Georgia Partnership for Transportation Quality  
Air and Noise Subcommittee  
Meeting Agenda  
March 27, 2018  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Introductions

- Welcome, Soli cannot attend for other meetings. Meg Hedeen is present to fill in for Soli.

Brandon Batt- Consultant Subcommittee Chair    Miles Kemp- GDOT Subcommittee Chair

GPTQ Goals for 2018

- First thing, ideas we have for some new working groups.

1. New Working Groups

   a. Suggested Topics/Groups?

   b. Scoping & Assumptions WG – Need Volunteers/Lead

      i. Brandon and Miles met with Eric Duff and Laura Dawood. They brought up ideas for scoping assumptions working group. The idea to refine the TO scoping process; consider ideas, look at projects of different type/size, scoping spreadsheet, who/how are different assumptions are being made, etc. to try and get everyone on the same page. GDOT has some tools we usually use that may be beneficial to others. There have been improvements over the last year. Scoping meetings are providing a benefit. The concern is that the meetings do not always occur. The group would work through the end of the year and hopefully even past that point. Look at initial studies and follow up evaluations.

      ii. Brandon- Gather experience from a wide selection of experience and bring in personal experiences to the group.

      iii. Josh- So it’s not like a MOS? Miles- Not setting that as a goal, but could be used in the process. Different ranges, cutoffs may be useful (current MOS example 1-100 receivers). Level of effort varies by project; want assumptions to be fair. Other examples: permit info, elevation data.

      iv. Meg- MOS pre-negotiated, but effort we are trying to do is to try to improve contracting process by getting everyone on the same page on the scoping side. Method could be to define our process. If an item goes into the contract, we all understand what effort will go into that task. Our current concern is that assumptions are all over the place; want to get this handled on the scoping side.

      v. Miles- Get enough information in order to scope properly. Scoping spreadsheet open for alterations/improvements.
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vi. Luis- volunteered to be in that group.

vii. Gil- In addition to this group, talk to ARC, they had a slightly different goal, but along the same lines.

viii. Miles- Want to make sure everyone feels included. Please email any thoughts or ideas you have after the meeting so they can be utilized by the group.

c. Cross-Discipline WGs?

i. We have had discussions with the heads of both of these groups, and want the team leads to sit down with the groups to work together. Would like a cross-committee meeting (it might be useful to assess scale first).

d. History & Noise – State-funded Projects

i. For state funded, the requirements for noise are very limited. Only providing sound levels for eligible Historic resources for History’s documentation. Have been coming up with a template for best practices for modeling. Prior to the working group, Terri Lotti and Miles put together a policy for History addressing how noise affects historic resources. Came up with a quick and easy way to provide information to History without using the air/noise specialist. History has had a lookup tool to provide ballpark sound levels based on the type, layout, traffic, and other factors. The idea going into the policy was how to duplicate for the State that as that tool was FHWA’s. Two weeks ago, the State tool was rolled out. Projects not covered by the tool still need work from the air/noise specialist. Can scope for sound levels if needed, but we want the History SME to know when they can use the lookup table and when they need us to predict sound levels.

ii. Brandon- Do we have a lookup table currently? Miles- yes. Luis- Did you guys just run different scenarios? Miles- yes. Luis- can you send out one of the TMNs? Miles- Absolutely, the information will be on the FTP site if needed for reference. Amanda- Have you and Terri determined what type of projects you can apply this lookup table to? Miles- Yes and it mostly covers widening/typical alignment shifts/traffic increases. Meg- This tool is for Historians to use without needing to contact air/noise SME.

iii. Miles demonstrated the lookup table. Filters were used to select specific variables. DVH traffic max is 2,500. Gil- I can see why you would have a group working on this project. More state funding means more state projects. Miles- We want to make sure everyone going into scoping efforts is aware of this table. Again, it will be based on the type of project and if it fits in the lookup table. Meg- Bigger projects might need
more work, but for simple projects. Noise abatement would negatively affect the historic resource visually. Amanda- do we know what is listed as an impact according to History, no number, just ‘consider the audible effect.’ Miles- Not really, it has been loosely based on the FHWA criteria. We have impacted, not impacted. History has three levels No Effect, Effect with No Adverse Effect, Adverse Effect. We are not interpreting, but only providing the data to the Historian. Gil- So we are doing sound level predictions when it is not needed? Miles- History has been in the driver’s seat for the most part, but we are trying to streamline addressing their needs. Does not cover horizontal alignment or vertical change. We are in the best position to tell them what they can use to fulfill their requirements (for noise). Different scenarios can be added, bridge replacements, alignment change, etc. Brandon- a printed PDF of the sound results would be great, I think History would love that. Miles-Agreed. Want to make sure we are providing a process so that they use the tool correctly. Josh- History has wanted the difference from existing to build, but the process of how we came up with that information is less important. Brandon- seems practical. Miles- could be set up in a question format. This tool is new for everybody. Gil- Before, history would come to air/noise and say I need this information. The goal is for them to know if they can use the tool, do so; if not then they can come to us? Miles- Correct, but there are assumptions about what is present. Not all historic resources are identified by scoping. Needs to be grown out and it’s likely there will be a learning curve. Need to determine how to present and explain the tool to the historian. Amanda- So, are we going to be able to tell them no noise is necessary similar to a Type III? Miles- A good questions for the working group. WE should provide guidance on how to use. Ideally, the Historians should be able to handle most projects and noise prediction without the use of an air/noise SME. Miles will provide the final History policy from Terri. Clayton- Does this working group exist yet? Miles- No, just Terri and I so far. Could possibly use this for situations on federal projects where an elevation change is 3ft or more and we need to justify a Type III.

e. NEPA & A/N – NEPA Air/Noise Summary Updates

i. Particularly for updates for air and noise in the NEPA document. Concerns brought up stem from FHWA comments about how NEPA analyst is putting the air/noise information into the NEPA document. Some leave things out that others put in. We do not know what NEPA needs. We want FHWA to agree and be on board with information and expectations. This should be a quick working group. Anyone with NEPA experience as well as Air and Noise would be very useful for this group.
Group can explore the NEPA subcommittee chairs. Would likely coordinate with the NEPA GPTQ sub-committee chair for this group.

ii. One thing that Eric and Laura mentioned was the level of interaction with the subcommittee meetings. Suggested going through exercises and/or case studies.

