

**Wilmington Urban Area MPO
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, October 13, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority
Ashli Barefoot, Town of Leland
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Nick Cannon, MPO Go Coast Program
Patrick Flanagan, Cape Fear Council of Governments
Adrienne Harrington, Town of Belville
Paula Kempton, Town of Carolina Beach
Vanessa Lacer, Pender County
Marty Little, New Hanover County
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT Division of Highways
Megan Matheny, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch
Barnes Sutton, Town of Navassa
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington

Members Absent

Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Mandy Sanders, Town of Kure Beach

Others Present

Cheryl Hannah, HDR
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Scott James, WMPO
Zach Manfredi, WMPO
Rachel McIntyre, WMPO
Marie Parker, Wave Transit
Ron Satterfield, City of Wilmington

1) Call to Order

Vice-Chair Barnes Sutton called to order the remote meeting at 10:00 a.m. Ms. Lorenzo took the roll call pursuant to Section 4.31 of Senate Bill 704 (Session Law 2020-3). A quorum was present, as follows:

Present: Stephanie Ayers, Ashli Barefoot, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Abby Lorenzo, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Nazia Sarder, Barnes Sutton and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Absent:** Granseur Dick, Robert O'Quinn and Mandy Sanders.

2) Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Ayers made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Cannon seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll call, as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Ashli Barefoot, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Vanessa Lacer, Abby Lorenzo, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Nazia Sarder, Barnes Sutton and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick, Robert O'Quinn and Mandy Sanders.

3) Presentation

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

Wave Transit Executive Director Marie Parker gave an update on the public transportation system and upcoming projects. She described Wave Transit as the public transportation provider for the region with more than 120 employees operating from three facilities: operations and maintenance, a transfer station downtown and another in north Wilmington. She noted that Wave provides a fixed-route bus service, a free downtown Port City Trolley, a paratransit service for those with mobility challenges, UNCW Seahawk shuttle on campus, a shared-ride van-pool program for commuters, and a recently started micro-transit program.

Ms. Parker said that Wave has improved on-time performance of bus departure times through time point spacing, backend data accuracy and reporting, and adherence to scheduled departure times,

especially important since passengers make transportation decisions based on the timeliness experience. Another big project is an analysis of passenger amenities with a recently completed peer review showing that Wave's amenities are insufficient for the size of the system - roughly half the number of benches and shelters to service passengers compared to seven peer agencies in North Carolina. She pointed out that amenities impact customer behavior, perception, and ridership. She noted that an improvement plan is currently in progress with three projects underway to create, replace or improve stops. The second phase of amenity improvements is underway with a grant submission for approval that will allow for the installation of upgrades to improve 20 stops with an equal number of benches and shelters.

Ms. Parker said that another project focus is route modifications to address growth and serve new developments such as the Live Oak Bank Pavilion and Park, as well as existing points of interest such as the Wilmington Convention Center and the Railroad Museum. On September 1st, a route deviation was implemented on the existing Port City Trolley route to increase exposure and accessibility by serving Nutt Street from Harnett Street to Red Cross Street. Also, transit was reintroduced to the 2nd Street corridor from Market Street to Red Cross Street to serve more private businesses as well as public facilities not previously served.

Ms. Parker said that in October of last year, the Wave Transit Board approved a system network redesign to be implemented in January, which would have resulted in a net 20% reduction in service. In April of this year, a vote was held to delay the implementation of changes at a joint meeting involving the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners as well as City Council. Currently, Wave staff is in the process of reviewing the current system as well as the model provided by consultants to develop a new plan to deliver a maximum amount of 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 to add more technology and make the system more inviting and user-friendly. Additionally, mobile ticketing is in the planning stages to provide a touchless technology commonly in use in multiple transportation modes in cities across the U.S. and abroad that is safer, greener, more convenient, and decreases boarding time. Also planned but not yet submitted for funding, is 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.

Ms. Parker commented that the micro-transit model is the largest and most exciting project to date. Ride Micro, the first project of its kind in North Carolina, combines three counties for a regional concept designed to provide coverage and interconnectivity to parts of Brunswick County, New Hanover County and Pender County. The on-demand, curb-to-curb service is an extension of the current transit network at fare rates more economical to the end user than typical private ridesharing services. The rates will be the same as regular bus fare, although it will be implemented as a free trial usage for the first 30 days in all zones. Citizens can use a variety of ride request platforms, currently a temporary toll-free number that will be expanded to a website form today, and ultimately an app in the spring of next year.

Ms. Parker said that when a ride is booked, passengers are advised to wait at a virtual stop where they will be picked up by a driver in a branded vehicle who will confirm the passenger's identity and transport them to a destination within a zone or to a connection in the existing fixed-route network.

The four micro-transit zones or polygons include:

- Zone 1 Brunswick-downtown connector,
- Zone 2 Northeast, includes Pender County and New Hanover County,
- Zone 3 Northern New Hanover County including the airport and Castle Hayne, and
- Zone 4 Southernmost New Hanover County extending to Carolina Beach, and ultimately to Kure Beach.

