



WILMINGTON URBAN AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Board Remote Meeting Minutes
Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington, N.C.
Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Members Present (In-Person)

David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

Members Present (Remotely)

Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington
Deb Hays, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Mike Allen, Town of Belville
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County

Others Present (In-Person)

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director, WMPO
Nick Cannon, Go Coast TDM Program Coordinator, WMPO
Scott A. James, Transportation Planning Engineer, WMPO

Others Present (Remotely)

Trevor Stewart, GIS Analyst, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, Senior Accountant, WMPO
Chad Kimes, NCDOT Division Engineer
Megan Matheny, Deputy Director, Wave Transit

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, Brenda Bozeman, Neil Anderson, Charlie Rivenbark, Deb Hays, Mike Allen, John Ellen, Jonathan Barfield, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Absent:** Hank Miller, LeAnn Pierce and Landon Zimmer

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 received.

4) Approval of the Agenda

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

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

5) **Public Comment Period**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that no public comments were received.

6) **Presentation**

a. **“Be A Looker” Campaign - Nick Cannon, WMPO**

Go Coast TDM Program Coordinator Nick Cannon gave brief presentation on the “Be A Looker,” a biennial bicycle and pedestrian safety campaign. He gave the following crash statistics:

Time span	Crash type	North Carolina	WMPO Region
Annually	Pedestrian-to-vehicle	2,000	341
2015-2019	Bicycle-to-vehicle	1,000	504

Mr. Cannon stated that New Hanover County has the 4th highest number of bike and pedestrian crashes and the highest number of crashes per capita. He explained that the “Be A Looker” campaign seeks to reduce the number of bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities by promoting biking and walking as legitimate modes of transportation.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Cannon stated that there have been several fatalities over the past few years.

Mr. Cannon said the second goal of the campaign is to educate those in the WMPO region on the rules of the road for driving, walking, and bicycling. He gave a brief overview of the previous marketing campaign from April to September of 2019. He noted that the final report including community feedback from the 2019 campaign is available online at www.GoCoastNC.org.

Mr. Cannon stated that this year’s campaign will run from May to October and be similar to the 2019 campaign but with an increased emphasis on community programming to include helmet fittings, and safety lessons in collaboration with the Wilmington Fire Department, and other identified partners within the MPO region.

Chairman Piepmeyer requested injury and fatality statistics to identify trends and the long-term success of the program. Mr. Cannon responded that the crash statistics are on gathered every few years by the Wilmington Police Department and DOT. Chairman Piepmeyer asked that a request be made to gather the data on an annual basis.

b. **Proclamation: “May as Bike Month”**

Chairman Piepmeyer read the proclamation naming May 2021 as Bike Month

c. **Belville 2030 Plan – Adrienne Harrington, Smart Moves Consulting**

Ms. Adrienne Harrington, Smart Moves Consulting, the Town of Belville’s on-call consulting firm, gave a presentation on the Belville Vision 2030 Plan. She encouraged MPO Board members to visit Brunswick Riverwalk Park at Belville, considered to be the “gym” of the town. She noted that the study area for the 2030 Plan fronts the Brunswick River to the east and is bounded by US-74/76 further to the north and NC-133 to the west. She explained that purpose of the plan is to identify and integrate opportunities for dining, shopping, and mixed-use development for a future downtown Belville with recreation and outdoors amenities such as the extension of the Riverwalk trail. She added that NCDOT is interested in relocating its maintenance facility, which makes the creation of a downtown riverfront possible.

Ms. Harrington displayed some examples of southeastern coastal and river front downtowns and small urban developments that preserve the character of those locations. She noted that economic impact analysis was conducted that resulted in 22 potential amenities and retail sectors that would be most beneficial to a successful downtown. She noted that the public survey polls the top-10 preferred amenities. Future transportation options include the following:

- Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail (greenway and blue way)
- Chappell Loop Road Bike Lanes and Sharrows (MPO 2045 MTP: BP-298)
- Belville Elementary Multi-Use Path (STBGP-DA funded and in design)
- Rice Hope Multi-Use Path (STBGP-DA funded and in design)
- NC-133/River Road Widening (MPO 2045 MTP: RW-51, 2040)
- NC-133 Modernization along the plan area (U-5914, let date FY22)

Ms. Harrington said that a website has been developed for the plan, www.townofbelville.com/vision2030. She noted that the public input period is open until the end of day today with an online or paper survey of 18 questions can be completed in 10 minutes total. She added that two in-person public meetings were held on April 14th and 15th. After the draft is ready, it will be circulated for further public input.

Mr. Rivenbark and Mr. Allen expressed appreciation to Ms. Harrington for the presentation.

7) Consent Agenda

- Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from March 31, 2021**
- Resolution approving the 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Administrative Modifications 21-3**

Mr. Willis made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 7a and 7b. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

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

8) Regular Agenda

- Resolution adopting Cape Fear Change in Motion 2020**

Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that Go Coast TDM Program Coordinator Nick Cannon gave an overview of Cape Fear Change in Motion 2020 at the MPO Board's last meeting. He noted that staff provided some information this afternoon regarding the impacts of COVID on the TDM program. He added that the plan will guide the TDM program over the next five years.

