

Meeting Minutes

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: January 25, 2006

Members Present:

Lanny Wilson, Board of Transportation, Chair
Catherine Brunjes, Council Member, Wrightsville Beach
Tim Fuller, Mayor, Town of Kure Beach
Alan Gilbert, Mayor Pro-Tem, Town of Carolina Beach
Laura Padgett, Council Member, City of Wilmington
Bill Saffo, Council Member, City of Wilmington
Bill Sue, Commissioner, Brunswick County
Chuck Thurlow, Commissioner, Town of Belville
Tommy Wallace, Commissioner, Town of Leland
Eulis Willis, Mayor, Town of Navassa

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Senior Planner
Joshuah Mello, Associate Planner
Aruna Reddi, Associate Planner
Lawless Bean, TDM Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Mr. Wilson welcomed the new members of the Transportation Advisory Committee. He asked the members to introduce themselves for the benefit of the new members in attendance. Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Kozlosky to prepare informational notebooks for each of the new members of the board.

2. Approval of Minutes for the December 12th Meeting

Mr. Thurlow made the motion to approve the minutes and Ms. Padgett seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment Period

Mr. Wilson asked if anyone would like to make any comments to the group. No one in the audience requested to speak.

4. Old Business

a. Expansion of the WMPO Planning Area Boundary - Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Kozlosky reviewed the expansion of the WMPO boundaries for the members. The boundary expansion is planned for the area encompassing the Cape Fear Skyway project in Brunswick county, as well as including the Hampstead area of Pender County. The TAC verbally endorsed the expansion a few months ago and Mr. Kozlosky told members the WMPO is now going through the formal process. As part of that process, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be approved by the TAC and local jurisdictions.

In reviewing changes to the updated MOU, Mr. Kozlosky told members with the addition of a 12th member to the TAC, there may be the possibility of a split vote. Therefore, staff included a second voting member from New Hanover County since they are the second largest entity based on population.

Ms. Padgett moved that we accept the MOU. Mr. Williams seconded the motion.

Ms. Padgett requested that before the TAC votes on her motion to accept the MOU, she would like to suggest that the WMPO consider making a representative from the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (CFPTA) the additional voting member since they have regional impact. She asked if members from other transportation authorities are on other MPOs. Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that the appointee must be an elected official or an operator of an area transportation system.

Mr. Sue asked how much population is left when you consider the City of Wilmington, Kure Beach, Wrightsville Beach, and Carolina Beach. Mr. Kozlosky told him he did not add those towns into the equation; and proportional population was excluding those municipalities. Prior to the proposed expansion, the City of Wilmington contributed 52% of the cost to the WMPO; the next largest donor jurisdiction was New Hanover County. Those figures were based on the population in the 2000 census. Mr. Sue asked if it would be subject to change. Mr. Kozlosky said it would be up to this committee. Mr. Sue said their side of the river should have about 30,000 additional people in the next 10 years and all that will be in the WMPO area. Mr. Sue pointed out that the composition of this board needs to have equal representation.

Mr. Saffo agreed that as population begins to increase, it makes sense for those jurisdictions to have more representation.

Ms. Padgett said she thinks as public transportation grows, it would be reasonable to have a vote because the system serves more than just New Hanover County and Wilmington.

Mr. Wilson said the problem he sees is that if Brunswick County were to decide that they wanted to become more involved in public transportation through Brunswick County Transportation and have their own authority, we could be facing a request from them to also be a part of the WMPO. Ms. Padgett said there have been a number of issues that involve public transportation and the authority does get funding through the WMPO. Therefore, she would like to amend her motion that we accept the MOU with the change that Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority be additional voting member rather than New Hanover County. Mr. Fuller seconded the substitute motion.

Mr. Willis asked if this had been discussed with the New Hanover County Commissioners and because Mr. Kopp was not in attendance. Mr. Kozlosky told members that Mr. Kopp is out of town but staff has had conversations with him prior to this meeting and discussed the possibility of having two representatives from New Hanover County. Ms. Padgett told members she is not trying to reduce New Hanover County's membership but is looking to diversify the board so that we have direct public transportation input.

Mr. Wilson asked if members feel it would be appropriate to table this for a month so that New Hanover County could have a chance to address the suggestion. Ms. Padgett made the motion to table her previous motion until next month. Mr. Thurlow seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

b. Innovative Financing Methods – Transportation Projects

Mr. Kozlosky distributed a list of possible funding sources that could be used to help with costs to construct the Cape Fear Skyway. The list contains options that have been used in the past to help finance transportation projects in other states and municipalities.

