

Land of Sky Regional Council
August 23, 2023
Regular Meeting at our office or via Zoom



When joining the virtual meeting, Delegates are requested to mute themselves and to un-mute for discussion or moving on orders of business.

Delegates are requested to state their names when moving on orders of business. Thank you!

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order (12:15pm)**
- II. Invocation**
- III. Pledge of Allegiance**
- IV. Roll Call**
- V. Consent Agenda**
 - A. Modification/Approval of Agenda
 - B. Approval of the Previous Minutes (June 2023)
- VI. Comments by the Chair and Delegates Roundtable**
- VII. Public Comment**
- VIII. Presentation**
 - A. Jennifer Mundt, Assistant Secretary of Clean Energy Economic Development, NC Department of Commerce
- IX. Executive Director's Report**
- X. Important Dates**
 - A. Next regularly scheduled Board of Delegates meeting is Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at Land of Sky Regional Council office, 339 New Leicester Hwy., Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806
 - B. Regional conversation series "Future Forward WNC 2050" will begin today following the Board of Delegates meeting at 1:15 pm. Attendees can join in-person or remotely. The same meeting link can be used for the Board of Delegates meeting and "Future Forward WNC 2050". The focus is where our region will be in 2050? The August kickoff will feature Chairpersons of the County Commissioners in our region. September will feature Mayors in the region. October will feature healthcare leaders at Advent Health, Charles George VA Medical Center, HCA/Mission Health, MAHEC and Pardee UNC Health Care.
 - C. French Broad River Tour: Transylvania County (September 8), Henderson County (September 15), Buncombe County (September 22), Madison County (October 6)
- XI. Adjournment (1:00 pm)**



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Consent Agenda
- Item Number:** V. Consent Agenda:
A. Modification/Approval of the Board's Agenda for August 23, 2023
B. Approval of Minutes from the June 28, 2023, Regular Meeting
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the June 28, 2023 Regular Meeting
- Background:** Item B. June 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes Recap:
Quorum was present to conduct business at the June 2023 meeting and the minutes provide a recap of the Public Hearing for public comments regarding the FY 23 Budget Ordinance. The meeting also included the Chair and Delegates' comments regarding economic strategies used by local governments, the types of development local jurisdictions are trying to attract, and resources that are provided as incentives to attract the desired economic development. Presentations were provided by Julie White, Deputy Secretary of Multi-Modal Transportation, NCDOT and by Scott Buchanan, CEO of the WNC Bridge Foundation. The FY 24 Budget Ordinance was approved under Old Business.
- Staff Recommendation:** Recommend approval of the Consent Agenda
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented.

**Land of Sky Regional Council
Board of Delegates
Regular Meeting**

June 28, 2023

Minutes

- I. Call to Order – Chair Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Fitzsimmons led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. Roll Call – Nathan Ramsey called the roll. The following members were present: Terri Wells, Tim Love, Jason Chappell, Sandra Kilgore, Jonathan Kanipe, Pam King, Archie Pertiller, Marueen Copelof, Barbara Jeter, Preston Blakely, Barbara Volk, Forrest Gilliam, Daniel Cobb, Mason Blake, Missy Hendricks, Patrick Fitzsimmons, Elisabeth Ervin, Justin Tyler, and Bob Tomasulo

Guests Present – Elizabeth Teague, Julie White, Scott Buchanan, Tyler Teresa, Rep. Caleb Rudlow, Freddie Harrill, Rachel Ager, and Linda Giltz

- IV. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the Board’s June agenda, and the minutes of the May 24, 2023 meeting was presented for approval.

Quorum was established by roll call.

Terri Wells moved to approve the Consent Agenda that included today’s agenda and the previous meeting minutes. Sandra Kilgore seconded the motion, which was carried out upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

- V. Public Hearing Regarding the FY 24 LOSRC Budget Ordinance
Chair Fitzsimmons opened the public hearing for the purpose of hearing comments from the public regarding the FY 24 LOSRC Budget Ordinance.

No public comments were received during the public hearing.

Chair Fitzsimmons closed the public hearing with no comments received regarding the FY 24 Budget Ordinance.

- VI. Chair’s Comments and Delegates Roundtable –
Chair Fitzsimmons encouraged Delegates to share information of interest from their jurisdictions focused on the topic of economic development strategies used by the local jurisdictions, the types of development that are attractive, and the resources utilized as incentives to attract that economic development.

Delegates Roundtable –

Tim Love – Shared that Buncombe County views economic development as a way to drive jobs and development. However, the County also promotes the development of infrastructure including broadband and the outdoor economy. A key piece of economic development is the development of the workforce, including bringing individuals into the workforce that have not traditionally been a part of that. This is achieved through working with programs such as Inclusive Hiring Partners (IHP) and Accelerate Buncombe, which are facilitated by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. Additional funding for McCormick Field is also meant to bring economic benefits to the community. The outdoor sports park is also a way to increase economic benefits for the community. Broadband and assuring high-speed internet access is being expanded to include access for everyone.

