contact us.

cc: John Alford, PE
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Roadway Design Project Engineers
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