

**Wilmington Urban Area MPO
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, February 9, 2022
Remote Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority
Claudia Bray, Town of Navassa
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
Matt Kirkland, Town of Leland
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
Vanessa Lacer, Pender County
Marty Little, New Hanover County
Caitlin Marks, NCDOT Division of Highways
Megan Matheny, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Mandy Sanders, Town of Kure Beach
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington

Members Absent

Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport

Others Present

Cheryl Hannah, HDR
David Hursey
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Scott James, WMPO
Jamar Johnson, WMPO
Sean Kane
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Rachel McIntyre, WMPO
Marie Parker, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

1) Call to Order

Mr. Kozlosky called the remote meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and took the roll call pursuant to N.C.G.S. Sec. 166A-19.24. A quorum was present, as follows:

Present: Stephanie Ayers, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Absent:** Claudia Bray and Granseur Dick.

2) Approval of the Agenda

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Vielkanowitz, Mr. Kozlosky said that there is no attachment for Discussion Item 6b, FY 23 Unified Planning Work Program Development.

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

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Claudia Bray and Granseur Dick.

3) Presentation

a. North Carolina State Ports Authority Update- Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports

Stephanie Ayers gave an update on the NC State Ports Authority with seaports in Wilmington and Morehead City and an inland Port in Charlotte. She said that the NC State Ports Authority serves a variety of customers with container boxes, bulk, break bulk, and roll-on/roll-off commodities. She

noted that the Port of Wilmington is one of 15 strategic seaports of 300 Ports nationwide with Port planning orders to respond to military requests. She added that the Port is strategically located within 700 miles of 70% of the U.S. industrial base and, although a state agency, is a corporate body that pays its own salaries by the revenues it generates.

Ms. Ayers said the Port of Wilmington covers about 300 acres with 100 developable acres to the north of its terminal, and another 100 acres to the south, half of which recently went under lease to build cold storage warehouse capabilities, a potential investment in the tens of millions of dollars. She noted that the Port of Morehead City covers a smaller area of about 130 acres with an additional 150 acres on Radio Island and serves primarily bulk and break-bulk commodities.

Ms. Ayers said that the Port contributes to 87,000 jobs across the state, almost \$700 million in tax revenues and more than \$15 billion in economic output annually. She noted that fiscal year '21 ending June 30th, was a record year for the Ports with a 300% increase in refrigerated volumes over the last five years and a 200% growth in intermodal rail since 2017. She explained that much of the Port's strategic planning is about better serving the refrigerated market (pork, poultry, and sweet potatoes in North Carolina) and importing them for a balance in trade (container boxes in equaling container boxes out). The value proposition to customers is getting product to them as quickly as possible. She added that the Port has the best gate and vessel productivity on the east coast, if not the U.S., and was ranked #1 by the *Journal of Commerce* for overall productivity in 2019.

Ms. Ayers said that Port undertook a new strategic plan for 2021. She noted that high-level activities included the completion of the \$250 million-plus program to improve the infrastructure of its container yard and continuing its Wilmington harbor navigation program. She reiterated that refrigerated commodities and intermodal rail continue to be an important focus for the Port. She gave an overview of the \$250 million infrastructure investment plan, which includes the opening of the south gate on Monday, February 14th. She added that the Port is looking into deepening the Wilmington harbor navigation channel from 42 feet to 47 feet, which takes two acts of U.S. Congress – one to authorize the project, which had been secured, and the other to make an appropriation for it. The General Assembly recently set aside the required match for the appropriation in the budget.

Ms. Ayers said that in 2018 the Port completed a container yard expansion master plan to grow from a 350,000 TEU capacity to more than a million TEUs. The plan required new cranes, paving, a new dedicated intermodal yard and improvements to the south gate, which opens next week. She offered to take the committee on a tour. She noted that trucks need only stop at the security gate with radio frequency identification and optical character recognition that reads the numbers on the box and communicates where the driver needs to go on the terminal to pick up or drop off.

