

Board Meeting Minutes
6th Floor Conference Room, 320 Chestnut Street
Wednesday, July 31, 2019

Members Present

David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington
Mike Allen, Town of Belville
Steve Shuttleworth, Town of Carolina Beach
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Pat Kusek, New Hanover County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Mike Alford, NC Board of Transportation

Others Present

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO
Karen Collette, NCDOT Highway Division 3
Chad Kimes, NCDOT Highway Division 3
Leta Huntsinger, WSP

1. Call to Order

Chairman Piepmeyer called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Piepmeyer read the conflict of interest statement and asked if any members had a conflict with any of the items on the meeting agenda. No members reported having a conflict.

3. Approval of Board Members' Excused Absences

Mr. Kozlosky stated that Steve Shuttleworth and Jonathan Barfield have requested to be excused from the meeting.

Ms. Kusek made a motion to excuse the absences of Mr. Shuttleworth and Mr. Barfield.
Mr. Ellen seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Kozlosky distributed a letter of support to Board Members. Chairman Piepmeyer requested that it be added to the agenda as a discussion item.

Mr. Ellen made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Mr. Miller, and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment Period

Johnny Thompson, 7219 Pine Cliff Drive, Leland, spoke to the Board regarding construction on Pine Cliff Road in Brunswick County. He expressed concerns regarding the shoulder of the road and emergency access.

Ms. Collette requested his contact information. Mr. Thompson responded that Mr. Kimes has taken his contact information.

Roy Henderson, 7247 Pine Cliff Drive, Leland, spoke to the Board regarding construction on Pine Cliff Road as well. He expressed concerns regarding dust from the construction site.

6. Presentations

a. United States Maritime Administration – Amanda Rutherford, Mid-Atlantic Gateway Director for Maritime Administration

Ms. Rutherford, Gateway Director, U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Maritime Sector, gave an overview of the agency, which provides technical and grant assistance for maritime infrastructure. She pointed out that a gap in infrastructure grants exists in North Carolina. She stated that she works with the Port, which needs letters of support from the community and MPO in order to pursue grant opportunities.

Ms. Rutherford stated that a new federal grant program limited to coastal areas has been developed with a minimum award of \$10 million, a match of 20% and a deadline of 8:00 p.m., September 16, 2019 via www.grants.gov. She requested to be made aware of any projects that might be submitted for the grant. She added that the grant will be offered next year as well in addition to other grant programs, such as moving freight by barge.

Ms. Rutherford stated that United States Maritime Administration (MARAD) has vessel missions during peace time such as those during hurricanes or natural disasters declared by an Act of Congress.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rivenbark and Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff would research the appropriateness of submitting the Rail Relocation Project for a grant. He noted that the City of Wilmington or the MPO might be the applicant for the project.

b. Independence Boulevard Extension – Susan Westbury, AECOM

Krista Kimmel, NCDOT Division 3, stated that she is the assigned project manager for the Independence Boulevard Extension Project.

Ms. Westbury distributed a hand-out from a public meeting held last Monday. She gave an overview of the project's history, current options and status. She noted that the overall goal of the project is to extend Independence Boulevard beyond its current terminus at Randall Parkway to Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway in order to provide an additional corridor to compensate for the lack of direct north-south connectivity within the City of Wilmington. In addition, the project will provide congestion relief to Kerr Avenue, College Road and Market Street. She gave the timeline for the project, as follows:

- 1972 – First appearance in the thoroughfare plan
- 2002 – Project initiated by NCDOT
- 2008 – Purpose and need developed
- 2010 – Six corridors considered, as follows:
- 2011 – Public meeting; eight design alternatives developed; impact analysis yielded three alternatives for detailed study (#2, #7 and #8)
- 2012 – Second public meeting to present the three alternatives. Concerns led to considerations of raising the railroad rather than the corridor, or designing a depressed facility for a corridor under the railroad, which were found to be cost prohibitive and posed some design concerns.
- 2016 – Funding received; studies updated for the three alternatives.
- 2018 – NCDOT selected Alternative 7 with two options for the interchange at Market Street. Coordination with CSX and NCDOT Rail Division, who agreed to at-grade crossings for greenway connection of the Cross City Trail from Randall Parkway to

Maides Park. Currently, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is in progress, and a public meeting was held last Monday.

Ms. Westbury stated that once Alternative 7 was chosen, NCDOT and AECOM sought to further minimize the impacts of the project. Alternative design considerations include the following:

- Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI)
- Traditional Urban Diamond Interchange (TUDI)
- Bridging Market Street to Hurst
- Improved access at Darlington
- Reducing the typical section and design speed to narrow the roadway

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Ms. Westbury displayed a video regarding the project. She stated that work with state and federal agencies on the environmental document is currently in progress. She noted that potential areas for noise walls, cost estimates, alternative impacts, and summarizing public meeting comments (open until August 18th) will follow. She added that the first draft is anticipated in September, with signatures in early 2020, followed by a public hearing with design maps showing proposed noise abatement areas and the alternative to be chosen after the public hearing.

