

Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning
Organization Board Meeting
Date: February 22, 2017

Members Present:

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

Others Present:

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO
Karen Collette, Division Engineer, NCDOT

1. Call to Order

Mr. Doetsch called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

2. Conflict of Interest Reminder

Mr. Doetsch 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 Board members Excused Absence

Mr. Kozlosky told members that Mr. Breault submitted a request to be excused from today's meeting.

Mr. Piepmeyer made the motion to excuse Mr. Breault absence from the meeting. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Agenda

With no requested changes to the agenda, Ms. Bozeman made the motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Watkins seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment Period

Mr. Andy Koeppel told members that he wanted to praise Mr. Kozlosky for the fact the he invited Mr. Kevin Lacy to the last Board meeting to speak about future numbering plans for the Hampstead Bypass. He said he agreed with Mr. Lacy in that Highway 17 leading into Market Street should be designated as US 17 Business, while the Hampstead Bypass designation should be US 17. Mr. Koeppel told members that he would like to encourage them to pass a resolution endorsing that concept.

Mr. Koeppel stated that the major thing he wished to speak about is the rail re-alignment. He noted that conceptually it's a good idea. He said even though he does not have any clue about what the feasibility study is going to say, he is concerned that those funds may be competing for funds that we might want to set aside

for a southern bridge. Mr. Koepfel stated that the southern bridge may be a higher priority for most people. He told members that he wanted to bring it before everyone's attention that the existing feasibility study does not include the feasibility relative to the cost to eliminate all the grade-crossings in New Hanover County, as opposed to relocating the rail to Brunswick County. Mr. Koepfel told members that eliminating the grade-crossings will certainly be substantially less than a billion dollars. If you take away the grade-crossings, the problem with traffic being held up goes away. He said that option should be included in the feasibility study and he would strongly recommend that the Board consider that approach when holding discussions with the consultant who is working on the feasibility study.

6. Presentations

a. Initiating the WMPO's 2042 MTP Development, Suraiya Motsinger, WMPO

Ms. Motsinger gave a presentation on the development of the WMPO's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). She told members that the WMPO is currently operating under Cape Fear Transportation 2040 and staff is at the point to begin looking at the process for developing the next plan. Ms. Motsinger noted that the MTP must be updated every five years. She told members that staff will work to incorporate the recommended changes from the Cape Fear Transportation 2040 process going forward in to the 2045 MTP. During the presentation, Ms. Motsinger reviewed the decision making process that will be put in place for the 2045 plan and the anticipated schedule/timeline moving forward to the adoption of the new MTP. A brief question and answer period followed.

9. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the January 25, 2017 meeting were approved unanimously.

b. Opening of the 30-day public comment for the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's Draft FY 18 Unified Planning Work Program

c. Resolution approving the STIP/MTIP Modifications (January)

d. Resolution adopting the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority's Locally Coordinated Public Transportation Plan

e. Resolution adopting the 2017-2021 Strategic Business Plan Targets, Objectives and Strategies

Mr. Williams made the motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Bozeman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

10. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution supporting the re-alignment of North Carolina Bicycling Highways 3 and 5 and request NCDOT to re-analyze Bicycle Highways Statewide

Ms. Doliboa told members that in August the WMPO received a letter from Mr. Paul Cozza, NC Ports Executive Director identifying potential safety concerns involved when mixing bicycle traffic with freight traffic. He requested that the designation of the Bicycle Highway be removed from South Front Street. Ms. Doliboa stated that she presented the request from Mr. Cozza to the Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee for discussion. The committee decided to create a sub-committee and invite the NC Ports to participate along with members from the Bike/Ped Committee and WMPO staff members to review the request and make a recommendation.

Ms. Doliboa told members that the WMPO met with NCDOT Bike and Pedestrian Division in October. They recognized the need for the Bicycle Highway routes to be reviewed and updated.

