

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting in Pender County
Date: November 16, 2011

Members Present:

Jonathan Barfield, Chairman, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Laura Padgett, Vice-chair, City of Wilmington
Jack Batson, Town of Belville
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
Dean Lambeth, Town of Kure Beach
David Williams, Pender County
Earl Sheridan, City of Wilmington
Lonnie Lashley, Town of Carolina Beach

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director
Tara Murphy, Associate Transportation Planner
Suraiya Rashid, Associate Transportation Planner
Bill McDow, Staff Engineer

1. Call to Order

Mr. Barfield called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM.

2. Public Comment Period

No speakers

3. Presentation

a. WMPO Organizational Analysis

Mr. Dan Dorian with KPMG gave a presentation on the WMPO Organizational Analysis Report.

4. Old Business

a. Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for the STIP/MTIP Amendments

Mr. Kozlosky noted that TAC members voted to continue the opening of the 30-day public comment period for the STIP/MTIP amendments at the November 15th. He said that there were questions regarding the differentiation between modifications and deletions. He explained that modifications are de-obligating the funds but continuing planning and environmental work on the projects and deletion is to stop the planning and environmental work.

Mr. Pope told members the reason the item was placed on the agenda was because of the resolution that was passed by the TAC to take the funding away from these projects. They were projects that were already in the preliminary engineering phase, so they asked that the funds stay there until the Department got to a stopping-point and then close the project down or make it a shelved-project. The other projects had not yet begun. The Old Fayetteville Road interchange began in 2008 with a Citizen Information Workshop. After that, right-of-way funding was moved to 2019 and so all PE work had stopped. The project was scheduled to come back in 2014 to restart the PE fund work. The EA is scheduled to be due in 2016 if the funding stays in 2019. Mr. Pope stated that if the TAC would like, they can pull the item from consideration, remove it from the BOT's agenda and let it fall where it falls during prioritization.

Ms. Batleman said she would prefer that. Mr. Pope said at this time PE work is not being done on the Old Fayetteville Road interchange. Ms. Batleman told members that the project is important for the Town of Leland because it's going to be the main thoroughfare through the Town of Leland and

the new Town Center is to be located on Old Fayetteville Road. She asked to have the Old Fayetteville Road interchange withdrawn from the list.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that based on the public involvement policy, the board could direct staff to remove the item from the STIP/MTIP amendment list and open the 30-day public comment period, recognizing that the item has been removed.

Ms. Batleman made the motion to open the 30-day public comment period for the STIP/MTIP amendments, excluding the deletion of the Old Fayetteville Road interchange and direct staff to put the project back on the list for prioritization. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

5. Public Hearing

a. Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps

Mr. Williams made the motion to open the public hearing for the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps. Ms. Padgett seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Ray King asked the board if maps are available here at the meeting. Mr. Kozlosky gave him a copy of the corridor maps.

Mr. Mike Cordle told members he has concern regarding the north end of the bypass heading south. It appears that traffic will be forced to take the bypass and to get back on North 17 you will be forced to travel through the local neighborhoods. It seems like there should be a 17 Business and a 17 Bypass.

Mr. Williams told members that NCDOT has heard the concerns regarding the northern access into Hampstead. They are looking at potential options to create a better interchange. They are working to come up with something north of Topsail High School. It will not be a standard clover-leaf but it is a possible solution. He noted that it is important to vote to preserve an overall corridor and be able to come back in 2012 and modify the northern section of the corridor.

Mr. Gary Taylor told the board he would rather wait until we have an idea of something that is viable and acceptable to the people of Hampstead before we move on with the project.

Ms. Julia Jones asked if residents received a letters to attend the meeting means that they are in the path of where the road is going to go. Mr. Kozlosky stated that property owners who received letters would be directly impacted by the proposed corridor map.

Ms. Dawn Sage asked at what point residents that are living within the corridor would not be able to make improvements to their home. Mr. Kozlosky told her that there will be a variance process for residents that can be submitted for making improvements to their property. The requests are reviewed to determine if it will have a significant impact to the corridor.

Ms. Allie Sheffield, president of Pender Watch told members they support the Bypass. They are confident that the state and the people working on the project are doing the best possible job that can be done. As an environmental agency, they have concerns about the red-cockaded woodpecker, but are sure that all federal policies will be followed. She said they are hopeful that the northern end can be improved and a better solution can be found.

Ms. Joyce Owens asked why it is that in order to have a bypass there would also be a need to not have any traffic on the existing 17 going through Hampstead. What is the connection between those two elements of the plan? Ms. Padgett replied that because of the woodpecker's habitat, the problem is creating a connection between the existing Highway 17 and the bypass. That

connection is generally a large clover-leaf intersection, but due to the habitat they do not have that option. NCDOT must meet federal regulations and protect the bird and their habitat. They are working to find a better solution to give residents access into Hampstead.

