

**Wilmington Urban Area
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, April 10, 2019
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Mike Kozlosky, Wilmington MPO
Nick Cannon, Wilmington MPO
Jerry Haire, Town of Carolina Beach
Nancy Avery, Town of Kure Beach
Rebekah Roth, New Hanover County
Ashli Barefoot, Town of Leland
Barnes Sutton, Town of Navassa
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County

Travis Henley, Pender County
Allen Serkin, Cape Fear Council of
Governments
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT Division of
Highways
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT Planning
Megan Matheny, Cape Fear Public
Transportation

1) Call to Order

Mr. Kozlosky called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

2) Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Barefoot made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Ms. Bunch, and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Presentation

a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO GIS Data Hub

Michael Madsen, GIS Analyst, gave an overview of the Wilmington Urban Area MPO GIS Data Hub and compared it to the old site. He noted that the new data hub would be an evolving site of web applications; traffic counts from 2012 to present; and maps for all modes of transportation in the region. He added that the new site is faster and more user friendly with data that can be filtered and downloaded in various file formats as a tool for member jurisdictions and others.

A brief question/answer and discussion period was held. Mr. Madsen stated that a link would be posted to the wmpo.org site and would be forwarded to committee members after it is presented to the MPO Board.

4) Consent Agenda

a. Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes - March 13, 2019

b. Resolution approving 2018-2027 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #19-1

c. Resolution approving 2018-2027 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #19-2

d. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2018-2027 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #19-2

Ms. Bunch made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d and to forward them to the MPO Board for consideration. Mr. Serkin seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

5) Regular Agenda

a. Resolution supporting the Bike/Walk NC's efforts of requesting the North Carolina General Assembly to end the prohibition on state funding, allow for the design, development and construction of stand-alone Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects that facilitate safe active transportation facilities, and

encouraging the General Assembly to consider codification of North Carolina's Complete Streets Policy

Mr. Kozlosky stated that in 2013 with the approval of the Strategic Transportation Investment formula, the General Assembly included language that the state would not provide the 20% match for standalone bicycle and pedestrian projects. He noted that this resolution would support Bike/Walk NC's efforts to revisit discussions and encourage the General Assembly to restore the state's 20% match for bicycle and pedestrian projects, and to codify the Complete Streets Policy.

Mr. Serkin expressed concerns that any modification of the policy would require the will of the legislature. He pointed out that policies need updating periodically.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that some clarification as to what would be codified would be necessary. He proposed a modification of the language in the resolution to encourage support of the Complete Streets Policy instead of codification.

Mr. Serkin made a motion to approve as amended the Resolution supporting the Bike/Walk NC's efforts of requesting the North Carolina General Assembly to end the prohibition on state funding, allow for the design, development and construction of stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects that facilitate safe active transportation facilities, and encouraging the General Assembly to support the North Carolina's Complete Streets Policy. Mr. Henley seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Serkin suggested bringing the modification to the Board's attention. He noted that the Board might desire to revert to the originally proposed language if more information can be obtained prior to the next Board meeting.

6) Discussion

a. Resilient Transportation Infrastructure Priorities

Mr. Kozlosky stated that during the February 27th Board meeting, the Board supported the North Carolina Department of Transportation's efforts to fund resilient transportation improvements to Interstate 40 and Interstate 95. In addition, the Board also discussed developing a top-five priorities list of resiliency improvements to infrastructure, mainly in response to Hurricane Florence. The Board identified the following opportunities:

- Town Creek/US 17
- Draining improvements
- Storm water maintenance issues and the creation of an active storm water management program
- Intracoastal Waterway (dredging)
- NC 133 in Brunswick County

Mr. Kozlosky stated that further discussion is planned for the Board's April meeting. He requested any other ideas or issues to be forwarded to the Board.

Mr. Serkin expressed concerns that some of the items are specific locations while others are general. He suggested that major thoroughfares and arteries in and

out of town be added, such as US 74 and US 421. He also suggested redundant or resilient rail infrastructure for commerce.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that these suggestions would be brought to the Board to determine the top-five priorities.

b. Supplemental Funding for TMAs – FY19 Appropriations

Ms. Kimes stated that the WMPO will receive \$904,000 in INFRA funds, \$813,000 of which can be used. She noted that this allocation is similar in limited scope and timeframe to the additional Omnibus funds the WMPO received. She noted that the scope is limited to the construction of highways, bridges, and tunnels, and can be used to eliminate hazards and the installation of protective devices at rail way/highway crossings. She added that short turnaround time requires construction to be authorized by September 30, 2022.

Ms. Kimes stated the two options for moving forward with this additional funding allocation include:

- Providing a competitive bid process allowing all member jurisdictions to compete for funding, and/or
- Engaging NCDOT to see if this restrictive funding could be utilized on an existing project and be swapped for funds with less stringent requirements and timelines.

Mr. Serkin stated that the Rail/Freight Committee discussed rail crossing improvements at US 421, just north of the Isabel Holmes Bridge, at a rail spur with a signal, but no arms.

