

**Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Board
Work Session Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 26, 2017**

Members Present:

Gary Doetsch, Town of Carolina Beach
David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
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

1. Call to Order

Mr. Doetsch called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m.

2. Review of the Merger Process

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that this work session was scheduled following a presentation given at the WMPO Board's March 29, 2017 meeting. He acknowledged the presence of the project consultant, Ms. Joanna Rocco, AECOM, and gave a brief presentation beginning with an overview of the Merger Process.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that the process is currently in between Concurrence Points #2 and #2A. He noted that data has been collected; the study area, identified; the purpose and need, adopted by the merger team; and alternatives, narrowed to 12 detailed study alternatives. He pointed out that the objective of the next Concurrence Point is to evaluate the impacts of the detailed study alternatives and bridging decisions, in which bridge locations and lengths are identified and the preliminary alignments and alternatives are reviewed. He pointed out that alternatives may be removed at this point; although, not the purpose of this phase.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that once concurrence is reached on #2A, the signatory agencies will publish the environmental impact statement. Then, public hearings will be held. He noted that the agencies will select the Least Environmentally Damaging Practical Alternative (LEPDA) in Concurrence Point #3; followed by avoidance and minimization (Concurrence Point #4); publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which will be followed by the final Record of Decision. He added that the Department would begin to acquire right-of-way once funding is identified; funding is not currently in the STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program). He gave an overview of the various resource (primary signatory and partnering) agencies constituting the merger team.

3. History of the Cape Fear River Crossing Project

Mr. Kozlosky gave a timeline of project planning from 1999 to date. He noted that the project was put on hold in 2011 after public workshops were held. He added that the Purpose and Need was established in 2013 when the project was reinitiated.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement is anticipated to be published this fall, followed by NCDOT public hearings in the winter (early 2018). He noted that a preferred alternative is expected to be selected in the summer of 2018, followed by the final environmental impact statement in the winter (late 2018/early 2019). He added that the Record of Decision is anticipated by the summer of 2019. He pointed out that the schedule is dependent upon availability of funding is subject to change.

4. Review of Cape Fear River Crossing 12 Detailed Study Areas

Mr. Kozlosky displayed maps of the feasibility study alignment and alternatives. He pointed out that the 12 alternatives are really eight (8) with some variations to those alignments. He noted that maps were also distributed to the Board, and that Ms. Batleman requested a version identifying Brunswick County subdivisions.

Mr. Kozlosky gave an overview of alternatives as follows:

Alternative B – Begins at I-140 in Brunswick County, skirting between Mallory Creek Plantation and Brunswick Forest, and ties in at Shipyard Boulevard (Port);

Alternative C – Begins at I-140, with an interchange at 17, skirts between Mallory Creek Plantation and Brunswick Forest, and ties in at Carolina Beach Road and Independence Boulevard;

Alternative F – Begins at Wilmington Bypass, upgrades 17 to a freeway, the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and Carolina Beach Road until Shipyard Boulevard and the Port;

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Williams, Ms. Rocco agreed that many driveway connections would be impacted.

Alternative G – Begins at interchange of I-140, upgrades 17 to a freeway, builds on location to skirt between Brunswick Forest and Mallory Creek, and ties in at Carolina Beach Road and Independence Boulevard;

Alternative J – Upgrades 17 to a freeway, goes on new location, and ties in at Shipyard Boulevard;

Alternative MA – Begins at 17 at the interchange in front of Snead's Farm/Stoney Creek of I-140, goes on new location, and ties in at Carolina Beach Road and Independence Boulevard;

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Barfield, Mr. Kozlosky stated that based on the prepared table Alternate MA would impact both residential and businesses. He indicated to the Board that the table of impacts was distributed to them.

Alternative NA – Follows a similar alignment over by 17 until 133, and ties in at Shipyard Boulevard;

Alternative P – Upgrades the existing alignment of US 17, Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, and 421 (Carolina Beach Road) with arterial widening (not to construct a freeway);

Alternative Q – Upgrades the existing alignment of US 17, the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, and 421 (Carolina Beach Road) with arterial widening (not freeway);

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that Alternatives Q and G have similar alignments except for one upgrading with arterial widening and the other with freeway.

Mr. Williams expressed concern regarding the impact to Magnolia Greens and Waterford versus south of Brunswick Forest.

