

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: April 29, 2009

Members Present:

Lanny Wilson, Chairman, NCBOT
Bill Sue, Brunswick County
Tommy Wallace, Town of Leland
Mac Montgomery, Town of Kure Beach
Alan Gilbert, Town of Carolina Beach
Laura Padgett, City of Wilmington
Chuck Thurlow, Town of Belville
Mike Ballard, Town of Navassa

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director
Anthony Prinz, Transportation Planner
Joshuah Mello, Transportation Planner
Bill McDow, Transportation Engineer

1. Call to Order

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes for the March 26th meeting carried unanimously.

3. Public Comment Period

Mr. Ricky Meeks told members he is concerned about trash along our roadways and pedestrian paths, especially at the corner of Oleander Drive and College Road. He said he would also like to request that WAVE Transit System install benches and shelters along the bus routes for passengers.

4. Presentation –

a. Cape Fear Skyway Bridge Study:

Ms. Jennifer Harris, Staff Engineer with the North Carolina Turnpike Authority and Mr. David Griffin with URS

Ms. Harris told members the Turnpike Authority is studying the Cape Fear Skyway as a candidate toll road. URS is the consulting firm that is under contract to conduct planning, environmental, and engineering studies related to the project. URS prepared a Bridge Location and Type Study to help identify the potential cost for the Cape Fear Skyway. Mr. David Griffin is the project manager at URS.

Mr. Griffin highlighted some of the achievements of the planning, environmental, and engineering studies related to the Skyway project during his presentation. He told members milestones for the study have been the completion of the following:

- Draft Section 6002 Coordination Plan
- Draft Purpose and Need Report
- Draft Alternatives screening Analysis
- Draft Bridge Study Report
- Preliminary Field Studies
- Functional design plans for the bridge crossing area

Future objectives for the project will be the draft Environmental Impact Statement due in March 2011, the final Environmental Impact Statement in March of 2012 and the Record of Decision in September 2012. Mr. Griffin reviewed several potential footprints for the bridge corridor and

bridge types. Ms. Harris told members there will be a public information meeting later in the fall of this year for the project.

Mr. Wilson told members how important the toll-road projects are to the state. These public/private partnerships are a means of financing the much needed road projects around the state. We are within a month of beginning work on a billion-dollar project and then a year later, there is going to be a second project. He stated that this whole idea of toll-roads is here and it's going to be here to stay.

5. Old Business

None

6. New Business

a. Resolution supporting an administrative modification to the 2009-2015 State Transportation Improvement Programs to include the purchase of two 12-passenger vans (STIP# TA-5102)

Mr. Kozlosky told members the 30-day public comment period was opened at the last meeting for the purchase of the two 12-passenger vans by the Cape Fear Transportation Authority and moving funds from the State TIP, which is currently unfunded, to the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funding. Ms. Padgett made the motion to approve the resolution supporting the administrative modification to the STIP to include the purchase of the passenger vans and re-allocation of funds to ARRA funding. Mr. Sue seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Approval of the 2009-2010 Inter-local Section 5303 Agreement Between the Wilmington MPO and Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority (CFPTA)

Mr. Kozlosky told members we received Section 5303 funds to conduct transportation and transit planning throughout the MPO. This year we should receive between \$58,000 and \$59,000. This agreement will provide for 65% of those funds to be contributed to CFPTA so that they can conduct short-range transit planning. This is the same agreement that was brought before the board last year, and at that time it was requested that agreement be presented to this board on an annual basis. Mr. Ballard made the motion to approve the agreement and Ms. Padgett seconded it. The motion to approve the 2009-2010 Inter-local Section 5303 Agreement between the Wilmington MPO and Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority carried unanimously.

Mr. Sue asked if there are currently any plans to send the Brunswick Connector down US Highway 133. Mr. Eby stated that they have not had any request to do that. Mr. Sue said he has had several calls requesting the service. Ms. Padgett suggested adding the request to the study list for route feasibility consideration.

c. Resolution supporting the Congestion Relief/Intermodal Transportation Fund

Mr. Kozlosky told members the 21st Century Committee recommended legislation establishing the Congestion Relief and Intermodal Transportation Fund. This legislation would allow regional transportation authorities to have the ability to enact a ½ percent sales tax dependent upon a referendum to fund transportation improvements within a special transit district in larger areas and ¼ cent in smaller areas. Staff recommended approval of the resolution.

Mr. Sue asked if the referendum would be approved by the City or the Commissioners, or just a straight referendum from the TAC. Ms. Padgett said it must go through the County Commissioners. The legislation will give them the option to put it on the ballot for a referendum. Ms. Padgett made the motion to support establishing the Congestion

Relief/Intermodal Transportation Fund. Mr. Montgomery seconded the motion and the vote carried unanimously.

d. Resolution opposing pending legislation transferring responsibility for state roads to local governments

Mr. Sue made the motion to oppose pending legislation transferring responsibility for state roads to local governments. Mr. Thurlow seconded the motion.

Mr. Wilson said there should be some clarification on the three bills pending right now. NCDOT is proposing to also transfer the money that DOT is currently spending on secondary roads to the counties. Mr. Sue asked about the amount of escalation on the cost for the repairs. Ms. Padgett said the problem is the money that comes with the transfer is insufficient to do anything. She stated that it is at least prudent to ask that this be slowed down and more heavily considered beforehand.

The resolution opposing pending legislation transferring responsibility for state roads to local government carried unanimously.

e. Resolution supporting the City of Wilmington's Cross City Trail and other multi-use trails in the community

Ms. Padgett made the motion to support the City of Wilmington's Cross City Trail and other multi-use trails in the community. Mr. Sue seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

f. Resolution supporting the installation of dual-left turn lanes and right turn lane at the College Road/Oleander Drive intersection and encouraging the NCDOT to allocate funding for this project

Mr. Pope told members NCDOT currently has a milling and resurfacing project on Oleander Drive. The original thoughts on the project were to skip the College Road/Oleander Drive project and the TIP project would take care of that intersection. Now that the College/Oleander project is no longer a project NCDOT has went back to acquire TIP dollars to mill and resurface the intersection. DOT staff evaluated what kind of improvements can be made at College and Oleander. The recommendation was a dual-left movement off Oleander Drive onto College Road. There are a lot of concerns because it does not resolve all the issues at College and Oleander. The resolution is to allow DOT to acquire additional funds to build a right-turn lane on the vacant lot on the corner. Mr. Pope told members he estimates the cost involved will be near \$400,000. The current project is going to go ahead and mill and resurface this intersection and install the dual-left turns. Once the funds are available, NCDOT will put in the right-turn lane onto College as a separate project. He stated that he wanted to make note to this board that this project will not solve the problems with the capacities on northbound College Road. When they pull the dual-lefts off of Oleander from the Independence Mall and put them on this stretch of North College, between Oleander and Wrightsville Avenue, there will be issues there. It will probably have a negative affect to Wrightsville Avenue. We may have to take some of the time off Wrightsville Avenue to give more capacity to College Road to be able to stack traffic in there. During peak-hour time the dual lefts will stack up just like the single left stacks today.

Mr. Sue suggest that at the first stop light after you turn left onto College Road going north, they need to reroute the traffic down to Wrightsville Avenue. Mr. Pope said that is not the problem, the problem is Wrightsville Avenue.

Mr. Pope said that the Department of Transportation is going to try to make the situation the best it can be under the circumstances. He stated that until they get an additional lane of capacity in the northbound direction, there is not a lot that can be done to that stretch of roadway. He told members he did not want to spend money to make improvements at College Road and Oleander Drive and not make some attempt for improvement.

Mr. Montgomery asked about the cost of purchasing property for the right turn. Mr. Pope said the property necessary for the right of way will cost about \$200,000. The resolution will bring some of the TIP dollars back to build the right turn lane.

Mr. Montgomery made the motion to support the installation of dual-left turn lanes and right turn lane at the College Road/Oleander Drive intersection and encouraging the NCDOT to allocate funding for this project. Mr. Thurlow seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

g. Caper Fear Memorial Bridge Study Update/Feasibility Investigation

Mr. Pope told members after last month's presentation to this board, he was given the task of investigating the feasibility of five of the suggested solutions from the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Study.

Mr. Pope said the first recommendation was the installation of solid lane lines and sign the area to maintain lanes through the ramp merge for US 17 northbound and US 74-76 westbound as well as NC 133 northbound and US 74-76 westbound. The estimated cost would be approximately \$4,800. The concern is that this approach would not be effective because it is not enforceable.

The next suggested measure is the installation of closed circuit TV camera on the bridge and signal system feed cameras into the City of Wilmington's traffic signal communication office. The signal system is currently being upgraded and the locations proposed are in the vicinity of Wooster Street and 3rd Street, US 17/74/76/421 (West of the Memorial Bridge) and US 421/NC133 (DMS sign structure north of Battleship). The cost of adding this to the signal system upgrade is around \$82,000. The project is funded 50/50 with the City of Wilmington and the Department of Transportation.