Ms. Doliboa said when the sub-committee convened in November, members noted that bike suitability map shows Front Street is listed as an advanced-rider route. She said the sub-committee discussed alternate routes that would accommodate inexperienced riders and tourist. Their recommended alternate route for NC Bicycling Highways 3 and 5 follows a path down Castle Street to 5th Avenue, to Willard Street, and then turning left on to 3rd Street which will take riders to Greenfield Avenue. The route will then follow the multi-use path to Lake Shore Drive. From Lake Shore Drive, riders will take Morning Side Drive to cross at a signalized crosswalk on to Central Boulevard. Riders will then merge in with the existing state bike route. A brief question/answer and discussion period followed.

Mr. Rivenbark made the motion to support re-alignment of North Carolina Bicycling Highways 3 and 5, and request that NCDOT re-analyze Bicycle Highways Statewide. Mr. Barfield seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

11. Discussion

a. Potential Options for Expenditure of the Remaining Direct Attributable Allocations

Mr. Kozlosky told members that at the last meeting members discussed the fund balance remaining from the 2017 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program-Direct Attributable (STBGP-DA) and Transportation Alternatives Set Aside – Direct Attributable (TASA-DA) call for projects. Staff compiled a list of potential options for the Board for consider in allocating the remaining fund balance.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the remaining balance from the 2017 call for projects, as well as the un-awarded amounts from previous years, total \$2.5 million dollars available for allocation.

Mr. Kozlosky reviewed the list of suggested options as follows:

- A.) Hold funds in reserve. Mr. Kozlosky noted that that will allow the member jurisdictions to request additional federal dollars towards their existing projects if needed.
- B.) Open up a second call for projects. Mr. Kozlosky explained that staff only received applications for 4 projects in the last call. He noted that some of that could be due to the member jurisdictions staffing capacity. If that is the case, we would run the risk of not receiving any additional applications.
- C.) Contact NCDOT and gage their interest in utilizing these funds to off-set some of their shortfalls in TIP projects that are federally funded projects
- D.) Flex these funds over to the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority. Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff received a letter from Mr. Eby indicating that they would be interested in acquiring 4 compressed natural gas busses at about \$465,000.00 each. The Authority would provide the local match for these busses.
- E.) Provide funding to determine the Least Environmental Damaging Practical Alternative for the Cape Fear crossing. Mr. Kozlosky explained that it is estimated that the completion of that study will cost between \$1.5 and \$1.8 million. He noted that NCDOT informed staff that because the project is not funded in the State Transportation Improvement Program, they will propose to cease work on the study once they get to Concurrence Point 2A. Mr. Kozlosky said by providing funds to this effort, it will continue the study to determine what will be the Least Environmental Damaging Practical Alternative.

Mr. Piepmeyer asked if the Board could combine a mix of the options presented by staff. Mr. Kozlosky told members that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) recommended a combination of A., D., and E. He said the TCC members did not indicate a dollar value to each, as they preferred that the Board identify the funding for each one.

Mr. Kozlosky told members that staff took the recommendation from the TCC and created four possible combinations for options A., D., and E. The combinations are as follows:

- #1) Purchase 1 CNG bus for Wave = \$372,000; Allocate \$750,000 towards Cape Fear Crossing Study; Keep \$1,429,913 in reserve for project overages
- #2) Purchase 2 CNG buses for Wave = \$744,000; Allocate \$750,000 towards Cape Fear Crossing Study; Keep \$1,057,913 in reserve for project overages
- #3) Allocate \$1,500,000 towards Cape Fear Crossing Study; Keep \$1,051,913 in reserve for project overages
- #4) Purchase 4 CNG buses for Wave = \$1,488,000; Keep \$1,063,913 in reserve for project overages

Mr. Piepmeyer told members he thought combining the options was the best solution. Mr. Barfield told members he agreed with the TCC recommendation. Mr. Barfield said members have recently had several conversations regarding support for an additional river crossing and this would help get to the next step in that process. He noted that at the same time, item D will provide funding for Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority and that will benefit both Brunswick and New Hanover counties in trying to get people back and forth.

