

Meeting Minutes

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee Special Meeting

Date: May 16, 2006

Members Present:

Lanny Wilson, NC Board of Transportation - Chairman
Alan Gilbert, Town of Carolina Beach
Bill Kopp, New Hanover County
Laura Padgett, City of Wilmington
Bill Saffo, City of Wilmington
Bill Sue, Brunswick County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

Staff Present:

Joshuah Mello, Associate Planner
Lawless Bean, TDM Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:12 PM.

4. New Business (moved ahead)

a. Discussion and Development of Strategies to deal with NCDOT Funding Shortfall

Mr. Wilson placed a conference call to Mr. Mark Foster, the Chief Financial Officer for NCDOT to discuss the cash shortfall anticipated by the state.

Mr. Foster gave members a current update on the financial status of DOT Highway funds. Due to decreasing revenues and the significant increase in construction costs, the state is facing a serious shortfall in the near future. Mr. Foster said the state must push back projects and right-of-way acquisition. They anticipate a four-month delay of projects over the next three years. One possible solutions to dealing with the funds shortage is for local municipalities to provide seed money to get some of their projects done. The idea of user-fees has been considered and seems to be the preferred means of helping to fund some of these projects. Mr. Foster told members we are at a crossroads and if we do nothing, we are just going to get further behind. Everyone needs to work together in trying to find creative solutions to solve this problem.

Mr. Wilson told members the financial branch finished the funding analysis for our Division. It is anticipated that it will be 2019 before any new projects can be added to the TIP. During informal discussions on the funding shortfall, one of the best suggestions offered was identifying the critical needs for New Hanover County and exploring the possibility of having the General Assembly give New Hanover County the authority to have a referendum in the fall for a dedicated local revenue source for transportation. It was suggested the revenue source be "sunset" after those identified projects are completed. The bypass can be completed using money from the Garvee Bonds. However, there is no funding available for other important projects such as Dow Road in Carolina Beach and Kure Beach, Military Cutoff Road extension and the Independence Boulevard extension. The total needed for these projects is approximately \$110 million. DOT has allocated approximately \$25 million for the projects, leaving an \$80 million shortfall.

Mr. Kopp said he is assuming we are talking about a sales tax. If so, how much would it take to do the three projects and can we borrow against the tax revenue to go ahead with the projects.

Mr. Wilson told members it is possible to bond a stream of income. Based on that, a half-cent tax would produce between \$14 million to \$15 million per year, which would be enough to do these three projects. If the General Assembly were to give the authority to the MPO to do the planning and

environmental work for the project, they could be completed in a more expedited fashion. Other counties in the state have utilized this as a means to fund projects.

Mr. Wilson suggested we go forward and approve a resolution asking our legislative delegation to give New Hanover County the authority to have a referendum in November of this year. This needs to get to the General Assembly for the short session.

Mr. Gilbert made the motion to move forward with the resolution for the three projects to be presented to the General Assembly for a half-cent sales tax that will sunset after 7 years. Ms. Padgett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comment Period

Mr. Pete Jarrell, who resides at 1103 Forest Hills Drive, asked to address members regarding the widening project at the intersection of Wrightsville Avenue and Independence Boulevard. Mr. Jarrell said he had questions regarding the progress of the project. Mr. Wilson suggested that he speak directly with Mr. Patrick Riddle, the Division 3 Engineer who was in attendance at today's meeting.

3. Old Business

There were no items of old business.

5. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:26.

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky
Senior Transportation Planner
/pb