Ms. Ayers said the Port has already built the first phase (\$14 million) of its refrigerated container yard, where containers are now stacked on racks instead of lying on the ground. Phase two will add 720 plugs for refrigerated containers is another container area. She added that the Queen City Express, the intermodal rail service that moves containers from the Port of Wilmington to Charlotte and back, has allowed the Port of Wilmington to grow its container service, since container carriers need access to intermodal rail to move boxes further inland. CCX opened and the Mid-west Express has started shipping boxes to Chicago via the CCX in Rocky Mount.

Ms. Ayers said that in 2021, the Port of Morehead City was awarded a \$1.7 million U.S. DOT grant towards a \$2.1 million project to replace rail on Radio Island, and, in 2020, the Port of Wilmington was

awarded a grant. Currently, a grant application is in progress to fund a \$25 million project for the last of the container yard improvements at the Port of Wilmington to build a dedicated intermodal rail facility to accommodate its growing container rail volume. She added that transportation priorities include a new north gate at Greenfield Street, improving U.S. 74 between Wilmington and Charlotte, South Front Street and Carolina Beach Road widening including a Burnett Boulevard intersection improvement, and the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement project.

Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that there is a resolution for consideration on today's agenda to support the RAISE, INFRA and PID grant applications to fund the new intermodal facility at the Port of Wilmington.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Vielkanowitz regarding the long-range rail realignment project, Ms. Ayers said that Mr. Parsley gives regular updates to the Port. She noted that the improvements to the intermodal yard would be inside the Port terminal in a specific 10-acre area and would not impact the rail realignment. Currently the intermodal area is not dedicated and is mixed in with tenants and truck parking. She explained that container boxes leaving the Port are required by U.S. Customs and Border Protection to go through radiation Portals to check for radiation. She added that the radiation Portal is currently located outside the security gate and would be moved to the dedicated intermodal yard within the 10-acre area.

4) **Consent Agenda**

- a. **Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- January 12, 2022**
- b. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Administrative Modification #22-1**
- c. **Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Amendment #22-2**

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

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Claudia Bray, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Granseur Dick.

5) **Regular Agenda**

- a. **Resolution supporting the North Carolina State Ports Authority Grant Applications for the US DOT FY 22 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE), Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), and Port Infrastructure Development (PID) grant programs to fund a new Intermodal Terminal Facility at the Port of Wilmington**

Mr. Kozlosky noted that this is the item Ms. Ayers discussed in her presentation.

Mr. Vielkanowitz pointed out an autocorrect error on the second page, second paragraph regarding the PID acronym.

Ms. Lacer made a motion to support the Ports' grant applications, and to forward the committee's recommendation to the MPO Board for consideration.

Ms. Matheny seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Claudia Bray, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick.

b. Resolution Supporting the Allocation of Additional Direct Attributable Funds to the City of Wilmington for the Hooker Road Multi-use Path (U-5534G), Hinton Road Multi-use Path (U-5534H), and Wrightsville Avenue/Greenville Avenue Intersection Improvement (U-5534C) Projects

Mr. Kozlosky said that in 2013 and 2014 the City of Wilmington applied to the MPO for the three projects referenced in this resolution. In January of 2022, the city adopted a resolution requesting additional funding for these projects in the amount of \$2.4 million and committing the required match of 20% or \$600,000 to these projects. He noted that the additional funding would allow the projects, which are in right-of-way acquisition or completing design, to move forward. He noted that the funds would need to come from the current fiscal year and would leave a balance of slightly more than \$1.7 million in Direct Attributable (DA) funding.

Additionally, Mr. Kozlosky said that the MPO received a bid for the building at 525 North 4th Street, a project also funded by the DA program, which will need an additional \$1.7 to \$1.8 million and be a topic for discussion by the MPO Board. He pointed out that if the additional funds are approved, it would deplete the DA account.

Ms. Ayers inquired if any of the other jurisdictions have a need for DA funding. Mr. Kozlosky responded that the MPO Board first needs to give direction on these considerations before it is known how much funding will be available. He noted that Mr. James will give an update on FY23 DA project scoring criteria. He pointed out that these projects have been around for a while and are a priority of the city. He added that staff recommends moving this resolution forward for approval.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Cannon, Mr. Kozlosky clarified that the current DA funds were deposited into the MPO account in October.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Vielkanowitz, Mr. Kozlosky confirmed that Project U-5534C, to realign the intersection and install sidewalks, would implement the desired improvements at that location.

