



**WILMINGTON URBAN AREA**  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**MPO Board Remote Meeting Minutes**  
**Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington, N.C.**  
**Wednesday, June 30, 2021**

**Members Present (In-Person)**

David Piepmeyer, Pender County  
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland  
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  
Frank Williams, Brunswick County  
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

**Members Present (Remotely)**

Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach  
LeAnn Pierce, Town of Carolina Beach  
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

**Others Present (In-Person)**

Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO  
Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director, WMPO  
Nick Cannon, Go Coast TDM Program Coordinator, WMPO  
Chad Kimes, Division Engineer, NCDOT  
Caitlin Marks, Planning Engineer, NCDOT  
Chris Peoples, Deputy Chief Engineer, NCDOT  
Greg Burns, Eastern Deputy Chief Engineer, NCDOT  
Christopher Werner, Director of Technical Services, NCDOT  
Rodger Rochelle, Chief Engineer, Innovative Delivery, NCDOT Turnpike Authority  
Matt Nichols, MPO General Counsel

**1) Call to Order**

Chairman David Piepmeyer called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**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.

Mr. Kozlosky advised that public comments will only be heard during the public comment section of the meeting.

**3) Approval of Board Members' Excused Absences**

Mr. Kozlosky said that Mr. Anderson is out of town and has requested to be excused from this meeting.

Mr. Ellen made a motion to excuse Mr. Anderson from the meeting, seconded by Ms. Bozeman and the motion 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.

4) **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Mr. Williams 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. Andy Koeppel spoke to the MPO Board regarding the bridge and prioritization. He requested that some consideration be given, after the new bridge is constructed, to preserving the old bridge comparable to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge or the Delaware Memorial Bridge to alleviate traffic flow. He expressed concerns regarding the discontinuation, several years ago, of the Southern Crossing project for political reasons. He pointed out that the Southern Bridge is not inconsistent with the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, and much money was spent in narrowing down alternatives to identify a final route. Regarding the prioritization, he commented that he is a strong advocate of reinstating the Wallace to Castle Hayne rail connection, which would enhance the downtown multi-modal center. He added that to omit the rail connection from the prioritization process would be a mistake.

Mr. Barfield clarified that today's presentation on the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is a proposal only.

6) **Presentations**

a. **Replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (Unsolicited Proposal)- Chad Kimes, Chris Werner, and Roger Richelle, NCDOT**

NCDOT Division 3 Engineer Chad Kimes acknowledged the presence of Christopher Werner, Director of Technical Services, and Rodger Rochelle, Chief Engineer of the NC Turnpike Authority. Mr. Kimes explained that the purpose of today's presentation is to provide information and facilitate consideration of a potential partnership between NCDOT and the MPO.

Chairman Piepmeyer clarified that this presentation is in response to an unsolicited proposal that was sent to NCDOT from a private entity.

Mr. Kimes gave an overview of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and the need to replace the aging infrastructure. He said that the 51-year-old, moveable span bridge was constructed in 1969. He noted that over time, NCDOT has been replacing most its moveable span bridges. He added that a \$15 million major rehabilitation was completed last year and that major rehabs are anticipated to be necessary every 10 years on the moveable span, and 20 years on the fixed span. In addition, yearly routine maintenance costs about half a million dollars per year currently and is subject to increased cost. He assured the Board that the bridge today is safe with major inspections every two years and a moveable span inspection yearly.

Mr. Kimes stated that the current four-lane bridge handles approximately 60,000 cars per day. He noted that the bridge is at or beyond capacity at present, and the volume is anticipated to increase to nearly 82,000 per day by 2045. During the last major rehab, NCDOT initiated a feasibility study for a high-level analysis of bridge replacement. Four options were considered as follows:

1. 65-foot fixed span (standard height requirement for the Intracoastal Waterway)
2. 135-foot fixed span (with additional clearance to meet upriver industry needs)
3. 65-foot moveable span (similar to today)

4. 65-foot moveable span with a rail component

Mr. Kimes explained that in order to accommodate the traffic, the replacement bridge will need to be a six-lane facility with 12-foot outside shoulders and a 22-foot wide inside median. He noted that proposed for the north side is a multi-use path, which has been successful in Surf City, and would address the current lack of a bicycle-pedestrian facility between New Hanover and Brunswick counties. The rail option would be on the opposite or south side of the bridge. A rough cost estimate shows that construction costs for a moveable span facility are more than double those for fixed spans, excluding maintenance costs.

