

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning
Organization Board Meeting
Date: August 31, 2016

Members Present:

Gary Doetsch, Town of Carolina Beach
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Emilie Swearingen, Town of Kure Beach
Skip Watkins, New Hanover County
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Staff Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director

1. Call to Order

Mr. Williams called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

2. Conflict of Interest Reminder

Mr. Williams 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 Agenda

Mr. Watkins made the motion to approve the agenda for today's meeting. Ms. Swearingen seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the July 13, 2016 Work Session and the July 27, 2016 meeting were approved unanimously.

5. Public Comment Period

Ms. Florence Schroeder addressed members regarding road conditions in the Waterford Place subdivision in Myrtle Grove. Ms. Schroeder read a statement regarding her and her neighbor's concerns about the roads in their neighborhood and asked that they be repaired and maintained.

Following her request for assistance, Mr. Doetsch told Ms. Schroeder that NCDOT would need to address the matter. Mr. Doetsch asked Ms. Collette, NCDOT Division Engineer if she could speak to members of the community in attendance regarding road conditions and maintenance in Waterford Place subdivision. Ms. Collette said she will meet with the neighborhood representatives immediately following today's meeting.

Mr. Alvin Rogers addressed members regarding alternatives for widening College Road. Mr. Rogers presented his suggestion for the one-way pair alternative and he asked members to consider his suggestion for the one-way alternative rather than building an overpass at the intersection.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that a presentation will be made to the City Council at their September 19th meeting regarding at-grade vs. grade separated interchanges. He stated that the Department is currently evaluating the different alternatives and no decision has been made.

Ms. Linda LaPrice addressed members regarding road conditions in the Waterford Place subdivision in Myrtle Grove. She questioned why builders are allowed to build without getting approval on streets on which they are building. She asked why the rules and laws regarding streets in a subdivision are not being enforced.

Mr. Braden Willis addressed members regarding traffic on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. He suggested that a median barrier gate be installed that will allow traffic to turn around and move off the bridge and to allow drivers to choose an alternate route into Wilmington. He also suggested that a helipad be added to serve emergency medical personnel when an ambulance is unable to get across the bridge due to traffic or bridge issues. Mr. Willis told members that he's been reading about the transportation plans for the rail corridor in the area. He noted that with the possibility of a rail-yard expansion in the Leland/Navassa area, he cautioned members to consider the potential risks involved in the transportation and storage of hazardous chemicals at the rail-yard.

Mr. Andy Koeppel addressed members regarding agenda items 7.c (Resolution encouraging the North Carolina Department of Transportation to provide notifications and implement restrictions for work on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and work toward the long-term replacement of the bridge) on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Koeppel told members that he questioned that replacement is the word that we want. He suggested that "alternate" might be a more appropriate word. He noted that the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge will remain in place after a southern bridge is built.

Mr. Watkins noted that the word replacement caught him off-guard as well when he saw it on the news. It may be confusing to the general public.

6. Presentation

a. Joint FHWA/FTA Certification Review, Ron Lucas, FHWA

Mr. Ron Lucas gave a brief overview of the FHWA/FTA Certification Review that took place on April 14th. He told members that the Certification Review included a desk audit, a public comment meeting and an on-site review. Mr. Lucas reviewed the commendations and recommendations from the review committee. He noted that no corrective actions were identified during the audit. He congratulated the MPO staff on their successful certification review.

b. Section 5310 Program, Albert Eby and Vanessa Lacer, CFPTA

Mr. Eby and Ms. Lacer gave a presentation on the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority's Section 5310 Program.

Mr. Eby gave a brief overview of the Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled program and CFPTA's accomplishments since becoming the designated recipient. Mr. Eby noted that one of the requirements for eligibility was the development of the Program Management Plan (PMP). As outlined in the PMP, Ms. Vanessa Lacer was hired as the Mobility Manager to oversee the program's activities.

Ms. Lacer told members that on a Federal level, the mission of the Section 5310 program is to remove barriers to public transportation. She gave a brief overview of educational opportunities and activities being offered to eligible recipients through the new WAVE Connect program.

