

**Wilmington Urban Area
Technical Coordinating Committee
Meeting Notes for February 9, 2011 (revised 3-14-11)**

Members Present:

Mike Kozlosky, City of Wilmington
Sam Burgess, New Hanover County
Ken Vafier, Pender County
Shane York, NCDOT
Pat Walsh, Town of Belville
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Patrick Riddle, NCDOT
Don Eggert, Cape Fear RPO
Bill McDow, City of Wilmington
Tim Owens, Town of Caroling Beach
Eryn Moller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Robert Waring, Town of Leland
~~Albert Eby, WAVE~~

Others Present:

Tara Murphy, City of Wilmington

1. Call to Order

Mr. Kozlosky called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

2. Approval of Minutes

The motion to approve the minutes for the January 12, 2011 meeting carried unanimously.

3. Presentation – Cape Fear Skyway

Ms. Jennifer Harris with the NC Turnpike Authority told members they will be discussing the project study area, the purpose and need statement, the process in developing the alternative concepts, and the process used to evaluate those alternatives to come up with a short-list to study in detail. Ms. Harris told members the feasibility study for the project began in 2003 and has been expanded twice during the process. The purpose of the project is to improve traffic flow and enhance freight movement. It will also provide improved hurricane evacuation time.

Mr. David Griffin, from URS, told members because federal funding will be used for the project the studies must go through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. It's important that we establish the need for the project, the purpose for the project and that we look at a full range of alternatives. A 3-phase screening approach was developed. The first-step was a qualitative screening to determine if the concepts meet the purpose and need. They looked at all the alternatives and asked if they will improve traffic flow; enhance freight movement by providing better connectivity to the Port; and meet the goals in the Strategic Highway Corridor, the NC Intrastate System and the WMPO long-range transportation plan's vision.

Mr. Griffin told members that the second step is the quantitative screening. He said they looked at the GIS database of environmental features to create preliminary segments and corridor locations in which a roadway could be constructed. The environmental screening criteria included cost, human environment and natural environment. They used the criteria in evaluating the potential corridors and segments. After careful screening, 10 corridors were retained for further screening.

Mr. Griffin said the third step of the process was to develop conceptual alignments, layouts of each of the alternatives looking at ramp movements and interchange configurations to find what a more realistic alignment might take in terms of location, and calculate the impacts based on more detail design

drawings. That will help narrow it down from corridors to a foot print of the actual roadways. They will also look at travel-time and volume to capacity ratio to see if there is any further elimination that could be done to narrow down the detailed study alternatives.

Mr. Griffin told members the current project schedule has the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed in the 1st quarter of 2013 with the final EIS in the 3rd quarter of 2013. The Record of Decision is scheduled for the 4th quarter of 2013. He said the financial feasibility and the environmental planning with final alignment and design details will also be completed in 2013. Mr. Griffin said public workshops will be held in March to solicit comments on the purpose and need and the alternatives selection process.

Ms. Harris told members the NC Turnpike Authority has a project specific email address at capefear@ncturnpike.org if anyone has questions or comments on the project.

Mr. Kozlosky asked Ms. Harris if there had been any updates to the cost estimates for any of the alternatives. Ms. Harris said there have been some cost estimates developed and as they move further in the process with the short-list of alternatives and the engineering is done, they will get better cost estimates. She told members the most recent rough-cost estimate for the northern alignment is around \$980 million. She stated that replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge structure alone is around \$400 million and that does not including all the other work that would be in association with it. That is also a very rough estimate.

Ms. Harris reminded members the Turnpike Authority is working through the environmental study process to comply with NEPA. They are looking for the best transportation solution given what has been identified as the transportation needs. She said there has been a lot of debate about tolling and how much this is going to cost and if tolling existing roads will be considered. That's all a parallel issues that will ultimately be decided locally after the environmental process is complete. This process will not make recommendation or decisions on tolling. They are evaluating the environmental impacts associated with various alternatives, and in the end, if they have to be funded using tolls, it will be a determination outside of this process. Mr. Kozlosky told members it is also important to point out that if we were to look at tolling on existing facilities, there would have to be a change to the statutes.

Ms. Harris said they will be sending newsletters to the people on their mailing list to notify them of the upcoming workshops on March 22nd in Brunswick County and March 24th in New Hanover County.

4. Old Business

No items

5. New Business

a. Resolution Requesting Re-design of Village Road Phase II

Mr. Kozlosky told members at the last TAC meeting, Mayor Futch from the Town of Leland requested that this item be placed on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. The resolution is requesting that NCDOT down-size the Village Road Phase II to a more compatible project with their long-range development plans for the town, as well as be consistent with the traffic demands on this corridor. There was a resolution that was adopted by the Town of Leland in January of 2011. They are requesting that the project be scaled down by taking the 4-lane cross section and reduce it to 2-lanes and incorporate bicycle lanes and sidewalks into the project.

