

MPO Board Meeting Minutes
1st Floor Annex Conference Room, 305 Chestnut Street
Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Members Present

David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Pat Batleman, Town of Leland
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington
Jonathan Barfield, Cape Fear Public
Transportation Authority
Mike Allen, Town of Belville
LeAnn Pierce, Town of Carolina Beach

Rob Zapple, New Hanover County
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

Others Present

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO
Chad Kimes, NCDOT Highway Division 3

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 Mike Alford and Hank Miller have requested to be excused from the meeting. He noted that John Ellen has indicated that he has an event in Kure Beach and will try to be here as soon as he can.

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to excuse the absences of Mr. Alford and Mr. Miller. Mr. Willis seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Williams, and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Election of Officers

Mr. Williams nominated David Piepmeyer for Chairman. Ms. Batleman seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations, Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to close the nominations and elect Mr. Piepmeyer as Chair. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Piepmeyer expressed appreciation and nominated Pat Batleman for Vice Chair. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the nomination.

There being no further nominations, Chairman Piepmeyer closed the nominations. The Board voted unanimously to elect Ms. Batleman as Vice Chair.

6. Public Comment Period

Mr. Bruce McLelland spoke to the Board regarding the proposed e-bike ordinance on page 55 of the agenda. He noted that federal guidance on e-bikes in national parks allows their use for transportation or recreation anywhere a traditional bike can go; but no further. Under the

Consumer Safety Protection Act, e-bikes with two or three wheels, fully operational pedals and 750-watt (one horsepower) or less are considered bicycles, and those producing more power are considered motor vehicles. He expressed concerns that the ordinance is adverse to alternative transportation and neglects to address public safety, the environment and traffic congestion. He pointed out that 28% of e-bikes are purchased as a substitute for motor vehicles, and that e-bikes increase the burden on law enforcement. He also expressed concerns regarding the meagerness of the bicycle helmet fine proposed.

Mr. Eric Hawthorne, residing at 19th Street and Market Street, spoke to the Board and expressed concerns regarding increased accidents on Market Street and the safety of children in that area. He commented that cars drive up on the curb. He also expressed concerns regarding the lack of police presence.

Ms. Lydia Mincey spoke to the Board regarding funding for Market Street Road Diet, and requested increased prioritization for that project to make Carolina Place and Carolina Heights feel more residential than a cut-through. She commented that walking on the sidewalk and crossing the street is unsafe in this area.

Mr. Piepmeyer acknowledged new MPO Board members, New Hanover County Commissioner Rob Zapple, and Town of Carolina Beach Mayor LeAnn Pierce, each of whom expressed some brief words of appreciation.

7. Presentations

a. "Be A Looker" Final Results – Nick Cannon, WMPO

Mr. Cannon gave an overview of results from the six-month "Be A Looker" campaign. According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) traffic crash facts, Wilmington is ranked one of the most dangerous regions in the state of North Carolina for bicyclists and pedestrians. In 2017, there were more than 100 bicycle and pedestrian collisions with motor vehicles, eleven of which were fatal. Over the past 10 years the WMPO region has made strides to improve bicycle and pedestrian policy and infrastructure with such facilities as the Cross City Trail and Transportation Alternative Set Aside – Direct Attributable (TASA-DA) funded projects. However, the culture shift from a strictly car-centered one to a shared one is a long way off.

Mr. Cannon stated that the goals of the "Be A Looker" Campaign were to promote bicycling and walking as legitimate forms of transportation and to educate participants on the basic rules of the road for each of the modes. The marketing campaign targeted behaviors including motorists not looking or not yielding to bicyclists and pedestrians, distracted driving, bicyclists riding on the wrong side of the road against traffic, not using signals or not wearing helmets, and pedestrians not crossing at the crosswalk. He gave an overview of strategies and results of the campaign as follows:

- Graphics external to two Wave Transit shuttles (Brunswick Connector, #107 on S. College Rd.) - 3 million impressions
- Digital billboards (Lamar) - 2 million impressions
- E-mail blasts every other month to 15,000 recipients - 8,407 opened
- Press conference at Empie Park to launch campaign with guest speakers and a media presence
- Social media (Instagram and Twitter) once a week - 2,000 interactions

- Printed materials - 800
- Presence at farmer's markets downtown and Wrightsville Beach, partner employers, posters displayed at 12 businesses downtown
- A dedicated webpage at www.wmpo.org
- "Be A Looker" Pledge - 285 and increasing

Mr. Cannon stated that a survey found that 93% of respondents were satisfied with the campaign. However, 72% of respondents felt no safer than before.