Jason Chappell – Shared that Transylvania County uses the traditional economic incentive policies based on what a development could offer the community. The County promotes what is available in the area and quality of life aspects that benefit the community. The County is specifically working to increase the Bio-Tech industry to make it a focus in the County and the hope is to grow a research park in the western region of the state.

Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville works to increase economic development by elevating affordable housing to assure that the requisite workforce is available for businesses that want to relocate to the area. This includes the promotion of public/private partnerships. The City is also seeking out economic development that promotes energy efficient jobs and a focus on other employment sectors that are not dependent on tourism.

Pam King – Shared that The Town of Black Mountain currently has over two million visitors a year. The Town is working to focus its economic development activity through the receipt of a grant from NC Commerce to grow the recreation sector. Recently, The Town has partnered with the NC Wildlife Commission for recognition as a Mountain Heritage Trout Fishing site. As part of this recognition, the Town is focusing a lot on improving local assets. Looking forward and planning to participate in the NC Main Street Program. The Town just passed its FY 24 budget, raising taxes for the first time in 25 years.

Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard focuses on assets readily available including outdoor recreation opportunities. The City has focused on attracting small to medium manufacturers that produce products that highlight the available assets in the area. The City is part of the NC Main Street community and has an active downtown program. The City is partnering with the Transylvania Alliance to do a lot of the outreach to attract business and economic development. Recently, the City received the largest grant ever (\$24.5 million) to transform the Ecusta Trail. Economic development is very diversified.

Barbara Jeter – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock has many attractions that promote the economic viability of the area including the Carl Sandburg House and the parks in the Village.

Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher has an economic development plan that focuses on partnering with Henderson County and the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development (HCPED) to train and prepare the workforce in order to attract economic development. One of the larger opportunities in Fletcher was the closure of Continental that allowed the Town to take over part of the former manufacturer's facility.

Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville partners with HCPED and working with the current industry in the area and to promote the area for economic development activities including the purchase of land to set aside for future industrial development. Incentives that could be offered include running water/sewer lines to the property and if the property is going to be annexed into the City some tax breaks could be offered, as well. The downtown area focuses economic development on enhancing the area for the community and for the benefit of economic development.

Forrest Gilliam – Shared that the Town of Marshall focuses on making sure that there is affordable housing and adequate water/sewer infrastructure. He noted that the loss rate on the water system has been greatly reduced over the past few years and the Town is very pleased with this achievement. Working with the County and Mars Hill and across the state line to improve the resiliency of the community. The goal is to achieve moderate growth, support downtown business, and provide a good standard of living. He noted that short-term rentals are a challenge.

Daniel Cobb – Shared that the Town of Mills River works very closely with HCPED and provides incentives for new business to come to the area. The Town works to provide the proper environment for economic development to occur by protecting the community and assuring there is potential for growth.

Mason Blake – Shared that the Town of Montreat offers over 20 miles of the best trails in the region. The Town is seeking state funding to develop a handicapped accessible trail.

Elisabeth Ervin – Shared that the Town of Woodfin works to attract visitors to its natural resources, greenways and blueways. By the end of 2023, the Town should have its comprehensive plan in place promoting affordable housing and jobs that provide for self-sufficiency.

Justin Tyler – Shared that he is currently working with Kimberly Clark and noted a steady increase in the cost of raw materials and that compensation for labor is certainly behind inflation. For the most part, industry is working to catch up on wages. On the overhead side, electricity rates in the area are fairly below average, which is attractive to industry considering establishing themselves in the area.

Bob Tomasulo - Shared that when communities are undertaking economic development to not overlook the aging community that can offer a lot of skills and experience.

Erica Anderson – Shared that the Workforce staff toured the community college in Wilkes County where they are running an IT training program. She noted that Asheville has collaborative workspace and that could be a benefit in the more rural areas, too. Affordable housing is a big part of having the requisite workforce to attract business and industry. The diversity of the area is a positive aspect when discussing economic opportunity.

VII. Public Comment –

Chair Fitzsimmons called for public comments. No public comments were made.

