

Citizens Advisory Committee
6th Floor Conference Room, 320 Chestnut Street
Wednesday, August 8, 2018
Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Laura Padgett, Chair, City of Wilmington
John Cawthorne, Vice Chair, Town of Kure Beach
Web Bostic, New Hanover County
Sallie Rochelle, Pender County (via conference call)
Jason Windham, City of Wilmington
Patrick Boykin, Town of Carolina Beach
Harold King, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Brayton Willis, Town of Leland
Valorie Hatten, Town of Navassa
Vanessa Lacer, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Neal Andrew, North Carolina Board of Transportation

Members Absent:

Stuart Smith, Town of Belville

Others Present:

Abigail Lorenzo, Senior Transportation
Planner, WMPO
Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director,
WMPO
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT - Transportation
Planning Branch

1. Call to Order

Ms. Padgett called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes – July 11, 2018

Mr. Andrew made a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2018, seconded by Mr. King, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Presentation – Wilmington Rail Realignment Study

Ms. Padgett distributed copies of maps of rail lines in the City of Wilmington and gave an update on the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project. She pointed out that the railroad (CSX) has 32 crossings within the City's most populated areas. She commented that opportunities to improve safety and lessen congestion are limited due to access. She stated that by 2025, studies predict Port traffic to increase trains to eight round trips a week, or roughly three passes per day. She noted that during the last four years, the number of carriers calling at the Port has doubled, each offloading 1,200-1,300 containers to trucks or trains. Although Wilmington has traditionally been a truck port, the mode is struggling to compete with rail, which is gearing up with longer trains.

Ms. Padgett stated that the potential rail realignment that would shorten the distance to the Davis Yard has some environmental issues; but is uninhabited. She noted that the realignment would also remove the risk of hazardous chemicals, conflicts between cars, trucks and trains, and blocks to emergency medical facilities. She added that this project will create economic development opportunities for each of the four surrounding counties, the Port, and the region.

Ms. Padgett stated that the Mayor of Wilmington originally appointed an 11-member task force to spearhead this effort. She noted that a study it recommended has shown that the realignment is feasible, without any environmental barrier that cannot be mitigated, at an estimated cost of \$650 million including a 40% contingency. She added that once the line is realigned to the other side of the river, the existing track could be repurposed for a trolley, tramway or bicycle paths that would connect UNCW, the community college downtown, and the Multi-modal Center, with other

potential connections in the future. Also, CSX is not averse to sharing the railroad bridge across the river to connect northern Brunswick County through public transit.

Ms. Padgett stated that the City of Wilmington continues to be the lead agency and is preparing to hire a full-time position to advance this initiative. She noted that she has met with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and has built support on both sides of the aisle in the legislature with those eager to see the project funded as an improvement to the Ports (Wilmington and Charlotte). Outreach has also included the Army Corps of Engineer, Rotary Clubs, the Board of Realtors Government Affairs, the Sierra Club, the Coastal Federation, Eagles Island Coalition, and local governments, except for the beach communities where there is no rail. She added that she is available to give a presentation to any of those communities on request.

Ms. Padgett stated that a privately owned railroad and development in Whiteville has expressed an interest in a connection to the Port of Wilmington rather than shipping through the Port of Charleston. She added that this would give the opportunity to ship agricultural products from Columbus County and commercial goods from Brunswick County. Also, the Pender County Industrial Park has expressed an interest in a connection to the rail line.

Ms. Padgett stated that a FRA grant application is currently in progress with a deadline of September 17th. She noted that an award would allow the rail realignment to proceed with further engineering and Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) documentation. Additionally, the Surface Transportation Board, which approves additional tracks, has had a positive reaction to the project.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Ms. Padgett stated that the rail realignment documents may be found online at www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail. She distributed her contact information for any further inquiries.

4. Presentation – Preliminary Public Outreach Results

Ms. Lorenzo reminded members that public outreach in the form of a survey and public input map for the development of Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) closed on July 31st.

Mr. Madsen gave a comparison of public outreach for the 2040 MTP and the 2045 MTP as follows:

Public Outreach	2040 MTP	2045 MTP
Duration	6 months (5/21/2013 - 11/30/2013)	4 months (3/30/2018 - 7/31/2018)
Advertising/ Promotion	Newspapers ads, TV, press releases/radio interviews, link to the website	Newspapers ads, TV interviews, press releases, link to the website, billboards, Wave bus wrap and interior ad, WMPO.org, social media
Events & Presentations	Open houses, farmers markets, member jurisdictions	Open houses, member jurisdictions, farmers markets, Senior Center, NHRMC, UNCW, CFCC, libraries, Employment Security Commission, Social Services, VA

Surveys	4,165 surveys	2,287 surveys
Public Input Map		1,905 hits (15.49 per day) 563 comments 4,554 votes on comments
Total Responses	4,165	7,404

Mr. Madsen gave an overview of preliminary results of the 2045 MTP survey and public input map with top comments and votes for each transportation mode. He noted that the primary drivers for the map were kick-off events and e-mail blasts, with the greatest response in May. He added that July was the best month for survey responses, which may be attributed to social media ads.

A question/answer and discussion period was held. Members expressed a desire for the ability to separate bicycle and pedestrian input, and to define safety. The Committee also expressed appreciation to staff for the additional promotional efforts and for the quick turnaround of preliminary results.

5. Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045 Goals Discussion

Ms. Lorenzo stated that the Mr. Hollis and the Public Transportation Subcommittee have requested to bring forward to the CAC a discussion regarding the potential addition of education to the goals or vision of the 2045 MTP that were adopted by the Committee in January.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Bostic, Mr. Hollis expressed concerns regarding including education as a goal at the subcommittee level, and suggested that it might be more appropriate as an overall goal for the 2045 Plan.

A question/answer and discussion period was held. Mr. King suggested that communication might be more accurate as a goal of the plan than education.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that a revised goal will be presented to the Committee in September.

It was the consensus of the group to advise the subcommittees that the 2045 Plan will include outreach, communication and awareness under its socially responsible goal.

6. Modal Subcommittees Update

Ms. Lorenzo reported that the modal subcommittees are well on the way to developing goals and objectives. She noted that the August meetings will begin tomorrow with the Roadway Subcommittee, followed by those of the other subcommittees throughout the month. She added that the draft goals and objectives for each will be brought to the Committee for review and discussion at its September meeting.

7. Additional Items

Ms. Padgett stated that the next meeting of the CAC will be held on September 12th.

Mr. King expressed appreciation to staff for their management of the subcommittee meetings.

Mr. Bostic expressed concerns regarding the broadness of objectives presented to the modal subcommittees. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the goals and objectives of the 2040 Plan were provided only as a starting point for the subcommittees to develop their own.

Mr. King commented that the process itself is somewhat evolutionary in nature.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that the Aviation Subcommittee had an additional representative and a lot of passion, which generated much conversation and necessitated some additional navigation in defining goals and objectives for project selection.

Ms. Padgett commented that field experts establishing their role in each of the modal subcommittees will help provide some structure for the groups.

Mr. Cawthorne agreed that group dynamics had added a layer of complexity that prolonged the initial meetings of the subcommittees, which would probably decrease over time.

In response to concerns expressed by Mr. Bostic regarding discussions during the Aviation Subcommittee, Ms. Padgett clarified that the rail spur to the airport and the bridge will remain important connections to the Davis Yard.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Abby Lorenzo
Senior Transportation Planner
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.**