A question/answer and discussion period was held. Mr. Rivenbark commented that these improvements take time. He noted that the use of motorized wheel chairs has also increased. Also, crossing College Road near the University is a real challenge.

Mr. Anderson concurred. He suggested putting signals on the trail or other improvements that might prevent accidents.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Zapple, Mr. Cannon stated that the General Assembly has no legislation regarding motorized scooters yet.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Pierce, Mr. Cannon stated that in the future the campaign might be separated to focus on each of the transportation modes.

b. NCDOT Resiliency Study – Matt Lauffer, NCDOT

Matt Lauffer gave an overview of the NCDOT Resiliency Study on interstates I-95 and I-40 and current weather trends. After the significant impacts of Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence, Secretary Trogon directed the study. Hurricane Florence caused historic amounts of rainfall, 43 lives were lost, and damage totaled \$17 billion. A significant impact to the infrastructure included 600 road closures and 2,100 improvements/repairs caused by Matthew, and 2,500 road closures and 3,100 site repairs caused by Florence. And, I-40 was closed for nine days during Florence.

Mr. Lauffer stated that Hurricane Floyd in 1999, Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018 were 500-year and 1,000-year events statistically. He pointed out that a high probability exists for these types of events to occur again during the next 20 years. Additionally, there were a couple of isolated events in Franklin County and Catawba County in June of 2019 where 7.5 inches of rain fell in four hours, which is also categorized as a 1,000-year event.

Mr. Lauffer displayed a graph of concentration pathways of temperature increase with two potential trends, high and low. Additionally, a discussion included the sea level rise of eight inches since 1880, and a foot to four-feet by 2100 for high tide currents, which includes a subsidence of land. Also, hurricane power is increasing with Category 4 and Category 5 storms occurring more frequently. NOAA is tracking the value or the development increase in cost.

Mr. Lauffer stated that ten locations on I-95 and seven locations on I-40 were studied for resiliency. Although the federal register requires a 50-year surge for interstate highways, a 100-year surge is now being considered for resiliency options. He noted that shortcomings of the study included an omission of high-level system modeling, and a lack of detail for design; although it included the cost for utilities and right-of-way. He

gave an overview of improvement options to elevate the roadway or increase capacity of culverts for drainage, implement roadside barriers, and alternatives routes to maintain connectivity. He noted that South Carolina had some reactivity time for temporary measures, but North Carolina has less time for them.

Mr. Lauffer stated that the draft report is available for review; although, some locations will be added around US-17 and the Marine Corps Air Station near Jacksonville. Currently, the Division is prioritizing and identifying funding needs, and integrating flood improvements with reconstructive project opportunities on I-95. Additionally, Executive Order 80, the Governor's initiative on climate change and resiliency, will be integrated, especially Section 9, when released in March. Other actions include increased communication with emergency management, development of flood warning tools for operational awareness, and participation in national conferences and research. Mr. Lauffer displayed an interactive map with the improvements and estimated costs.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed concerns regarding the lack of resiliency alternates for US-17. Mr. Williams concurred, especially those around Town Creek.

Mr. Anderson expressed concerns regarding funding for resiliency improvements. Mr. Kimes commented that it's important that the needs have been identified. He added that NC-133 has two points of vulnerability. He noted that the Division is trying to use the funds that have already been programmed to address needs with ongoing projects with the flooding in mind.

Mr. Barfield expressed concerns regarding the lack of funding for I-40 at the legislature.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kimes stated that federal grants provide a portion of funding for interstates; although, the state must pursue it aggressively.

In response to an inquiry by Vice Chair Batleman, Mr. Kimes stated that the Town Creek area on US-17 could take a number of years unless additional revenues are found.

8. Consent Agenda

- a. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2019**
- b. **Resolution approving 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendments #19-5 and #19-6**
- c. **Resolution approving 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #19-5**
- d. **Resolution amending the Wilmington Urban Area MPO meeting schedule for the November TCC meeting**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 8a through 8d as presented. Mr. Williams seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

9. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution supporting an amendment to the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's Transportation Improvement Program and requesting the North Carolina Department of Transportation remove Direct Attributable funding for the Clarendon Park Multi-use Path and Salisbury Street Streetscape Projects from the State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs

Mr. Kozlosky stated that these requests to remove funds have come from the Town of Carolina Beach and the Town of Wrightsville Beach. The Town of Carolina Beach has decided not to move forward with the Clarendon Avenue Project, and the Town of Wrightsville Beach desires to proceed with the Salisbury Street Streetscape Project using Town funds only.

