



MPO Board Meeting Minutes
6th Floor Training Conference Room, 320 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, N.C.
Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Members Present (in-person)

Mike Allen, Town of Belville
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Deb Hays, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
David Piepmeyer, Pender County
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington
Frank Williams, Brunswick County

Others Present (in-person)

Chuck Bost, Town of Belville
Andy Koeppel, resident, City of Wilmington
Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO
Chad Kimes, Division Engineer, NCDOT
Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director, WMPO
Caitlin Marks, Planning Engineer, NCDOT
Rachel McIntyre, WMPO Assoc. Transportation Planner
Warren Miller, Consultant, Fountainworks
Matt Nichols, MPO General Counsel
Marie Parker, Exec. Director, Wave Transit

Members Present (remotely)

Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
LeAnn Pierce, Town of Carolina Beach
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

Others Present (remotely)

Nick Cannon, WMPO TDM Program Coordinator
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
Sam Cathcart, Consultant, Fountainworks
Natalie English, Wilmington Chamber of
Commerce
Cheryl Hannah, HDR
Regina Hopkins, WMPO Sr. Accountant
Scott A. James, WMPO Transportation Planning
Engineer
Marty Little, New Hanover County
Zach Manfredi, WMPO Assoc. Transportation
Planner
Rebekah Roth, New Hanover County Planning
and Land Use Director
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT Transportation Planner
Ron Satterfield, Interim City Planning Director
Trevor Stewart, WMPO GIS Analyst

1) Call to Order

Chairman Piepmeyer called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Mr. Kozlosky called the roll. A quorum was present as follows:

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

Mr. Kozlosky said that the consultant from Fountainworks will conduct some polling later in the agenda and provided a link to MPO Board members.

2) Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Piepmeyer read the conflict-of-interest statement. He asked if any member had a conflict of interest with any of the items on the meeting agenda. No members reported having a conflict.

3) Approval of Board Members' Excused Absences

Mr. Kozlosky said that no request for an excused absence was received for this meeting.

4) Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Allen made a motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Williams, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

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

5) Public Comment Period

Andy Koeppel, Wilmington, spoke to the MPO Board in-person regarding the bridge. He expressed concerns regarding the timing of the southern project being suspended two weeks prior to the designation of a final route, the expenditure of more than \$11 million with only \$300,000 remaining to complete the study, and the discontinuation of Prioritization 6.0. He expressed the hope that NCDOT would make a serious effort to engage the funding process.

6) Presentation

a. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority Update- Marie Parker, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Wave Transit Executive Director Marie Parker gave an update on the public transportation system. She described Wave Transit as the public transportation provider for the region with more than 120 employees operating from three facilities: operations and maintenance and two transfer stations (one downtown and the other in north Wilmington). She noted that Wave provides a fixed-route bus service with most routes operating exclusively within the City of Wilmington, a free downtown Port City Trolley, a paratransit service for those with mobility challenges, Seahawk UNCW student shuttle on campus, and a shared-ride van-pool program.

Ms. Parker gave an overview of improvements implemented this year. She noted that on-time performance of departure times has been improved with some programming corrections. She added that a peer review analysis of passenger amenities across the state completed recently found that Wave's amenities are insufficient for the size of its system - roughly half the number of benches and shelters to service passengers compared with seven peer agencies in North Carolina. She pointed out that passenger amenities impact customer behavior, perception, and ridership and noted that an improvement plan is currently in progress with three projects underway to improve shelters and amenities. The second phase of amenity improvements with a grant application and review, is also in-progress to improve 20 stops with an equal number of benches and shelters.

Ms. Parker said that this year, several route modifications have been made to serve new development as well as existing areas and points of interest (Wilmington Convention Center, the museum, and area hotels). She noted that a permanent deviation was implemented on the Trolley route to increase exposure and accessibility by serving Nutt Street from Harnett Street to Red Cross Street, serving private businesses and public facilities not previously served.

In October of last year in response to budget constraints, the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority Board approved a system network redesign to be implemented in July of this year, which resulted in a 21% reduction in service. In April of this year, a vote was taken at a joint meeting involving the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners as well as City of Wilmington Council to delay the changes. Presently, Wave staff is in the process of reviewing the current system as well as the model provided by consultants last year to develop a new plan to maximize service at the current budget. The focus is to deliver service where it is most needed and reallocate existing resources to the most productive times of the day and days of week. The new system is proposed to go into effect in July of next year.

Ms. Parker gave a brief overview of upcoming projects. She said that mobile ticketing, a touchless technology in use in multiple transportation modes in cities across the U.S. and internationally, has already been allocated funding. However, the addition of passenger Wi-Fi, a demand that increases exponentially for trips greater than 20 minutes, which applies to all of Wave's routes, has yet to be funded.

Ms. Parker said that the much-anticipated regional micro-transit model will be implemented soon, the first project of its kind in North Carolina, and will provide on-demand regional transit coverage and interconnectivity to Brunswick County, New Hanover County and Pender County at rates more affordable than private ridesharing services. She noted that passengers will have the ability to travel anywhere within a zone or connect to the existing fixed-route network. The first phase, which begins on October 11 will be fare free initially, and re-establish the connection between Brunswick County and New Hanover County as well as establish connectivity

between Pender County and New Hanover County. The second phase of micro-transit will add north and south zones in New Hanover County after the beginning of the year.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Hays, Ms. Parker said that at the last Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority board meeting, members voted to allow fare-free rides on Election Day for all modes of Wave transportation.

Chairman Piepmeyer inquired about the status of funding challenges. Ms. Parker responded that discussions are ongoing regarding continuous, dedicated revenues for transit. She noted that Wave will continue operate at its current budget and is sustainable for three years.

7) Consent Agenda

- a. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from August 25, 2021**
- b. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendments #21-5 and #21-6**
- c. **Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendments #21-7**
- d. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Administrative Modifications #21-8**

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

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

8) Regular Agenda

- a. **Resolution adopting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Board's Remote Public Participation Policy and Procedures**

Mr. Kozlosky said that based on discussion at the last MPO Board meeting, staff has incorporated changes in the Remote Public Participation Policy and Procedures. He noted that the revised policy indicates the Board's desire to hold meetings with members being present in-person, identifies that members may use remote meeting attendance for two meetings per calendar year, which may be extended by a vote of the Board for any member suffering from quarantine or a long-term illness, and adds employment or business obligations to the list of circumstances for the use of remote meetings. He acknowledged the presence of MPO General Counsel Matt Nichols to address questions.

Ms. Bozeman made a motion to approve the policy. Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

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

9) 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 noted that some information on the upcoming Commuter Challenge event has been distributed to members at the table.

Ms. Lorenzo said that the hand-out explains how to use the Share the Ride NC application to set up teams and track trips during the Commuter Challenge event that runs from October 16 through October 31.

10) Announcements

- a. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee- October 12th**
- b. **River to Sea Bike Ride- October 16th**
- c. **Go Coast Commuter Challenge- October 16th – 30th**

d. **Brunswick Heritage Riverside Ride- October 23rd**

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Ellen, Mr. Allen said the inaugural Brunswick County ride is a well-organized, six- to eight-mile ride with a police escort along the entire route, which begins at the ballpark on Mt. Misery Road in Navassa, continues to River Road in Leland, and stops at the Brunswick Riverwalk Park, where some tables will be set up.

Ms. Lorenzo added that the ride on October 23 will start at 7:30 a.m. at Phoenix Park in Navassa, follow Cedar Hill Road, through Leland on Village Road and the interchange, and stops for a 15-minute break in Belville at Riverwalk Park before returning to Phoenix Park. She noted that registration is available online and is limited to the first 100 registrants at the request of law enforcement for this inaugural event. She added that as of this morning, there are 81 registrants.

Ms. Bozeman expressed kudos to Mr. Cannon and Ms. Lorenzo for their presentation to her board. Mr. Ellen, Mr. Allen, and Mr. Williams acknowledged that the presentation was made to their boards as well.

11) Strategic Planning Exercise

Mr. Kozlosky noted that this is the second phase of the strategic planning exercise for the MPO, continued from the last Board meeting. He added that a web link was communicated at the beginning of today's meeting for members to log in and participate in polling for the exercise. He noted that the draft strategic plan will be brought forward for further consideration and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Vice-Chair Miller commented that he is unable to participate in the polling because he is driving. Mr. Warren Miller, the consultant from Fountainworks, responded that the Vice Chair is welcome to participate verbally.

A lengthy discussion was held on the draft vision statement, focus areas or goals, top project priorities, alternate funding and revenue sources, advocacy, and organizational/operational effectiveness.

12) Adjournment

Next meeting – October 27, 2021

Several Board members made the motion and the second to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m. a roll call as follows:

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

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.**