

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: January 25, 2012

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
Brian Berger, New Hanover County
Dean Lambeth, Town of Kure Beach
Earl Sheridan, City of Wilmington
Steve Shuttleworth, Town of Carolina Beach
Mike Alford, NC Board of Transportation
Jerry Merrick, Town of Navassa
Bill Sisson, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Bill Sue, Brunswick County

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 4:05 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Ms. Padgett requested a correction be made on page 2, paragraph 4 of the November 15th meeting minutes. The word comprised should have been compromised. With that correction, the minutes from the November 15 and 16, 2011 meeting were approved unanimously.

3. Public Comment Period

Mr. Andy Koeppel told members that he was disappointed to learn that Mr. Allen Pope was no longer the Division 3 Engineer. He stated that he always found Mr. Pope to be very knowledgeable and responsive to any request he brought to him. He said he would like to encourage the MPO to honor Mr. Pope for all the contributions he made to the area while serving as the Division Engineer.

Mr. Allen Pope told members he would like to thank the members of the TAC for their support through the years while working as the Division 3 Engineer. He noted that he has worked for NCDOT for the past 28 years and knows Ms. Karen Fussell personally. He told members that she will do the job she has been asked to do and he will do everything he can to help make her a success in her new position.

4. New Business

a. Resolution Supporting the STIP/MTIP Amendments

Mr. Kozlosky told members in August 2011 TAC members voted to de-obligate funding for several projects within the MPO in order to maintain the schedule for Military Cutoff Road extension project and allocation of funding for two bridges over the Brunswick River that are considered "scour-critical" which is part of the Causeway upgrade project. The list of projects was presented at the November meetings. The Town of Leland requested that the Old Fayetteville Road interchange project be withdrawn from the list. That was done prior to the opening of the 30-day public comment period.

Mr. Sue noted that legislation was passed allocating \$100 million in funding for bridge safety. He asked why we are proposing to use equity funds when there is money available to replace unsafe bridges.

Mr. Kozlosky noted that the Department of Transportation recommended that the equity funds be used for this project. He told members that if it is the wish of the board, he will investigate if funds are available through the bridge funds.

Mr. Bobby Lewis, Chief of Staff to the Secretary of Transportation told members the bridge money is closer to \$300 million over the next couple years with a delivery rate of closer to four years. He said that the \$300 million will be distributed throughout the divisions and a portion will go to each division with an expectation of a high-return on delivery. The target has been for low-impact bridges, which are bridges that don't have to go through the NEPA process. It is pretty much where you take the bridge out and put it back in. Generally the bridges are low-volume with an easy permit process. He suggested staff bring the request for the Brunswick River Causeway Bridge to the Department for investigation. Mr. Sue told members his concern is that the bridge is essential for all travel in southeastern North Carolina and he felt that should elevate it to the top of the list from a logical standpoint.

Ms. Batleman told members she wanted to re-confirm and re-establish the fact that the Town of Leland is still opposed to the Village Road Phase II project.

Mr. Batson made the motion to approve the STIP/MTIP amendments. Ms Padgett seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Resolution Supporting the NC Mobility Fund Projects for the Wilmington MPO

Mr. Kozlosky told members NCDOT is soliciting candidate-projects for submittal for NC Mobility Funding. Projects must be ready to have funds obligated within 5 years and must be consistent with the MPO and RPO transportation planning efforts. The projects must also be included in the adopted transportation plan and consistent with local land use plans where available. All project capital costs including right-of-way and construction will be eligible for the mobility funds. Each MPO is allowed to submit up to 5 projects. Mr. Kozlosky told members staff reviewed the Long Range Transportation in developing the list of projects that met the criteria for the NC Mobility Funds. At their last meeting, the TCC reviewed the list and recommended that the Hampstead Bypass, Cape Fear Skyway, Independence Boulevard extension, Wilmington Multi-Modal Transportation Center and the restoration of the rail line between Wallace and Castle Hayne be considered for submittal as candidate-projects for the NC Mobility Fund Projects.

Mr. Barfield asked Mr. Alford for his thoughts on developing a strategy in order to receive NC Mobility funding dollars. Mr. Alford told members that the board needs to be in unison and lock-step on the request. He suggested that it would be beneficial to land on one project that will have the greatest impact for the area and push hard for that project. He stated that he felt that the Hampstead Bypass is a great qualifier and it will have significant impact on the area.

Ms. Padgett asked if the projects should be prioritized. Mr. Kozlosky noted that projects will be evaluated using the criteria established for NC Mobility Fund projects and ranking of the projects by the Board will not have an impact.