Ms. Pierce requested to table the item for the Town of Carolina Beach. She noted that the Town's Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee is considering possibilities that will work for the Town and its citizens.

Ms. Pierce made a motion to table the item concerning Clarendon Avenue to a future date in order to consider design modifications. Mr. Barfield seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the Resolution supporting an amendment to the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's Transportation Improvement Program and requesting the North Carolina Department of Transportation remove Direct Attributable funding for the Salisbury Street Streetscape Projects from the State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

b. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item is the opening of the 30-day public comment period for the fiscal year 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which is the MPO's budget. He noted that the MPO is required by the state to adopt its budget by March 15th. The public involvement policy adopted by the MPO requires a 30-day public comment period. Highlights of this budget include the proposed completion of a Pender County Streets Plan. Also, once the Board has considered the Cape Fear Moving Forward long-range transportation plan, staff would work with the Board to develop a five-year strategic plan. Additionally, an enhancement has been included for the purchase of Streetlight data, otherwise known as mobile phone data and connected vehicle data through navigation systems, which would be used in transportation planning activities, traffic engineering analysis, and data for bicycles and pedestrians.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that a 4% merit increase has been included as well. He reminded Board members that the MPO is subject to the city's merit policy. In order to be conservative, a 4% increase was proposed based on estimates from other jurisdictions ranging from 3% to 4% merit increases.

Mr. Kozlosky requested a motion to open the public comment period. He noted that this item would return for consideration at the next MPO Board Meeting on February 26th. He added that each of the member jurisdictions should have received a letter related their local match.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to open the 30-day public comment period. Mr. Williams seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

A brief question/answer and discussion period was held.

10. Discussion

a. 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #20-1

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item is for informational purposes only and will be brought forward to the MPO Board at its next meeting.

b. WMPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee Model E-Bicycle Ordinance

Mr. Cannon stated that several months ago, New Hanover County Parks and Gardens requested that the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee draft a model ordinance for the regulation of electric bicycles for consideration by member jurisdictions if needed. He noted that the draft ordinance received a few comments from the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) last week.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Williams, Mr. Cannon stated that some of the public comments heard earlier today were heard at TCC as well. Regarding the helmet fine, he pointed out that sometimes a recommendation is made that is the responsibility of local law enforcement; although the intention is to prioritize safety. He requested that the MPO Board forward any comments to staff by January 31.

Mr. Williams clarified that this model ordinance is a suggestion that the member jurisdictions may or may not adopt.

Mr. Kozlosky concurred that this is a nonbinding model ordinance for this committee, which will be passed along to the member jurisdictions to consider, amend and/or adopt.

c. STIP/Locally Administered Projects

Mr. Kozlosky stated that due to NCDOT's cash management issues staff has been asked to work with member jurisdictions regarding anticipated expenditures of Direct Attributable (DA) funds. He noted that MPO staff met with the City of Wilmington this morning and will be meeting with staffs of the other member jurisdictions to update NCDOT with Direct Attributable projects and expected expenditures over the next 18 months. He added that NCDOT has indicated that they would not be willing to pay invoices for projects that have not been started pre-December 1st until June, and possibly as late as January of 2021. He added that the update will be provided to NCDOT's Chief Operating Officer by January 31, 2020 and that the Division is undergoing a similar exercise.

Mr. Kimes commented that NCDOT is hoping to catch up by the end of this year.

A question/answer and discussion period was held regarding future funding sources.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Zapple, Mr. Kozlosky stated that reimbursements will be sought for projects that are already in progress.

Mr. Kimes stated that the next 12 months will follow different criteria. He noted that NCDOT has had to re-adjust some of its delays. He commented that the Division 3 is

better off than some of the other Divisions and that NCDOT is being held to a higher standard of accountability these days.

Mr. Rivenbark expressed concerns regarding the impacts to economic development.

11. Updates

- a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO**
- b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority**
- c. NCDOT Division**
- d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that updates are included in the agenda packet. He added that although some stick figures have been public for proposed alignments of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, they are not ready to be distributed yet. Once the information is ready, it will be forwarded to members. Additionally, the City of Wilmington and New Hanover County yesterday adopted resolutions supporting public transportation. He noted that the MPO would be a partner and have a seat at the table.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that NCDOT is beginning public outreach regarding Prioritization 6.0.

Ms. Marks stated that this is an opportunity for the public to comment on projects they would like to see in Prioritization 6.0. She noted that she will be in her office three entire days next week to answer questions.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff will begin to bring information regarding Prioritization 6.0 from the MPO perspective to the MPO Board at its next meeting.

12. The next WMPO Board meeting – February 26, 2020

13. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:49 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.**