Mr. Wilson told members they have already been successful in securing the Garvee Bonds to help buy down the price for the project.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the NC Turnpike Authority is anticipating having the Traffic & Revenue Forecast back by the end of March from Wilbur Smith and Associates. This forecast will permit the NC Turnpike Authority to go to Wall Street and identify a bondable rate for the Cape Fear

Skyway project. Mr. Wilson suggested that Mr. Kozlosky contact Wilbur Smith and Associates to find out what information may still be needed to help in compiling up-to-date forecast data. Because our current transportation model is out of date, it has been difficult to create the traffic and revenue forecast. NCDOT anticipates the new model will be completed by November. Commissioner Sue voiced concerns about the development of the model and the schedule. Mr. Wilson suggested asking Mr. Buff from the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch to come down and explain the modeling process and answer question regarding the model.

5. New Business

a. Traffic Signal System Improvements

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the current signal system was installed in 1995. A new system will cost approximately \$12 million. In order to improve mobility, the WMPO is requesting that NCDOT amend the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include the installation of a new traffic control system as an unfunded project for the City of Wilmington and if funds become available, it could be considered as a possible project. The City has programmed approximately \$3 million to update the system as a capital improvement project. Mr. Padgett pointed out that improvements to the signal system would be the cheapest way to move traffic better. She suggested that the project be added to the unfunded list and then when we update the TIP, we look at all the unfunded projects and go through some kind of ranking. Ms. Padgett made the motion to add the signal system improvements to the TIP as an unfunded project. Mr. Saffo seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Scientific Park Drive Connection

Mr. Kozlosky identified a proposed connection from 23rd Street to Kornegay Drive in the Creekwood neighborhood using Scientific Park Drive. He told members that, when constructed, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway had a crossover that provided access via Kornegay Drive into the Creekwood neighborhood. NCDOT has since closed the crossover and currently allows only right-in/right-out movements. The ultimate goal of NCDOT is to make the road a fully limited-access facility. With that goal in mind, staff is proposing a connection from Scientific Park Drive to the Creekwood neighborhood. This would be a city project with some potential for NCDOT participation. Mayor Willis recommended some public input with the community. Mr. Sue made the motion to support the resolution to explore the feasibility for this connection. Ms. Padgett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Scenic Byway Designation

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the WMPO is exploring the possibility of a scenic byway designation beginning at the 1898 Memorial, through downtown along North Third Street, Red Cross Street, Water Street, Nun Street, South Third Street, and Carolina Beach Road to Greenfield Lake Park via Morningside Drive and West Lake Shore Drive. Staff will submit the route and pre-application to NCDOT for review by the end of March. The full application to NCDOT will be submitted later in the year. Once it is designated as a North Carolina Scenic Byway, the route will be eligible for scenic byway grant funding. Mr. Wilson suggested the resolution be presented to the City of Wilmington for support before the TAC takes action. Mr. Kozlosky told members he will present this to the Wilmington City Council at their February 21 meeting.

d. SAFETEA-LU Legislation – Randall Parkway Funding

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the City of Wilmington has been appropriated \$4 million for the Randall Parkway widening project in the recently passed SAFETEA-LU legislation. Three million dollars of that amount was identified as “high priority project” funding. One million dollars was identified as “transportation improvement project” funding. The \$3 million will impact the equity formula. Therefore, a project within the City of Wilmington or the WMPO will need to be delayed to accommodate that increase in funding. Mr. Kozlosky told members that the TCC recommended that funding for the Kerr Avenue widening project be delayed.

Mr. Wilson reminded members that because the Kerr Avenue work has been going on for years, they are near completion of the environmental document for the project. He suggested that perhaps it would be wise to see if there are other possible projects to consider delaying that might not be as far along in the environmental process. Mr. Wilson said he can get an update on the projects for the committee to review to help in the decision if it becomes necessary. He told members that, knowing how close they are to getting the permit for the Kerr Avenue project and with NCDOT's desire to reduce the scope of their project to the segment between Martin Luther King Parkway and Randall Parkway, there may be other funding methods that would ensure completion of both projects. If the city would take over the segment from Randall Parkway to Oleander Drive, we could accomplish the same thing and both projects could go forward. With that suggestion, members agreed to delay action on this item.

e. Senior Engineering Technician position

Mr. Kozlosky told members that due to the increased work load and expansion of the WMPO boundary, staff is requesting support from the TAC to create an additional position. In creating a new Senior Transportation Engineering Technician, the senior position will fit into the City of Wilmington new Succession Planning program. Mr. Kozlosky said the cost incurred from the additional position will be paid at 80% through federal grants and 20% by the WMPO. Ms. Padgett made the motion to support hiring a new Senior Engineering Technician. Mr. Thurlow seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Project Updates

a. Cape Fear Skyway – Official Transportation Corridor Map

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the Wilmington City Council endorsed the corridor preservation map for the Cape Fear Skyway at their last meeting. The corridor map will protect that area for three years from the time the building permit or subdivision is submitted.

b. NCDOT Project Updates

Mr. Wilson told members that new transportation funds were allocated by the General Assembly to economic development projects and these funds were approved at the last Board of Transportation meeting. He requested that WMPO staff help him to distribute the information on these funds.

7. Announcements

There were no announcements.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:34.

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky
Senior Transportation Planner
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