Ms. Batleman asked why we could not have chosen to speed up the "B" Section of the I-140 (Wilmington) Bypass, Dow Road, Old Fayetteville Road interchange, Riegelwood to Wilmington express bus service and Isabella Holmes Bridge / US 17 / Hwy 421 Interchange. She told members that these projects seem worthy of being considered for mobility funds.

Mr. Kozlosky noted that projects must be on the North Carolina state-wide or regional tier to be eligible for consideration for funding.

Mr. Barfield said he agreed with Mr. Alford that the committee needs to be of one-accord moving forward. Mr. Lambeth asked Mr. Alford if the TAC selected only one project, would we have a better chance to receive funding.

Mr. Alford suggested submitting a ranked number-one project and adding in two other projects. He recommended selecting a highway project, a rail project and a multi-modal type project because points will be awarded in each of those categories. He noted that the highway project's time travel savings seems to be important criteria in terms of weight. He told members that the Kinston RPO from Division 2 gave points to the Hampstead Bypass project because they felt that it's a key priority for the whole eastern part of the state.

Mr. Barfield asked members if they agreed that the projects to be submitted will be the Hampstead Bypass, the multi-modal center and the rail line between Wallace and Castle Hayne.

Ms. Batleman told members she has been doing research on the Castle Hayne to Wallace rail road track. She said a study was done in 2004 and she does not see how the project will meet the criteria of the Mobility fund project application. CSXT did not provide any input into that study. There has not been any public involvement in the debate about restoring the rail. She said she is just not sure that rail project is ready for this kind of endorsement.

Ms. Padgett told members that a study was done before the 2004 study that Ms. Batleman referred to and it talked about the importance of passenger rail service between Wilmington and Raleigh. She told members that one of the routes approved in that study was through Goldsboro and it would require the connection between Wallace and Castle Hayne. She said in terms of freight mobility, to add that project as a candidate for Mobility Funding will offer a regional opportunity that will add a critically needed north/south route to the State Port.

Ms Padgett made the motion to submit the Hampstead Bypass, the multi-modal center and the restoration of the rail line between Wallace and Castle Hayne as the candidate projects for the NC Mobility Funding from the Wilmington MPO. Mr. Sue seconded the motion.

Ms. Batleman told members that she would like to make an amendment to the motion. She made the motion to amend the resolution supporting the NC Mobility Fund projects for the Wilmington MPO by deleting Cape Fear Skyway and the restoration of the rail line between Wallace and Castle Hayne from the project list. Mr. Lambeth seconded the motion.

Mr. Sheridan noted that the Skyway was not part of the original motion.

Mr. Barfield called for a vote on the substitute motion. The motion failed with 4 members voting in favor and 8 voting against the amendment to the motion. Ms. Batleman, Mr. Shuttleworth, Mr. Batson and Mr. Lambeth voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Lambeth told members the reason he supported Ms. Batleman's amendment to the resolution was that in an earlier meeting when Representative Hamilton spoke to the TAC members regarding the rail line, she made mention of the fact that she had bi-partisan support. She mentioned by name Senator Rabon. Mr. Lambeth said in his discussions with Senator Rabon the next day, he said that he had no discussion with her. Mr. Lambeth told members we have no information from the railroad. If they are the primary user, he cannot support tax-payer money for a pie-in-the-sky project. He said he wanted to see some hard-numbers.

Mr. Barfield called for the vote on the original motion made by Ms. Padgett. The motion to submit the Hampstead Bypass, the multi-modal center and the rail line between Wallace and Castle Hayne as the candidate projects for the NC Mobility Funding carried with 9 members voting in favor and Ms. Batleman, Mr. Lambeth and Mr. Shuttleworth voting against the motion.

Mr. Shuttleworth made a motion that we prioritize the projects selected with the Hampstead Bypass as the primary project submitted by the Wilmington MPO and the other two projects are being included. Ms. Batleman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

c. **Resolution Supporting the Submittal of the 2012 Recreational Trails Program Grant for the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail**

Mr. Kozlosky told members the NC 2012 Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funds trail-related recreation needs at the state level. The funding comes from federal gas tax paid on non-highway fuel use for off-highway vehicles. The City of Wilmington was deeded an easement through the Autumn Hall development last month. The easement will connect to Eastwood Road. The resolution supports the submission of a grant application in order to obtain RTP funds to construct that portion of the trail.