Ms. Kimes responded that the source of a 20% match would need to be identified. She commented that rail projects would be a good use of these funds.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that the Traffic Separation Study (TSS) that was completed and adopted, identified and recommended 30 or more crossing improvements in the City of Wilmington. He inquired about the use of funds for signal improvements.

Ms. Kimes expressed doubt that the funds could be used for signal improvements unless for railroad.

Ms. Matheny suggested that it might be used for a hybrid of both.

Some concerns were expressed regarding the transfer of funds, and the equality and complexity of the swap. Staff responded that NCDOT would document the transfers by letter, and that any trade out would be equal and carefully tracked.

Regarding concerns about choosing projects suited to the funds rather than those in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Mr. Kozlosky stated that the entire TSS project was submitted through the STI, funded for fiscal year 2025, and is in the draft STIP at an estimated cost of \$40 million.

Ms. Kimes expressed concerns regarding further increasing the existing Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and risking a rescission of \$7.5 million, the current balance of those funds.

Mr. Serkin inquired if NCDOT Rail Division would be willing to provide the match for rail crossings. Other options for the match included the potential of CSX or the developer of Brunswick Forest.

Mr. Serkin inquired about bicycle or pedestrian rail crossing improvements in the city. Ms. Kimes stated that staff would research it.

Mr. Serkin commented that the preference seems to be for putting the funds toward unfunded rail crossings first (such as the three in Navassa), and then toward unfunded TSS projects.

Mr. Kozlosky summarized that the priority would be to seek using the funds for rail crossing improvements and the availability of the local match. More information would be brought forward at the next meeting to finalize the conversation.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Serkin, Mr. Kozlosky stated that no bicycle or pedestrian improvements are included in the TSS study. However, these are being made as the result of a few sidewalk projects in the City of Wilmington.

c. Direct Attributable Funding Swap

Ms. Kimes stated that a couple weeks ago NCDOT reached out to MPOs across the state to help protect balances from the upcoming rescission by offering a funding swap. She noted that NCDOT would swap \$7.83 million of STBGP funds for use on the Wilmington Bypass Projects or 2633 AA, BA and BB (I-140/US 17 freeway on new location in Brunswick and New Hanover County) in place of the Federal National Highway Performance Program funds originally intended for use. She added that these funds would be used to make payments on GARVEE bonds issued as part of funding for these projects.

Ms. Kimes stated that staff reviewed all of the allocations and obligations of the UPWP, WAVE Transit, the Cape Fear Crossing, and all awarded projects to identify a balance of about \$6.5 million plus the Omnibus and the INFRA funds. She noted that the swap would not stop any reimbursement payments, and would reduce the balance prior to the rescission.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that given the redistribution of federal funds in September, the Secretary has instructed NCDOT to pursue \$250 million in additional federal money. He noted that the states that spend their federal money will get more from those who don't. He added that demonstrating expenditure through a swap is a way to achieve this goal.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Serkin, Mr. Kozlosky stated that the time frame to spend the money is four years, with 10 years to construct the project. Ms. Kimes pointed out that the 10-year timeline is based on obligation of the individual project.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this swap would not be unique to Wilmington, and has been done in Charlotte, Hickory and some of the other MPOs as well.

Ms. Bunch made a motion to approve the Direct Attributable funding swap with NCDOT. Ms. Barefoot seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held regarding the challenge of obligating funding. Mr. Kozlosky encouraged members to identify shovel-ready projects or ideas.

Concerns were expressed regarding the application process, the local match, the history projects coming in over budget, the back log of projects, inferior design, a general lack of capacity, and federal red tape.

Ms. Kimes pointed out that much has been learned since 2013 that will serve the future.

Ms. Kozlosky stated that the MPO plans to provide some education, and has researched best practices of benchmark cities.

Ms. Matheny expressed a desire for creative partnerships. She noted that WAVE cannot construct amenities without sidewalks and can only construct 50 feet of sidewalk. However, constructing a sidewalk network is not an option for some.

Mr. Serkin expressed concerns regarding land use planners who are responsible for transportation planning in addition to other duties. He noted that some communities in the area might be growing large enough to invest in a dedicated transportation planner to take advantage of the available funding. He also suggested that this may be an opportunity for the MPO to take a more active role in matching projects with funds.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that it often comes down to the local jurisdiction's priorities and willingness to provide a match.

Ms. Barefoot requested a workshop in identifying alternative sources for the local match.

Mr. Serkin suggested that this discussion be held at the Board level. He commented that it is more an issue of staff capacity.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff will compile a list of issues and reasons for discussion at an upcoming Board meeting.

Mr. Haire expressed concerns regarding competing with Wilmington.

Ms. Avery expressed concerns that two of the main thoroughfares in Carolina Beach and Kure Beach are state roads.

7) **Updates**

Updates are included in the agenda packet.

8) **Announcements**

- a. **Cape Fear Crossing Public Hearings: April 29th and April 30th**
- b. **Next TCC meeting: May 15th**
- c. **Bike/Pedestrian Committee Meeting: June 11th**

9) **Additional Item**

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Roth, Ms. Sarder stated that the CTP would be updated after the MTP to include all of those projects.

Mr. Kozlosky expressed a desire to rethink the CTP update.

10) **Adjournment**

With no further items, the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 p.m.

**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.**