Mr. Eggert told members that based on the fact that Mayor Futch in Town of Leland has requested this redesign, he will move to recommend adoption to the TAC. Mr. Burgess seconded the motion.

Ms. Bunch told members she is concerned that the request has gotten this far when obviously the need is there. That need was based on statistical data that supported the road widening and to now

back off concerns her. We should be looking more into the future. If the need has already been documented, why would we want to lessen what is there?

Mr. Kozlosky told members the project began in 2007. The proposal was to widen it to a 4-lane divided facility. The thought is before additional funds are spent to continue on with the process, the town would request that the TAC remove this project and remove the funding for the project but to include funds for bicycle lanes and sidewalks. The estimated cost of the widening project is a little over \$21 million. Between Town Hall Drive and South Navassa there are 10,012,057 vehicles. As you get farther to the west, it reduces down to 6,000 and then at Mt. Misery it drops to 3,800. This project was prioritized as part of the TAC's Prioritization Process and it ranked high in the process.

Ms. Murphy asked if the ADTs were current. Mr. Kozlosky told members he was not sure because the information was provided by the town. Ms. Murphy asked if we have projected data. Mr. Kozlosky said there are projected volumes as part of the feasibility study but those were not included in the resolution so he cannot say if they were included by the town or not.

Mr. Owens asked if the Town of Leland looked at all the projections and future build out. Mr. Waring told members the town's master plan was considered when they discussed it and the fact that the further west you go, the less development is seen in the area. He said he believes the future traffic projections were included in the master plan that was done for the town, but he was not sure how far they projected out.

Mr. Eggert's motion carried with 9 members voting in favor of the motion. Mr. Kozlosky and Ms. Bunch voted against the motion and one member abstained from the vote.

b. Military Cutoff Road Extension Funding Alternatives

Mr. Kozlosky told members in 2003 a feasibility study was completed for the project. The study identified a right-of-way acquisition cost of \$18 million. A new right-of-way acquisition cost has been identified by the Department and the cost has increased to \$68 million. With the dramatic cost increase, the Department and the MPO are required to find the funds to complete the project or it will be delayed. Three potential scenarios have been developed to identify funding for the additional \$50 million necessary for the right-of-way acquisition. They are:

Scenario 1 - Total Savings - \$51.2 Million

U-4751 - Military Cutoff Extension - Keep ROW in 2014, delay construction 2 FY to 2019 - cost savings \$30 Million. R-3300 - Hampstead Bypass - delay ROW 2 FY to 2019 - cost savings \$21.2 Million

Scenario 2 - Total Savings - \$50.3 Million

U-4751 - Military Cutoff Extension - Keep ROW in 2014, delay construction 2 FY to 2019 - cost savings \$30 Million. R-3300 - Hampstead Bypass - Delay ROW 1 FY to 2018 and cashflow over 2 years - cost savings \$10.6 Million. U-3338 B - Kerr Avenue - Keep ROW in 2012, delay construction 4 FY and cashflow over 2 years - cost savings - \$9.7 Million

Scenario 3 - Total Savings \$55.5 Million

U-4751 - Military Cutoff Extension - Keep ROW in 2014, delay construction 1 FY to 2018 - cost savings \$15 Million. R-3300 - Hampstead Bypass - Delay ROW 2 FY to 2019 - cost savings \$21.2 Million. U-3338 B - Kerr Avenue - Keep ROW in 2012, delay construction 5 FY - cost savings - \$19.3 Million

Mr. Kozlosky told members he would like to have a recommendation from the TCC to take to the TAC. He said outside the urban loop prioritization process, we must recognize that Military Cutoff

extension was the number one project for the MPO and the Division. The TIP Development Unit told Staff that a decision must be made immediately.

Mr. Riddle told members he spoke with Mr. Pope yesterday. Mr. Pope told him that a decision was critical. Mr. Riddle said he is waiting on that call before he could vote on which scenario to recommend.

Mr. Burgess told members he prefers Scenario 3. Mr. Vafier told members he realizes that the Military Cutoff extension and the Hampstead Bypass are separate TIP projects but they really go together. He is a little concerned about moving one forward and in effect delaying the other. Mr. Kozlosky said the estimated cost for the right-of-way for the Hampstead Bypass will exceed the amount that has been identified for funding. Based on what we have seen with the right-of-way costs for Military Cutoff extension, we are talking about a significantly larger amount than projected.

Mr. Owens asked what the numbers for the new right-of-way costs for Military Cutoff extension were based on. He pointed out that real estate numbers have declined over the past few years. Mr. Kozlosky said it is possible that the \$18 million had not been updated from the feasibility study done several years ago.

Mr. Vafier asked why the decision must be made today. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Department is coming out with the Final STIP that they plan to adopt in June. They are preparing the document right now and must have it finalized within the next few weeks. He said he would welcome any recommendations that members would like to suggest in addition to the scenarios developed by the Department. Mr. Vafier told members as the representative from Pender County, he could not support anything that would delay the Hampstead Bypass.

