



MPO Board Remote Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington, N.C.
Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Members Present

David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington
Deb Hays, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Mike Allen, Town of Belville
LeAnn Pierce, Town of Carolina Beach
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Jonathan Barfield, Jr., 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
Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director, WMPO
Trevor Stewart, GIS Analyst, WMPO
Nick Cannon, Go Coast TDM Program Coordinator, WMPO
Scott A. James, Transportation Planning Engineer, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, Senior Accountant, WMPO
Chad Kimes, NCDOT Division Engineer
Megan Matheny, Deputy Director, Wave Transit
Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority

1) Call to Order

Chairman David Piepmeyer called the remote meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Mr. Kozlosky took the roll call pursuant to Section 4.31 of S.L. 2020-3, SB 704. A quorum was present as follows:

Present: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

Absent: Neil Anderson.

2) Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Piepmeyer read the conflict of interest statement and asked if any member has 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 excused absences from this meeting were requested.

4) Approval of the Agenda

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

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson.

5) Public Comment Period

Mr. Kozlosky stated that a public comment was received from Cynthia Simpson in the form of a voice mail message as follows:

Hello, my name is Cynthia Simpson and I live at 130 Hooker Road and I'm calling as a comment to your planning organization meeting to be held tomorrow at 3:00PM. For approximately 14 years, I have expressed concern to all parts of the city and the planning organization regarding speeding and racing, reckless driving in my neighborhood. And [as recent as] three days ago, someone posted in the NextDoor application about traffic in College Acres and the speeding. Other people posted that they have called the police and had meetings at a house at the corner of Mallard, Rose and Hooker. It doesn't really matter which street it is. In response to that, Masonboro Sound and many other areas Culloden, Bayshore Estates, and, of course, this is East Wind, Piney Acres and College Acres. And I have a daughter with an intellectual disability, and I have begged the city to make our streets safer. In April of 2014, the City Council approved and funded a path to be built on the street to at least save pedestrians and cyclists. But the last we heard is that it's being redesigned, possibly moved to the other side of the street with a crosswalk where no driver making either a left turn or right turn could see someone crossing Hooker Road to get to the bus stop. If there is a vehicle in the intersection waiting to turn on to Wrightsville Avenue, someone making a left turn onto Hooker Road, could not see the pedestrian and certainly someone coming from the right... I watched someone make that right turn at a high rate of speed. She was laughing and talking to her passenger and never looked around the corner. So, we have so many concerns and we, for my family, we wish you would take all of that into consideration. 910-632-5022. Thank you very much for allowing me to make this call.

Mr. Ellen said he and his wife travel on Hooker Road every Thursday morning delivering meals to elderly shut-ins in Wilmington. He noted that although several 25 mph speed limit signs are posted, traffic signs will not prevent people from going faster or from distracted driving. However, the city and the residents are attempting to control the speed limit.

6) Presentation

a. Go Coast Change in Motion 2020 TDM Plan - Nick Cannon, WMPO

Mr. Kozlosky noted that this presentation is for information purposes only and staff will bring the plan back for the Board to consider at its next meeting.

TDM Coordinator Nick Cannon gave brief overview of the short-range Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan, Cape Fear Change in Motion 2020. He described the plan as one that identifies strategies to mitigate traffic congestion and diversify modes within the region, which can be implemented in the next one to five years. He added that the overall goal of the plan is to reduce vehicle miles traveled by 10%. He read the plan's mission statement, as follows:

To provide area residents with the resources and offer motivation to choose healthy, sustainable, and effective multi-modal transportation to reduce stress on the road network and increase alternative means of mobility.

Mr. Cannon stated that the Go Coast Committee reviewed the TDM element and survey responses from the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) to develop a public survey for the short-range TDM plan. He added that a 30-day public comment period was held prior to the committee prioritizing the strategies.

Mr. Cannon displayed some of the comments from the survey and encouraged Board members to review them. Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that the 85% for single occupancy vehicles for trips drew his attention.

Mr. Cannon responded that the statistic is not surprising. He pointed out that 60% would prefer to drive their cars less often.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rivenbark, Chairman Piepmeyer commented that the statistic confirms his perception vehicle use in the surrounding area and the state, which is nothing like Europe or other countries.

