

**Minutes of the Wilmington Urban Area
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: February 27, 2003**

Members Present:

Harper Peterson, Chairman, Mayor, City of Wilmington
Lanny Wilson, Board of Transportation Member
Jason Thompson, Councilman, City of Wilmington
Betty Medlin, Mayor, Kure Beach
Jane Gilbert, Council Member, Leland
Julia Boseman, New Hanover County Commissioner
Eulis Willis, Mayor, Town of Navassa
Bill Sue, Brunswick County Commissioner

Staff Present:

Mark Tinkler, Senior Transportation Planner, City of Wilmington
Lawless Bean, TDM Coordinator

Special Guests - Citizen Advisory Committee Members Present

Jim Medlin, representing the Community Growth Planning Transportation Team
Kristi Tomey, representing the City of Wilmington
Sarah Brooks, representing New Hanover County
Mike Newkirk, representing the Town of Carolina Beach
Harold King, representing the Town of Wrightsville Beach
David Heglar, representing the Town of Kure Beach
James Marlowe, representing Brunswick County
Stuart Smith, representing the Town of Belville
Sherman Davis, representing the Town of Navassa
Dick Scott, representing the Community Growth Planning Transportation Team

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Harper Peterson called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

2. Approval Of Minutes:

Mr. Wilson noted a few minor changes to the minutes from the December 19th meeting. He said he would email the changes directly to Mr. Tinkler. Taking into consideration those changes, Mr. Wilson made the motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Sue seconded it. It carried unanimously.

3. Old Business:

Mr. Tinkler updates the members on the progress of obtaining original signature for the MOU. It is well on the way to completion and will be sent to the State after the signatures are completed.

4. Public Comment:

Mayor Peterson reviewed the purpose of the Public Comment period of the meeting for the benefit of the audience. He then asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak. There was no one in attendance that wished to make any comments.

5. Introduction of the Citizens Advisory Committee members:

Mayor Peterson welcomed the new members of the Citizen Advisory Committee. An introductory reception was held at 4:30 prior to the regular TAC meeting. Citizen Advisory

Committee members were invited to stay for the meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee. The next meeting for the Citizen Advisory Committee will be held in the First Floor Conference Room on Thursday, March 20th at 4:00pm. Mr. Thompson, who took the lead on establishing the Citizen Advisory Committee, welcomed the members and thanked them for volunteering their time to this committee.

6. Addition of WTA and NHTA Chairpersons as non-voting members of the TAC

Mr. Tinkler said there are already non-voting members on the Transportation Advisory Committee. He felt that it was an oversight that WTA and NHTA were not included. He recommended that they be included because they have a significant stake in the area transportation system.

Mayor Willis asked if the CSX Railroad in Navassa could also be included as non-voting member. Mr. Tinkler did not know if it would be appropriate to include private companies. However, he would like to see them involved somehow. Mayor Willis explained that railway right-of-way is always a consideration for the Town of Navassa. Mr. Tinkler said he is not sure but will check and get back with Mayor Willis. Mayor Peterson agreed they should participate in some capacity. They should be aware of the meetings and the agendas we address and the issues that may involve them. Mr. Wilson suggested the possibility of bringing them into the Citizens Committee. Mayor Peterson suggested that we get some clarification on the possibility of inclusion into the TAC as non-voting members. Mr. Tinkler said if there is no problem and it is the wishes of the committee, he will bring a resolution to the next meeting for consideration. Mayor Willis said he would talk to the railway officials in Navassa to determine if they are interested in the proposal. Mayor Peterson asked if anyone knows of any other agencies that should be at the table or at least aware of the agenda of the TAC to bring it to our attention.

Ms. Gilbert made the motion to approve the addition of WTA and NHTA Chairpersons as non-voting members of the TAC. Mayor Peterson seconded the motion. Mr. Tinkler said if there were questions that Chris McNamee and Dick Scott are present.

