

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: June 25, 2014

Members Present:

Laura Padgett, Chair, City of Wilmington
Pat Batleman, Vice-chair, Town of Leland
Dean Lambeth, Town of Kure Beach
Gary Doetsch, Town of Carolina Beach
Joe Breault, Town of Belville
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
David Williams, Pender County
Earl Sheridan, City of Wilmington
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director

1. Call to Order

Ms. Padgett called the meeting to order at 3:32pm.

2. Conflict of Interest Reminder

Ms. Padgett asked if any members had a conflict of interest with any items on the meeting agenda. No members reported having a conflict of interest.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the May 28th meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Public Comment Period

Mr. Andy Koepfel addressed members regarding Strategic Transportation Corridors (STC) item. He told members he was disappointed that after the MPO passed a resolution at the previous meeting indicating the feeling about having a highway going through the Green Swamp, the resolution was totally ignored. He stated that he would encourage the TAC members to have direct verbal communication with NCDOT officials in Raleigh regarding the corridor.

Regarding the Economic Prosperity score in the STC Corridor Rating and Ranking matrix, he noted that he doesn't see where it calls upon the potential for additional economic prosperity to occur rather than just recognizing the existing economic advantage that exists at this moment. If looking at the rail restoration between Castle Hayne and Wallace, that project is directly related to the potential to attract new manufacturing.

Mr. Koepfel told members he did not understand how project U (US 74/US 74E/Future I-74) was given the Mobility Factor of 6. He noted that the potential for economic growth associated with new types of economic development that would occur along that corridor doesn't seem to be addressed.

Mr. Koepfel also noted that under Prioritization 4.0, he does not fully understand how Prioritization 4.0 is going to be impacted by the final rating choices that exist relative to everything that has been presented. He

hopes TAC members will raise that issue and have a meaningful discussion on the subject. He said members need to have additional knowledge in order to create a situation that's as positive as possible for this MPO. If we don't get our foot in the door when the final numbers come out, our ability to prioritize the projects that are most important to us will be negatively affected.

5. Presentation

a. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

Ms Rashid gave a presentation on the status of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The Cape Fear Transportation 2040 Plan will look 25 years into the future. She noted that staff and the modal committees are developing project recommendations. The recommendations will go to the public in January.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Resolution supporting amendments to the 2014-2015 UPWP

b. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for STIP/MTIP Amendments and Modifications

Ms. Batleman made the motion to adopt the items on the consent agenda. Mr. Doetsch seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution regarding NCDOT's Strategic Transportation Corridors Initiative

Mr. Kozlosky told members that NCDOT held regional workshops to receive input on the Strategic Transportation Corridors Initiative and they are accepting comments until June 27th. Staff found several items of concern. Mr. Kozlosky explained that several key routes and direct connections to key locations such as the airport and the port were overlooked. The initiative doesn't include any facilities that are not currently constructed, such as a portion of the I-140 bypass. If the map is to be used as a planning tool, new location facilities should be shown. In the past, the Strategic Transportation Corridors has been used by the State in the NEPA process as a justification for supporting projects. Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff would suggest submitting a resolution to NCDOT to express the concerns from the Wilmington MPO.

Ms. Padgett said she and Ms. Batleman attended a webinar presented by NCDOT on the Strategic Transportation Corridors Initiative. She noted that there appeared to be no direction or path for the Strategic Transportation Corridors Initiative to go from a study to actually influencing policy or funding. She said she would like to suggest that the resolution include a statement that says the plan will be presented and considered for funding by the NCDOT Board of Transportation and the Legislature.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to approve the resolution providing comments to NCDOT regarding the Strategic Transportation Corridors Initiative and include a statement that the final Strategic Transportation Corridors plan should be submitted to the North Carolina Board of Transportation and the North Carolina General Assembly to be used for future funding and planning. Mr. David Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

8. Discussion

a. Strategic Transportation Investment Formula – Project Update

Mr. Kozlosky told members staff was asked to include discussions regarding the Independence Boulevard Extension project. He noted that the cost of the project is \$150 million as it's currently designed. The Hampstead Bypass is \$232 million. In looking at the Division Tier of the funding that is available for the Division, there is about \$19 million annually that will go to Division 3 over the next 10 year period. There is about \$30 million annually that will go to this Region (Division 2 and Division 3) over the next 10 years. If you do the math, that is about \$ 300 million in projects at the Regional Tier and about \$190 million at the Division Tier. Staff wanted to acknowledge those cost in comparison to the funds that NCDOT has available.

Ms. Padgett told members that there is currently disagreement on the Wilmington City Council about what kind of project the extension of Independence Boulevard should be. She noted that even with the project's current ranking, NCDOT continues to work on the design. Ms. Padgett suggested that the MPO draft a letter or a resolution requesting the Department stop the design and all other work on the project.