7. Consent Agenda

- a. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for STIP/MTIP Amendments (August)**
- b. Resolution approving STIP/MTIP Amendments (June and July)**
- c. Resolution encouraging the North Carolina Department of Transportation to provide notifications and implement restrictions for work on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and work toward the long-term replacement of the bridge**
- d. Resolution supporting a modification in project limits for the Cape Fear Boulevard Multi-use path Project**

Ms. Batleman asked that Item c. be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion.

Mr. Williams made the motion to approve Item a., b. and d. on the consent agenda. Mr. Miller seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Batleman told members that she had made suggested changes to the original resolution in an effort to give the resolution more emphasis.

Mr. Watkins told members he is not sure that the members of the WMPO have gone as far as to identify that a new Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is an urgent need for replacement. He asked if we are looking at a fourth crossing as the next step. He said he felt that that part of the motion is placing the WMPO's emphasis on a new Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, rather than a fourth crossing. The wording indicates that we are placing greater weight on the replacement of that bridge, as opposed to what the real factor is. He said he understand closures and inconveniences as stated in the resolution, but he has a problem supporting replacement for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, as opposed to working on a fourth crossing.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that work is still being done on the Environmental Document for identifying whether a new crossing is a more viable option or upgrading the existing route. The draft document is expected in 2017. He told members that even if a new crossing is built, there will still be a need to replace the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

Mr. Watkins noted that it is his personal opinion that the resolution has too narrow a focus as opposed to requesting action on another crossing of some sort.

Mr. Williams told members that even if we do get a southern route, the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge will have to be replaced. The proposed resolution makes sure this gets the attention it needs from NCDOT.

Ms. Batleman told members that we have a situation where we won't know until next year what corridor will be selected for the fourth crossing. What is the likelihood that funding will be identified to pay for a fourth crossing and what is the likelihood that we would get the funds to replace the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

A general discussion followed regarding past efforts on the issues involved in establishing a southern route across the Cape Fear River.

Mr. Anderson suggested that we need a “fixed bridge” as opposed to a “lift bridge”. He suggest that the resolution should state that “...requests the North Carolina Department of Transportation to begin planning for the necessary replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and/or an alternative fixed bridge as quickly as possible.” Ms. Swearingen suggest taking out the “/or” from the wording.

Mr. Williams told members the whole point of the resolution is to just make sure it’s on the radar of NCDOT, but eventually this bridge will have to be replaced.

Ms. Batleman told members that she feels that the important message here is to assure commuters using the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge that the WMPO Board is not ignoring the problem. She noted that it’s important that the bridge replacement be brought to the attention of the Department now and not later.

Following discussion on wording for the resolution, Mr. Williams suggested that staff put the resolution back on the agenda for the next meeting in order to get the wording right using the feedback from the Board today.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that it appears that there are two issues being addressed in the resolution. The first is the maintenance issues and the problems with advanced notification of closures. The other issue is the desire to replace the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and also look to continue the study for the Cape Fear Crossing project. He asked members if it would be better if the two issues were separated and bring back separate resolutions for consideration.

Consensus of the board was bring back two separate resolutions.

Mr. Watkins made the motion to table the resolution in order for staff to revise the resolution as directed by the Board. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

8. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution adopting the Wilmington Urban Area MPO’s 2016 Congestion Management Process Biennial Report

Ms. Doliboa told members that the report is the first Congestion Management Process Biennial Report. She noted that when the MPO was designated as a Transportation Management Area (TMA), FHWA required that the WMPO complete a Congestion Management Process. Ms. Doliboa said the purpose of the biennial report is to demonstrate how the WMPO’s regional network is performing according to the CMP performance measures. She explained how the data was collected and how the data was used for evaluating the segments. Mr. Doliboa stated that the next step is to facilitate the implementation of the strategies to improve the CMP network. The data from the report will also be used as a component in the MTP project selection process.

A brief question/answer and discussion period followed.

