

## Transit projects speeding ahead

By Taft Wireback  
Staff Writer  
News & Record: Greensboro, NC

Friday, Nov. 30, 2007

HIGH POINT — Road projects are moving ahead across the Triad, the regional airport is growing and its FedEx hub is on schedule to open in 2009, but the Triad's transportation future still is tinged with doubt.

That was the take-home message as regional leaders in business and government gathered Thursday afternoon to hear from the state Department of Transportation, Piedmont Triad International Airport and FedEx.

"Got any kids? Send 'em my way," quipped Rod Melvin, managing director for FedEx Air/Ground Freight, in promising plenty of part-time jobs and a magnet for other businesses when the hub opens.

The tone of uncertainty came from state Secretary of Transportation Lyndo Tippett , who said the state has far more projects in this region and throughout the state than the anticipated revenue needed to pay for them.

The future likely will include toll roads and possibly even transponders used by motorists so they can pay fees to state government based on the miles they drive, he said.

"In years ahead, I will tell you, you're not going to see any major new roads that are not toll roads," Tippett said.

Say what? Not only that we may even have to pay fees to state government based on the miles we drive, he said. Say what again? Join the discussion at the Debatables blog.

Tippett, Melvin and PTI director Ted Johnson briefed the group of about 100 at the event, hosted jointly by the High Point Chamber of Commerce and the Greensboro Partnership.

On the plus side, Tippett ticked off a number of important Triad road projects nearing completion, in various stages of construction or in the final planning stages.

They include two new legs of Greensboro's western loop between PTI and Interstate 85 at a cost of \$218 million, improvements to Business 85 and High Point Road, and progress along the fledgling Interstate 73 and 74 routes in Guilford and Rockingham counties.

Johnson had good news to report on a variety of fronts at PTI, including the expansion of discount passenger airline Skybus as well as construction of several HondaJet buildings and Cessna's potential expansion of its maintenance hangar.

Construction also is going smoothly on a 9,000-foot runway related to the hub and a connecting taxiway, he said.

"That's not just a FedEx runway. It will be used by all folks," Johnson said.

A major interchange with Bryan Boulevard to accommodate the hub should be ready next summer, he said.

FedEx's Melvin said hub construction is far enough along that workers are installing sophisticated, package-sorting equipment inside.

"It is going to help us relieve congestion in the New York/Newark area, as well as be a gateway for traffic from Miami to New York," he said of how the hub will figure in FedEx's package and freight distribution system.

The FedEx official struck the most resonant chord with his audience, however, when he talked about the hub's likely economic boost for the region.

"Whenever we put up a hub, it serves as a magnet to other companies," he said. "They want to be in close proximity so they can integrate their product through it and, essentially, have a gateway to the world."