Ms. Parker said that the first phase, which launched on Monday, includes Zones 1 and 2, which focuses on re-establishing the connection between Brunswick County and New Hanover County and introduces a connection between Pender County and New Hanover County. The second phase will add the north and south zones of New Hanover County over the next several months. She reiterated that the service will be free for anyone to use within the first 30 days within the zones. About 10% of virtual stops has been established within the first zone. The capacity of the virtual stops total about 2,000 stops within each of the zones. Upon completion of the project, between 7,000 and 8,000 stops are planned for the final system by spring of next year.

Mr. Cannon commented that he witnessed the timeliness of buses arriving and departing at the top of the hour at Padgett Station. He noted that the WMPO has included posts about micro-transit on its social media channels and offered to include posts on all improvements as well.

Mr. Flanagan inquired about the drivers. Ms. Parker responded that for current resources, Wave is nearly at capacity. She added that a contractor provides drivers for micro-transit and is fully staffed.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Marks, Ms. Parker said that Zone 3 will be implemented in December and Zone 4 will be implemented in the spring.

Ms. Harrington expressed interested in spreading information on micro-transit as well. Ms. Parker clarified that micro-transit connects to any virtual stop within a zone or to a transfer station. Zone 1 connects with Padgett Station, and Zone 2 connects with Forden Station.

4) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- September 15, 2021
- b. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO TIP Amendments #21-8
- c. Resolution authorizing the Chairman to enter into an agreement between the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority for the FY 21-22 Section 5303 Funding
- d. Resolution approving the Donations for the 2021 Commuter Challenge

Ms. Bunch made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Items 4a through 4d, as presented, and to forward the items to the MPO Board for consideration. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Ashli Barefoot, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Nazia Sarder, Barnes Sutton and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick, Robert O'Quinn and Mandy Sanders.

5) Discussion

a. 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #21-9

Ms. Lorenzo said that this item is for informational purposes only.

b. Coronavirus Response & Recovery Supplemental Appropriations Act Funding Preliminary Recommendations

Transportation Planning Engineer Scott A. James reminded the committee that in the spring discussion was held regarding how Coronavirus Response & Recovery Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) Funds could be awarded to eligible projects in the WMPO area. In summary, approximately \$1.4 million to \$1.5 million was made available to area at 100% recovery, meaning no match was required. He said that the WMPO solicited project applications earlier this year and seven were received. After review for completeness and ranking, the WMPO ranked projects from the following member jurisdictions:

- 1) Town of Navassa
- 2) Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
- 3) City of Wilmington
- 4) Town of Kure Beach
- 5) Town of Belville

Mr. James said that two additional projects were received. However, the project from the Town of Leland was not supported by NCDOT at this time, and an alternate funding source was identified for the project from Pender County. He noted that the WMPO recommends that the requested amounts be awarded in full in the order of the ranking until funds are expended. This means that the first three projects will receive 100% of the funds requested, the fourth will receive approximately 87% of the funds requested, which will deplete the available funds, and the fifth project not be awarded any funds.

Ms. Harrington expressed appreciation to Mr. James for his help on the application. She noted that the Town of Belville requested the total project cost of \$670,000 and requested \$300,000. Unfortunately, the Town was unable to commit to the remaining \$370,000. She advised that applicants of future funding show the gap between the request and total project cost.

Mr. Sutton inquired if any action of the TCC is required. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the committee could vote to recommend that the MPO Board support the recommendation.

Mr. Sutton made a motion to approve the recommendation, seconded by Ms. Lacer, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Ashli Barefoot, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Nazia Sarder, Barnes Sutton and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick, Robert O'Quinn and Mandy Sanders.

c. FY23 Transportation Planning Study Requests

Ms. Lorenzo said that the WMPO has started the process of identifying needs for the FY23 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). She requested that starting today and through December 10th at 5:00 p.m., member jurisdictions and planning partners consider and submit to WMPO staff transportation planning needs for FY23. She noted that the needs should be identified by name of the project or study, description of purpose and need, anticipated cost, and any other identified funding

contribution. WMPO Planning staff will also consider planning activities for the next fiscal year. She added that the list will be returned to the committee with WMPO staff's recommendations for funding.

6) **Updates**

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

Ms. Lorenzo stated that the updates are included in the agenda packet.

7) **Announcements**

- a. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee- October 12th; next meeting December 14th**
- b. **River to Sea Bike Ride- October 16th, registration closes on October 15th at 1:00 p.m. (\$5 fee day of)**
- c. **Go Coast Commuter Challenge- October 16th-31st**

Mr. Cannon gave an overview of a new feature for the Go Coast Commuter Challenge. Participants are now able to participate as part of a team. A flyer has been designed to provide directions on how to participate as a team to use alternative transportation. He added that the WMPO has a team. He encouraged everyone to register on the Go Coast website on the events page, and download the NC Share The Ride app to track trips for the next two weeks. He noted that local sponsors have donated prizes and gift cards.

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

Ms. Lorenzo said that this is the first year for the Brunswick Heritage Riverside Ride. She reported that the event has met the cap of 100 on participants and that registration is closed.

8) **Next Meeting- November 4, 2021**

Ms. Lorenzo noted that the next meeting of the TCC will be held on a Thursday and is earlier in the month due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

9) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Ayers made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Bunch and meeting was adjourned at 10:36 a.m. by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Ashli Barefoot, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Nazia Sarder, Barnes Sutton and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick, Robert O'Quinn and Mandy Sanders.

THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.
THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.