Mr. Cannon gave an overview of the seven resulting strategies of the plan, as follows:

1. Alternative work schedules – education, outreach, and promotion to area employers
2. Bike share program – identification of points of interest for connection through bike share

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Cannon stated that UNCW has suspended its bike share due to COVID-19; but discussions are underway to reinstate the program.

Chairman Piepmeyer requested some statistics from UNCW's program to better understand how it has been received. Mr. Cannon said he would provide them and continued with his presentation.

3. Carpooling and vanpooling – promoting Share the Ride NC and park-and-ride lots
4. Consulting for telecommuting opportunities – providing free service to Go Coast program members first and later to other employers throughout the region
5. Fostering a bicycle and pedestrian friendly culture – continuing programs such as "Be A Looker," Watch For Me NC, NC Vision Zero and bike-oriented events
6. TDM-focused collaboration – through coordination with standing committees, transportation partners, and planning staffs of member jurisdictions
7. Personalized commuter plans – offering catered TDM transportation plans to anyone living or working within the MPO planning boundary

Mr. Cannon said that to assess the feasibility and success of the strategies, the committee developed a scorecard that considers ease of implementation, cost, existing conditions, demand, impact on traffic, and impact on Multi-Modal Transportation (MMT). Additionally, work plans were provided to give actionable and measurable goals to guide to the success of each strategy. He added that the plan will be presented to the MPO Board for consideration next month and can be presented to member jurisdictions after its adoption.

Chairman Piepmeyer requested that any changes to the plan since the last adoption be highlighted and summarized for Board members. Mr. Kozlosky responded that staff would do so.

Mr. Barfield commented that the pandemic has been a trifecta for illustrating TDM in action with telecommuting and decreased traffic.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation for Mr. Cannon's concise presentation.

7) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from February 24, 2021
- b. Resolution approving the 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendment 21-1
- c. Resolution approving the 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Administrative Modifications 21-2
- d. Resolution approving the FY 22 Section 5310 Grant Awards
- e. Resolution approving the FY 22 Unified Planning Work Program
- f. Resolution certifying the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Planning Process
- g. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable Funds to the North Carolina Department of Transportation for the US 421/Lake Park Drive and Hamlet Avenue Traffic Signal
- h. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendment 21-2

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 7a through 7h. Ms. Bozeman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

Nays: None. **Absent:** Neil Anderson.

8) Regular Agenda

- a. Resolution approving the Allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant-Direct Attributable Funds to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound Connector, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority for the Automated Passenger Counters, and NC State Ports for North Gate Feasibility Study

Transportation Planning Engineer Scott A. James gave a brief presentation on the proposed allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant-Direct Attributable (STBG-DA) funds. He noted that in November of 2020, the MPO issued a call for projects in response to the one-year extension of the FAST Act. As a result of the call, three applications were received:

1. New Hanover County – Middle Sound Loop and Porters Neck Walmart Connector Construction. Requesting from the MPO \$553,472.
2. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority/Wave Transit – Install automatic passenger counter technology. Requesting from the MPO \$160,000.
3. NC Ports Authority – Partially fund a feasibility study for a connection to the north gate access. Requesting from the MPO \$250,000.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed concerns that Wave would not know how many passengers it serves and analyze this data on a regular basis.

Mr. Kozlosky acknowledged the presence of Megan Matheny, Deputy Director, Wave Transit, to provide clarification regarding the request to fund automatic passenger counters.

Ms. Matheny clarified that the current on-board fare box technology captures trips to the increment of one minute. Although Wave Transit captures and analyzes a multitude of data points, the current technology doesn't capture staff level, on and off boarding data at a particular stop. She noted that the new technology is more reliable and has the capability of capturing boarding data to better align stop locations to increase efficiencies within routing. She explained that the new technology won't

inform where routes will go, but how they operate by realigning or condensing stops to better serve existing customers.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation that no operating funds were requested.

Mr. Kozlosky acknowledged that Stephanie Ayers, Director, Planning & Development at North Carolina State Ports Authority, is also available to answer questions regarding the request by the NC State Ports Authority.

There being no additional questions or comments, Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the allocation of STBGP-DA funds. Ms. Hays seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

Nays: None. **Absent:** Neil Anderson.