VIII. Presentations –

A. NCDOT Multi-Modal Transportation –

Julie White, Deputy Secretary, shared about NCDOT's Multi-Modal Transportation efforts including how it is key in the changing landscape of mobility. She noted that NCDOT is able to partner with communities to develop grant applications for federal transportation funding. Her presentation included many statistics including that a growing amount of the population has its transportation needs unmet. Over a million people in the state do not own a vehicle. This includes those under the driving age, the aging community, those living in poverty, handicapped individuals and others without access to a private vehicle. She noted that the vision is to promote equitable outcomes where there are not transportation barriers, providing equal access to opportunities and services through the provision of layered multi modal services, connected mobility hubs, Complete Streets and the facilitation of mobility as a service. Deputy Secretary White shared that NCDOT is constantly thinking about the future of mobility in the State, promoted through NC Launch, an initiative that examines current planning and future opportunities. She noted that NCDOT has a winning strategy for winning federal discretionary grant dollars through the use of the transportation disadvantaged index tool. The Complete Streets goal is a big focus for the multimodal team as it is a strategy that promotes the quality of life for communities. Focused on technology and how personal devices can be used to move from point A to point B seamlessly. She shared about microtransit which is a technology enabled transit service that typically uses shuttles or vans to provide pooled on-demand transportation with dynamic routing. The goal is to partner with communities to offer this service state-wide. The Deputy Secretary shared about the governor's goal for the electrification of transit fleets. Information was provided on the S-Line – Gateway to the Southeast which is passenger rail supported with public dollars that includes a corridor representing the only opportunity to create additional capacity and connect the Southeast and Northeast with regular high performance rail service. In pursuit of passenger rail, a federal planning grant of \$900k was utilized to develop infrastructure improvements in the communities that the S-Line runs through with the goal of increasing economic opportunity. She noted that intercity passenger rail service has the highest ridership in its 32-year history and the department is engaged in developing additional passenger and freight rail opportunities throughout the state.

Tristan Winkler expressed appreciation to Deputy Secretary White for the support from her team for the grant funding for the Ecusta Trail.

B. WNC Bridge Foundation –

Scott Buchanan, CEO, shared about that the Foundation began in 2003 beginning as the CarePartners Foundation. In January 2019 the WNC Bridge Foundation was established. The Foundation exists to connect communities to a healthier future and to create lasting change through local partnerships. Efforts are focused on expanding access and equity for vulnerable populations throughout the region. He noted that health includes the social determinants of health rather than only physical/mental health. The Foundation offers five community initiatives including Childrens Services, Health Scholarships, WNC Greatest Needs, Rathbun House, And

You're Special throughout 18 counties and offers many volunteer opportunities. Partners include Dogwood Health Trust that has provided funding utilized for home repairs, among other items. The WNC Bridge Foundation has retail outlets to provide funds to support the Rathbun House. A grant program is also funded through endowment investments and since 2019 over \$17 million has been awarded through the grant programs. The focus of the grant programs is IMPACT grants and AIM grants. Scott Buchanan shared that the next initiative is a revitalization of the Shiloh Community.

IX. Old Business

A. Approval of FY 24 Land of Sky Regional Council Budget Ordinance

Nathan Ramsey shared that the FY 24 Budget Ordinance was presented at the May meeting and posted on the LOS website for public review and comment. He noted that the organization is in a great financial position. No dues increase is proposed, and a 7% cola is included for all full-time staff. The total proposed budget is over \$21 million for the upcoming fiscal year.

Terri Wells moved to approve the FY24 LOSRC Budget Ordinance. The motion received a second and was carried out upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

X. Executive Director's Report

Delegates and guests were encouraged to reach out to Nathan Ramsey with any questions or comments regarding the report, which is available in the meeting packet.

Nathan

XI. Important Dates –

A. The LOSRC BBQ is planned for Tuesday, August 15 from 11:30am to 1:30pm at the Town of Fletcher Bill Moore Community Park.

B. The next LOSRC Board of Delegates meeting is planned for August 23, 2023 at the Land of Sky offices beginning at 12:15pm.

C. The Regional Conversation Series "Future Forward WNC 2050" begins August 23, 2023 at 1:15pm with the Chairs of the County Commissioners from the Land of Sky Region.

XII. Adjournment –

The meeting adjourned as there was no further business.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

Subject: Executive Director's Report

Item Number: IX. Executive Director's Report

Responsible Party: Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director

Attachment(s): Executive Director's Report for August 23, 2023

Background: The Executive Director's Report provides updates and relevant information regarding projects and initiatives for LOSRC Departments/Agencies.

Staff Recommendation: N/A.

Suggested Motion(s): N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council
Executive Director's Report
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey
August 23, 2023

1. Finance

- FY23-24 budget will be over \$28 million after Budget Amendment #1.

2. Economic and Community Development

Kudos!

- July 14, 2023, LOSRC staff Traci Thompson facilitated a Regional Housing forum to over 110 attendees. There were numerous speakers and information exchanged. Materials will be shared on the updated housing webpage.
- June 12, 2023 – **Land of Sky Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ 301)** was approved by the US Secretary of Commerce under Board Order No. 2144 with a service area including all of Henderson County and portions of Buncombe, Haywood, Jackson and Transylvania counties.
- July 19, 2023, LOSRC and Southwestern Commission held a joint Brownfields training in Waynesville. Presentations were made by NC Department of Environmental Quality staff and can be shared upon request. They have limited funding for brownfields assessments for properties in specific counties. Please contact erica@landofsky.org for more information.