There being no questions or comments, Ms. Bozeman made a motion to adopt the Cape Fear Change in Motion 2020. Mr. Ellen seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

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

9) Discussion

- COVID-19 Direct Attributable Funding Allocation**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item relates to the COVID-19 Direct Attributable Funding Allocation.

Transportation Planning Engineer Scott A. James said that this item is the second part of the discussion held in March regarding the Corona Virus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021. He noted that the COVID-19 Direct Attributable Funding was the local allocation of \$10 billion of highway infrastructure program funding. Of that amount, the WMPO is the recipient of \$1,333,044, which are available for obligation until September 30, 2024 and the federal share payable shall be up to 100%. In March, the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) discussed if the share should be payable up to 100%, or at the 80% level that is consistent with exiting Surface Transportation Block Grant and Transportation Alternatives Set Aside-Direct Attributable funding programs. In March, the TCC and MPO Board supported making the funds 100% payable, and the Board directed staff to make criteria by which additional funds would be awarded.

Mr. James stated that staff reviewed the current methodology to score and award projects, and suggests the following modifications:

1. Remove the local match percentage currently worth five points out of a total of 83 points
2. Add metric to reflect whether the project is existing or new
3. Include metric to permit documentation of hardships resulting from a COVID-19 pandemic-related event or consequence

Mr. Kozlosky stated that once staff receives direction from the Board, it will bring back a call for projects as well as scoring criteria for consideration at its next meeting.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Kozlosky stated that if the Board were to approve the call for projects as well as the scoring criteria at its next meeting, staff would advertise in June.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Willis, Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff is considering grading projects out of a total score of 100. He noted that staff would bring the point totals back to the Board at its next meeting.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period regarding the allocation of the funds followed.

Chairman Piepmeyer inquired about tiebreakers. Mr. Kozlosky responded that staff would bring forward recommendations to the Board.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed concerns that the money would be allocated fairly and pointed out that a high scoring project with a high cost might eat up all the funds.

Mr. Rivenbark pointed out that \$1.3 million is not a lot of money. Chairman Piepmeyer concurred.

Mr. Ellen suggested spending the money on the "Be A Looker" TDM Campaign. He commented that a million of infrastructure could be one I-beam.

Mr. Forte commented that \$400,000 per county might buy a traffic light and the money might be better spent on a project that would benefit all three counties. Ms. Bozeman pointed out that the amount would not pay for a single stop light.

Mr. Rivenbark inquired about limitations of the funds. Mr. Kozlosky responded that the funds are like those for the STBG program. He pointed out that the funds came from the COVID-2 Bill to address

issues that resulted from the pandemic, which is why identified hardships resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic was included in the recommended scoring.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that staff discussed the equitable distribution of the funds and prepared a slide illustrating a distribution of funds based on the percentage of population in the MPO region. However, he commented that he would not advocate a distribution based on population. Chairman Piepmeyer commented he requested this slide, but that he does not advocate it either.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kozlosky stated that limitations exist. However, projects like those implemented under the previous programs could be implemented such multi-use paths, sidewalks, traffic signal installation, etc.

Mr. Willis inquired about the metric to distinguish between an existing or a new project. Mr. James responded that the idea was for projects that were previously not proposed due to the lack of a local match or for some other reason to be proposed as 100% payable. He noted that ongoing projects might have run into cost overruns or other difficulties. He pointed out that each is different to evaluate and staff wanted the ability to evaluate them independently.

Mr. Rivenbark inquired about use of the old Highway 17 roadbed for a bicycle-pedestrian walkway, or a plan from DOT or any municipality in Brunswick County to move bicyclists or pedestrians safely between Brunswick County and New Hanover County.

Mr. Allen said that there had been some discussion about it a year ago. He noted that DOT said the roadbed still exists. However, this was before the pandemic. He noted he would revisit it.

Mr. Rivenbark commented that this would be a high priority project. Mr. Allen said that the project using the old roadbed was estimated to cost \$700,000.

It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with staff's proposal to change the methodology and to bring forward a proposal for scoring criteria and call for projects at the Board's next meeting.

Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that this would be contingent upon further consideration.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Willis, Mr. Kozlosky stated that a documented COVID impact would be included in the scoring criteria.

b. Prioritization 6.0 Local Input Methodology

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo gave an overview of the draft Local Input Methodology for Prioritization 6.0. She stated that staff has been engaging in the prioritization process with NCDOT since early 2020. Last summer, the MPO submitted its projects for quantitative scoring. She reminded members that prioritization is based on the Strategic Transportation Investment (STI) law, and is a methodical, data-driven process for prioritizing projects for funding. She gave an overview of the funding tiers, the point distribution and project eligibility. She noted that the methodology requirements are defined by North Carolina General Statute §136-18.42 and ensure a readable document and a transparent process.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that the methodology of Prioritization 6.0 resembles that of Prioritization 5.0. She noted that the method of calculating Local Input Points (LIP) has changed in Prioritization 6.0 to allow the MPO an additional 100 points in the Regional and Division tiers, and gives an option to include a flex policy that would allow up to 500 points to be flexed between the Regional and Division tiers.

