

**Wilmington Urban Area MPO
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, January 11, 2023
Remote Meeting Minutes**

Members Present

Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport
Patrick Flanagan, Cape Fear Council of Governments
Jeremy Hardison, Town of Carolina Beach
Adrienne Harrington, Town of Belville
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Vanessa Lacer, Town of Leland
Rachel LaCoe, New Hanover County
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Marie Parker, Wave
Mandy Sanders, Town of Kure Beach
Nazia Sarder, Vice Chair, NCDOT
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington

Others Present

Abie Bonevac, City of Wilmington
Thomas Bradshaw, City of Wilmington
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Cheryl Hannah, HDR
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Scott James, WMPO
Jamar Johnson, WMPO
Andrew Ooms, Kittelson
Amy Passaretti, Port City Daily
Greer Shivers, WMPO
Nicole Smith, City of Wilmington
Emma Stogner, WMPO

Members Absent

Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority
Michelyn Alston, Town of Navassa
Greg Feldman, Pender County
Mike Kozlosky, TCC Chairman, WMPO

1) Call to Order

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo acknowledged the absence of Chairman Mike Kozlosky. Vice Chair Nazia Sarder turned over the remote meeting to Ms. Lorenzo, who called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. A quorum was present, as follows:

Present: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Abby Lorenzo, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman, Mike Kozlosky, Rachel LaCoe and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

2) Approval of the Agenda

Ms. Bunch made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Lacer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by roll call vote, as follows:

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

3) Election of Officers

Mr. Flanagan renominated the current officers, Mr. Kozlosky as chairman and Ms. Sarder as vice chair. Ms. Parker seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by rollcall, as follows:

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

4) **Presentation**

a. **525 North 4th Street Building Renovation- Jamar Johnson, WMPO**

WMPO Engineering Associate Jamar Johnson gave an update on the Wilmington Multi-modal Transportation Center, Phase 1B, also known as the new home of the WMPO. He gave an overview of the 525 North 4th Street building renovation, including the building's history, the renovation contract, highlights and discoveries, and upcoming milestones. He noted that the building was built 129 years ago in 1894, as the Thomas & Co. Grocery Store. He added that it was physically expanded in the 1920s. In 1995, the building was sold and became a furniture store. Since 1899, the building has withstood more than 15 hurricanes.

Mr. Johnson said that of the two bids received, Paragon Building Corporation was the lowest responsible bidder. He noted that the contract was executed May 17, 2022, and a pre-construction meeting was held two days later. He added that HDR is serving as both the contract administrators and the design team, and that construction began August 1, 2022.

Mr. Johnson displayed a month-by-month photo tour of the renovations from August to January. He noted that the building was abandoned for a long time and the windows on the second floor and on the sides were bricked up. Also, there was some damage to the building that exposed the bricks to the elements. During Hurricane Florence, the north parapet was destroyed and had to be removed from the area. Interior views showed exposed holes in the ceiling, and the walls. Exploration caused holes in the floor that revealed black mold and asbestos, which needed to be abated. Bricks were removed from the windows, and an extensive clean up followed. In September, utility and building permits were issued from Cape Fear Public Utility Authority (CFPUA) and New Hanover County.

Mr. Johnson said that the parge was removed from the southern exterior wall, surface paint from the east and north walls, and the combination of wood floorboards and concrete on the first floor. In October, demolition was paused due to damage to the exterior walls by cleaning methods on the north and east facades, which opened a discussion about brick stabilization. Interior prep work continued for utilities including electrical conduits, and water and sewer piping.

In November, Mr. Johnson said that a connection was made to the water main on North 4th Street. Due to a conflict with the water line, an alternative sewer connection was sought, and permit was obtained to close a portion of Campbell Street between the Wave Transit parking lot driveway and North 4th Street.

In December, Mr. Johnson said that the soil underneath the concrete slab of the building was prepared. Since no vibratory devices could be used, only water and an extended time were used to achieve the necessary 98% compaction. Alternate routes for the sewer line continued to be explored. However, no active sewer line was found on Campbell Street, and discussions were held with CFPUA regarding installing a new line on Campbell Street or returning to a connection on North 4th Street. He noted that this month, work on the slab foundation began with the installation of the rebar, and that concrete is expected to be poured next week.

Mr. Johnson said that interesting finds included mismatched sizes and colors of bricks, mortar joints varying in thickness from 1/8th to 2 inches, some of which has lost strength over time as well as differences in brickwork installed 40 years apart. Fortunately, historic brick was found on Davis Street to match existing brick. He added that an extensive fire was discovered to have occurred sometime during the 20th Century, based on bottles found with a particular pattern created only by fire.

Mr. Johnson said that staff anticipates construction to be completed this year in late summer or early fall. He noted that structural steel will be installed tying back to the brick, masonry repairs will be made to all four facades, the rough framing and layout of the interior for the roof, walls and both floors will be done, interior and exterior stairs will be installed, with wood being repurposed for the interior stairs to preserve some of the building's history. Additionally, new windows will be installed. He noted that the contractor anticipates building occupancy after Labor Day on September 5th.

Ms. Bunch expressed appreciation to Mr. Johnson for his thorough presentation. Ms. Lorenzo noted the presentation will be shared via e-mail.

5) **Consent Agenda**

- a. **Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- November 16, 2022**
- b. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Amendment #22-7**
- c. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Administrative Modification #22-11**
- d. **Resolution supporting the establishment of a Citizen Advisory Committee and 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Committee to assist with the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan**
- e. **Resolution supporting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's application to the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Paved Trails and Sidewalks Feasibility Study Grant Program to complete a Feasibility Study for Phases 2 and 3 of the Future Downtown Trail in the City of Wilmington**
- f. **Resolution supporting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's application to the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Paved Trails and Sidewalks Feasibility Study Grant Program to complete a Feasibility Study for Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor in the MPO's planning area boundary**
- g. **Resolution supporting the East Coast Greenway's application to the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Paved Trails and Sidewalks Feasibility Study Grant Program to complete a Feasibility Study for future Pleasure Island Greenway in the Town of Kure Beach and Fort Fisher**
- h. **Resolution supporting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's application for the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Bicycle Helmet Initiative**

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

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

6) Regular Agenda

a. Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for the 2023-2024 Unified Planning Work Program

Ms. Lorenzo reminded committee members that the MPO's upcoming Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) or budget must be submitted no later than March 31, 2023, and that, per the Public Participation Policy, a 30-day public comment period is required. She noted that the four proposed enhancements are based on working closely with our members and direction from the MPO Board and its adopted Strategic Plan. Enhancements include:

- i. Payroll costs: A conservative 10% allocation for staff adjustments in merit and market adjustments, which includes a reorganization of WMPO staff and position reclassifications to reflect the roles, responsibilities, and hierarchy of the Deputy Director as well a Senior Transportation Planner position, and a full year of the Administrative Specialist position
- ii. Operations of the MPO in the new building: In the current FY23 budget, a half-year of funding was anticipated, and occupation of the new building is expected in late summer or early fall, plus an inflation rate of 8.2%
- iii. Special Studies:
 1. The second phase of organizational assessment
 2. Grant identification and assistance
 3. A financial planning consultant for the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which kicks off this summer
 4. 20% matching funds for the Safe Streets For All federal grant
- iv. Increase in the Section 5303 pass-through funds

Ms. Lorenzo said that the member jurisdictions' cost share is also included in the memo.

Mr. Dick made a motion to open the 30-day public comment period for the 2023-2024 UPWP. Ms. Parker seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call vote, as follows:

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

b. Resolution amending the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Public Participation Policy and Rules of Procedure

Ms. Lorenzo said that the current policy and rules require the posting of meeting notices in both the *Star News* and the *Wilmington Journal*. However, it has been increasingly difficult to contact the *Star News*, and the *Wilmington Journal* is no longer in business. She added that this item would remove the language regarding publishing meeting notices in these two outlets and would amend the language to indicate that meeting notices will be posted in accordance with federal law and the state's open meetings law.

Ms. Lacer made a motion to amend the WMPO's Public Participation Policy and Rules of Procedure. Mr. Dick seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call vote, as follows:

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Adrienne Cox, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

7) **Discussion**

a. **2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #23-1**

Ms. Lorenzo said that this item is for information purposes only and will be brought back at the next meeting for consideration.

b. **2022-2026 MPO Strategic Plan 2023 Work Program**

Ms. Lorenzo said that a matrix has been included in the agenda packet and is an extension of the Board's adopted Strategic Plan with specific action steps to realize the implementation of the plan in the upcoming year.

c. **2023 Draft Legislative Agenda**

Ms. Lorenzo said that draft legislative agenda includes language for transportation funding options, the transportation project priority of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, opposition to the transfer of state road maintenance, limitation on city requirements for street improvements related to schools, moped legislation, and electric scooter legislation.

d. **Direct Attributable Funding**

Ms. Lorenzo said that a memo giving an overview of awarded amounts of the FY23 Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP), Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) and Carbon Reduction (CR) funds and the remaining reserve funds available was prepared for informational purposes to assist members during their FY24 budget process.

e. **2020 Urbanized Area (UA) Census Data- Organizational Boundaries, Structure, and Governance**

Ms. Lorenzo said that when the memo was sent out last week, this item was intended as an update as to when members might receive the new Urbanized Area (UA) data from the Census to accompany the 2020 Census UA totals that were released on December 29, 2022. On Monday, the files were released, and an email was sent with the maps provided an update on what the data shows. As part of the release of the Urbanized Areas for each decennial Census, the MPOs begin a collaborative and coordinated process of considering the boundaries of their organization, structure, and governance. With the release of the Urbanized Areas and population totals, she noted that the MPO is beginning these steps and will continue the discussion with the TCC and MPO Board and provide updates. She commented that staff is in the early stages of reviewing the data and considering scenarios.

Mr. Flanagan expressed appreciation for the maps and asked for the definitions or rules for jumps and hops. Ms. Lorenzo pointed out that the email included a link providing a comparison of the criteria for the 2010 Census and the 2020 Census. She noted that jump distances were changed to a maximum hop distance of 0.5 mile in the 2020 Census, and a maximum jump distance of 1.5 miles. She added that intervening low density jump corridor blocks are not included in Urban Area calculations.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Flanagan, WMPO GIS Analyst Greer Shivers said there was no explicit note about the distance being along a roadway or as the crow flies. However, she would research it further.

Mr. Dick asked about the potential of changing boundaries and building a case model for airlines to add service. He noted that airlines consider the growth in Brunswick County for Myrtle Beach only, not Wilmington, even though there is cross over. Ms. Lorenzo responded that this is the process where amending the boundary would be considered. However, the MSA is separate from the UA.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Bunch, Ms. Lorenzo said that this will be a collaborative, transparent process that will begin soon. She reiterated that the data is in the process of being reviewed by staff.

Ms. Sarder said that NCDOT began the Travel Demand Model before the UA data was released. She expressed concerns regarding the model schedule and requested to be kept in the loop.

Ms. Lacer asked about the deadlines. Ms. Lorenzo that she will research the deadlines. She noted that this process is only beginning and will be ongoing over the next few months.

Ms. Lacer asked if the boundary would generally be expected to grow, rather than shrink. Ms. Lorenzo responded that this process anticipates the urban boundary in 20 years. She noted that where the boundary may change will be under consideration. She added that potential new jurisdictions must be agreed upon by all entities including the MPO Board, the jurisdiction under consideration, and the state. She commented that there has been quite a lot of growth since 2010, so shrinkage might not be expected, although it's too early to tell.

Ms. Lacer inquired about the 20-year planning horizon. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the MPO is required to evaluate its boundary and governance with the release of the Urbanized Areas after each decennial Census. In terms of setting the planning area boundary, which is different than the Urbanized Area boundary, consideration is made for where the Urbanized Area boundary is anticipated to be based on current growth, where that growth may go and where we anticipate the Urbanized Area boundary being in 20 years. So, it's evaluated every 10 years, but it's a consideration of 20 years similar to the MTP with its 25-year planning horizon, which is updated every five years, because changes can occur quickly.

f. **Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road interchange**

Ms. Lorenzo said that the Board requested at its October meeting MPO staff to evaluate and bring back options for a potential project swap involving the delay of the Military Cutoff Road and Eastwood Road interchange project (U-5710). Since the Drysdale Drive extension is currently under construction, the Board was interested in understanding how the delay of U-5710 might impact traffic conditions in the area.

Ms. Lorenzo said that MPO and NCDOT Division 3 staff reviewed the request and determined a potential swap option to move U-5710, scheduled for right-of-way in Fiscal Year 2023 and construction in Fiscal Year 2025, to Preliminary Engineering (PE) only, and to advance U-5704 (College Road and Oleander Drive intersection improvements), currently funded for PE only, to right-of-way in Fiscal Year 2024 and construction in Fiscal Year 2026. She added that this information and an updated traffic forecast regarding the Military Cutoff Road and Eastwood Road interchange will be presented to the Board for consideration.

Ms. Lorenzo said that according to the forecast, Fiscal Year 2029 would be the first year of an unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) E, and LOS F by 2045. She noted that additional lanes and improvements along Military Cutoff Road would be needed to operate acceptably and would likely result in additional impacts and cost.

Ms. Lorenzo pointed out that the Military Cutoff Road and Eastwood Road interchange is funded in the amount of \$66 million, and the College Road and Oleander Drive intersection improvements are funded at \$37.7 million. She noted that the projects are both funded in the Statewide Tier and, if the project swap is approved, the remaining \$28.9 million would be used to rebalance the State Transportation Improvements Program (STIP).

Ms. Lacer asked about the criteria for the swap regarding impacts to the community, especially those at a lower income level. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the swap was considered from the standpoint of

forecasting future operations based on changes to the planned improvements. Ms. Cox added that this information would have been considered when the projects were originally considered for the STIP, but not for the purposes of the swap.

Mr. Vielkanowitz spoke in favor of the swap and commented that the intersection of College and Oleander has been historically congested and a major impediment in the City of Wilmington. He added that the area of Military Cutoff Road and Eastwood Road has recently become a heavily traveled area.

Ms. Cox concurred with Mr. Vielkanowitz. However, she expressed reservations about funding leaving the region. Ms. Lacer expressed concerns about swaps being outside the criteria of the prioritization process, as well as the loss of funding. She pointed out that it would be important for the public to understand why it's a good swap and in the public interest. Ms. Bunch expressed concerns regarding a swap when there are some many projects needed in the region.

Mr. Flanagan said that he was present at the committee meeting that developed the swap system after the reworking of the STIP. He explained that the swap option was intended as a mechanism to give MPOs and RPOs an opportunity to provide local input.

8) **Updates**

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

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

Ms. Cox said that an update from December was included in the agenda packet due to illness over the holidays. She noted that it will be revised for the MPO Board meeting. She invited questions about projects by phone or email.

Ms. Sarder said that the Brunswick CTP is further along than was indicated in the update and that the steering committee will meet soon.

9) **Announcements**

- a. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee- February 14th**
- b. **Next TCC meeting- February 8th**

10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Flanagan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Dick, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:11 a.m. by roll call, as follows:

Ayes: Helen Bunch, Adrienne Cox, Granseur Dick, Patrick Flanagan, Jeremy Hardison, Adrienne Harrington, Abby Lorenzo, Vanessa Lacer, Rachel LaCoe, Robert O'Quinn, Marie Parker, Mandy Sanders, Nazia Sarder and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Stephanie Ayers, Greg Feldman and the representative of the Town of Navassa.

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