Mayor Willis asked if any possibility to expanding bus service to the Navassa area. Ms. Gilbert pointed out that there is currently a study in progress. Mr. Tinkler said that it is the Transit Merger Feasibility Study project. They are trying to get WTA and NHTA merged before services are expanded outside New Hanover County. Mr. Wilson asked if it is possible just to extend the service, with it being just across the bridge. Plus, if we are going to request additional funding, now is the time because if legislation goes through they are getting ready to increase public transportation spending 25%. As part of the Transit Merger Feasibility and Master Plan project, the City ordinance establishing the WTA was just redefined to take full advantage of the existing state legislative authority to provide service within 30 miles of Wilmington. So, technically it is possible now for WTA and in the future for a new transit authority to provide a route to the Navassa area. It is just a matter of coming up with the funding. Mr. Wilson said if can obtain the funding, we should provide the service. Mr. Wilson said he will see Ms. Perry, who is head of the NCDOT Public Transportation Division next week and see if she can come by and meet with Mayor Willis and see if there is something that can be done. Ms. Bean and Mr. Tinkler agreed that Brunswick County should be brought in. Mr. Wilson suggested that a meeting take place March 18th to discuss the possibility of bring public transportation to the Navassa and Leland area.

Mayor Peterson asked if there was any further discussion regarding the motion on the floor. The vote to approve the motion to add WTA and NHTA as non-voting members on the Transportation Advisory Committee was taken and it passed unanimously.

7. Discussion of Draft Planning Work Program FY 2003-2004 (Due to NCDOT March 1st)

Mr. Tinkler advised that the TCC approved this PWP and recommended for approval when the TCC met on February 12th. He explained the entire focus of next year's work program would be on developing the long range transportation plan and the travel demand model development in support of that. The new long-range transportation plan five-year update is due at the end of August 2004. We need to transfer all possible resources to that. Due to increased allocations for next year as well as unexpended allocations from previous years, we do have the possibility to fund several consultant efforts and we have been receiving input since December. The TCC also approved and recommended that all three feasibility studies be funded. Mr. Tinkler asked if there were any questions and comments.

7.i. Carolina Beach North End Traffic and Circulation Study

This has been an important issue with the town of Carolina Beach. The town council is fully behind this feasibility study. The study is to look at the traffic circulation issues for the whole north end of Carolina Beach between the canal and the ocean. The cost for this project is \$25,000. There were no questions on this item.

7.ii. Military Cutoff Corridor Collector Street Preliminary Engineering Feasibility Study

The engineering feasibility study will be necessary prior to selection of the exact footprint to be reserved. (Mr. Tinkler noted that the NCDOT feasibility study considering the entire corridor between Military Cutoff Road and the route 17 Bypass as approved in December would be a separate project) Mr. Sue said he had no problem with the study but at the same time we should look into sources to buy the property in the corridor or we could be in the same situation as in the south end of the county.

7.iii. Minimum Footprint Grade Separated Interchange Feasibility Study for College Road and Oleander Drive

Mr. Tinkler explained the intent of the study is to have creative design engineers take an "out of the box" look at this intersection and see if there is a non-traditional solution to the problems at the interchange at a lesser cost. The traditional solution constructs College Road as a viaduct at the cost of \$170 million dollars. Mr. Wilson asked the cost of the study. Mr. Tinkler stated it is shown at \$50,000. Mr. Wilson suggested that another solution is to contact the NCDOT to buy into it. Mayor Peterson said the intersection is failing dramatically and someone must look at possible solutions. Mr. Wilson suggested this would be an opportunity to get input from the state engineers in Raleigh and possibly save the cost of the feasibility study. Mayor Peterson agreed that is a great idea and suggested that this item be pulled off the PWP but still find a study vehicle to look at this intersection. He asked Mr. Wilson how he suggested we expedite this study. Mr. Wilson said we should call the design engineers down and ask them to come up with a less costly solution. Mayor Peterson asked if this could be done quickly and Mr. Wilson suggested possible meeting next Thursday, March 6th. Mr. Tinkler suggested that he could bring a resolution to the next meeting outlining this request.

Mr. Thompson asked how would the funds that were set aside for this portion to be used. Mr. Tinkler said if this was not funded, this portion of the PWP funds could be added to the contingency fund balance for the next year. The TAC could also fund another project. Mr. Tinkler reminded everyone that this PWP must be approved tonight. If it is approved minus this item the PWP could always be amended later.

Mayor Peterson then made the motion to approve the Planning Work Program FY 2003-2004 minus the study for the College Rd./Oleander Dr. intersection. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. The vote carried unanimously.