Ms. Lorenzo explained the difference between scoring. She noted that Prioritization 5.0 considered its quantitative score, the previous Prioritization 4.0 score, consistency with plans, status of project in development, and inclusion in the adopted strategic business plan for a total of 1,500 points per tier, and the top 15 highest scoring projects receiving 100 points. For Prioritization 6.0, staff proposes to drop the previous prioritization score criteria and add a criterion of project alignment with NCDOT Division 3 as well as the flex policy language. She also recommended is a modal project mix standard to commit 100 points to each mode wherever possible. If the top 16 projects are highway projects, projects ranking 13 through 16 would be removed and be replaced by projects from each of the non-highway modes. This would ensure that the MPO continues to support multi-modal infrastructure by assigning at least 100 points for top scoring multi-modal project for each mode.

Chairman Piepmeyer inquired about the basis for removing the score of the previous prioritization. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the proposed change is based on experience from Prioritization 5.0. She explained that staff worked closely with Division 3 to match points, particularly on the Division tier, and was successful in having several MPO projects picked up due to the collaborative effort.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that staff will need to send the Local Input Methodology (LIM) to the NCDOT Methodology Review Committee. She noted that the LIM is required to be presented for the Board for consideration for approval by July 30, 2021 and displayed the remaining tentative P 6.0 timeline is as follows:

- 8/31/21 – Quantitative scores released
- 9/1/21-11/30/21 – Regional Impact point assignment window
- 1/30/22 – Programmed Regional Impact projects released
- 2/1/22-4/29/22 – Division Needs point assignment window
- August 2022 – Draft 2023-2032 STIP released

Mr. Anderson expressed concerns regarding further delay to larger projects that are on the back burner. Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that the prioritization process is not for projects that have already been committed, such as those impacted by DOTs cash flow challenges. He noted that this is for new projects or those subject to reprioritization at the very back of the STIP.

Mr. Kozlosky inquired about support for the change in the scoring process to remove the previous prioritization score (revamp as a collaboration score), the flex policy, and the proposed modal mix. He noted that once support is established, staff will submit a draft to NCDOT for review per state law.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Kozlosky suggested that the Board consider this at its May meeting.

c. 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #21-4

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

d. 2021 River to Sea Ride

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the River to Sea Committee is considering October 16, 2021 for the event. He noted that the event has been rescheduled from spring to fall.

e. MPO Board Meetings (In Person)

Mr. Kozlosky requested that the Board resume meeting in-person starting in May.

Chairman Piepmeyer commented that next month's meeting will have a closed session and expressed support for meeting in-person in view of announcements by the CDC and increased vaccinations.

Ms. Hays spoke in favor of in-person meetings and said she needed to leave the meeting. Other board members who spoke in favor of in-person meetings included Mr. Rivenbark, Mr. Ellen, Ms. Bozeman and Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller also expressed appreciation for the remote meeting option and inquired about an alternative to the downtown venue due to parking. Mr. Kozlosky responded that the venue would need to provide the required spacing and that staff will investigate other meeting locations. Mr. Barfield commented that the Government Center is always an option.

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. Regarding the MPO update, he reminded members that at the last meeting, the Board supported securing an earmark or community project funding for the Drysdale Drive Extension part of the Military Cutoff/Eastwood Road Interchange Project. He noted that staff worked successfully with Congressman Rouzer and his office for the Congressman to submit the project.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Mr. Kozlosky for recommending a good project for the region that will not negatively impact any of the other projects in the region.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded members that Senator Lee introduced Senate Bill 398 to reinstate the MPO's protections as it relates to the filing of Map Act. He noted that the Bill has moved out of the Rules Committee and has been assigned to the Senate Transportation Committee. He added that a favorable recommendation of the Senate Transportation Committee would send the Bill back to the Rules Committee.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rivenbark regarding the delay, Mr. Kozlosky stated that the protections were removed with the Map Act legislation repeal in 2019. He noted that Senator Lee was involved with introducing it in 2017. He added that the MPO has been working on it ever since 2019 to have it reinstated. He commented that it has just taken time to get it through the legislative process.

Mr. Kozlosky noted that a closed session would be held at the next MPO Board meeting. Also, the MPO is embarking on the update of its strategic plan with Fountainworks. He noted that he distributed a survey earlier this week regarding staffing and organizational efficiencies that will guide the MPO. He encouraged members to complete the survey, which should only take a few minutes.

11) Announcements

- a. **Go Coast TDM Committee Meeting – May 20, 2021**
- b. **Next MPO Board meeting – May 26, 2021**

Mr. Kozlosky said that staff would search for another location.

12) Adjournment

Mr. Barfield expressed appreciation to Chairman Piepmeyer for sending Pender County's clerk to New Hanover County. Chairman Piepmeyer spoke highly of Ms. Long.

Mr. Ellen requested to be excused from the May MPO Board meeting. He noted that he would be attending his eldest grandson's high school graduation in St. Louis.

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:13 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.