Announcements

- EPA has a new regulation for **lead-based pipes** in water/sewer systems. Funding for replacement is available here: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure/lead-service-line-replacement-funding>
- All inventories must be completed by Oct. 16, 2024. Please contact us if you would like assistance with more information. More information to complete an inventory is here: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/drinking-water/lead-service-line-inventory>
- We are assisting residents sign up for discounted internet service (ACP) in Buncombe County. Please contact ian@landofsky.org for more information.

Upcoming Events

- Register here:
<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=3IF2etC5mkSFw-zCbNftGdUTtyHrASFPudSbBde1UhtUNFFZVEQwV1YxMVFPN1VIVIRGNjRQOTc0Ui4u>
-

Grants

EDA Published Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity

EDA has published a new Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (PWEAA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The FY23 PWEAA NOFO outlines application submission requirements and review procedures for applications received under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) programs.

EDA invites application from communities who experienced a major disaster declaration (2021-2022)

The Economic Development Administration is accepting applications to support the development or implementation of disaster recovery projects in communities that were adversely impacted by a major disaster declaration in 2021 or 2022. **In North Carolina, the following 9 counties currently meet these criteria based on impacts from Tropical Storm Fred:** Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Madison, Mitchell, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey. Funds can support a wide array of construction and non-construction projects that facilitate economic recovery. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact the NC EDA Representative, Hillary Sherman, at hsherman@eda.gov to discuss their project and program requirements. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. For more information and to apply, applicants should access <https://sfgrants.eda.gov/s/funding-program/a2j3d0000000twKAAQ/fy-2023-disaster-supplemental> to learn more and complete their application.

NC Division of Environmental Quality accepting applications for lead service line replacement projects

The North Carolina Division of Environmental Quality (QEW) is accepting application for lead service line replacement projects. Applications are being accepted on an ongoing basis. To apply, applicants should complete the Project Solicitation Form for Lead Service Line Replacement projects and then submit the completed form online at the submittal portal. Both links to the form and the portal are available at: [Lead Service Line Replacement Funding | NC DEQ](#).

FEMA Seeks Input for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program

FEMA has issued a Request for Information (RFI) to identify sources that can provide support for the BRIC program's non-financial Direct Technical Assistance initiative. FEMA seeks to learn from organizations of different sizes and reach who may be a good fit to meet all or some of its needs. Click [here](#) to access the RFI.

USDA Rural Development's Resource Guide for Rural Entrepreneurs

USDA Rural Development has a new resource out for rural entrepreneurs that is full of insights, with excellent case studies and information for rural entrepreneurs on starting and growing their business. [CLICK HERE](#) to download the guide and share with your business community.

The AIEI Releases an Investment Playbook for Rural Areas

The Appalachian Investment Ecosystem Initiative (AIEI) released a [resource playbook](#) on investments and economic development opportunities in rural areas. The playbook focuses on Appalachia.

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

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, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IJA Discretionary Funds.
4. MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.
5. 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.
6. Haywood County adopted their Greenway Master Plan at their February 6th meeting
7. 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 East Patton Avenue Corridor Study.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The MPO & RPO were awarded a Safe Streets for All Planning Grant from USDOT to cover Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties
11. The City of Hendersonville was awarded a feasibility study grant through the NCDOT Paved Trail Study program for the Above the Mud project.
12. The City of Brevard was awarded a feasibility study grant through NCDOT Paved Trail Study Program for the Old Hendersonville Hwy Shared Use Path.
13. 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
14. RPO staff assisted local partners in applying for NCDOT's first rural Carbon Reduction program CRP, call for projects. The Carbon Reduction program is a new formula program in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021. RPO staff submitted three projects for local partners, totaling approximately \$1.2 million, with additional projects being developed for future calls.

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.
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. Submitted a GoldenLEAF grant for Brevard for Times Arcade Alley stormwater drainage improvements, and developing a second application for a stormwater masterplan update.
2. Developing a riparian area management plan with Hendersonville.
3. Supported a community rain garden workshop in Black Mountain at Lake Tomahawk Park. Also, put the TOBM Public Works bioretention project out to bid, and updating the Upper Swannanoa Rivery Watershed Restoration Plan.
4. Updating the WNC Stormwater Partnership website and working with partners on a regional stormwater-focused public education media campaign.
5. Completed the stormwater infrastructure inventory for Weaverville, and started working on concept designs for green infrastructure improvements in the Nature Park and at the Community Center.
6. Completed the environmental review for the ARC-funded water/sewer extension in Mars Hill.

