

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: February 29, 2012

Members Present:

Laura Padgett, Chairman, City of Wilmington
Dean Lambeth, Vice-chair, Town of Kure Beach
Jack Batson, Town of Belville
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
Brian Berger, New Hanover County
Earl Sheridan, City of Wilmington
Steve Shuttleworth, Town of Carolina Beach
Jerry Merrick, Town of Navassa
Bill Sisson, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
David Williams, Pender 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

Ms. Padgett called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from the January 25, 2012 meeting were approved unanimously.

Ms. Padgett told members she would like to welcome everyone to a new year for the WMPO and that she looks forward to working with everyone while severing as Chair, along with working with Mayor Lambeth as Vice-chair. She noted that she had a few thoughts on goals for this year. She said she would like to see the Wilmington MPO represent to the State the market potential and value that our part of the state has. She will be working to make our area of the state and our MPO issues are heard and valued at the State level. She told members that Senator Rabon has already reached out to indicate that he is very anxious to help. The State, not just Brunswick County lost two big potential job creators recently due both to politics and inadequate facilities. We as the MPO should be dedicated to our area as a region and to its potential for North Carolina. Wilmington is the primary urban-hub and the lead engine in economic activity; but, the communities that surround Wilmington are critical to Wilmington's future success and vice-versa. She told members that she wanted to make it clear that everyone has a voice at the table. With very fast growth in Brunswick County and Leland in particular, the MPO needs to recognize the changes and the challenges that our region will face. She thanked members in advance for working with her to enhance our region.

3. Public Comment Period

Mr. Andy Koeppel addressed members regarding the need to support the request for a feasibility study on restoration of rail service between Jacksonville and Wilmington. He suggested that the resolution should note that the Castle Hayne to Wallace rail line is a higher priority. He also spoke to members regarding the feasibility study for the Multi-modal Transportation Center. He stated that study should have been completed in June 2011 and suggested that the TAC begin discussions on the need for the study to be completed as soon as possible.

Mr. Alvin Rogers spoke to members on the possibility of one-way alternative routes for South College Road and Kerr Avenue to address the traffic issues along South College Road. He noted that the Dawson/Wooster corridor was converted to one-way and it has worked for over 40 years. He requested that staff take another look at that as a possible solution to the traffic issues on South College Road.

4. Presentations

a. Recognition of Allen Pope

Ms. Padgett told members she would like to recognize Mr. Pope and thank him for his years of service to our MPO while serving as the Division 3 Engineer. She noted that Mr. Pope was always available to members and we appreciated his time and the attention he gave to the issues facing our area for many years.

Mr. Pope said he would like to thank the members of the TAC for their support through the years. He reminded members that he is still a NCDOT employee and to contact him if he can be of service.

b. Wilmington/New Hanover County Comprehensive Greenway Plan

Mr. Kozlosky gave a presentation on the activities and upcoming events for the Comprehensive Greenway Plan funded by the MPO, City of Wilmington and New Hanover County. He presented information on the guiding concepts, scope of work and the schedule for the plan. The first round of public involvement meetings are scheduled for April. A website and Facebook page has been launched for the project. The consultant, Alta/Greenways plans to have the draft plan completed in July and the final plan by the end of 2012.

5. New Business

a. Opening of the 30-day Public Comment on the 2012-2013 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Williams made the motion to open the 30-day public comment period for the 2012-2013 UPWP. Mr. Barfield seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period the Public Transportation MTIP/STIP Amendment

Mr. Williams made the motion to open the 30-day comment period for the Public Transportation MTIP/STIP amendment. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

c. Resolution Adopting the Title VI Documentation for the Wilmington MPO

Mr. Kozlosky told members the NC Department of Transportation Civil Rights Division reviewed all MPOs statewide and determined that all 17 are deficient in regards to Title VI. As part of that review, they are requesting that the MPO adopt the policy statement, the standard Title VI assurances, and appendices. There is also a Notice of Complaint that is part of the Title VI and civil right discrimination process. It explains how the complaint is investigated and who will investigate the complaint.

Mr. Barfield made the motion to adopt the Title VI documentation for the Wilmington MPO. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

d. Resolution Requesting NCDOT complete a Feasibility Study to Evaluate the Potential of Future Rail Service Between Wilmington and Jacksonville

Ms Padgett told members the feasibility study for rail service between Wilmington and Jacksonville is a separate project from the rail project for Castle Hayne to Wallace. The advantage for the potential rail service between Wilmington and Jacksonville would be to provide greater access to troops for our Port and a connection with Jacksonville.

