

# **Meeting Notes**

## **Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee- Special Meeting**

**Date: October 14, 2009**

### **Members Present:**

Lanny Wilson, Chairman, NCBOT  
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority  
Mac Montgomery, Town of Kure Beach  
Alan Gilbert, Town of Carolina Beach  
Mike Ballard, Town of Navassa  
Bill Blair, Town of Wrightsville Beach  
Bill Saffo, City of Wilmington  
Jason Thompson, New Hanover County  
Bill Sue, Brunswick County  
Chuck Thurlow, Town of Belville  
David Williams, Pender County  
Tommy Wallace, Town of Leland  
Laura Padgett, City of Wilmington

### **Staff Present:**

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director

### **1. Call to Order**

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

### **2. Presentation-**

#### **a. Cape Fear Skyway**

Mr. Steve Dewitt told members that the Cape Fear Skyway project is at a critical stage in the process right now and issues need to be addressed if the Skyway project is to move forward. Mr. Dewitt said the Turnpike Authority hopes to accomplish two things, the first being that they need to know where the community stands and if they wish the project to move forward. The second is updating TAC members on where the financing stands and what the issues are because that will play into where this project goes.

Mr. Dewitt reviewed the history of the Cape Fear Skyway project to date. He told members that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. Part of the NEPA requirement is to look at all reasonably feasible alternatives and to put lines on a map that weave through the environmental issues such as wetlands, streams and protected areas. The lines will also weave through subdivisions, communities, and businesses in trying to find a series of lines that are reasonable and feasible alternatives to study further in more detail in order to come up with the final alignment. Because the Turnpike Authority has been made aware of the new developments being proposed along the alignments, they have stepped back and looked at other alternatives knowing that the development of Brunswick Forest is important to the local economy. They have also just received news of another development being proposed at the best alignment for the bridge to cross the Cape Fear River.

Mr. Dewitt stated that when looking at the development of Brunswick Forest, they have two new alternative routes which run north and south of the area that will allow the project to move forward with minimal impact. He told members it is important that the "A" and "B" sections of the I-140 loop be constructed to ensure traffic on the Skyway. The bypass will be important in creating the revenue that will be needed to pay for the bridge.

The next step in the process is to determine if the community really wants this project to go forward. If the Turnpike Authority receives affirmation to move forward, the next step will be the final Environmental Impact Statement in March 2012 and the Record of Decision in September 2012.

Mr. Sue asked Mr. Dewitt where the two interchanges are going to be located on the northern alignment. Mr. Dewitt said in terms of the specific geographic point, there are multiple issues that will need to be addressed and at this stage, those are the kind of things that they will need to work with the community in determining.

Mr. Sue told members he could not consider the southern route of the two new alignments presented today. That route terminates at Sneed Farms and we have promised them by resolution three years ago that we would do all we could to not break up that established community. He stated that the northern route has the least interference of either proposal. He said he has some concerns about where it crosses Lanvale Road, but it is the best corridor he has seen yet.

Mr. Thompson told members he thought all the specifics on the interchanges are a moot point unless we do something about the proposed development at the site selected for the bridge to cross the river. He stated that he felt like this board needs to get to the main issue of preserving a corridor. That comes down to Brunswick County being willing to put in an overlay to preserve the corridor.

Mr. Sue reminded Mr. Thompson that he could only speak as one representative and he needs details to take to the other commissioners. Mr. Dewitt said once the Turnpike Authority received word from the community to move forward with this project, they would work with the developers and stakeholders to look at options and work on the details of finding the alignments that make more sense.

Mr. Saffo asked Mr. Kozlosky if he had any information on the proposed development at the base of the proposed bridge. Mr. Kozlosky said there has been a development proposal that has been submitted to Brunswick County or a preliminary development proposal and they are conducting a transportation impact analysis on that proposed development. Staff has been made aware of some type of development will occur on that property and that is one of the reasons we wanted to sit down with this board today in an effort to preserve that corridor for the Skyway.

Ms. Padgett asked Mr. Kozlosky about the corridor preservation on the New Hanover County side of the river. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the reservation period on the Madison Place Apartment property site expired October 11<sup>th</sup>. The City of Wilmington will need to make a decision to develop a strategy on how it intends to move forward in preserving that corridor if the Cape Fear Skyway project does move forward. He said that the developer of the Madison Place property has indicated that he will wait to hear the decision from this committee on the Skyway.

Mr. Grady Rankin, Chief Financial Officer for the Turnpike Authority, gave a presentation on the financial feasibility and financing the "GAP" funds needed to build the Cape Fear Skyway. In closing he told members the main issues facing the Cape Fear Skyway will be the community's willingness to protect the right-of-way for the project, the willingness to toll additional sections of the I-140 bypass and the willingness of the legislature to provide the "GAP" funds for 40 years.

Mr. Williams told members he supports the project in its entirety. Mr. Saffo asked staff for the projections for the capacity of the Memorial Bridge in the future years. Mr. Kozlosky told member there are about 70,000 vehicles per day going across the bridge and about 108,000

vehicles on the causeway today. The Town of Leland just completed a master plan last year that indicates that they will have a population of approximately 100,000 people by 2050. The draft purpose and need indicates a 2008 ADT of 52,700 vehicles per day and by 2035, they anticipate 113,000 vehicles crossing the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge on a daily basis. Mr. Kozlosky stated that if we don't move forward with the Skyway or another bridge crossing, we are going to see grid-lock in Brunswick County.

Ms. Padgett asked if the Turnpike Authority has looked at changes in the large-ship traffic and are there still opportunities to change the size of the bridge if needed. Mr. Dewitt said they have worked with the State Port to make sure that what ever they build will fit the need of the State Port as we know it today. The height of the bridge can be changed if necessary but the span of the bridge will not change a whole lot and the real cost comes in spanning that kind of distance with no supports in the middle of it.

Mr. Dewitt said it all comes down to the fact that the Turnpike Authority needs the MPO's support to move forward. He told members that neither Turnpike Authority, nor NCDOT have money to buy right of way so the question will come down to how will we deal with protecting this corridor.

Mr. Sue told members the only way by law that Brunswick County can protect the corridor is to put it on their land use plan. He said they have no revenue to purchase right of way. Mr. Kozlosky stated that based on recent legislation that passed last year, counties do have the authority to file transportation official corridor maps and that could be used for the preservation of a corridor. That provides a three year preservation period from the time anyone submits a subdivision plan or a building permit. The preservation is for three years and when it expires, the developer has the option to move forward and construct the project on that property. Mr. Sue said he will have the Brunswick County planning staff investigate that possibility.

Mr. Wilson suggest giving everyone on the TAC the opportunity to go back to their counties, communities and boards and see if consensus can be reached and come back with a decision at the next regular TAC meeting on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Announcements**

- a. Cape Fear Commutes meeting- October 21<sup>st</sup>
- b. Wilmington Bike/Pedestrian Committee meeting- December 10<sup>th</sup>

### **4. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky  
Executive Director  
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization