MPO Board Meeting Minutes  
6th Floor Training Conference Room, 320 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, N.C.  
Wednesday, February 23, 2022

**Members Present (in-person)**  
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington  
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach  
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland  
Mike Forte, Brunswick County  
Deb Hays, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority  
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach  
David Piepmeyer, Pender County  
Charlie Rivenbark, City of Wilmington  

**Members Present (remotely)**  
Mike Allen, Town of Belville  
Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County  
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa  
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation  

**Others Present (in-person)**  
Natalie English, Wilmington Chamber  
Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director, WMPO  
Scott A. James, Transportation Planning Engineer  
Chad Kimes, Division Engineer, NCDOT  
Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director, WMPO  
Caitlin Marks, Planning Engineer, NCDOT  
Rachel McIntyre, WMPO Assoc. Transportation Planner  
Bruce Wortelman  

**Others Present (remotely)**  
Deb LeCompte, Carolina Beach  
Amy Passaretti  
Joanna Rocco  
LB Haviland  
Marty Little, New Hanover County  
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT  
Katie Hite  
Tony Sumter  
C Hannah  
J Dayton  
Aubrey Parsley, City of Wilmington  
Marie Parker, Wave Transit  
Historic Wilmington Foundation  
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland  
Charles Bost, Town of Belville  
Johanna Still

1) **Call to Order**  
Chairman David Piepmeyer called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Kozlosky called the roll, and a quorum was present as follows:

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

2) **Conflict of Interest Statement**  
Chairman Piepmeyer read the conflict-of-interest statement. He asked if any member has 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**  
Chairman Piepmeyer said that Mr. Ellen requested at the last meeting to be excused from this meeting. Mr. Kozlosky concurred and said that no other member has requested to be excused.

Ms. Hays made a motion to excuse Mr. Ellen from the meeting, seconded by Mr. Rivenbark, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call as follows:
4) **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Forte made a motion to approve the agenda.

Vice Chair Miller requested to add a discussion item (9E) to the agenda. He said that last night the Chamber approved a resolution urging all possible considerations for funding the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, possibly to consider a similar resolution.

Mr. Rivenbark seconded the motion it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Jonathan Barfield, Brenda Bozeman, Deb Hays, Hank Miller, David Piepmeyer, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Forte, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

**Nays:** None. **Excused:** John Ellen.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Mr. Rivenbark and the motion carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Jonathan Barfield, Brenda Bozeman, Deb Hays, Hank Miller, David Piepmeyer, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Forte, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

**Nays:** None. **Excused:** John Ellen.

5) **Public Comment Period**

Mr. Bruce Wortelman, resident of Gorman Plantation, spoke to the MPO Board and said that he has been working with NCDOT since 2016 regarding unsafe traffic conditions in his neighborhood due to speeding vehicles. He noted that the population growth on Middle Sound Loop Road and Military Cutoff Road Extension have added to the problem. However, traffic studies conducted by DOT between 2019 and 2021 denied multi-way stops and speed limit reductions. He added that the Deputy Marshal at the New Hanover County Fire and Rescue recently drafted a letter acknowledging the neighborhood traffic calming endeavor, and DOT has granted a petition to capture homeowner signatures in support of the project. He requested that the MPO investigate homeowner concerns and provide a recommendation and funding for traffic calming measures.

Ms. Natalie English, President and CEO, Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, said that the Chamber’s Public Policy Committee approved a resolution yesterday urging the WMPO to consider all possible options for funding the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. She commented that the business community understands that the funding for transportation infrastructure across the country is not keeping pace with needs, even with the Infrastructure Bill that passed last year. However, the bridge is a top priority for connecting the region as well as the state of North Carolina.

Mr. Rivenbark inquired about Mr. Wortelman’s comments. Mr. Kozlosky said that MPO staff will contact Division 3, as this is a consideration for the Department. He noted that Mr. Wortelman expressed an interest in adding this project to the MPO’s long-range plan, which will be approved in November of 2025.

6) **Presentation**

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

Stephanie Ayers said she primarily deals with real estate, grants, strategic planning, and is the liaison for inland transportation issues related to road and rail for the NC State Ports Authority, which has seaports in Wilmington and Morehead City and an inland Port in Charlotte. She noted that the terminal facilities serve a variety of customers with container boxes, bulk, break bulk, and roll-on/
roll-off commodities as well as the military. Both seaports are identified as strategic seaports, which of the 300 seaports in the U.S., 15 have port planning orders with the U.S. DOD to respond to the military as well as commercial customers. She added that the Port is strategically located on the east coast 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 through moving cargo.

Ms. Ayers said the Port of Wilmington covers about 300 acres and has a 600,000 TEU capacity. The TEU (Twenty Equipment Unit) represents the 20’ equivalent container box invented in North Carolina by Malcolm McLean, although containers seen on the highway today are double that. For comparison, she added that Savannah has a 3 million TEU capacity. She noted that the Port recently completed a project to increase its capacity for refrigerated containers. She added that the Port of Morehead City is at full capacity and covers about 130 acres, with an additional 150 acres on Radio Island available for development. Morehead City serves the same commodities as Wilmington except containers.

Ms. Ayers pointed out that according to a NC State study produced triennially, the Port continues to be an important economic contributor to the state due to the jobs it generates statewide, tax revenues, and economic output. She noted that fiscal year ‘21 ending June 30th was a record year for the Ports with refrigerated container volumes up 300% over a five-year period and a 213% growth in intermodal rail since 2017. She added that the Port heavily focuses on growing rail and refrigerated container volumes.

Ms. Ayers pointed out that the Port brings its customers the value of superior performance in its ability to turn around trucks and ships faster than anyone else in the U.S. She noted that the Port was ranked #1 by the Journal of Commerce for overall productivity in 2019.

Ms. Ayers said that over the summer, the Port completed a new strategic plan for it to be the preferred east coast port based upon value brought to stakeholders. The five-year plan is to grow containers by 50% and breakbulk customers (anything that can be palletized). Highlights include the completion of the container yard plan and Wilmington harbor navigation project, focused growth of refrigerated containers and intermodal rail cargo, and investments on and off terminal to support new businesses. The Port continues to work with economic development partners, making improvements in rail and highway connectivity outside of the Port and coordinating with sister agencies on targeted segments around the state.

Ms. Ayers said capital improvements include the $256 million infrastructure plan, which is about to be completed. She noted that the plan includes a birth expansion, raising the powerlines to 250’, three Neo-Panamax cranes, turning basin expansion, a container yard expansion master plan near completion, and a conditionally authorized Wilmington harbor navigation project. She added that the harbor project 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. She reported that the General Assembly recently set aside the required match for the appropriation.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Ms. Ayers said that at the outset of the container yard expansion plan, the Port was at 600,000 TEUs but was not at full capacity. She noted that the study determined a bottleneck on the terminal at the container gate that limited capabilities to 350,000 TEUs, which is the current capacity. On February 14th, the Port opened its new container gate complex with a fully automated container gate. She noted that trucks need only stop at security, swipe a card, and continue directly to pick up or drop off a box. This has improved capacity to 1.2 million TEUs.
Ms. Ayers said the last year, the Port completed the first phase of its refrigerated container yard expansion with 760 plugs. Currently, Phase 2 is under design to add an additional 720 plugs. The Port has freezer and chiller capability on the terminal, and just signed a lease for construction of a cold storage facility off the terminal. Additionally, the Queen City Express rail service to Charlotte has added two new trans-Pacific services since its reinstatement in 2017. And just this year, the Mid-west Express, through the CCX Carolina Connector in Rocky Mount that NCDOT helped fund, is shipping boxes to the Midwest enabling zero-dwell time at the Port.

Ms. Ayers gave a brief overview of U.S. DOT grant awards as follows:

- In 2020, the Port of Wilmington was awarded a $16 million grant for infrastructure improvements.
- In 2021, the Port of Morehead City was awarded a $1.7 million U.S. DOT grant towards a $2 million project to replace rail on Radio Island.
- For 2022, a grant application is in progress to fund a portion of a $22 million program to finish the container yard expansion and build a dedicated intermodal yard at the Port of Wilmington, which is on today's consent agenda for consideration.

Ms. Ayers said that short-term 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 Burnett Boulevard intersection improvements, and the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement project.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rivenbark, Ms. Ayers said that the State Ports contributes 87,000 direct and indirect jobs to the state. She commented that the airports might contribute more jobs to the state.

Chairman Piepmeyer expressed appreciation to Ms. Ayers.

7) Consent Agenda
   a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from January 26, 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
   d. 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. Forte 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:


Nays: None. Excused: John Ellen.

8) Regular Agenda
   a. 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

Executive Director Mike Kozlosky said that the projects were funded with Direct Attributable (DA) funds in 2013 and 2014. He noted that the city has been working on the design of these projects and
has identified a need for additional funds for the construction of these facilities. The city is requesting $2.4 million in DA funds from the MPO and has committed to providing the 20% local match of $600,000 for the completion of those projects. Funds for the projects would come from the current fiscal year and would leave a balance of around $1.7 million in the DA program.

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to support the allocation of additional funds to the City of Wilmington. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call as follows:


Nays: None. Excused: John Ellen.

9) Discussion

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

Mr. Kozlosky stated that this administrative modification is for informational purposes only and will be brought back at the Board’s next meeting for consideration.

b. FY23 Unified Planning Work Program Development

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo said that this item is to provide some detail for a required administrative modification to the draft FY23 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and is an update to what was presented to the Board at its January meeting. She noted that the WMPO is an annual recipient of Federal Transit Administration 5303 funding, awarded at an 80% federal share, requiring a 10% state and 10% local match. In the January draft UPWP, the total federal share was split into $143,061 for FY23 and $47,687 for FY24. However, the FY23 UPWP is required to show the entire amount of $190,748. She added that this change is for administrative purposes only and will not increase the local match.

Mr. Kozlosky said that information can be found on page 46 of the agenda packet. He clarified that the amount will be budgeted for one fiscal year but be spent over two fiscal years. He added that currently there is a 30-day public comment period open on the draft, with the budget to be brought back to the Board for consideration at its March 30 meeting.

c. Direct Attributable Programs Prioritization Criteria

Mr. Kozlosky said that this is an ongoing discussion item regarding the Direct Attributable (DA) scoring criteria, which was presented at the Board’s last meeting. He noted that this is an update on the schedule for the intended call for projects and award of those funds, based on direction from the Board to canvas members and present revised scoring criteria.

MPO Transportation Planning Engineer Scott A. James recapped the direction from the Board to increase safety ranking and gave the timeline as follows:

- March – input from membership,
- April – revised methodology and 100-point total
- May – final draft for consideration
- June – issue a call with revised methodology for FY23 funds

d. Wilmington Multi-modal Transportation Center Phase 1B

Mr. Kozlosky gave an update on the Wilmington Multi-modal Transportation Center Phase 1B for the building renovation at 525 North 4th Street, which would be used by the MPO for future office space. He noted that bids came in $650,000 more than the architect’s/engineer’s estimate. He added that several options were explored: value engineering, phasing the project, asking the contractor to extend
their bids for additional time to secure additional moneys, and rejecting the bids and re-bidding the project. Staff recommends either removing the Boardroom, which might result in a rough cost savings of $50,000, or asking for additional funds, $1.8 million from the MPO, and $468,000 from the city. He noted that initial discussions have been held with the city.

Chairman Piepmeyer commented that a Boardroom might be considered essential. He pointed out that parking is still an issue with discussions ongoing with Cape Fear Community College. Vice Chair Miller pointed out that its purpose would be diminished without a boardroom. He added that value engineering would only yield 50 cents on the dollar.

A lengthy discussion session followed. The Board expressed concerns regarding increasing construction costs and the timeline for the current trend to make a correction and how much of a correction could be expected.

Mr. Rivenbark expressed reluctance to take this back to the city, although the options are lean.

Chairman Piepmeyer commented that the Boards purpose is to advance transportation and expressed concerns about the cost of this project when transportation projects in the region need funding.

In response to Vice Chair Miller, Mr. Kozlosky said that the building is about 7,200 square feet.

Mr. Rivenbark commented that it would be less expensive to tear it down and build new. However, that would defeat the purpose of the historic element. He inquired if the cost (of the local match) could be shared. Mr. Kozlosky pointed out that when the building is complete, it will be owned by the city and that it is currently dilapidated. Mr. Rivenbark expressed a desire to consult with City Council.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kozlosky said that about $100,000 in the city budget has been unallocated, which could be used toward the match to the MPO money, so the ask of the city would be $331,586. Board members asked about the total amount, Mr. Kozlosky said that the bid was $3.1 million. He noted that the estimate is conservative to avoid future asks, and any remaining balance would be returned to the DA fund.

Ms. Hays asked about the intent of the project. Mr. Kozlosky explained that the MPO is housed in the City of Wilmington. He reminded the Board that the building exists and must be used for a transportation purpose because it was purchased with transportation money by DOT. The thought was to use federal money to rehab the building because the MPO is a transportation agency that would move into the facility and use these dollars, which are eligible for historic rehabilitation. He added that the federal money cannot be used to demolish the building and build new.

Discussion continued. Ms. Hays commented that proceeding forward seems to be the best option and concurred with Mr. Rivenbark that the city shouldn’t shoulder the entire burden. Mr. Kozlosky said that historical data shows that waiting another six months might anticipate a 20% to 30% increase in cost, approximately $900,000, and that’s the amount of time it will take to get the additional funds.

Mr. Rivenbark estimated the rehab cost at $700 per square foot. Mr. Kozlosky noted that it includes furniture.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded the Board that this item is for discussion only, that it will have to go to City Council first, and the MPO Board will consider it at its April meeting. Chairman Piepmeyer reminded the group that he will be absent from the March meeting.

Mr. Forte inquired about the cost of walking away from the project. Chairman Piepmeyer said that the $370,000 investment in design would be lost. Mr. Kozlosky added that the building, with ownership
transferred to the city in 2017 from NCDOT, would continue to sit vacant. He noted that this project has been in the works since 2019.

Barfield expressed regret for the potential loss of a great opportunity to restore it.

e. Wilmington Chamber’s Resolution Urging Consideration of All Options to Fund the Replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge

Vice Chair Miller said the Chamber yesterday discussed the importance of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge to the region. He distributed a copy of the resolution that the Chamber adopted urging consideration of all options to fund the bridge’s replacement.

Ms. English said that the Federal Highway Administration gave the Chamber an update yesterday on what the Infrastructure Bill would do for transportation infrastructure in the State of North Carolina, and Mr. Kimes gave an update on North Carolina’s transportation dollars. She noted that the Chamber understands clearly that fewer transportation projects will be delayed thanks to the Infrastructure Bill, that an unfunded priority is unlikely to get funding using traditional funding methods, and that the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is important to the region.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Piepmeyer, Mr. Kozlosky said that the MPO received a resolution from Brunswick County encouraging exploration of all funding options and another resolution from the Town of Leland encouraging that the project be added to the State Transportation Improvements Plan (STIP).

Mr. Kimes estimated that NCDOT’s 10-year program is about $12 billion over-programmed. He noted that NCDOT expects to receive about $1.5 billion over the next five years from the Infrastructure Bill. He explained that this will keep the first few of years of projects from slipping. He added that projects in the STIP with greater costs will be a real challenge.

A lengthy discussion followed. Concerns were expressed regarding resurrecting tolling as an option as well as the condition of the bridge. Mr. Anderson asked Ms. English if the Chamber supports a toll. Chairman Piepmeyer pointed out that it’s a competitive process that might not end up being a toll. Mr. Rivenbark expressed concerns about sponsoring options that are not fully supported by the Chamber. Ms. English responded that she was in support of a toll, but others were more vocal.

Mr. Barfield expressed concerns about relitigating the tolling decision. He commented that he would not support a toll. Ms. Hays expressed a desire to explore all options. She pointed out that the bridge is in desperate need and DOT is unable to fund it. Mr. Anderson attributed the problem to a lack of legislative action. He identified four options for bridge replacement as follows:

- Wait 40 years
- Tolls
- Bridge failure that attracts media attention
- A reduced toll subsidized by money from other sources, such as grants

Mr. Kozlosky said that competitive grants and mega grants exist through the Infrastructure Bill, but the challenge is the state match and the project being excluded from the STIP.

Mr. Kimes said that there is a separate program for bridges, a Bridge STIP. But the value of the project was not enough for the High Value Bridge Program. So, the Highway STIP is the only option. And although the project scored well, it didn’t score well enough to get funded in addition to STIP being out of money right now. He noted that the unsolicited proposal was the only other option but was
rejected. He added that NCDOT remains open to other options and suggested that grants be pursued. Mr. Kozlosky said the MPO is working in coordination with DOT to explore the options.

Vice Chair Miller pointed out that nothing is going to happen unless the MPO supports all options. Mr. Barfield disagreed and commented that NCDOT is doing its job to explore the options except tolling.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that the Board would be voting to consider all the options, not specifically tolling. Mr. Kimes reminded the Board that to continue with an unsolicited proposal, he would need the Board’s approval. He noted that when it was rejected in June, that was the end of it.

Chairman Piepmeyer asked Mr. Kimes if he could go back to the originators of the unsolicited proposal to see if they are still interested. Mr. Kimes responded that he would need a specific request for that, which could be combined with the other request to explore all options.

Mr. Kozlosky said that the Board could choose to explore all options but would have to identify that tolling be included since the unsolicited proposal was rejected in June. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Forte, Mr. Kimes explained that an unsolicited proposal is a two- to three-year process that initiates a competitive process.

Ms. Hays reiterated that the Board is not voting on a specific project or option, merely instructing NCDOT to explore all options including tolls. She encouraged the Board to consider the unsolicited proposal if it’s still available. She concurred with Mr. Rivenbark that costs are increasing every day and inquired about bonus allocations. Mr. Kozlosky responded that bonus allocations go with tolls, are capped at $100 million, and must be applied to projects within the counties where the facility is located.

Vice Chair Miller requested that staff prepare a resolution with the following language: “Now therefore, be it be resolved that the WMPO urges consideration of all possible options to include tolling and previous proposals to fund a replacement for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.”

Mr. Forte seconded the motion and it carried 9-3.


Mr. Barfield requested that weighty topics with much conversation and community input such as this one be included on the regular agenda and not as a walked-on item. Ms. Bozeman concurred.

10) Updates
a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO
b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
c. NCDOT Division
d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Mr. Kozlosky acknowledged new MPO staff members: Engineering Associate Jamar Johnson, and Associate Transportation Planner Emma Stogner (who starts on February 28th). He noted that Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Coordinator Nick Cannon is leaving the MPO on March 4th.

Ms. Bozeman asked if the MPO is fully staffed. Mr. Kozlosky said the MPO lacking a GIS Analyst and a TDM Planner. He noted that rest of the updates are included in the agenda packet.
11) Announcements
   a. Hampstead Bypass Groundbreaking Ceremony- March 11th at 11 am
   b. NC State Ethics Forms Due- April 15th
   c. NC Association of MPOs 2022 Conference- April 20th-22nd

Mr. Kimes said invitations were sent for the March 11th Hampstead Bypass groundbreaking ceremony. He noted that the Secretary of Transportation will be in attendance. He added that the ceremony will be held just north of the high school.

Ms. Bozeman requested confirmation that her ethics form has been received. Mr. Kozlosky said he would look into it.

Mr. Kozlosky said that the MPO expects 400 to 500 attendees at the NC Association of MPOs’ Conference at the Wilmington Convention Center downtown. He encouraged Board members to attend. Ms. Lorenzo said that mobile tours include the Port of Wilmington, two bike rides (downtown and Carolina Beach), micro-transit to Belville, and a boat tour of the riverfront.

Mr. Kozlosky said that the April MPO Board meeting will be held at the airport, starting with a tour of the airport.

12) Adjournment
   Next MPO Board meeting – March 30th, 2022

Chairman Piepmeyer said that Vice Chair Miller will run the March MPO Board meeting.

Mr. Rivenbark made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Vice Chair Miller, and the motion to adjourn carried unanimously by roll call as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Jonathan Barfield, Brenda Bozeman, Deb Hays, Hank Miller, David Piepmeyer, Charlie Rivenbark, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None.

**Absent:** Landon Zimmer. **Excused:** John Ellen.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 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.