Mr. Kozlosky told members the resolution came from the Jacksonville MPO. They are requesting support for evaluating the feasibility of future rail service between Wilmington and Jacksonville. He noted that rail service was in existence up until 1985. The resolution is asking the Department to evaluate the feasibility of restoration of the rail line. The study will address if the rail line is feasible, as well as determine an alignment. The study would be the first step in the process.

Ms. Padgett noted that in 1992 the rail company offered to give the land in the right-of-way to the City of Wilmington or to give it to the joint property owners on either side. The City Council at that time voted to give the land to the adjacent property owners. Mr. Williams told members he does not think this rail line will be possible but that will be determined by going forward with the feasibility study.

Mr. Williams made the motion to request NCDOT complete a feasibility study to evaluate the potential of future rail service between Wilmington and Jacksonville. Mr. Sisson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

6. Discussion

a. Results of NCDOT Prioritization 2.0

Ms. Rashid reviewed the Prioritization 2.0 list and reminded members that highway projects are subject to the equity formula. She noted that we were competing with all projects in Division 3. Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that Prioritization 2.0 is prioritization for 2016 to 2020 and this would be used to allocate funding in the TIP for those years.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that Prioritization 2.0 for bicycle projects ranked the South 17th Street Multi-use Path as the number one project in the State of North Carolina.

b. NC Maritime Study

Ms. Padgett told members she is a member of the advisory committee for the development of the North Carolina Maritime Strategy. The study takes a fresh look at North Carolina's maritime assets and the needs for improvement to ensure that North Carolina and the Port of Wilmington remains competitive in the future. The draft report is complete and available for review. The Department of Transportation is holding a series of three informal public meetings to receive comments on the draft report. Meetings will be held March 6th, 7th and 8th.

c. City of Wilmington Collector Street Plan

Mr. Kozlosky told members in January 2011 the MPO began the updating the City of Wilmington collector street plan. The last plan for the City was developed in 1992. The consultant hired to update the plan identified existing and possible future collector streets. The first public workshop was held in October 2011 with a total of 31 residents participating. The second workshop was held in February and over 300 citizens attended. The majority of those attending were opposed to the collector street plan because it recommends interconnecting neighborhoods. The plan recommends technical design standards for collector streets that could be utilized when the City goes in and resurfaces the streets. It also identifies locations where the street improvements should be made. There is no funding that is dedicated to the collector streets in the City's Capital Improvement Program; however, the plan will serve as a guide as development comes in so that the City could work to implement the vision outlined in the plan.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the public comment period closed today after being open for the past 4 months. Many residents have submitted comments and he said that there has been strong opposition to a few of the connections. He stated that he wanted to bring this item before the board for suggestions on how to move forward.

Ms. Padgett told members she thought one of the issues was that residents don't understand how a collector street plan will work. The connectors are not something the City is going to go out and do immediately, but when there is development in an area, the places for the roads to be located would be mapped out. The plan that was completed actually works well but it has been too long since it was adopted and it's time to update the plan. Neighborhoods have become accustomed to looking at stubbed-out streets that were really intended to be connectors. Now they are objecting to that use. Ms. Padgett said her suggestion would be that staff hold a public hearing in each of the neighborhoods that have had comments and attempt to explain exactly what the collector street plan is and how fast it's likely to have something implemented. She said she feels that separate neighborhood meetings will be a better opportunity to talk with residents about the plan and its impact on their neighborhood.

Mr. Sisson said that a lot of the fear is because collector streets, when originally planned were to funnel neighbor traffic into major arterials. What people are seeing now is that major arterials are over-serviced and those collector streets are becoming alternate arterials. If they were still in their original state, serving their original purpose, maybe it wouldn't be such a major concern.

Ms. Padgett said she thinks there needs to be more conversations with the concerned citizens in those neighborhoods. Mr. Sisson said he agreed because the closer you can get to where people live, the easier it will be to talk with them. Ms. Padgett stated there needs to be some improvements in the way the plan and maps are presented. There needs to be conversation with smaller groups about what a collector street does and the need for connections in some of these areas.

Ms. Murphy noted that these additional meetings may involve additional services for the consultant. Mr. Kozlosky said if additional services are warranted, staff will need to come back to the TAC with a budget amendment in order to allocate the resources.

7. Updates

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

8. Announcements

9. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:14 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.**