Housing

1. May 11, 2023, LOSRC staff Scott Adams and Paul Moon researched and presented on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to over 90 attendees (via Zoom) for a continuing education event sponsored by American Planning Association - North Carolina chapter (APA-NC).
1.5 hour recording of presentation here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNZbVFrQKn0>
2. A Recovery Housing grant was awarded by Dogwood Health Trust to develop a regional program. Additional grants will be sought from HUD and NC Commerce to further fund and develop the program.

3. Staff continues to lead the 15-county Housing Asset Inventory project and has begun reaching out to Local Governments and Housing nonprofit providers to gather information. The project is a multi-COG effort funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Dogwood Health Trust.
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 is researching best-practices in consideration of formation of a regional housing trust fund.
6. Staff is updating the Housing page on the website.

Economic Development/Workforce

1. Staff are working with several jurisdictions to develop and submit applications for economic development projects.
2. Staff is developing an ARISE application for the WNC Innovation Park in collaboration with Upstate South Carolina's Appalachian COG and Southwestern Commission.
3. 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.
4. The Creative Manufacturing Sector Development plan is final! Please contact us for a copy of the plan.
5. 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
6. 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.
7. The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
8. 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.

Foreign-Trade Zone

1. May 11, 2023 - hosted a Basics of FTZs seminar at the NCSU Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Approximately 45 attendees heard from companies using the FTZ program in upstate SC, consultants in the FTZ field, US Customs and Border Protection officers from the Greenville-Spartanburg Port of Entry, and LOSRC staff.

2. June 6, 2023 – presented FTZ information at the Buncombe County Business Response Workgroup meeting.
3. June 8, 2023 – presented FTZ information at the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development Transportation Components Clusters Meeting.
4. Finalized Zone Schedule and Operator Agreement template to reflect recent Board Order.
5. Met with various stakeholders, including US CBP Headquarters staff, potential FTZ users and potential program sponsors.

Resilience/Hazard Mitigation

1. Supported Pew Charitable Trust in the organization of the WNC Resilience Symposium and presented LOS Regional Resilience Program to community and state representatives.
2. Completed an introductory webinar tutorial for AccelAdapt, and testing new tool features. Also organizing a summer AccelAdapt User Group meeting.
3. Continuing to develop the DPR9 THIRA/SPR with Buncombe County.

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
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. Staff are partnering with the Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club to host an electric vehicle car shows on April 22nd in Hendersonville, and April 30th in Asheville.
5. Staff are working on developing a EV planning map for the region.
6. 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) and Ian Baillie (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 staff is assisting Buncombe County Schools to submit a full application for a \$3.8 million grant through the US Department of Energy Renew Americal School program to upgrade HVAC systems at 4 elementary schools. (Initial Concept Paper was approved February.)

2. WRP staff is assisting Tri-Hishtil an industrial greenhouse in Mills River with energy use analysis to support Duke Energy's incentive programs.
3. WRP staff performed a "greening assessment" for Wicked Weed Brewing's Brewpub in support of two state environmental recognition programs.
4. WRP staff complete energy assessment report for Congregation Beth Ha Tephila in Asheville.
5. WRP engineers complete an energy assessment for White Labs in Asheville.

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.
2. Staff will begin working with Rosman on a ~~Parks and Recreation Plan~~Park Master Plan and Pedestrian Bridge to connect their school with the town park and downtown.
3. Staff are assisting Madison County identify Parks and Recreation priorities with their P&R Board.

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 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 if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.

3. Aging

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

- Here is the current FY24 aging-related ARPA funding for Region B:

ARPA Funding Source	Initial ARPA Allocation	FY23 Spending	FY24 Remaining
Home Delivered Meals	\$468,723	\$169,296	\$299,427
Congregate Meals	\$290,898	\$116,358	\$174,540
Supportive Services	\$691,123	\$183,263	\$507,860
Family Caregiver	\$272,833	\$63,505	\$209,328
Health Promotion	\$84,119	\$16,065	\$68,054
Ombudsman	\$16,167	\$0	\$16,167
Planning and Admin	\$266,076	\$35,430	\$230,646

Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff updated the Caregiver Resource Directory and started distributing them throughout the region.
- Staff in collaboration with AARP will present Powerful Tools for Caregivers online. On average, there are 8 caregivers participating in each session.
- Staff co-presented with MountainCare a webinar for the series: “Helping the Helper” on the topic of Caregiver Resources to employees of Champion Credit Union. There were 24 participants in the webinar.

Foster Grandparent Program

- Currently, 32 volunteers work one-on-one with children ages infant to 8 years old. Four new volunteers are in the process of completing their criminal history checks.
- Staff is focused on recruitment efforts to build volunteer capacity with the goal to recruit ten volunteers by the end of the calendar year.
- Staff is preparing for a Technical Assistance visit from our AmeriCorps Seniors Portfolio Manager.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Evidence-based program offerings continue to increase with nine new A Matter of Balance coaches trained in July and several current active programs including A Matter of Balance and Walk with Ease.
- Staff partnered with AARP and Blue Ridge Pride Generation Plus to deliver the monthly segment of Rainbow Inspirations in July.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA, Trader Joe's, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In July, 79 bags of groceries were distributed to residents, and 553 "Neighbor Knock" visits were conducted.