Mr. Watkins asked Mr. Eby about the request for new busses. Mr. Eby told members WAVE currently has 39 fixed-route busses and shuttles in the fleet. He noted that 12 of the 21 larger busses have exceeded their useful life. Replacing the aging fleet would save on operating and maintenance costs every year. Mr. Eby told members about the challenges they face in finding federal funding for the purchase of new busses.

Mr. Williams told members that he feels that option A is the number one priority because if we've already started projects and they are coming up short, then we need to finish the ones we've started. Secondly with the Cape Fear Crossing, we need to finish that study and see what it says. He said he was not opposed to the request for the purchase of busses, he too would like to see more information. Mr. Williams said the options A and D are his top two priorities.

Mr. Doetsch asked staff to share more of the details regarding funding going forward. Mr. Kozlosky told members that the WMPO had \$1.3 million in requests for Direct Attributable funds last year and they received \$3 million in funding. He noted that the purpose of the discussion is to auto-correct and draw down some of that balance. Staff looked at several combinations for how the Board might utilize these funds. Mr. Kozlosky reviewed four different scenarios for expending the funds.

Ms. Swearingen asked if we would come up short on the Cape Fear Crossing and not be able to finish it if we don't allocate the \$1.5 million. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the \$1.5 million would get us to the point

of identifying the Least Environmental Damaging Practical Alternative. He noted that NCDOT indicated that we could break it up over a course of two years. That \$750,000 is included as part of combination options 1 and 2.

Staff reviewed the four combination options again for the Board and a general discussion followed regard the funding amounts for the different combinations.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff is looking for direction from the Board on coming back for adoption or approval in March.

Mr. Piepmeyer said the number 2 option is an equitable split between three different needs and all three of the needs are very worthy issues that the Board should address. Mr. Williams told members he leans toward option number 2, with option 1 as his second choice. He asked if staff could provide a list of projects that would be funded with the overage. Mr. Kozlosky said staff could pull that information together for the Board. Mr. Williams asked how time-sensitive this decision is. Mr. Kozlosky said DOT is asking because they are trying to identify and wrap up the draft STIP and they need to know if the WMPO is willing to put funds toward the crossing.

Mr. Barfield told members that he would like to move option #2. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Bozeman suggested that before the final decision is made on finding project overages, the list needs to be looked at to see if there are any dire-needs that need to be done before anything else is done. Mr. Kozlosky said staff will bring a list of projects for over-runs to the next meeting.

b. STBGP-DA and TASA Process Improvements

Mr. Kozlosky told members that at the Board's request, staff was asked to review the STBGP-DA and TASA-DA processes to see if improvements can be made. He said staff met with TCC members regarding the processes and will be sending out a memo on the issues that were identified along with options/solutions available to work through those issues. Mr. Kozlosky said staff will work to put the process improvements in place prior to the next call for projects.

c. Unobligated PL Balances

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the unobligated PL balance is \$198,000 and he said that amount is relatively low in comparison to other MPOs around the state. He noted that there could be a rescission of funds in 2019 but staff does not anticipate any issues because our PL balance is low.

d. STIP/MTIP Modifications (February)

Mr. Kozlosky told members the modifications to the STIP/MTIP for February are for information purposes only and staff will bring a resolution to the March meeting for consideration.

e. Prioritization 5.0 Project Development/Evaluations

Ms. Motsinger told members that NCDOT's SPOT group is allowing MPOs to submit roadway projects a month in advance of the actual submittal due date. That will allow the SPOT staff to review the submittals, make suggestions and provide feedback regarding the projects to the WMPO staff prior to the actual submittal deadline. Ms. Motsinger said staff plans to submit the list of projects as outlined in

the memo provided in the meeting packet to the SPOT group on 28th of February. She asked members to contact staff if they had any questions or if they would add any projects to the submittal list. A brief question/answer and discussion period followed.

f. **March 29th Board Meeting**

Mr. Kozlosky told members that the March 29th meeting conflicts the Town Hall Day and asked members if that meeting should be rescheduled. Ms. Swearingen and Mr. Willis said they will be attending Town Hall Day. Consensus of the remaining members was to keep the date as scheduled since a quorum of members will be available.

12. Updates

Updates are included in the agenda packet.

13. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm

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.**