Mr. Anderson commented that the City of Wilmington should consider beautification of the interchange.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation for the presentation of the timeline, and pointed out the importance of communicating that these projects are first identified by the local jurisdictions.

Ms. Collette stated that although the MPO expressed a desire for an elevated facility, several members of the public expressed opposition to a bridge due to the type of characters that loiter under bridges. She commented that the interchange would be an aesthetic improvement.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the project is funded for right of way acquisition in 2022, and for construction in 2025, 2026 and 2027.

7. Consent Agenda

- a. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of May 29, 2019 and Special Board Meeting Minutes of June 26, 2019**
- b. **Resolution adopting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Title VI Program Plan**
- c. **Resolution approving 2018-2027 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #19-3**
- d. **Resolution approving the naming of the NC Ferry Division Tugs**

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ms. Kusek seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

8. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution approving the allocation of 2020-2021 Surface Transportation Block Grant - Direct Attributable and Transportation Alternatives - Set Aside Funding for the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Ms. Kimes reminded the Board that the MPO issued a call for projects on April 1st for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) funds, which closed on July 1st and initially considered the development of a five-year plan. The applications spanned two years and did not exceed the available funds for those two fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Applications were as follows:

TASA

- Town of Carolina Beach/NCDOT – US 421 Lake Park/Hamlet Avenue Intersection Improvements

STBGP

- City of Wilmington/New Hanover County – Traffic Signal Preemption
- Town of Wrightsville Beach – West Salisbury Street Streetscape
- City of Wilmington – Wilmington Multi Modal Center Phase 1B
- Town of Carolina Beach – St Joseph/Lewis Drive Bike Lanes
- Friends of the Wilmington Rail Trail – Wilmington Rail Trail: Phase 1 Master Plan Development

Ms. Kimes stated that staff does not recommend the Wilmington Rail Trail: Phase 1 Master Plan development since it is a planning project that is not appropriate for STBGP funding. She requested discussion as to how it could be supported.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that the signal preemption project is a joint effort between the City, New Hanover County and New Hanover Regional Medical Center.

Ms. Kimes stated that this is the first year that multiple jurisdictions have applied together. She noted that the total requests are \$2.8 million for the current fiscal year and \$627,000 for the following fiscal year. She added that each year, the MPO is awarded \$234,000 in TASA funding. She noted that the STIP unit in Raleigh advises that the more restrictive TASA funding be awarded first.

Ms. Kimes gave a brief overview of remaining funds. She stated that member jurisdictions expressed concerns regarding the timing of the call for projects, which coincided with budget preparation. She noted that in the future, the timing should be adjusted to avoid the conflict. She added that another option might be to hold an open call for STBGP funds. Since STBGP funds do not require the competitive process and deadline that TASA funds do.

Mr. Kozlosky requested that the Board consider staff's recommendation for TASA and STBGP funds, flexing funds to the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Rail Trail Master Plan, support for two calls per year and support for going out for an additional call for projects.

Following further consideration, Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the Resolution approving the allocation of 2020-2021 Surface Transportation Block Grant - Direct Attributable and Transportation Alternatives - Set Aside funding for the Wilmington Urban

Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. Mr. Ellen seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

It was the consensus of the Board for staff to return with a recommendation to consider flexing funds in the Unified Planning Work Program for the Rail Trail Master Plan.

Mr. Forte made a motion to approve two calls per year. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

9. Discussion

a. Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045 Red-Line Analysis

Ms. Leta Huntsinger, WSP, gave an overview of project costs, data sources, and funding amounts. She stated that in addition to project details provided by staff, cost estimation tools were provided by NCDOT for the Roadway and Bicycle/Pedestrian modes to estimate construction costs. For the other modes, historic information was available from the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority, Wilmington International Airport, NCDOT through the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), feasibility studies, and modal agency representatives.

Ms. Huntsinger stated that right-of-way costs in this region were the more challenging aspect. Many regions use an average cost. However, due to the diversity of land values within the region, tax records were reviewed to separate areas into districts or zones with similar values and land use type (residential, commercial and undeveloped/vacant land).

Ms. Huntsinger stated that the projects were sorted and adjusted for increased costs over time in five-year increments. She noted that a conservative estimate for the projects in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is about \$3.5 billion in 2020, or \$7.25 billion in 2045. With the projects already programmed in the Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), needs across the region total \$7.4 billion in 2020 dollars. She noted that light rail was excluded from the overall estimation since it is a special case without historical data.