9) Discussion

a. COVID-19 Direct Attributable Funding Allocation

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this discussion item relates to the COVID-19 Direct Attributable Funding Allocation that the MPO received as part of the COVID-2 legislation of which the MPO was allocated \$1,333,045. He noted that these funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024. He added that the funds are identified in the legislation as 100% payable. He reminded Board members that the current MPO programs are 80% reimbursable from the federal share and 20% local reimbursement.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) considered the 80/20 cost share versus 100% payable and the TCC recommends that the funds remain 100% payable. If the Board by consensus supports the recommendation, staff proposes to work with the TCC to bring back a call for projects as well as project evaluation criteria to consider prior to any call for projects.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed concerns regarding having more requests than the available funding. He said he has asked staff to propose a method for prioritizing and making recommendations for how to award or obligate the money.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that hearing no objections staff will assume that 100% payable is acceptable, and staff will return with a proposed call for projects and evaluation criteria for discussion prior to issuing the call.

b. Surface Transportation Legislation (Earmarks)

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is considering earmarks as part of the new federal transportation reauthorization bill. He noted that Congress has been provided with requirements for the members to submit earmarks. Based on conversations with the City's Legislative Liaison, there are several members who are not going to submit earmarks. However, Congressman Rouzer is willing to consider submitting earmarks for this region.

Mr. Kozlosky commented that there has been a lack of guidance as to whether the earmarks will involve new money or existing money. He noted that he provided some information to Board members last night from NCDOT regarding those definitions. He explained that the Department has concerns that if earmarks are existing money, reprioritization of projects will be necessary in order to accelerate an earmarked project, because DOT is overprogrammed.

Mr. Kozlosky inquired if there was any desire from the Board to submit an earmark. He noted that earmarks are being accepted between tomorrow, April 1st, and April 16th. If the Board desires pursuing earmarks, staff recommends reviewing the U-5710A project, Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road Interchange (Drysdale Drive Extension), which has funding in fiscal year 2022. He asked the Board for guidance regarding any desire to pursue earmarks. He reminded the Board that there are talks at the federal level about an infrastructure bill, which may consider earmarks as well.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed interest in pursuing earmarks. He cautioned that not all projects would be eligible.

Mr. Kozlosky commented that when considering earmarks, he reflected on the Board's top-five funded priorities (Hampstead Bypass, Independence Boulevard Extension, the interchange at Market Street, Eastwood Road and the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, the interchange at Kerr Avenue and the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, and the interchange at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road). He noted that in order to be eligible for earmarking, a project would need a federal environmental document. He noted that the Hampstead Bypass project has a state document and is ineligible. He added that if the Board desires, staff would recommend the U-5710A project.

Mr. Barfield commented that in the words of Mayor Bill Saffo, "It's a sorry frog that can't croak in its own pond." Meaning, it's important to pursue dollars for projects. He made a motion to support the process to earmark it.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed concerns regarding DOT's project load, and the negative impact to the other projects in the schedule. He concurred with Mr. Barfield about pursuing available funds.

Ms. Hays agreed with Mr. Barfield. She commented that when she discussed earmarks with Congressman Rouzer, she was unaware of any negative connotations.

Mr. Kozlosky clarified that the MPO has not had discussion with the Congressman's office, only the City's Legislative Liaison has. He noted that the MPO's conversations have been with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, which have a basis of prior experience with earmarks, such as the City's earmark for Randall Parkway, which created some challenges, and the multi-modal center, which was not used or was transferred to another project. The Department is concerned that these earmarks are existing money coming to the state that, overprogrammed, would necessitate a reprioritization exercise similar to the one in August or September of last year, and would delay some projects to accelerate another.

Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that earmarks with existing money would only help specific projects and not the entire program.

Ms. Hays expressed appreciation and inquired about stopping the process if found to be detrimental.

Mr. Kozlosky commented that that the MPO would be best served by considering U-5710A, the interchange at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road, specifically the A-section, the Drysdale Drive Extension, which is programmed in fiscal year 2022. He noted that if it's new money, and typically an earmark is only for a portion of the cost of the project, the MPO would request that it be placed on U-5710A, which would free up money for other projects. If the money is existing, choosing a project programmed in fiscal year 2022 could avoid reprioritization of the STIP and MPO TIP. So, this project would meet the needs, whether the earmark is existing money or new money.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Mr. Kozlosky for recommending a plausible and thoughtful solution to a complex issue. He also encouraged members to consider how the MPO would best be served in the event of an infrastructure bill.

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the earmark recommendation of staff unless it proves to be detrimental, in which case the money would be refused.