Mr. Kozlosky told members the Hampstead Bypass right-of-way acquisition funding is only \$20 million and that is not a significant amount of money for the property acquisition. Looking at each of the three proposals, they all include delaying the Hampstead Bypass either by one or two years. They also include delaying the construction Military Cutoff extension. He said Scenarios 2 and 3 will delay the Kerr Avenue widening and Scenario 1 does not. Members of the committee must decide how importation is the Kerr Avenue widening compared to the Hampstead Bypass and Military Cutoff extension.

Mr. Burgess told members he preferred Scenario 3 based on the interest of New Hanover County and the fact that we need that extension in addition to the fact of the significant cost savings of \$55.5 million.

Mr. Kozlosky told members one of the ideas he has been working on is to work with New Hanover County's hired lobbying group in DC. There is also an appropriations bill and he will try to submit those projects at the request of the Commissioners for their lobbying group. The projects he is looking at are Kerr Avenue, Wilmington Bypass, the Multi-modal Center, and the Cross City Trail. One of the issues with Military Cutoff extension and the Hampstead Bypass is that they do not have a federal environmental document. Only a state environmental document has been completed for these projects and so those are only eligible for state funds.

Ms. Bunch asked what staff's recommendation was. Mr. Kozlosky said he would recommend Scenario 1. Mr. Riddle reminded members that if any other possible scenarios are developed, they will be presented to the TAC for consideration along with the selection chosen by the TCC.

Ms. Bunch made the motion to recommend Scenario 1 and forward to the TAC for consideration. Mr. Owens seconded the motion. The motion failed in a tie vote with five members voting in favor of the motion and 5 members voted against the motion. Two members abstained from voting.

c. Resolution Amending the 2010-2011 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Kozlosky told members staff evaluated the existing program and then modified the program based on our anticipated expenditures over the fiscal year. The line items modified were the future forecast travel patterns; the collector street element in the long range plan; the rail, waterway and other elements of the long range plan; congestion management strategies and the special studies.

Mr. Riddle made the motion to amend the 2010-2011 Unified Planning Work Program and forward to the TAC for consideration. Ms. Bunch seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

d. Strategic Planning Exercise

Mr. Kozlosky told members he is conducting a strategic planning exercise within the MPO. The exercise will be used in the development to the strategic business plan for the MPO. The *Cape Fear Commutes 2035 Transportation Plan* will serve as a comprehensive plan for the region and staff is proposing to develop a strategic business plan to focus our energies. The elements in the appendices of the plan were used for the planning exercise. Staff asked members to select the five most important areas that they would like to see included as a focus area over the next few years. Staff will ask the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to develop performance measures. That will allow staff to track the implementation of long range planning effort. The focus elements from the plan are: Mass Transit, Roadway, Pedestrian, Freight, Bicycle and Aviation.

6. Discussion

a. Local Project Prioritization

Mr. Kozlosky told members the prioritization committee held its first meeting. They decided that they would evaluate the existing projects based on the *Cape Fear Commutes 2035 Transportation Plan* matrix. Mr. York will be running each of the projects through the model to develop the travel demand criteria. Based on *Cape Fear Commutes 2035 Transportation Plan*, the projects were broken up into three different types. They are Congestion Mitigation, Quality of Life and Safety. The committee will determine how to consolidate them into one matrix after they receive the travel time information. They will schedule the next meeting following the receipt of that information.

b. Process for Items to be Placed on the TAC Agenda

Mr. Kozlosky told members the Chairman of the TAC asked that the process for placing items on the meeting agenda be reviewed. Based on the bylaws, additional items may be placed on the regular agenda following discussion on the last item on the regular agenda, as long as there is a majority of concurrence from the present and eligible voting members. Mr. Kozlosky said he wanted to make this committee aware of that request.

7. Updates

a. Wilmington MPO/City of Wilmington

Mr. Kozlosky updated members on projects within the City of Wilmington.

- **US 17/NC 210 Corridor Study in Pender County** - Mr. Kozlosky told members that the MPO held separate focus group meetings this week with the business community and residents. The next focus group meeting will be held later in the month with the development community. The next public meeting is scheduled for March 3rd at Topsail High School. Staff anticipates a June competition date for the project.
- **Market Street Corridor Study** - Mr. Kozlosky told members the study is looking at mobility and safety, land use and transportation for the Market Street corridor. The plan was recommended by both the City Planning Commission and County Planning Board. Staff will

be making a presentation on the plan to the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners on February 21st and the Wilmington City Council on February 28th and March 1st.

- **Multimodal Transportation Center** – Mr. Kozlosky told members staff is working with the Department to complete the environmental assessment. The Department is also trying to secure an option on the U-Haul property. They anticipate completion of the environmental assessment by June.

b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Not available

c. NCDOT Project Update

Mr. Riddle updated members on the projects for NCDOT.

8. Announcements

9. Adjournment

With no further items, the meeting was adjourned at 11:18am