Ms. Huntsinger gave an overview of alternative funding sources. She noted that following further research, several proposed sources of revenue were abandoned due to lack of viability; although, they will be summarized in a technical memo. She added that the remaining alternate funding sources with potential revenue in 2020 dollars over the life of the plan include the following:

- **Quarter-cent (¼ ¢) Local Option Sales Tax (General Transportation or Transit)** – all of New Hanover County and portions of Brunswick and Pender counties within the MPO boundary – \$6.12 million
- **Driver's License Tax (\$5 annual fee)** – population assumptions and data challenges regarding the number of registered vehicles – \$25 million
- **Vehicle Registration Fee (\$7 per vehicle)** – population assumptions and data challenges regarding the number of registered vehicles – \$40 million
- **Vehicle Rental Tax (5%)** – New Hanover County only (no car rental agencies currently exist in Brunswick or Pender counties within the MPO boundary) – \$29 million
- **Bicycle Registration (\$10 annually)** – challenges in estimating bicycle ownership – \$7 million (conservative estimate)

Ms. Huntsinger pointed out that the quarter-cent sales tax has the greatest potential for alternative revenue.

Ms. Lorenzo gave an overview of the draft redline process for project selection by mode. She stated that WSP provided 2020 cost estimates for the ranked projects. She noted that a 3% inflation factor was applied for out years in five-year increments for 2025-2045.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that the Aviation mode has more money than projects, which is to be expected since the airport's needs change with great frequency.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Anderson, Ms. Lorenzo explained that the projects have been color-coded to categorize projects as funded (green), fiscally constrained (blue), and unfunded (red).

Ms. Lorenzo stated that the Bike/Pedestrian list was amended based on comments by the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) favoring projects that cost \$5 million or less, and those that provide bicycle and pedestrian amenities, as well as removing bike lanes on high-speed corridors. She pointed out that some of the costlier projects, such as a Leland to Wilmington bike-pedestrian connection (the highest ranking project on the list), were moved below the red line of fiscally constrained projects and will appear in the plan as unfunded.

Several Board members expressed concerns regarding the volume of information, and requested further details. Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that the recommendations would be brought back to the Board in August for consideration, unless a work session is desired.

Vice Chair Batleman suggested that the members review the recommendations with their Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) representatives.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Kusek, Ms. Lorenzo stated that forecasted revenues are based on historical data and specific to each mode.

Mr. Kozlosky commented that staff will bring this item back at the August meeting and would be available to meet with each of the members individually if desired.

b. NCDOT Funding Challenges

Chad Kimes, NCDOT Division 3 Deputy Division Engineer, gave an overview of NCDOT's funding challenges. He stated that the revised draft STIP from Prioritization 6.0 is due to be released next week. He noted that NCDOT aims to maintain a cash fund balance over the next three years ranging between \$250 million and \$750 million. Below the minimum, NCDOT cannot let projects.

Mr. Kimes stated that spending hit the red line in July due to several challenges as follows:

- \$400 million reimbursement as a result of the hurricane
- \$267 million impact in Map Act settlement
- Construction cost increases
- \$69 million impact from snow response

Mr. Kimes stated that in order to get back on track, all projects without bonds or grants are being delayed. He noted that the #1 project in Southeastern North Carolina, the Hampstead Bypass in Pender County, which is one year from let, was going to be pushed out three

years. However, NCDOT was able to reposition some bond money and the northern section, a 4- to 5-year project, will be let as planned (next September). The A Section (I-140 to NC-210) will be delayed two years (2½ years to build). So, the Hampstead Bypass will open as anticipated in 2025.

Chairman Piepmeyer explained that although the A Section is eight miles, and the B Section is five miles, the A Section is all on new location and the B Section includes three interchanges.

Mr. Kimes stated that the Hampstead Median Project was delayed significantly as a result of this decision. He commented that he could not go into detail on the other projects since much of his current information may change. He added that some of the delays have to do with phasing. He noted that Division 3 will not lose projects as other divisions may due to the previous decision to accelerate projects from a 10-year program to a five-year program.

Mr. Kimes stated that he would return after the draft STIP is released.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Mr. Kimes.

Mr. Alford commended the efforts of the Division engineers.

Mr. Miller expressed appreciation as well.

Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that the Department implemented the vision of Secretary Trogon, which likely benefitted the region.

Ms. Collette recognized the efforts of Mr. Kimes.

Further discussion ensued regarding the unforeseen impacts to NCDOT's fund balance.

c. 2018-2027 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #19-3

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item is for informational purposes only.

d. Letter of Support

Mr. Kozlosky stated that Volkswagen pleaded guilty to tampering with emissions control devices, and agreed to a settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Division of Air Quality was selected to oversee the settlements. Wave is in the process of applying for four compressed natural gas buses through this grant opportunity. Staff has written a letter of support.

Mr. Ellen made a motion to approve Mr. Kozlosky's letter of support for Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority's application for the four buses. Vice Chair Batleman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

10. Updates

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the updates have been included in the agenda packet.

11. Announcements

- a. **N.C. 133 (Castle Hayne Rd) widening from I-140/U.S. 17 (Wilmington Bypass) to Division Drive Public Meeting – July 25th**
- b. **Bike/Pedestrian Committee Meeting – August 13th**
- c. **The next WMPO Board meeting – August 28th**

12. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:03 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.**