Based on traditional methods for funding through NCDOT's Prioritization Process, Mr. Kimes said that the likelihood of funding the replacement bridge in the next 10-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is highly improbable.

Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that the unsolicited proposal provides an opportunity to fund the replacement of the bridge sooner and earlier in its lifespan.

Mr. Werner said that NCDOT received an unsolicited proposal for a public-private partnership with a construction mechanism, which can bring a project to fruition faster than traditional methods. He noted that the proposer, a team of construction and engineering firms supported by outside financial backers, would assume much of the risk involved with design, construction and maintenance of the project for a certain duration. However, the Department would retain ownership and oversight of the facility, and conduct inspections.

Mr. Werner clarified that NCDOT did not solicit this concept proposal and commented that it is not unusual for DOT to receive an unsolicited proposal. He pointed out that concept proposals may include items that are improbable for DOT, the MPO, or the public, such as the highly aggressive schedule for project delivery. He emphasized that the decision to support the proposal is a local, joint decision of the entire WMPO Board and NCDOT. If supported, further consideration of the details will be necessary as well as soliciting a competitive selection process.

Chairman Piepmeyer inquired about the time constraints for the unsolicited proposal. Mr. Werner responded that a decision would need to be made soon or the terms of the proposal would change.

Mr. Barfield pointed out that there is 10 years to work on prioritizing the bridge replacement and to maintain the bridge. He requested to hear both the pros and the cons of the proposal regarding impact to the public. Mr. Werner responded that NCDOT desires to remain objective and can only present the concepts of the proposal.

Mr. Williams pointed out that the MPO is being asked to consider the proposal of an idea, but not any particular vendor or other specifics.

Mr. Ellen inquired if indemnification from the Map Act lawsuits would cover the MPO for this unsolicited proposal. Mr. Nichols responded that the unsolicited proposal is another matter entirely and that the legal risk would be considered separately.

Mr. Barfield expressed concerns regarding potential negative impacts.

Chairman Piepmeyer commented that it's a big decision and expressed appreciation to NCDOT for the opportunity to consider the unsolicited proposal and to receive feedback from constituents.

Mr. Rivenbark expressed a desire to hear the idea.

Mr. Allen pointed out that the infrastructure is not keeping pace with the growth rate (population), and that any idea that addresses traffic flow needs to be considered.

Mr. Werner addressed Mr. Barfield's concerns regarding local input by stating that local input is instrumental to prioritization. He added that the proposed concept for a toll project is a local decision. He noted that there are multiple exit points along the path of this proposal.

Mr. Zimmer asked Mr. Kimes to comment on the STIP versus a public-private partnership. Mr. Kimes said that based on revenues, NCDOT faces some hurdles regarding funding and capacity to handle new projects. He added that the tier that would need to fund this project would not cover the \$200 million to \$400 million rough estimate. He could not comment on the timeline for such a large-scale project in the STIP. Although maintenance will continue, it will need to occur more frequently and at a higher cost. He pointed out that this is the only bridge of its kind in the state and that replacement parts are difficult and costly to procure.

Mr. Werner said that the proposal recommends a 135-foot, fixed span bridge, similar to one of the options of the feasibility study, and modifying the interchanges on the west side at US-421 and downtown at S. Front Street. He reiterated that the development team proposes procurement via a progressive Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with multiple exit points throughout the process. The team also proposes to fully fund the environmental document, which would inform NEPA documentation, and the team would be responsible for public outreach and stakeholder coordination, assist the Department in obtaining necessary permits, construct, operate and maintain the new facility, and demolish the old facility. Additionally, the developer would assume the risks of the NEPA document, permitting, design, construction, operation and maintenance costs, the schedule for on-time delivery and revenue to make the project viable.