Home and Community Care Block Grant: FY23 end of year services report:

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 3,324
- Meals: Delivered/Congregate = 191,704
- In-home Aide Hours = 15,511
- Legal Services Hours = 2,270
- Transportation Trips = 40,800
- Home Improvement Projects = 64

Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion (serves 37 western counties):

- Staff Completed 56 in-person facility visits (July/August). Provided training, materials and support as needed.
- Staff provided program training to Buncombe County Department of Social Services – Aging Programs. 24 Aging Programs staff attended and completed training.
- Staff provided program training to Lincoln County Department of Social Services – Aging Programs. 17 Aging Programs staff attended and completed training.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator - Central counties: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin

- The central region has a caseload of 12 older adults.
- One client is preparing to transition September 1. Three others are hoping to transition October 1 the assessments with the Program for All Inclusive Care (PACE) can be completed in time to be officially enrolled in their services and have plans of care completed. The others continue to look for affordable housing and family and friends who can provide the necessary support when in home aide services cannot be present.
- Not included in the caseload numbers, the central region had four withdrawals from the project. Two withdrew because their needs exceeded what their supports could provide, and two withdrew because they discharged from the facility before home and community services could be established.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator - Western counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Yancey

- The western region has a caseload of 22.
- The western region has completed two transitions.
- Out of the 22 Money Follows the Person clients currently being served, 19 are waiting for safe, affordable housing before they can transition.

Ombudsman Program

- From April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, the Ombudsman Program provided General Information and Advocacy to 507 people.
- The Ombudsman Program attended both the North Carolina Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman and the North Carolina Long Term Care Ombudsman Association Quarterly Meetings. Topics such as facility construction and voting rights were discussed.
- The Ombudsman Program is planning the Community Advisory Committee Retreat which will be taking place in September 2023.

Outreach and Assistance

- Staff continues to highlight important dates, events, and information on the Area Agency on Aging Facebook page. Reaching over 1,500 Facebook users each month. As well as sending out the WNC Aging Updates Newsletter twice a month reaching around 1,000 individuals.
- Staff is coordinating outreach opportunities throughout the region. Examples Asheville Newcomer Club, Bounty and Soul Food Market, MedAssist Madison County, UNETE, and many other opportunities that are coming up this fall.
- Staff have assisted with phone calls and emails asking for help with things like housing, transportation, and other aging resources.

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

- Staff has distributed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (\$12,500 thus far) to 21 dementia caregivers in the LOS counties allowing caregivers who received these funds last fiscal year to keep their respite care services in place for a little while longer.
- Staff has distributed \$500 vouchers for respite care services using Project C.A.R.E. funds (i.e. NC funds) to 12 caregivers in 8 of the 15 counties of the Western PC region.
- Staff is traveling to caregivers' homes for enrollments again after having taken a pause from doing so during the pandemic.

Senior Companion Program

- We have launched internally our new database with AirTable. This is an interactive database that has organized our volunteers, stations, clients, and referral wait list. It has the capability to be linked to our website so that referrals can be made directly to our program, it will also allow for paperwork for our stations to be linked, and it will be able to email and contact folks. This is very exciting.
- We now have 62 active volunteers and have received 4 more recruits. We will be placing these new recruits on a wait list until the first of the year once we have had a quarter to consider our budget. We will be seeking opportunities with AmeriCorps Seniors for more funding to increase our volunteer pool.

Senior Tar Heel Legislature

- Senior Tar Heel Legislature liaison, Dee Heinmuller, met with other Area Agencies on Aging that support Senior Tar Heel Legislatures via zoom to discuss recruitment and other retention strategies for volunteers.
- The Buncombe County Delegate presented Senior Tar Heel information at a local senior center.
- The Senior Tar Heel Legislator information will be shared in August at the SE4A conference at Grove Park Inn, in concert with the topic of advocacy.