Mr. Barfield requested to see the alignments with Brunswick County subdivisions.

Mr. Kozlosky indicated these would be provided momentarily, and requested to continue listing the remaining alternatives as follows:

Alternative T – Starts at and upgrades 17 to a freeway, goes on new location, and ties in at Shipyard Boulevard;

Alternative VA – Upgrades (arterial widening) 17 until the interchange at US 421, where it goes on new location and ties in at Burnett Boulevard or the vicinity, upgrading Carolina Beach Road;

Alternative VF – Follows the same alignment as Alternative VA; however, upgrades 17 on its existing location to a freeway.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that agencies will consider upgrading existing facilities as well during the merger process.

5. Review of Detailed Study Alternatives Impacts Table

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that the table of impacts was provided at its last Board meeting on March 31, 2017. He gave an overview of resources such as the length of the corridor and the cost (only construction, not right-of-way acquisition). Other considerations include residential and commercial relocations, road crossings, low-income and/or minority populations, archaeological sites/historic properties, wetlands, surface waters, floodplains, streams, federally-protected species, potential noise receptors, conservation easements or land management areas, community facilities such as cemeteries, churches and fire stations, etc. He pointed out that the agencies will have different areas of concern. He commented that the merger process for the Least Environmental Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) is a balancing act.

6. Discussion of Alternatives the Board Could Support for Removal

Mr. Kozlosky opened the floor for discussion and displayed maps labeled with Brunswick County subdivisions.

Ms. Swearingen expressed concern regarding the influx of traffic to Shipyard and Independence Boulevards, and Carolina Beach and College Roads.

Ms. Rocco responded that alternatives tying into Independence Boulevard would include an upgrade of Independence Boulevard, which would be considered in the same design year.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Swearingen, Ms. Rocco stated that a traffic forecast and impacts for the LOS (Location of Study) were evaluated for all alternatives, and used to refine the designs. She noted that once a LEDPA exists, the forecast will be redone.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Barfield, Mr. Kozlosky stated that the table shows the impact to New Hanover County as well.

A question/answer and discussion period was held. The Board expressed concerns regarding upgrading existing infrastructure, and expressed a preference for alternatives south of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

Mr. Williams expressed concern regarding the noise impact of Alternative G.

Mr. Doetsch commented that his least favorite is Alternative F. He estimated an additional 2½ to three (3) years of impact to the causeway into Wilmington.

Mr. Barfield suggested eliminating Alternatives VF, VAW, P, and F, which would impact the causeway, creating greater traffic and burden on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Doetsch suggested removing C and J as well.

Ms. Batleman expressed concern regarding the impact to Mallory Creek Plantation and Brunswick Forest.

Mr. Williams suggested that Alternative T be removed as well.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Batleman, Ms. Rocco stated that F and P would impact Historic Districts in Wilmington. She noted that details could be found under the project documents' link online at <https://www.ncdot.gov/projects/capefear/>.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Watkins arrived at 2:25 p.m. He expressed support for alternatives that tie into Shipyard Boulevard and the Port; not Independence Boulevard.

Ms. Batleman pointed out that Alternatives MA or NA might solve everyone's dilemma; although a concession.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Williams concurred with Mr. Barfield regarding alternatives recommended for removal, and added C, J, and T for removal as well. He noted that B, G, MA, NA and Q remain.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that that the agencies might not elect to remove any.

Ms. Batleman expressed concern with the distance of MA and NA from Sned's Farm and Stoney Creek. Ms. Rocco responded that she would obtain that information.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that it adopted a Resolution to minimize impact to Sned's Farm and Stoney Creek.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Williams reiterated his preference for Alternative MA.

Mr. Barfield made a motion to endorse Plan Alternatives MA, NA, B, G, and Q; and to support the removal of all others (C, F/P, J/T, and V) if the opportunity arises.

Mr. Kozlosky advised the Board that it could bring forward a Resolution of support for a preferred route at a later date.

Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion on the floor and it carried 7-2. (Mr. Watkins and Ms. Batleman voted in opposition.)

Mr. Williams requested a Resolution of support for Alternatives MA and NA.

Ms. Batleman expressed concern regarding Alternatives B, G and Q, which would impact residents of adjacent areas.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

7. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

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.**