Ms. Ayers made a motion to support the allocation of additional DA funds to the city, and to forward the recommendation to the MPO Board for consideration. Mr. Kirkland seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Claudia Bray, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Granseur Dick.

6) Discussion

a. 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #22-2

Mr. Kozlosky said that this item is for informational purposes only and will be brought back for the TCC to consider at the next meeting.

b. FY 23 Unified Planning Work Program Development

MPO Senior Accountant Regina Hopkins explained that draft #2 of the UPWP was necessary because the 5303 grant was enhanced by \$3.5 million statewide and was allocated for expenditure over two years. She said that the application must reflect the full amount of \$194,000 and that it will not increase the funding allocation or the local match. She added that the MPO will budget \$143,000 in FY23 and the remainder will be set aside for FY24.

Mr. Kozlosky reiterated that the local match would not be impacted.

Mr. Vielkanowitz inquired about the \$98,000 for mapping indicated in the UPWP. Ms. Hopkins responded that it's for the GIS Analyst's staff time and an intern to assist with GIS.

c. Direct Attributable Scoring Criteria

Mr. Kozlosky said that if the Board approves additional funding for the Hooker/Hinton project, there would be some remaining DA funds in the account. He reiterated that the Board will discuss options for the building project such as removing components of the design or additional funding. He added that any balance would necessitate a discussion on the DA scoring criteria.

Mr. James said this is a continuation of the discussion on the DA scoring criteria. He noted that the current score total is 83 points, with most points focused on congestion and mobility – traditional traffic engineering metrics. Six of the seven applications for the COVID call for projects using a similar methodology were non-automotive projects, and two of the three applications for the prior DA call for projects using the current methodology were non-automotive. Both calls left points on the table, signifying a mismatch of what is being proposed and what is being evaluated by the current methodology. He pointed out that capacity improvement applications are in absence, possibly due to cost, replaced by numerous bicycle and pedestrian, recreational, and transit proposals.

Mr. James said that following the MPO Board discussion last month, staff proposes to increase the total point score to 100. The Board requested to increase the points for safety metrics and incentivize congestion management or capacity improvements with additional points and agreed with staff to add more nuanced metrics to the nonautomotive elements of the application. He added that staff intends to canvas the membership to get a better understanding of potential projects and past project opportunities so that the revised methodology reflects the goals of the Board and the project mix prevalent in the MPO region.

Mr. Kozlosky asked for feedback on anticipated projects and any changes to the criteria. He noted that the training program for the process would be reinstated as well.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Kirkland, Mr. James clarified that the Board wants to know why there are so many nonautomotive proposals and why are there no proposals for capacity improvements, and staff wants to better evaluate the proposals it receives. He noted that the Board is interested in incentivizing projects that address congestion and improve access and mobility to maintain its degree of incentive in the ranking, while increasing the points for safety.

Mr. James reminded the committee member that he would also reach out to them after today's meeting for feedback.

7) 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 he sent an email yesterday regarding Wave Transit's application for a MOBI award. He encouraged members to vote and added voting is open daily until February 25th.

Ms. Matheny said that Wave's application is for its tri-county micro-transit initiative, Ride Micro, which is 100% funded by NCDOT for one year. She noted that the Transit Authority has applied for a second year of funding, which is currently under review by NCDOT. She added that an app was launched mid-January for customers to book, pay for and locate transportation.

Mr. Kozlosky said that NCDOT will be undertaking some environmental justice outreach regarding the Independence Boulevard extension from February 22nd through February 25th. He added that NCDOT will hold an event at the Davis Center at Maides Park on February 26th from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

8) Announcements

- a. Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee- February 8th
- b. Go Coast TDM Committee- February 17th
- c. Next TCC meeting- March 16th

9) Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Ayers made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Kirkland, and meeting was adjourned at 10:52 a.m. by roll call as follows:

Ayes: Stephanie Ayers, Claudia Bray, Helen Bunch, Nick Cannon, Patrick Flanagan, Adrienne Harrington, Paula Kempton, Matt Kirkland, Mike Kozlosky, Vanessa Lacer, Marty Little, Caitlin Marks, Megan Matheny, Robert O'Quinn, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None.

Absent: Granseur Dick.

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