Mr. Barfield told members his main concern is for the residents that live in that area. Will residents receive enough compensation to purchase another home if they are displaced when the land is taken for the project?

Ms Padgett told members her concern is that the project is designed to be built on fill and it will create a wall across the City of Wilmington. She told members that would not be the appropriated type of project to put there and there would be less impact on the people living there if it were not done on a berm. There is no agreement that the project should be built the way it's being designed. She told members that the project is ranked so low, we are wasting effort and money to continue to work on it. Dr. Sheridan told members that he shares Ms. Padgett's concern about the project.

Ms. Fussell told members that the preliminary numbers on the Division level right now show that there are \$598 million worth of projects ahead of the Independence Boulevard project. It's far enough down on the list of projects that when they reach a stopping point in the design, the project will be shelved until the appropriate time.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that with the Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) formula being developed, the first part of the process was to take the politics out of it and create a data-driven process. The next step in the process is to look to see if there are opportunities to generate additional revenue. If you increase the amount of revenue going toward transportation, then this project could come further up on the list. Mr. Kozlosky said he wanted to caution members if you stop work, you will lose any progress that has been made.

Ms. Fussell told members it's very near to the start of the whole process. If counties or cities raise money to put toward the project, the cost benefit ratio will rise and the points will rise. She said that with no participation and no additional revenue to go toward the project, what we have today is something so far down the line that there has to be a breaking point. Ms. Fussell noted that just because you have a certain amount of planning on a project that was going to be funded and now it's not, she does not see that as a prudent expenditure of State funds to use all that before you cease work on a project. It is controversial so there will come a time when those stops have to take place.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to send a letter to the Division Engineer stating our preference that work be stopped on this particular road. Dr. Sheridan seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Fussell suggested that the letter should state that work should be stopped when the project reaches the next milestone.

b. Strategic Transportation Investment Formula – Local Input Methodology

Mr. Kozlosky told members that following the receipt of the resolutions of support from member jurisdictions for local projects, staff input the data into the prioritization matrix. The spreadsheets contain the data points for the regional and division tiers. He asked that members review the information to see if there are any changes that need to be made.

Mr. Kozlosky said at the next meeting in July, staff will ask that members review and approve a draft score and ranking at the regional and division levels. Following the approval of the draft scoring, a public comment period will be opened to take public input on the draft scoring and ranking. The next step will be to ask TAC members to approve the final scoring and ranking by the regional and division tiers on August 27th. Scores must be submitted into NCDOT's system by August 29th.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff provided the list of the Top 15 projects based on the adopted local input process. He noted that if TAC members should decide to move/remove a project, justification must be provided for submittal to NCDOT. He asked members to review the information contained in the spreadsheet prior to the next meeting in order to make sure it's correct.

Ms. Batleman told members she is concerned because it appears that the NC 133 River Road Widening description is an old description. Mr. Kozlosky said the description is from an earlier Prioritization process and they were not updated. She noted that the widening of NC 133 had been separated from Cape Fear Skyway project and the description on the spreadsheet indicates that the projects are connected. Ms. Batleman said NC 133 has become a main concern for the Town of Leland and it is separate and apart from the river crossing. She told members that she is concerned that it's not going to happen unless there's a Skyway. Mr. Kozlosky said that's not the intention and staff will correct the wording. He asked if the wording is changed to say from Rabon Road to US 74/76/17 will be satisfactory. Ms. Batleman agreed.

c. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Tolling

Ms. Padgett told members that over the last 10 to 20 years we have seen the Federal Government shirk away from their responsibility in paying for transportation. While we still get money from the federal government, it's not enough. Local governments are going to have to come up with ways to finance transportation projects. Ms. Padgett stated that solutions being considered by the Legislature are Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and tolling. She said she did not think either option would go anywhere until local governments, through their MPOs, begin to say that these are the things that we want them to consider so that we have adequate transportation infrastructure on a multi-modal basis. Ms. Padgett said she would like the TAC to discuss these possible solutions and come to a consensus of support for these funding options and communicate that to our legislators.

Ms. Padgett told members that the state of Virginia has recently done away with their state gas tax and added to their state sales tax to pay for transportation infrastructure. Everyone is watching to see how that will work as an option to funding transportation needs.

Mr. David Williams said he could support that as a possible solution but noted that we can't make those decisions at this local level. Ms. Padgett told members she is not looking for a decision today; she just wanted to get this topic on the agenda for discussion.

9. Updates

Project updates for the Crossing over the Cape Fear River Work Group, Wilmington MPO, CFPTA and NCDOT Division and Planning Branch are included in the agenda packet.

9. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 PM

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky

Executive Director

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

**THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.
THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED ON A COMPACT DISC AS PART OF THIS RECORD.**