The next resolution in conjunction with the PWP is the Certification of the MPO Continuing Planning Process. Mr. Thompson made the motion to approve the resolution. Mayor Medlin seconded the motion. With no further discussion the vote carried unanimously.

8. 2004-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Tinkler reminded members that the TIP did not have to be adopted tonight. The MPO TIP review session with NCDOT in Raleigh takes place next Thursday. Mayor Peterson and Mr. Sue will be attending a meeting with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Allen Pope and the officials with the NCDOT. This is a final negotiation session for the MPO to reach agreement on anything outstanding.

Mr. Sue questioned the cost of item #2 (8.ii.) on the meeting agenda – Unfunded TIP Project for Wilmington Traffic Signal Control System Replacement. Mr. Tinkler apologized for the confusion regarding this item. Mr. Tinkler explained that originally the TCC was seeking to fund a feasibility study for the Wilmington Traffic Signal Control System Replacement project. Upon further consultation with NCDOT Traffic Engineering, it was determined that a feasibility study would not be required as the needs and replacement specifications for the system were known and that this project could move straight to the project development process as a TIP project. Mr. Tinkler clarified that the only project added to the Unfunded TIP is the traffic signal system replacement project.

Mr. Tinkler then explained the resolution before the committee regarding the need for a New Regional Transit Administration, Maintenance and Transfer Facility. It is being requested that this project move from the unfunded to the funded list if possible.

Mr. Sue brought up the point regarding the addition of items to the Unfunded List while items currently on the list are being pushed back further and further. An example is the widening project of Village Road. Ms. Gilbert agreed with Mr. Sue that there are a lot of urgent needs that are being pushed aside. The Village Road project has been on the books for years. Mr. Wilson told Mr. Sue he understood his frustration and if there is anyway to expedite the project, we need to try to do that. Mayor Peterson suggested that this become an item for discussion at the meeting in Raleigh next week.

Mr. Tinkler advised the members that he removed the State Port project from the unfunded project list. He changed the resolution to reflect that it is only requesting support for Congressional Earmarking. Mr. Tinkler apologized for any confusion this may have caused. The NC State Ports is not seeking funds from the same funding sources as the roadway projects in the TIP. Ms. Markham with the State Ports in Raleigh clarified for the members that they have worked closely with the NCDOT to make sure the funding is coming from the correct funding sources. This should help the Wilmington area by bring in new federal dollars for improvements.

Mr. Wilson suggested we seek funding to provide public transportation service to Navassa be added to the list. Mr. Tinkler explained that a project would need to be developed first, and would begin with the planned meetings in Navassa in March.

Mr. Wilson mentioned that one of Governor Easley initiatives is to utilize \$700 million dollars worth of bonds that were designated for use in the intrastate system. They are going to redirect that money to be used for existing facilities. This will provide a 25% increase in our public transportation funds to be spent over the next two years. We need to move quickly because there will be many requests for these funds if that legislation goes through.

Mr. Tinkler said they are working closely with the Public Transit Division and NCDOT to compile a list of projects for requesting Congressional Earmarking. We are looking at \$20 million dollars a year. So far on the draft we have over \$16 million dollars on the list for Wilmington.

Mayor Peterson reminded members our purpose tonight on this agenda item is to give direction to the committee going to Raleigh for the MPO TIP Review Session with these projects. Mayor Peterson suggested we walk through the item one at a time for clarification.

Mr. Sue requested that Mr. Tinkler provide him with a list of all unfunded projects on the TIP by priority before the TIP is approved. Mr. Tinkler said the TCC will discuss the issue of ranking of projects at the TCC meeting on March 12th and report to the TAC.

Mayor Peterson asked that the resolution to add the purchase of two trolleys to the 2004-2010 TIP be brought for a vote. The motion was moved by Mayor Peterson and seconded by Mr. Sue. There was no further discussion and the vote carried unanimously.