Mr. Werner said that the proposal is for a five-year program with a contract term to maintain the facility for 50 years. After which time, operations and maintenance would transition to NCDOT. He noted that the team is a national caliber design and engineering entity with coastal and North Carolina construction experience. Additionally, the team commits to minimizing toll rates as much as possible, and to provide customer and invoicing services for the facility.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Kimes said that NCDOT opened the Topsail Beach Bridge in two years. He reiterated that NCDOT would be responsible for the NEPA document, adding that NCDOT would provide oversight of the products provided. He listed benefits of the unsolicited proposal as follows:

- Additional lanes,
- Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity across the bridge,
- Accelerated delivery schedule,
- Assumption of the financial and operational burdens,
- Potential job creation,
- Limited disruption of the local community,
- A low maintenance structure with a design life of 75 to 100 years

Mr. Barfield expressed concerns regarding the impact of tolls on businesses and residents. Mr. Werner responded that the proposal is a high-level concept that does not focus on the impacts of tolling yet. He noted that some toll friendly options such as monthly options have been proposed.

Mr. Ellen expressed concerns regarding insufficient information to field questions from the public. Chairman Piepmeyer responded that details would be provided only if there is support for exploring the concept proposal further.

Mr. Kozlosky said that this presentation will be distributed to Board members after the meeting. He concurred that it will be necessary to support the concept to gain the ability to answer questions. He added that some of the information in the proposal is confidential, such as toll rates. To be fair to everyone, the only way to answer those questions is for the Board to decide to move forward and take the next step to review the proposal in more detail.

Mr. Williams commented that the Board can endorse the idea and reject the plan at any time.

Mr. Rivenbark pointed out that every solution that has been considered so far has been a toll facility because the gas tax can't cover the expense, and that bridge users from elsewhere are used to paying tolls. Additionally, the toll may deter some traffic. However, there are numerous exit points to leave the process, and the Board needs to hear the proposal.

Mr. Rodger Rochelle, Chief Engineer of the North Carolina Turnpike Authority, gave an overview of the process to move forward if the MPO decides to support it. He noted that the NCDOT Board adopted a policy governing the procurement process for any public-private partnership, including those that originate from unsolicited proposals. He added that the Department may accept, reject or ignore any such proposal, and, if accepted, would publicly advertise procurement for any project resulting from an unsolicited proposal.

Mr. Rochelle said that there are six steps in the process to reach selection of a proposer and execution a comprehensive agreement. He noted that the unsolicited proposal has reached the half-way point of submission, NCDOT initial screening, and NCDOT advising proposal viability.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Barfield, Mr. Rochelle said that at this point, any work necessary for the development of the environmental documents would be under the direct charge of DOT. Preliminary design would need to be done to complete the document.

For the final plan, NCDOT would take on the role of oversight and detailed review of any plans for construction put forth by the engineering team. Competitive procurement would be based on NCDOT's and the MPO's vision for the bridge to provide for less risk to the bidders. For example, the I-77 agreement incorporated 1,500 pages.

Mr. Rochelle noted that to give a balanced presentation as requested by Mr. Barfield, Mr. Werner covered the benefits of the proposal per the developer and he would cover the areas of risk that need to be considered.

For the final steps of the process, Mr. Rochelle described an overlapping, three-phase timeline for programming, planning and preliminary design, and procurement as follows:

Spring/Summer 2022	Winter 2023/24	Fall 2024
<p><b>1) Programming</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and local Transportation Improvement amendments</li> <li>• Early public involvement as part of pre-screening assessment</li> <li>• Turnpike Authority's sketch-level traffic and revenue forecast</li> <li>• Legislative needs</li> <li>• Secure PE funding</li> </ul>	<p><b>2) Planning &amp; Preliminary Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental NEPA documents</li> <li>• Scoping</li> <li>• Construction permits</li> <li>• Preliminary design</li> </ul>	<p><b>3) Procurement (Interactive)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bidders can propose alternate ideas</li> <li>• Interactive development of comprehensive agreement</li> <li>• Receive competitive bids</li> <li>• Select best value proposal</li> <li>• NCDOT Board and Local Government Commission approvals</li> <li>• Legislative reporting</li> <li>• Commercial close</li> </ul>

Mr. Rochelle listed three areas of potential risk:

Financial	Delivery	External Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary engineering funds as part of the feasibility study</li> <li>• Expenses outpacing milestones</li> <li>• Bonus allocation uncertainty</li> <li>• Competitive pressure unknown</li> <li>• Lack of plan of finance certainty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEPA (historic district, etc.)</li> <li>• Navigational clearance</li> <li>• USACE, CAMA, USCG permits</li> <li>• Right of way</li> <li>• Considerable resources for procurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitting and regulatory agencies</li> <li>• Public acceptance of tolling to fund projects</li> <li>• Business community acceptance of tolling</li> <li>• Unknown toll rates during planning (tied to costs)</li> <li>• Legislative change(s) required to proceed</li> <li>• USDOT tolling approval</li> </ul>

Mr. Rochelle gave an overview of bonus allocation. He explained that there are bonus allocation dollars that can be used at the discretion of the MPO by virtue of accepting other funds beyond traditional funds such as those generated by tolling. He noted that the bonus allocation has a time limit of funds being authorized for projects within five years of financial close and must be used in the same county or counties as the location of the original project (Brunswick/New Hanover). He added that the amount of the bonus allocation is calculated based on either toll revenue debt (bonds sold to fund construction) or a USDOT low interest loan, toll supported loan or debt capped up to a maximum of \$100 million.

Mr. Kimes said the next step for DOT to move forward rests on the MPO Board. He noted that in order to proceed, NCDOT would need support, which would be followed by continued analysis, and prescreening as discussed by Mr. Rochelle.

Mr. Ellen asked if the Board should be ready to vote on this at the July meeting. Chairman Piepmeyer responded that Board members should have the opportunity to discuss the unsolicited proposal with constituents and, when ready, place it on a future agenda.

Mr. Williams requested a deadline. Chairman Piepmeyer commented that it would need time to be vetted and for the public to provide input.

Mr. Zimmer agreed that some time is needed. Vice Chairman Miller concurred although more information is also needed. Mr. Williams commented that both his fellow commissioners and constituents need to be informed about the unsolicited proposal. He suggested the August agenda.

Chairman Piepmeyer clarified that today's presentation is merely to inform the public with no intent to consider it today. Ms. Bozeman concurred with Mr. Williams. Mr. Barfield suggested that NCDOT give a presentation to his fellow commissioners. Mr. Allen concurred.

Chairman Piepmeyer recommended sending inquiries to Mr. Kozlosky.

Mr. Zimmer recapped that the MPO Board is asking constituents if they want more data. Mr. Kimes agreed that there is no more information to share until support is conveyed.

Mr. Rivenbark said he was ready to move forward with it.

Mr. Williams suggested putting it on the July agenda as a discussion item. Mr. Barfield and Ms. Hays debated whether this item could be included on New Hanover County's agenda for its July or August board meeting.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Hays, Mr. Kimes confirmed that today's information is all that there is to be shared at this time, and that the process can be exited easily.

Mr. Rivenbark likened the next step to a feasibility study.

Vice-Chairman Miller made a motion to add an item to the next meeting's agenda (July 28) to give NCDOT some direction. Mr. Allen seconded the motion. Mr. Miller pointed out that Chairman Piepmeyer would be absent at the Board's next meeting.

Mr. Kozlosky called the roll and the Board responded as follows:

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

**Absent:** Neil Anderson.

The motion carried 11-1. (Mr. Barfield voted "Nay.")

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to NCDOT.

**b. 2021 Bike Month Results- Nick Cannon, WMPO**

Mr. Cannon gave a presentation on the results from this year's annual Go Coast Bike Month, which took place during the national bike month of May. He noted that Bike Month was promoted heavily on social media, mass communication (email blast) via Constant Contact, and by press release. He added that participants were able to sign up online, track bicycle rides during the month and report them to Go Coast.

Results are as follows:

- 121 participants
- 800 trips by bicycle (500 commuting, 300 for leisure or exercise)
- 4,922 total miles ridden

Mr. Cannon gave a brief overview of most popular routes and highest participating employers.

**7) Consent Agenda**

- Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from May 26, 2021**
- Resolution approving the 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendments 21-3**
- Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendments #21-4**
- Resolution approving the 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Administrative Modifications 21-5**
- Resolution adopting an amendment to the Go Coast Transportation Demand Management Committee Bylaws**
- Resolution adopting Targets for the Public Transportation Safety Plan Performance Measures**
- Resolution supporting the North Carolina State Ports Authority's Grant Application to fund a new North Gate at the Port of Wilmington**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 7a and 7g. Mr. Ellen 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) Discussion**

- 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #21-6**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this item is for information purposes only and will be brought back for consideration at the Board's next meeting.

- FY 22 Unified Planning Work Program**

Ms. Lorenzo reminded the MPO Board that it approved the FY22 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) in March, which included \$200,000 for special studies requested by WMPO member jurisdictions. These studies include a collector street plan for the Town of Navassa, a bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town of Kure Beach, and a transit feasibility study for northern Brunswick County requested by the towns of Leland and Navassa.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that staff began discussions with Kure Beach and Navassa regarding scoping of their respective requests. However, discussions regarding the transit feasibility study was placed on hold when NCDOT Consolidation and Coordination of Public Transportation (ConCPT) systems funding for a micro transit program between northern Brunswick County and New Hanover County was bought forward by the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority and Brunswick Transit System. This pilot program would provide an opportunity to monitor transit demand in northern Brunswick County in real time, as well as re-establish the connection between Brunswick and New Hanover counties. The Brunswick consortium: Town of Leland, the Town of Navassa and Brunswick County, are in support of the pilot program. Thus, the need for a transit study for northern Brunswick County no longer exists in the MPO's budget.



While the pilot program was under consideration, MPO staff identified potential additional needs in place of the \$100,000 originally designated for the transit study as follows:

- Additional \$15,000 for the Kure Beach Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- \$2,000 for a part-time GIS Intern to assist cleaning up existing data
- \$2,500 to complete the MPO strategic plan that was started in FY21

Ms. Lorenzo said that the TCC discussed and recommends these modifications. If supported by the MPO Board, staff will bring back an amendment to the UPWP for consideration at the next meeting.

**9) Updates**

- Wilmington Urban Area MPO**
- Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority**
- NCDOT Division**
- NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

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

**10) Announcements**

- Coronavirus Response & Recovery Supplemental Appropriations Act Applications Due- August 9, 2021**

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that it adopted the submittal guidelines and application for the Coronavirus Response & Recovery Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) funds of which the MPO received about \$1.3 million. He noted that no match is required. He added that applications are due August 9 with a pre-application deadline of July 9 (recommended but optional).

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Kozlosky stated that no applications have been received yet, although several inquiries have been made.

Mr. Ellen stated that Kure Beach will be applying.

- Next MPO Board meeting – July 28, 2021**

Mr. Ellen noted that during Bike Month the Tour de Blueberry was held in Burgaw. He pointed out that he was the oldest person to finish the 66-mile ride. Chairman Piepmeyer expressed congratulations.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rivenbark, Mr. Kozlosky said that staff intends to return to holding meetings at 320 Chestnut Street. He noted that the meeting location is the Board's prerogative.

Chairman Piepmeyer said that today's meeting is at the Convention Center in anticipation of high in-person attendance. Mr. Rivenbark asked about remote capability at the other venue. Mr. Kozlosky responded that if the MPO Board decides to continue remote capability, once the Governor rescinds the Corona virus relief legislation, the Board will need to adopt a policy to allow remote meetings.

Chairman Piepmeyer encouraged in-person meeting participation. He requested feedback for the Board regarding continuing the remote option. Mr. Miller agreed that in-person should be the preferred practice. Mr. Williams pointed out that another of the boards on which he serves adopted a policy to limit remote participation and allowable reasons for it.

**11) Adjournment**

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Williams. 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, and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None.

**Absent:** Neil Anderson and Landon Zimmer.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 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.**