Chairman Piepmeyer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

Nays: None. **Absent:** Neil Anderson.

c. 2021 River to Sea Ride

Mr. Cannon reminded the Board members that the 2020 River to Sea Bike Ride event was canceled due to COVID-19. He noted that during initial planning of the 2021 event, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee recommended postponing the event from this May until fall, in anticipation of being able to have mass gatherings at that point in time.

Chairman Piepmeyer spoke in favor of the decision to delay the event until fall.

Mr. Ellen stated that the Tour de Blueberry is happening in Burgaw, NC, on June 19th. He noted that it will consist of three programs: a virtual ride, a limited live ride (20 kilometers, 50 kilometers or 100 kilometers/62 miles), and a fun run/walk. He added that the first week of October is the Mountains to the Coast event, six days at 60-70 miles a day, which ends at Topsail Beach, NC.

d. 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #21-3

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item is for information purposes only and would be brought back for Board consideration at a future meeting.

10) 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. He also gave an update on a concern expressed by Board members regarding parking at the building at 525 N. 4th Street. He noted that he contacted President Jim Morton at Cape Fear Community College (CFCC), and has had conversations with Lyn Sylvia, who manages parking for CFCC. Based on conversations with President Morton and Ms. Sylvia, there is an opportunity and ability to work together to provide parking at the deck adjacent to the Wilson Center. He added that college is currently in the process of retrofitting the entrance and exit gates of the parking deck, which are owned and operated by CFCC. He noted that staff will address the details of parking at the CFCC deck closer to the opening of the facility in May of 2022.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Mr. Kozlosky.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that regarding the strategic plan, staff has met with the consultant, Fountainworks, and anticipates conducting planning sessions with the Board during its May and June meetings.

Chairman Piepmeyer stated that he has requested an update and annual report from NCDOT, perhaps in July, and NCDOT Division Engineer Chad Kimes has agreed to it. In addition, he requested that Wave Transit also provide an update to the MPO Board later this year. He commented that Wave is an important part of the transportation system for the region.

Ms. Matheny responded that she welcomes the opportunity to provide an update and will work with Mr. Kozlosky to do so.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that as a follow-up to the agenda review, the MPO has also contacted Wave, ILM (Wilmington International Airport), the North Carolina Rail Division, and the North Carolina Ferry Division to calendar presentations to the Board and has requested this report on an annual basis.

Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out the importance of periodic updates for the Board to make informed decisions, to report back to member jurisdictions, and to answer questions of constituents.

Mr. Kozlosky reported that NCDOT has restarted the Independence Boulevard Project as well as the Military Cutoff/Eastwood Road Interchange Project. He noted that also included in the agenda packet with the NCDOT Update, are projects greenlighted and which phase of the projects have been greenlighted to move forward.

Lastly, Mr. Kozlosky stated that yesterday, Senator Lee filed Senate Bill 398 to restore the protections provided in the Map Act for the MPO and the City of Wilmington. He noted that staff worked closely with Senator Lee on the development of the Bill and worked with the City of Wilmington on the incorporation into the Bill of language they desired. He added that he spoke with Senator Lee this morning and expressed appreciation. He encouraged Board members to express appreciation to Senator Lee as well. He added that he will continue to provide updates once the Bill starts moving in the General Assembly. He reminded Board members that this has been a high priority on the legislative agenda adopted by the Board since the Map Act was repealed in 2019. He reiterated that the Bill has been filed to reinstate protections and commented that he is grateful to Senator Lee.

11) Announcements

- a. **Bike/Pedestrian Committee Meeting – April 13, 2021**
- b. **NC Ethics Forms - Due April 15, 2021**

Chairman Piepmeyer commented that he mailed his NC Ethics Forms. He encouraged members to submit their forms by the deadline.

Mr. Ellen said he encountered difficulty in completing the second form online, specifically the pull-down menu answering the question, "Are you running for office?" Even with support from the North Carolina State Ethics Office, he was unsuccessful in completing the question regarding state office candidacy and recommended that paper forms be submitted instead.

12) Adjournment

Next MPO Board meeting – April 28, 2021

Mr. Rivenbark wished everyone a happy Easter.

Mr. Ellen made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Rivenbark. The motion to adjourn carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: David Piepmeyer, Hank Miller, Brenda Bozeman, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, LeAnn Pierce, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Neil Anderson

The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 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 DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.