4. Administration

- Land of Sky Regional Council Summer BBQ was held on August 15 at Town of Fletcher Bill Moore Community Park. Around 350 people attended, this was our largest BBQ ever. We also celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Land of Sky Area Agency on Aging at this event. We received many compliments from the community about the event, food and the fellowship. Special thanks to Western Carolina University as our presenting sponsor. This event was a team effort but appreciate the leadership of Christina Giles, Administrative Services Director, for her leadership and work to make this BBQ possible. The Town of Fletcher was a gracious host and we appreciate their Parks and Recreation staff for supporting us.
- French Broad River Tour is scheduled for September and October in each of our counties. The presenting sponsor is UNC Asheville. Special thanks to Dr. Mary Roderick, Planning Director for her work to organize these tours. There will be no cost to attend. The Madison County tour will include a float tour at Hot Springs.
- Nathan attended UNC School of Government Basics of Economic Development course in Chapel Hill.
- Nathan attended the NCARCOG Forum meeting at Tryon International Equestrian Center hosted by Foothills Commission. Erica attended the COG Directors meeting as Nathan was at the UNC SOG course in Chapel Hill.
- We will be hosting a Recovery To Work forum presented by the Development Districts Association of Appalachia (DDAA) in early October.
- The inaugural George Masa Award for Environmental Stewardship will be conferred this year. The award is a partnership between North Carolina and Tennessee development districts: Land of Sky Regional Council, High Country Council of Governments, First Tennessee Development District and East Tennessee Development District. The award will rotate among the two states with Tennessee selecting the recipient this year.
- Nathan attended the Development Districts Association of Appalachia (DDAA) board meeting in Tannersville, Pennsylvania. Nathan is the NC representative and DDAA represents the region served by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).
- Congressman Chuck Edwards held a staff meeting at the LOSRC office and Nathan was able to share about the work of the Council.
- Nathan attended the NC Workforce Credentials Advisory Council meeting in Raleigh.
- LOSRC Leadership Team held a half-day retreat about the Council's strategic plan. We appreciate Erica for leading our strategic planning process.

- NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Secretary Elizabeth Biser and her staff met with Nathan and Erica as well as Tracy Wahl, DEQ Regional Brownfields Manager at the LOSRC office.
- Nathan attended the NC Board of Science Technology and Innovation (NCBSTI) meeting in Asheville.
- LOSRC hosted a table at the Asheville Chamber WomanUp event.
- Nathan attended the NC Military Business Center meeting at AB Tech.
- Nathan and Erica attended the Asheville Regional Airport groundbreaking event on their new terminal.
- Nathan attended the WNC Communities Hall of Fame luncheon.
- Nathan attended tour of the new Mission Health Behavioral Health and Wellness Center.

5. Strategic Initiatives

- **Mountain Mobility** – Mountain Mobility finished FY23 in a strong position with passenger trips up almost 10% from FY22. This has been our strongest year since the unofficial end of the pandemic. Of those trips, most of the increases were found in our Trailblazer services. Black Mountain Trailblazer trips were up more than 68% over FY22, with Enka-Candler coming in strong at 18% higher, and North Buncombe finishing with close to FY22 totals.
- **INspire** – Land of Sky increased the scope of the reentry/recovery work in July by adding an additional service funded by VAYA Health. **Transitions to Community Living (TCL)** is a new program offered to assist people with mental health challenges who live in facilities transition back into the community with social supports. VAYA Health asked Land of Sky if we would be willing to take on this work, and Brandon Manson, INspire Program Manager, was excited to accept the challenge. We have hired four Certified Peer Supports to carry-out this important work in our region. Currently, the TCL Peer Supports are in a series of trainings and hope to begin this work in earnest in August. INspire has applied for funding for additional Peer Supports from VAYA Health and Dogwood Health Trust. Additionally, we may have an opportunity to begin contracting our Peer Support services to other entities in Western North Carolina. We supplied a proposal to Cherokee Indian Hospital to provide two Certified Peer Supports to assist their patients battling substance abuse disorder. If we are successful in this proposal, we may look at ways to sustain INspire by providing these types of contracted services to other organizations in our region.
- **GO PLACES** – The GO PLACES team has begun accepting participants on the North Carolina side of the project and is continuing to work with the Eastern Tennessee Development District to get staff in place there. Philip Cooper, original Project Director for GO PLACES, transitioned to become the full-time Executive Director of Operation Gateway in June, and Gene Ettison has taken over as Project Director. We have also hired Erika Bowman as Project Coordinator for the NC side of the project. Erika has

lived experience and comes to Land of Sky from the YWCA of Asheville. We're excited to welcome her to the team.

- **Healthy Opportunities** – The HOP staff has been very busy working with car repairs for Medicaid clients. Since the first of May, Land of Sky has provided more than \$50,000 in car repair assistance to eligible clients. This has been a needed service in our area as not many organizations have the capacity to provide this level of assistance.
- **NEMT** – Active cases 1262, Clients Utilized Services 545, Total number of trips 4,221 (this number is low as several vendors didn't submit their trips in July until August, those trips will be reflected in the August numbers)

6. Workforce

Labor Market Update

Unemployment rate in Mountain Area region was **2.9%** as of June 2023. As of June 2023, **4,724 more** people working compared to June 2022. **1,100 more** people working compared to May 2023. Unemployed Individuals by month (Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties): June 2023 7,551

Total Labor Force **227,882**

Total Employed Labor Force **221,288**

As of June 2023, the Asheville metro has a record number of jobs, people working and the number of people in the labor force. Asheville metro now (as of June 2023) the lowest unemployment of any NC metro at **2.9%**. This rate is down 0.5% from the metro unemployment rate of **3.4%** of one year ago. All counties in our region have an unemployment rate lower than the statewide rate of **3.4%**. Buncombe has the #2 lowest unemployment rate of any NC county at **2.8%**, Henderson has the #3 lowest unemployment rate of any NC county at **3.0%**..

