

MPO Board Remote Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington, N.C.
Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Members Present

David Piepmeyer, Pender County

Pat Batleman, Town of Leland

Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington

Mike Allen, Town of Belville

LeAnn Pierce, Town of Carolina Beach

John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach

Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach

Rob Zapple, New Hanover County

Frank Williams, Brunswick County

Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

Others Present

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO

1) Call to Order

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

Mr. Kozlosky called the roll call at the opening of the meeting, as follows:

Present: David Piepmeyer, Pat Batleman, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Rob Zapple, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Neil Anderson, and Woody White.

Chairman Piepmeyer stated that he has been working from home for the past 12 weeks. He commented that remote meetings have some challenges and expressed appreciation to the board members for their perseverance.

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 no requests for excused absences were received.

4) Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll-call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Pat Batleman, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Rob Zapple, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson, and Woody White.

5) Public Comment Period

No written or audio public comments were submitted in advance of the MPO Board meeting.

6) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from February 26, 2020
- b. Resolution approving 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #20-2
- c. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendments #20-1 and 20-2
- d. Resolution approving Amendments to the FY 20 Unified Planning Work Program
- e. Resolution dissolving the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Citizen Advisory Committee and to recreate the committee and/or task force with the development of the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- f. Resolution approving the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's 2020 Legislative Agenda
- g. Resolution supporting the Allocation of Additional Surface Transportation Block Grant-Direct Attributable Funding to the Town of Wrightsville Beach for the Coral Drive Sidewalk (U-5534S) Project
- h. Resolution supporting the Town of Navassa's 2020 NCDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Grant Submittal
- i. Resolution approving a reduction in scope for the Middle Sound Loop Trail- Ogden Connection (EB-6027)
- j. Resolution supporting the North Carolina Department of Transportation Ferry Division's request for the Marine Highway Project designation
- k. Resolution supporting an amendment to the Wilmington Urban Area MPO Meeting Schedule for the November 2020 TCC meeting

Mr. Zapple requested to pull Item 6i for further discussion, and made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 6a through 6k, excluding Item 6i. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll-call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Pat Batleman, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Rob Zapple, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson, and Woody White.

- i. Resolution approving a reduction in scope for the Middle Sound Loop Trail- Ogden Connection (EB-6027)

Mr. Zapple stated that although the northern portion is being eliminated from the scope of the Middle Sound Loop Trail- Ogden Connection project, it will be included with the Military Cutoff Extension, and the trail will be built in its entirety. He made a motion to approve the reduction in scope for the Middle Sound Loop Trail-Ogden Connection. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll-call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Pat Batleman, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Rob Zapple, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson, and Woody White.

7) Discussion

a. 2018-2027 and 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #20-4

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the proposed administrative modifications are mainly transit items and delays to projects associated with NCDOT's cash flow challenges. He noted that this item is for information purposes only and will return for consideration at the next meeting.

b. Identification of MPO Priorities

Chairman Piepmeyer stated that Vice-Chair Batleman requested that this item be included in the agenda for discussion.

Vice-Chair Batleman noted that the state has a surplus of more than \$2 billion. She pointed out that the Division has some important projects, and it would be useful to communicate some of them to the General Assembly for the diversion of surplus funds. She commented that legislators should be encouraged to take action to stimulate the economy and to address long-overdue infrastructure needs, while creating potential employment opportunities. She requested that a letter be sent to the General Assembly from the MPO emphasizing the importance to the region of transportation priority projects.

In view of recent revenue challenges, Mr. Zapple requested the latest projections from NCDOT regarding current funding.

Mr. Kozlosky responded that the Secretary told the NC FIRST Commission and the legislature that a \$300 million shortfall is expected in the current fiscal year, and a \$370 million shortfall for the next fiscal year. He noted that significant cuts have been made and NCDOT has been seeking to rise above its cash floor. He noted that the Secretary and the Chairman of the Board have met and had a conversation with the Senate Transportation Oversight Committee. Based on the latest information, NCDOT cannot enter into any new contracts or agreements, which limits its ability to advance projects. NCDOT is also in arrears in some of its existing projects, which adds an amount owed to the cash spreadsheet sent to board members each month.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that Chad Kimes from NCDOT will be present at the Board's June meeting to address concerns regarding projects impacted by its cash flow challenges. He noted that staff is working with NCDOT regarding several Locally Administered Projects (LAPs). Although these LAPs use federal funds, the local municipalities front the money, and seek reimbursement from NCDOT, which in turn seeks reimbursement from the federal government. Because NCDOT is the middle party and currently below its cash floor, LAPs cannot move forward. He noted that staff has had conversations with the COO at NCDOT in an attempt to move some projects forward. For instance, the Town of Leland purchased temporary easements, which will expire at the end of this year.

Mr. Kozlosky suggested focusing on a statewide perspective. He commented that since transportation is one of the major components of state government, working collaboratively with the state to find solutions is important.

Mr. Zapple inquired about the CARES Act. Mr. Kozlosky responded that the NC House Bill that passed would put \$300 million into a general maintenance reserve fund; although the Senate Bill did not specify where the funds will go. He noted that NCDOT is undecided about the use of the funds, which may be limited by language in federal law about how they can be used.

Vice-Chair Batleman pointed out that no harm would come from expressing concerns to the General Assembly regarding priority projects, such as the Hampstead Bypass. She commented that silence would accomplish nothing.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Vice-Chair Batleman for acknowledging the importance of the Hampstead Bypass project. He stated that it would be helpful to include a status update with percent complete and associated funds to completion for prioritization of projects for the region in time for the next board meeting.

Mr. Williams expressed concerns that June 24th might be too late given the legislature's schedule. He noted that although a \$2 billion surplus is projected, a \$5 billion shortfall is also projected. He suggested focusing on a top priority list of projects and that it be completed quickly.

Chairman Piepmeyer concurred that there are many competing interests for the funds such as from the education and health sectors and the Department of Social Services (DSS). He added that Pender County's budgetary process has been complicated by numerous unknowns.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff would need to work with NCDOT on the status and cost to completion for each project. He noted that staff will work to return something in a week.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed a desire to circulate the data to the board for feedback.

Mr. Williams requested a deadline for board members to respond, so that comments would not delay the process.

Mr. Rivenbark commented that the communication needs to be sent for consideration as soon as possible. Chairman Piepmeyer and Vice-Chair Batleman concurred.

Chairman Piepmeyer stated that a letter of preface would be drafted to legislators, while staff compiles the data for a quick follow-up to the letter.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Zapple, Chairman Piepmeyer stated that copies of the letter will go to the local delegation including Senator Rabon and Representative Carson Smith, etc.

8) Updates

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

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the updates are included in the agenda packet.

9) Announcements

- a. **Bike/Pedestrian Committee Meeting - June 9th**
- b. **Next MPO Board meeting - June 24th**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the location of the June MPO Board meeting will depend on the Governor's Orders.

Mr. Rivenbark expressed concerns regarding planning for events such as pandemics and hurricanes.

Vice Chair Batleman pointed out that hurricane season is approaching.

10) **Adjournment**

With no further items, Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ellen seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 3:34 p.m. by roll-call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Pat Batleman, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Rob Zapple, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson, and Woody White.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky
Executive Director
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

THE ABOVE MEETING MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.