Mr. Pope explained that the primary objective of the project is to take thru-traffic off Highway 17 through Hampstead and put it on the bypass. Because of the issues with the red-cockaded woodpecker, they are unable to fit a standard size interchange on the northern end of the project. A possible solution is an interchange south of the school along Grand Floral Drive to bring traffic back to downtown Hampstead.

Ms. Padgett asked Mr. Pope why traffic forced to continue on to the overpass and not given the choice, even if you have to put a traffic signal there. Mr. Pope explained that the right-of-way needed for that would option would put the project at risk of encroaching on the woodpecker's habitat.

Mr. Mike Nadeau told members he submitted an alternate design to Jay McGinnis, the project engineer working on this project. He indicated that the ramp speed is the issue. If the ramp speed is lowered for the on and off ramps, it could be a possible solution.

Mr. Frank Taylor told members he works with Go Gas. He said he felt that the established businesses in the area will be adversely affected by the bypass and the possibility of a median installed on Hwy 17 in Hampstead to restrict left turns.

Mr. John Thomlinson told members that the area is only a proposed woodpecker habitat and he feels that tax payers are being put on the backburner in preserving that habitat.

Mr. Ray King suggested adding an on-ramp off the interchange so that it would connect to the US 17 as an alternative. Mr. Kozlosky said that the Department of Transportation is looking at that as a possible alternative.

Mr. Mike Cordle said he is concerned because of the drop in property values if the bypass is built and the committee needs to think about how the people will be affected financially. He would like to see a Hwy 17 alternate and a Hwy 17 bypass.

Mr. Lee Piver asked if there is a bird population in the area or is it only a habitat. Mr. Williams said it is a potential foraging habitat. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the determination was made by the US Fish and Wildlife.

Mr. Jermain Kemp told members he is stationed at Camp LeJeune. They have over 400 square miles of facilities and 20% of that has been shut down by the woodpeckers. He noted that this is a fight with the federal government that no one is going to win.

Ms. Carolyn Taylor told members her only concern is that this map is accepted in the hopes of moving forward and then not being able to find an answer to the north/south cul-de-sac. To do that does not seem sensible.

Mr. George Brown told members the red-cockaded woodpecker is creating a serious problem for everyone here today. He wanted to remind everybody that the decision on the access for the corridor is not up to the TAC members. The purpose of today's meeting is to establish a corridor. Everyone may not like the proposed interchange that is currently in place, but they are working to find a compromise for the interchange. He stated that we must first establish the corridor and he feels very confident that a better solution can be worked out for the interchange.

Everyone being given an opportunity to be heard, Mr. Williams made the motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Padgett seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

6. New Business

a. Resolution Supporting the Filing of the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps

Mr. Batson reminded members that we are here to mark the corridor, not redesign maps or interchanges but protect the corridor from encroachments in the future.

Ms. Padgett asked Mr. Kozlosky what was the justification for choosing the EH alignment section that is further west rather than building it straighter to the east. Mr. Kozlosky stated that it was selected because it had less impact to the human and business community and other endanger species impacts.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to file the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Resolution Adopting Variance Procedures for the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps

Mr. Kozlosky explained the variance procedure proposed for the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official maps.

Ms. Padgett made to motion to adopt the Variance Procedures for the Hampstead Bypass Transportation Corridor Official Maps. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

c. Resolution Supporting the "Freedom Roads" Trails Program

Mr. Kozlosky told members the "Freedom Roads" Trails Program recognizes roads, rivers and ports and North Caroling Scenic Byways used in the critical efforts of the enslave African Americans seeking access to freedom and those that supported the freedom seekers. There are several sites located within the WMPO boundary that are recognized by the program. The trails program will help promote these sites and increase tourism to these locations.

Mr. Sheridan made the motion to support the "Freedom Roads" Trails Program. Mr. Batson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

d. Cancellation of the December TAC Meeting

Ms. Padgett made to motion to cancel the December TAC meeting. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

e. Adoption of the 2012 Meeting Calendar

Ms. Padgett made the motion to adopt the 2012 meeting calendar. Mr. Batson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. Updates

Project updates for the Wilmington MPO/City of Wilmington and NCDOT are available in the agenda packet.

9. Announcements

10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:14 PM

Respectfully submitted

Mike Kozlosky

Executive Director

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED ON A COMPACT DISC AS PART OF THIS RECORD.**