Buncombe **2.8%**

Haywood **3.1%**

Henderson **3.0%**

Madison **3.3%**

Transylvania **3.3%**

Asheville ranked #3 for monthly job growth by metro at 0.5%.

Mountain Area WDB Labor Market Overview:

[Mountain Area WDB Overview | LEAD Analytics \(ncommerce.com\)](#)

- We have received \$500,000 from USDOL ETA for National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) funding to support Evergreen Packaging workers. Southwestern Workforce

Development Board will be receiving \$6 million. We are working closely with SWDB to help Evergreen workers and local businesses. There will be funding for worker re-training, education and on-the-job training contracts. Employers who hire a dislocated worker may receive a reimbursement for the employee's wages of up to 75% for up to six months depending on the skills gap. **This funding can serve dislocated workers beyond Evergreen workers.** We have \$6.5 million for the next two years through this grant. Our #1 priority is to expend these funds to benefit our region's employers and dislocated workers. Contact the MAWDB and SWDB business services staff to learn more.

- "\$19 per hour and beyond" career fair was held on Thursday, June 29 at the WNC Ag Center's Expo Building. Over 350 job seekers attended with 100+ employers participating offering more than 4,000 jobs. We ran ads in The Mountaineer, Smoky Mountain News, WPTL radio station in Canton, targeted facebook ads and ads on the Asheville Radio Group stations in an effort to attract Evergreen workers.
- Career pathways outreach project for Mountain Area Careers is underway with Amplified Media focusing on the Construction/Skilled Trades and Tech/IT sectors.
- We are far above the 20% federal mandate for work experience expenditures in our youth programs for PY22-23 at 268% of the goal. This performance was the highest in NC. Our board has failed to meet this threshold for the past two years although we have been very close to 20%. We appreciate the hard work of our board staff and youth contractors to exceed the 20% WEX mandate.
- We are working with the NC Department of Commerce on the Fierce Fellows program to support former offenders.
- Southwestern WDB OJT staff will be working in our region to support employers who are hiring dislocated workers.
- We will be working with Asheville Chamber to support MFG Day.
- WNC Career Expo is scheduled for October 25 at the WNC Ag Center..
- We are evaluating a regional talent analysis focused on engineering and perhaps other occupations/sectors as follow-up to last year's WNC Talent.
- We are working to set up a career fair in early September with possible locations at Asheville Outlets or Biltmore Church. The goal is to locate the career fair as close as possible to Haywood County.
- Engaged with Explore Asheville regarding Leisure & Hospitality workforce development task force
- We are in discussions about a follow-up to last year's WNC Talent labor market study with special focus on engineering and other high tech/innovation occupations

FRENCH BROAD RIVER TOUR

The French Broad River is believed to be one of the oldest rivers in the world. The Cherokee referred to the river by different names: Poelico and Agiqua ("broad") in the mountains of the headwaters; Zillicoah upriver of the confluence at present-day Asheville; and Tahkeesteh (racing waters) from Asheville downriver. Europeans referred to the French Broad River as "French" as the river was located in French controlled territory and to distinguish this river from the Broad River in the foothills which was in British controlled territory.

The river bisects the Land of Sky Region beginning near Rosman close to the South Carolina border and it flows through the region to Hot Springs near the Tennessee border. Recent studies indicate that the French Broad River has an economic impact of over \$2 billion annually. The river is a drinking water source, recreational amenity, and it sustains life, industry and agriculture in our region. The river is in many respects cleaner today than at any time in the past 70+ years but the river also faces significant threats. Part of the river is classified as impaired and with population growth projected to be around 125,000 over the next 25 years, there will be more runoff and erosion unless we take action now.

Land of Sky Regional Council will offer a tour of each county in our region with a focus on how we can work together to protect the French Broad River while supporting the growth and development of region.

September 8, 2023: Transylvania County
9:00 AM - 2:30 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

September 15, 2023: Henderson County
9:00 AM - 2:30 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

September 22, 2023: Buncombe County
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

October 6, 2023: Madison County
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

You can sign up for one county tour or all four. There is no cost to participate. We are grateful for our sponsors for making this tour possible. Lunch will be provided along with snacks.

MADISON



BUNCOMBE



HENDERSON



TRANSYLVANIA

PRESENTING SPONSOR



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