Mr. Berger asked if a local match was required. Mr. Kozlosky said if the project is funded through RTP, the city's match will be \$405,000.00. The RTP grant will cover \$75,000.00.

Mr. Shuttleworth told members when he asked Mr. Kozlosky how many miles of trails will be constructed in the next cycle, he was told about 6-miles, all of which will occur in Wilmington. He told members he will support the motion but he would like it to be known that the Towns of Carolina Beach and Kure Beach have a greenway plan. He noted that at some point they would ask that they start seeing trails built there as well.

Ms. Padgett asked if the requests for these grants were sent around to all the MPO members. Mr. Kozlosky noted that this was something the City of Wilmington initiated and staff had been asked to assist in preparing the grant. He told members staff is available to provide assistance for grant applications for any of the towns that would make that request. Mr. Kozlosky told members that the MPO, through funding from this board, is working on a comprehensive greenway plan for the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County. The comprehensive plan will provide an opportunity to incorporate a greenway network into NCDOT projects. This resolution is in support of the City of Wilmington's efforts in securing a grant through RTP for the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to support the submittal of the 2012 Recreational Trails Program Grant for the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion. The resolution carried 11 to 1, with Mr. Berger voting in opposition.

d. **Resolution Supporting the Submittal of the TCSP Grant for the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail**

Ms. Rashid told members the Transportation Communities Systems Preservation (TCSP) grant submittal is to extend the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail from where it currently terminates/originates at John D. Berry Drive just east of Halliburton Park down 17th Street to South College Road. It will include crossing improvements at John D. Berry Drive and the extension of the multi-use path to South College Road. It will also provide public transit access to the commercial node at South College Road. The resolution is in support of the City of Wilmington's TCSP grant application.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to support the submittal of the TCSP grant application for the Gary Shell Cross-City Trail. Mr. Shuttleworth seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

e. Resolution Supporting the Submittal of a FTA Targeted Transit Assistance Program Grant from Section 5317

Ms. Rashid told members the grant program is for construction of transit improvements beyond ADA accessibility requirements. The grant application is for a mid-block crossing on Front Street just north of the intersection of Front and Castle Streets. The pedestrian refuge island and crosswalk will connect the sidewalk at Solomon Towers to the transit stops on both sides of Front Street. The mid-block crossing will include ADA ramps.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to support the submittal of a FTA targeted Transit Assistance Program Grant for Section 5317. Mr. Berger seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

f. Resolution Adopting the US 17/NC 210 Corridor Study

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the Wilmington MPO and NCDOT completed a corridor study for US 17/NC 210 in Pender County. It identified near-term strategies to improve safety and mobility along the corridor. The Pender County Board of Commissioners adopted the study at their January 3rd meeting.

Ms. Padgett made the motion to adopt the US 17/NC 210 Corridor Study. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

g. Election of Officers

Mr. Barfield opened the floor for nominations for Chair of the TAC and nominated Ms. Padgett for Chair. Mr. Sue seconded the nomination. Mr. Shuttleworth nominated Mr. Lambeth for Chair. Mr. Batson seconded the nomination. Mr. Sue made the motion that the nominations be closed. Mr. Berger seconded the motion.

Ms. Padgett received 6 votes and Mr. Lambeth received 5 votes for Chair.

Mr. Barfield opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chair. Mr. Berger nominated Mr. Lambeth for Vice-Chair. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion. Ms. Padgett nominated Mr. Barfield for Vice-Chair. Mr. Sheridan seconded the motion. Mr. Sisson made the motion that the nominations be closed. Mr. Barfield seconded the motion.

Mr. Lambeth received 6 votes and Mr. Barfield received 5 votes for Vice-Chair.

5. Updates

Project updates for the Wilmington MPO/City of Wilmington, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority and NCDOT are included in the agenda packet.

6. Announcements

Mr. Alford encouraged members to go to the NCDOT website to review the information regarding the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. As we look to the future, the information contained in the plan is clearly relative to important issues in transportation planning.

Mr. Alford told member he would like to salute Allen Pope's service and dedication and will miss working with him. He noted that it was a personnel decision made within the department and they have the right to do that. He stated that the same time, he intends to do everything in his power to make Ms. Fussell a success. He told members that we all need to come together and do that as well because her success is our success.

Ms. Padgett stated that she would like the TAC's opinion on sending a letter on their behalf thanking Mr. Pope for his time, efforts and years of service. Mr. Batson suggested commissioning a plaque to recognize Mr. Pope's years of service to our MPO while serving as Division 3 Engineer.

7. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 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.**