2. GPTQ Exercises/Case Studies?

a. Example: Scoping a sample project together.

b. Responding to citizen complaints. What do you do if it’s a state-funded? Outside of project limits?

i. It would be good to compare and contrast the way GDOT and consultants handle such communications.

c. How do you handle existing barriers on a new Type I project? Do you only noise reduction/cost/etc. of the extension or do you consider the entire noise barrier?

d. How is traffic allocated on interchanges, roundabouts? How are truck percentages handled?

e. Brandon- Our thought was a 5-10 minute presentation. If you have a problem that came up in the field. How was it addressed? What should be the best practice? Miles- Could stir conversation about how to make approaches/methods better. Possibly update, policy, guidance, procedures. Brandon- I’d be willing to start, maybe with public involvement. Meg- Even things that didn’t work out.

f. Miles- Anything else?

i. Spencer- to the scoping group. What to do when the TO is approved, scope set, and then a change occurs that would have been included in the TO if known.

ii. Luis- The design-build process is not user friendly. Working group idea. Could we develop a quick way to identify if a better way to handle the design-build schedule? Contractor gets the final information well before the analysts. Miles- It would be good to know who is dealing with what and when. We have had a tough time applying our standard process to design-build projects. Josh- Is anyone approaching you with ideas or questions about how to improve things? Miles- Soli may have, but not that I can recall at the moment. Luis- My understanding is the contract/contractor and is the problem. Josh- We’ll probably need to bring NEPA and Office Innovative Delivery (OID) into this discussion. Miles- Soli will be involved as well moving forward.

Noise Assessments

a. Meg - Soli asked me to provide an update on the Noise Policy GA Tech was working on for us. Long-term goal was to provide modules for individual areas that are more interactive. The contract expired, so the information is a little scattered. Hopefully with TNM 3.0, a new document can be created as opposed to unscrambling the guidance document we have. Meg has read the guidance document and it is neither useless at the moment. If you have any ideas/approaches for new or clearer guidance, please provide them to Miles or Spencer.

b. Miles - A lot of information has been reiterated from FHWA, but new & useful information is sparse. The goal is to have a consistent approach so everyone has it as a reference, but we'll likely be pulling useful guidance and information out of the draft PCM to make available for reference/use.

c. Meg - The goal would be to have all helpful information one place.

2. Noise for State-funded Projects – Templates & WG Status

a. Amanda and others were working towards creating a template for sound predictions on historic resources.

b. Amanda - Guidance document submitted and everyone can take a look; staying at GDOT for now and conferring with History. Lookup table will need to be incorporated in guidance.

c. Miles - This still has a place for projects that do not fit in the lookup table.

d. Josh - would it be helpful if you got several examples from others?

i. Amanda - Yes that would be very helpful.

3. Noise for Section 106 Resources (History) – Look-up Table

a. Covered in Working Groups D above.

Air Assessments

1. CO Programmatic Agreement Updates

a. FHWA Categorical Finding for CO on Federally-funded Projects

i. Early 2017 the screening model was approved by FHWA. We have been getting a lot of questions for projects that really do not fit in the screening tool's layout. FHWA recently approved for use a categorical finding for CO on federally-funded projects. CO Categorical Hot-Spot Finding on EPA's website. An increase in flexibility/level of assumption removing the need for a CO hot spot modeling (or screening) for many projects the PA/screening tool does not cover.

ii. Miles demonstrated some of the website information. Tool is on their website where you enter information for the year, grade, angle of
intersection cross street, etc. Then you click “Submit Form” and the tool runs and presents your results with either a “Y” or “X” for passing or failing within the acceptable bounds of each variable.

iii. Gil- EPA provides guidance on how to write this into your document to meet the legal requirements.

iv. Luis- So when can we start using this?

1. Miles- It’s technically approved for use, we are just making sure that FHWA is accepting the new language. Hopefully we will start using this by the end of next month.

v. Gil- important for public to know we are not relaxing the standards, just confirming that this method is meeting those standards more efficiently.

vi. Spencer- Is this for federally-funded projects and the other screening tool for state funded?

1. Gil- Can use this tool for state funded projects as well, and vice-versa (within the bounds of the CO PA with FHWA).

Roundtable Discussion

- Training Opportunities?
  - TNM 3.0? No set training dates, but they are mentioning it more and more in Bowlby training classes. It will have tools to let you use Microstation or ArcGIS.
- SharePoint Usage/Access?
  - Anyone needing access can apply on GDOT’s website and Miles or Spencer can approve you.
- Amanda- is anyone else having trouble getting on ProjectWise?
  - Nobody really seemed to be having the same problems.
- Next Subcommittee Meeting & Suggested Topics?

Action items:

- Need volunteers for working groups. (Zach and Amanda on board for Noise & History working group)
  - Miles will provide final history policy from Terri.
- Brandon to provide a 5-10 minute presentation at our next subcommittee meeting to test out if ‘case studies’ would be an effective tool for collaboration and addressing specific questions/issues for Air or Noise.
- Miles will send a link to follow to apply for access to OES’ SharePoint.
- Link to be provided to FHWA’s CO screening webpage