Mr. Wilson suggested we might need to prioritize the list for congressional earmarking. Mr. Wilson said it would be beneficial to establish a priority list that we would like Congressman McIntyre to pursue. Each Congressman will have a certain amount to designate under the new legislation and it would provide direction on what is the top priority for the MPO. Mr. Wilson suggested that we provide him with a list of our top 3 projects for funding. Mayor Peterson agreed that a list be put together before the next meeting. Mr. Wilson said all members should be contacted for their contributions to the list. Mayor Peterson asked Mr. Tinkler to help coordinate a meeting for this purpose. Mr. Tinkler recommended that we address project prioritization at the next regular meeting of the TAC.

14. New Business (moved forward on the agenda:)

Mayor Peterson requested members to consider an item of new business while there was still a quorum for voting. He turned the floor over to Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson said he would like the members to consider two resolutions. The first is to address a resolution similar to that which was passed recently by the RPO, which is to bring Interstate 74 and tie it into the bypass in Brunswick County. The second resolution is to request that the newly formed Turnpike Authority study the Southern Bridge. Mr. Wilson said both issues are in the forefront and coming up quickly.

The motion to bring I-74 into Brunswick County was made by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Sue. With no other discussion, the vote was unanimous in favor.

The motion for the Southern Bridge Feasibility Study to be included in the initial three projects by the Turnpike Authority was made by Mayor Peterson and seconded by Mr. Sue. There was no discussion and the vote carried unanimously. Mr. Wilson asked that the resolution be sent to Secretary Tippet, Governor Easley, and to all our congressional delegation.

9. Presentation on the Household Travel Survey:

Mr. Tinkler passed out the information materials from NuStats on the upcoming travel survey. The public relations campaign is to begin very soon. First travel day will be after the Azalea Festival. Mr. Tinkler asked that members share this information with everyone.

10. Presentation by Bicycle Advisory Committee Chair – bicycle capital project priorities:

Mr. Chris O'Keefe, chairman of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, passed out information on the Master Bicycle Route Network Plan. The planning process has been underway for the last five years. The plan's purpose is to identify desirable origins and destinations and determine the most desirable routes for connecting neighborhoods. Mr. O'Keefe thanked everyone for the support they have received. Mayor Peterson asked Mr. O'Keefe to attend the Greenville Loop Road Corridor meeting. A public hearing is being held May 1st at Bradley Creek School regarding the reduction of speed limits and the concerns for safe use of the bike lanes along the corridor.

11. Spring Transportation Summit/Kickoff for Long Range Transportation Plan Update:

Mr. Tinkler said the tentative program being reviewed tonight is a work in progress. Mayor Peterson said they want this to be a presentation that the entire public can understand and touch on key issues related to transportation. The summit will be televised. Mayor Peterson requested that Ms. Bean participate in the development of the programs for the summit. Future organizational meetings will be held and information will be provided to members at the March TAC meeting.

12. Project Updates:

a. Kerr Avenue Widening – NCDOT project scoping meeting –

Mr. Tinkler said there was a meeting in Raleigh February 7th with NCDOT and the preliminary design phase is moving ahead

b. Route 17 Bypass – Brunswick County –

There have been two public meetings this month. One on the Cedar Hill Road interchange in Navassa and the following week on the entire Brunswick County section of the bypass. NCDOT and their consultant plan to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement by the end of 2003.

c. Market Street Traffic and Safety Corridor Study –

The State Traffic Engineers Office and the City of Wilmington will join together to conduct a 12 to 18 month study of Market Street from Colonial to Porters Neck. They will look at traffic safety issues.

d. Wilmington Multi-modal Transportation Center

Moving forward again. Proposals are due March 6th.

e. External Cordon Travel Survey

This is the second part of the Travel Survey for the travel demand model. The RFP is out as well and is due March 6th. This survey will take place during the same time period as the Household Travel Survey. It will identify everyone traveling into, out of, and through the area and which routes are taken.

13. New Associate Transportation Planner:

Mr. Tinkler announced that Mr. Jonathan David has accepted the position as Associate Transportation Planner. He will begin April 7th.

14. New Business:

Mr. Wilson said he had one more item of new business. He would like to ask the MPO to send a letter to Congressman McIntire acknowledging his efforts in obtaining funding for the terminals at Southport and Fort Fisher. Mr. Tinkler asked Mr. Wilson to forward the information to help him draft the letter.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:58

Respectfully submitted

Mark Tinkler
TCC Chairman

/pb