Mr. Williams made the motion to adopt the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's 2016 Congestion Management Process Biennial Report. Mr. Miller seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Resolution adopting the FY 2017 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) Submittal Guide and Competitive Process

Mr. Lowe reminded members that the STP-DA and TAP-DA programs are being combined at the Federal level. Mr. Lowe noted that effectively there's not much change in how the programs operate at the MPO level other than the name change to Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Transportation Alternatives Set Aside. He told members the submittal guides for both the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program - Direct Attributable and the Transportation Alternatives Set Aside - Direct Attributable guide have been updated for the 2017 allocations. The two primary changes are that this year's submittal will require a detailed opinion of probable construction costs that has been prepared by a licensed engineer. Staff will also require a project schedule that highlights key milestones and coordinates the schedule with NCDOT and WMPO. Mr. Lowe said the new requirements will help provide a good picture and understanding of the project process and timelines, and also help to ensure that the projects are moving forward.

Mr. Williams made the motion to adopt the FY 2017 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) Submittal Guide and Competitive Process. Ms. Batleman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

c. Resolution adopting the FY 2017 Transportation Alternatives Set Aside-Direct Attributable (TASA-DA) Submittal Guide and Competitive Process

Ms. Batleman made the motion to adopt the FY 2017 Transportation Alternatives Set Aside-Direct Attributable (TASA-DA) Submittal Guide and Competitive Process. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

d. Resolution requesting the North Carolina Department of Transportation begin right of way acquisition for the Hampstead Bypass

Mr. Piepmeyer made the motion to request the North Carolina Department of Transportation begin right of way acquisition for the Hampstead Bypass. Ms. Batleman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

e. Resolution encouraging the North Carolina Board of Transportation to support a bicycle/pedestrian crossing on 17th Street at New Hanover Regional Medical Center

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the Wilmington City Council approved a 720 space parking deck on the west side of 17th Street at New Hanover Regional Medical Center at their meeting on August 16th. He noted that New Hanover Regional Medical Center identified the building of an elevated structure over 17th Street as Phase II of the project. Mr. Kozlosky stated that in order to build such an encroachment, it will be necessary for the State Board of Transportation to approve.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Technical Coordinating Committee expressed concern regarding an elevated structure across 17th Street so language was add to the resolution at their request stating "WHEREAS, the Port of Wilmington is a major economic driver for the region, 17th Street is a designated detour route for the Port and an elevated walkway should be designed to accommodate oversized freight truck traffic to/from the Port of Wilmington."

Mr. Anderson made the motion to adopt the Resolution encouraging the North Carolina Board of Transportation to support a bicycle/pedestrian crossing on 17th Street at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

9. Discussion

a. STIP/MTIP Modifications (August)

Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff will be bringing STIP/MTIP Modifications back to the next meeting for consideration.

b. WMPO Bylaw Amendment

Mr. Kozlosky said staff is asking for direction from the Board regarding member absences. In April the Board members amended the bylaws to state that if members missed 3 or more meeting, a letter would be sent to the chief elected official of the board the member represents. Mr. Kozlosky said there has been question about whether that would be unexcused absences, so staff wanted to get direction as to if the Board wanted to provide excused and unexcused absences. If that is the desire, staff will bring an amendment to the board at the next meeting.

Consensus by the Board members was for staff to bring an amendment to the bylaws regarding excused/unexcused absences and alternate member participation for consideration by the Board to the next meeting.

c. Public Participation Plan Update

Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff is working to update the Public Participation Plan and will bring it to the Board in October.

d. Organizational Structure

Mr. Kozlosky told members that in April, staff was asked for information on how other MPO organizations are hosted throughout the state. Staff provided a memo that outlined this information and compared the five different organizational structures.

Mr. Williams told members he requested that staff look into this at the April meeting. He noted that this is not in any way intended to reflect negatively on the City of Wilmington. Mr. Williams explained that as it stands right now, staff has a chain of command. Does Mr. Kozlosky report the City of Wilmington or does he report to the Board? Mr. Williams said the other issue is the total geographic area the MPO serves. Mr. Williams suggested that the Board look at what the advantages/disadvantages of moving toward the Leaning Independent model and preserve the relationship with the City of Wilmington. No decision needs to be today but it is time to begin discussions.

A general discussion followed regarding the need to continue investigating the options. Consensus of the Board members was for the organizational structure to remain as it is currently.

10. Updates

Project updates for the Crossing over the Cape Fear River Work Group, Wilmington MPO, Rail Re-alignment Task Force, CFPTA. NCDOT Division and NCDOT Planning Branch are included in the agenda packet.

10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm

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.**