

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Advisory Committee
Date: April 30, 2014

Members Present:

Laura Padgett, Chair, City of Wilmington
Pat Batleman, Vice-chair, Town of Leland
Dean Lambeth, Town of Kure Beach
Gary Doetsch, Town of Carolina Beach
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Joe Breault, Town of Belville
David Williams, Pender County
Earl Sheridan, City of Wilmington
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director

1. Call to Order

Ms. Padgett called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. Conflict of Interest Reminder

Ms. Padgett asked if any members had a conflict of interest with any items on the meeting agenda. No members reported having a conflict of interest.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the March 26th meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Public Comment Period

Mr. Andy Koepfel addressed members regarding the minimum problem statement for the I-74 Alternate. He told members the project was originally planned to follow NC 211 through the Green Swamp. He noted that due to the environmental issues created with the route, the project was tabled. Mr. Koepfel stated that he was concerned that if TAC members passed the resolution that included a purpose and need statement for the I-74 Alternate, it would detract from our ability to get the funding for I-74 going between Whiteville and Wilmington. He noted that Mr. Kozlosky assured him that would not be the case. Mr. Koepfel told members that the I-74 Alternate is not a highway that deserves attention.

5. Presentation

a. Independence Boulevard Extension

Mr. Ted Devens, with NCDOT gave a presentation on the Independence Boulevard Extension project. He noted that the project is still in the alternatives analysis screening process and the Department is accepting feedback from local officials to get initial thoughts on what they would like to see for the project. Mr. Devens presented a draft video that included a review of the purpose and need for the project, as well as the constraints involved and the impact to the area.

Following the video, Ms. Padgett questioned the need to construct the entire facility as a raised or depressed roadway when there are only conflict points at four locations. She suggested that it be built as a boulevard facility. Mr. Devens told members that if the project is built at grade, traffic volumes at key intersections would cause those intersections to fail. He said because the entire project is only 1.7 miles in length, the real constrain will be the distance needed to bridge the intersections.

Based on the alternatives presented, Ms. Padgett asked why the Department would consider raising the rail for the entire project. Mr. Gary Lovering, project engineer for NCDOT told members with crossing at 36 feet high and at a 1% grade, it would be best to keep the rail elevated. Ms. Padgett told member she is concerned that if the rail is built on a continuous berm it would block streets in the future. She suggested that it be bridged. Mr. Devens said bridging the facility is an option; however, it would be very expensive to build and maintain.

Mr. Barfield told member he understands the need for the project but his main concern is the impact on the surrounding community and he cannot support the project. Dr. Sheridan said he too was concerned about the impact on the neighborhood as far as displacing people and having an expressway splitting the neighborhood area.

Mr. Devens noted that the engineering team working on the project is aware of the impacts to the surrounding community and that's why they are seeking feedback from TAC members. Ms. Padgett suggested that the purpose and need statement may need to be rewritten. Do we want people to go 55mph through the City of Wilmington? Mr. Frank Williams told members it's important to keep in mind the character you want to maintain for your community.

Mr. David Williams asked if TAC members were being asked to take action on the project. Mr. Kozlosky said no. The Department's engineering team is here because at the last meeting staff was asked to provide an update on the project. Ms. Padgett told members that there needs to be more conversation with the City of Wilmington as the project moves forward.

b. Wilmington MPO Travel Demand Model

Mr. Roberto Miquel, with CDM Smith gave a presentation on the Wilmington Travel Demand Model. He reviewed the key features offered with the new update of the model. Mr. Miquel told members that the travel demand model will be completed by May 31st.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Resolution approving the STIP/MTIP Amendments

Mr. Frank Williams made the motion to approve the STIP/MTIP Amendments. Mr. David Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

7. New Business

a. Resolution adopting the Purpose and Need/Minimum Problem Statements

Mr. Kozlosky told members that a few of the projects in Prioritization 3.0 do not have minimum problem statements because they were previously either loop or toll eligible projects. He noted that minimum problem statements were also needed for some of the projects that are now within the WMPO's planning area boundary that had previously been submitted by the RPO. The minimum problem statements are used as a guide when we prioritize the local input points.

Dr. Sheridan asked for clarification on the purpose of the Minimum Problem Statement. Mr. Kozlosky told member they will be identifying that there is a problem that exists. Mr. Kozlosky said staff is using the minimum problem statement as a guide in assigning the local points.

Ms. Padgett noted that the TAC is not approving a particular project. She told members that she would like to add the wording to the minimum problem statement for the Independence Boulevard extension project. She would like to include that this issue may not be necessarily fixed by one road and that it may take more than one effort to fix the problem of getting people north/south across Wilmington.

Ms. Batleman asked to amend the minimum problem statement for the Crossing over the Cape Fear River to include how important the project is to the Port of Wilmington. Ms. Padgett noted that it might help with funding. Ms. Batleman said getting the traffic into the State Port was one of the key elements in the project.

Ms. Padgett told member she was concerned about the wording for the I-74 Alternate minimum problem statement. She asked if this was requesting to build an alternate to I-74. Mr. Kozlosky said the minimum problem statement is speaking about taking I-74 and carrying it down through the Green Swamp toward Myrtle Beach. Since that time, the TAC representatives and local community leaders expressed a desire to bring the alignment to Wilmington and connect to the Wilmington Bypass. He noted that the Myrtle Beach MPO does not desire to remove that connection down to Myrtle Beach.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the minimum problem statement was crafted to meet the requirements for the process of assigning local input points. When the process of ranking project begins, TAC members will make the decision to assign points to the project or not.

Mr. Frank Williams told members as a member of the RPO, one of their goals is to get the path through the Green Swamp off the maps. He noted that if the way it's written is to emphasize going through the Green Swamp, he would rather leave it off.

Ms. Padgett told members she would take a motion to remove I-74 Alternate minimum problem statement from consideration in the ranking process. Mr. Doetsch said he would make that motion. Mr. David Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mr. David Williams made the motion to adopt the Purpose and Need/Minimum Problem Statements with the modifications from Ms. Padgett and Ms. Batleman. Mr. Frank Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

8. Discussion

a. Surface Transportation Program-Direct Attributable and Transportation Alternatives Program-Direct attributable Selection Criteria

Mr. Kozlosky told members that at the last TCC meeting, members suggested assigning of points for projects as to where they are at in the process. He said staff will bring their request to the board at the May meeting.

8. Updates

Project updates for the Wilmington MPO, CFPTA and NCDOT Division and Planning Branch are included in the agenda packet.

Ms Padgett told members she would like to request moving the September TAC meeting to another date. She asked staff to add that item to the agenda for the May meeting. Mr. Frank Williams told members that he will not be able to attend the meeting in May. Ms. Padgett asked staff to poll members to determine if we will have a quorum for the meeting in May.

Ms. Padgett told members she had a request to discuss starting the TAC meeting at 3:30 rather the 4:00. The consensus of the members was that meeting will begin at 3:30 beginning with the May meeting.

10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:38 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.**