The next thing NCDOT analyzed was the quick clearance and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with emergency services. The Department is continuing this discussion since Incentive Towing has not been done in this state before. Another possibility is the use of "Fender Bender" signs that you see on the interstate facilities. Staff will have conversations with the Highway Patrol concerning the locations for installation of "Fender Bender – Move Vehicle from Road" signage. The cost of signs in about 5 locations is \$5,000.

The last measure was a Dynamic Message Sign (DMS). This overhead sign would be located on Wooster Street, prior to 3rd Street, ideally it would be located around 16th Street. A shoulder mounted sign would cost approximately \$165,000, and the overhead mounted DMS sign will cost \$350,000.

Members agreed that it would be reasonable to try the more cost effective approach and determine if they will be effective in resolving the problem before looking at the more costly measures. Mr. Pope said he would like to suggest that if this board is thinking about adding the additional cameras to cover the bridge traffic, NCDOT needs to start doing the design work and negotiate with the contractor of the new signal system to add them to the contract before it is complete. The \$82,000 will be cost-shared with the Department and the City of Wilmington. Ms. Padgett said that it make sense to install cameras to monitor bridge traffic as part of the new signal system installation.

Mr. Thurlow made the motion to approve the installation of solid-lane lines and signs to maintain lanes through the ramp merge for US 17 northbound and US 74-76 westbound as well as NC 133 northbound and US 74-76 westbound, initiate quick clearance measure for accidents and a MOU with emergency services, and the addition of cameras to monitor bridge

traffic as outlined in the Cape Fear Memorial Study Feasibility Investigation. Ms. Padgett seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

h. Resolution

Mr. Wilson told members the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) situation in the state is growing more dire as each day goes by. Currently the TIP has about \$18 billion worth of projects and the Department of Transportation only has about \$9 billion. As the revenue continues to fluctuate, there are a lot of projects that the Department of Transportation is not going to be able to keep. We have gone back and looked at the likelihood of when the portion of the I-140 bypass could realistically be funded. Based on loop funding, it will be at least 10 to 15 years before it would actually be built. Because we have valid permits, we are proposing to take the balance of the stimulus dollars left and apply them all to the I-140 project.

Ms. Padgett asked how much the amount is. Mr. Pope said it is in the neighborhood of \$25 million. Mr. Wilson said with the money taken from the Oleander Drive project, along with analyzing projects that are not likely to be built from the TIP, it could provide the balance for the funding for the I-140 bypass. If we are able to do this, we can actually look to go out and design/build and advertise in August of this year.

Mr. Sue asked if he was referring to Phase 2 of the bypass, and if so, what good is Phase 2 if we don't know when we are going to get Phase 1. Mr. Wilson told members the alternative is to take the balance of the stimulus money and send it to be used elsewhere. Mr. Wilson said we are talking about a \$250 million project and there is no money to build that project even though it is funded in the TIP. The Department is down to letting \$15 million a month state-wide. What we're saying is we are trying to be able to go out here and by the end of the year put a project on the ground that is a \$100 million project. If we don't do this now, it likely won't be done for years and years. We have all agreed time after time that this is the number-1 priority for the region. General Trodon has said if we finish the A-section, it gives us a much better argument for the state building and moving forward the B-section in a timely manner because you would have that one little part that is not connected. The dilemma is that "B" is twice as expensive as "A" and we don't have the money.

Mr. Montgomery asked if this would give the Department of Transportation enough money to do the phase from US 74 to US 17. Mr. Wilson said yes. Mr. Sue asked if that included an interchange with phase 2 at US 74/76. Mr. Wilson said it did not include the interchange. Mr. Gilbert asked when the project would begin. Mr. Wilson said because it would be using stimulus dollars, it would have to begin construction by February of next year.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to approve the project moving forward as described by Mr. Wilson. Mr. Gilbert seconded the motion and the resolution carried unanimously.

7. Updates

a. Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Mr. Mello updated members on Cape Fear Commutes and the CAC activities.

b. Bike/Pedestrian Committee

Mr. Mello updated members on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee activities.

c. NCDOT Project Update

attached

8. Announcements

- a. Citizen Advisory Committee meeting- May 6th at 4pm
- b. Bike/Pedestrian meeting- May 14th at 5:15pm

9. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky
Executive Director
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization