



**WILMINGTON URBAN AREA**  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**MPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, May 31, 2023**

6th Floor Training Conference Room, 320 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, North Carolina

**Members Present in Person**

Mike Allen, Town of Belville  
Neil Anderson, City of Wilmington  
Deb LeCompte, Town of Carolina Beach  
Jonathan Barfield, New Hanover County  
Mike Forte, Brunswick County  
Dane Scalise, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority  
Luke Waddell, City of Wilmington  
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

**Others Present in Person**

Carolyn Caggia, WMPO  
Nikki Cooper, Law Office of Matt Nichols  
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT  
Scott James, WMPO  
Chad Kimes, NCDOT  
Vanessa Lacer, WMPO  
Rebekah Roth, New Hanover County  
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO  
Caitlin Melvin, NCDOT  
Matthew Nichols, WMPO Attorney  
Greer Shivers, WMPO  
Emma Stogner, WMPO

**Members Present Remotely**

Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland  
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach  
Dennis Panicali, Town of Kure Beach  
Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Pender County

**Others Present Remotely**

Veronica Carter, Town of Leland  
Katie Hite, NCDOT  
Regina Hopkins, WMPO  
Jamar Johnson, WMPO  
Bill Kincannon, HDR  
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO  
Amy Passaretti, Port City Daily  
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT  
Sarah Sularz  
Sharon Valentine

**1) Call to Order**

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM.

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo called the roll, and a quorum was present as follows:

**Present:** Mike Allen, Johnathan Barfield, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Absent:** Neil Anderson, John Ellen, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

**2) Conflict of Interest Statement**

Ms. Lorenzo read the conflict-of-interest statement and asked if any Board member had a conflict of interest. No Board member reported having a conflict of interest.

**3) Approval of Board Member Excused Absences**

MPO Executive Director Mike Kozlosky said that there were no requests for excused absence from today's meeting.

4) **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Waddell, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Johnathan Barfield, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Neil Anderson, John Ellen, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

Mr. Kozlosky noted that Mr. Anderson and Ms. Fletcher-Hardee will join the meeting later.

Mr. Dennis Panicali said that he is present in place of John Ellen.

6) **Public Comment Period**

Per the Public Participation Policy, Mr. Kozlosky read the only public comment that was received via email from Steve McNair as follows:

*I live in River's Edge, a small community off Independence Blvd between Carolina Beach Rd and River Rd. We need Independence Blvd widened to 4 lanes, bike and walking paths installed. Independence Blvd is a major collector road, and is overcrowded with stopped and backed up cars. Bike and walking paths are broken up, incomplete, or never installed.*

*Over 10,000 vehicles use this 1-mile stretch of road daily, according to a 2021 traffic study. In the morning, traffic backs up 2-3 lights to get across at Carolina Beach Rd, despite 5 outbound lanes on Independence next to the Harris Teeter, that much traffic flows through.*

*In the afternoon over 30 cars wait on Independence to turn onto River Road at a single stop sign, keeping us from getting in and out of the neighborhoods onto Independence, We're trapped!*

*This one mile stretch of Independence Blvd from Carolina Beach Road to River Road, had 6 access points in 2017. With the addition of new housing and Harris Teeter, we now have 17 points of access to Independence Blvd, with more planned.*

*In the Cape Fear Moving Forward 2045 report, the widening of Independence to 4 lanes with bike and walking paths is project # BP 285 scheduled for 2045. That's a long time away.*

*In 2017 the River Road Small Plan suggested a 250% increase in traffic, and Independence Blvd and River Road should become 4 lanes. What happened?*

*There are just pieces of bike paths from River Lights thru South Wilmington to the Pointe along Independence. In certain points along the road, paths were never built. Other paths are torn up and not repaired.*

*We ought to have a continuous bike path to connect to the paths at Carolina Beach and River Lights, linking up with paths going across town. How great it would be to bike up a path along the Blvd to the stores, shoppes and movie theaters. We need Safe Streets for All of Wilmington WMPO!*

*We moved here in 2017, my wife commented that we're sort of out in the country. Next trip the signs all said "Save Echo Farms". We know how that ended, what could have been bike paths disappeared into new homes.*

*We experience long waits on Independence trying to turn south onto River Road or just getting in or out our neighborhoods from more traffic from new neighborhoods plus the ever-expanding River Lights projects, which seem to get rubber stamped for approval. Why are these projects allowed without road and path improvements? The increase in traffic is a big concern for daily traffic hazards and future emergencies. The WMPO CMP dashboard doesn't track traffic at the intersection of Independence and River Rd.*

*So we turn to you for help. I believe none of you live south of Shipyard Blvd, Still we are your constituents. Our petition for widening Independence Blvd has over 900 signatures and grows daily.*

*We truly hope you'll seriously consider the traffic mess created on Independence and widen the road while adding a stop light at River Rd.*

Ms. Lorenzo added that no one is present from the public to speak.

Mr. Kozlosky reminded Board members that during the COVID-19 pandemic, a provision was made for public voicemails to be played out loud and public comments to be emailed and read aloud by staff during meetings. He recommended that this carryover from the pandemic be omitted from the Public Participation Policy.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to require that all public comments be made in-person.

**5) Election of Vice Chair**

Mr. Anderson nominated and made a motion to elect Luke Waddell as vice chairman, seconded by Mr. Forte, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Johnathan Barfield, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

**7) Closed Session**

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to hold a closed session for the purposes of discussing two separate matters as follows:

1. The first matter is a closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. sections 143-318.11(a)(5) and (a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, or conditions of appointment of individual public officers or employees, and to establish or instruct staff or agents concerning the negotiations of the amount of compensation or other material terms of an employment contract.
2. The second matter is a closed session to consult with our attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege pursuant N.C.G.S. section 143-318.11(a)(3).

Mr. Allen seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Johnathan Barfield, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

The meeting recessed for a closed session.

The meeting reconvened open session with all MPO Board members present as before. No action was taken.

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve the 10% increase for the MPO Executive Director position, seconded by Mr. Allen, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Johnathan Barfield, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

**8) Presentations**

**a. North Carolina Department of Transportation Project Update- Chad Kimes, NCDOT**

NCDOT Division Engineer Chad Kimes reported a cash balance of \$2.4 billion, and open commitments across the state totaling \$8.6 billion. He commented that the cash balance, storm resilience, and road maintenance programs are strong.

Mr. Kimes gave an update on projects including Gordon Road, Drysdale Drive Extension, College Road and Carolina Beach Road continuous flow intersection, Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway (MLK) and College Road controlled access to I-40 from Gordon Road to Market Street, interchanges at Eastwood Road and Military Cutoff Road (options to come), Eastwood Road and Market Street, MLK and College Road, MLK and Kerr Avenue, and US 421 and Isabel Holmes Bridge, five or six interchanges within the next five years. He said that although the College Road and Oleander Drive project is funded for PE only, NCDOT will analyze alternatives to improve the quadrant design. Also, he commented that the signal system upgrade is a much-needed project due to quickly aging technology.

Mr. Kimes commented that the Independence Boulevard Extension project with right-of-way (ROW) acquisition scheduled for Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 is a massive project. He noted that NCDOT is currently working on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). He added that the project extends from Randall Parkway to MLK for a full interchange and starts at grade with bridges over CSX rail line and over Darlington to maintain neighborhood interconnectivity, and a continuous bridge over Market Street and past Hurst Street for neighborhood interconnectivity at Hurst Street, Princess Place Drive and Market Street.

Mr. Barfield asked about a vacant lot on Montgomery Avenue on the other side of Princess Place Drive. Mr. Kimes advised caution and recommended that the property owners contact NCDOT regarding the schedule. He noted that according to the DEIS, the project could impact 120 businesses and homes.

Regarding the Hampstead Bypass, Mr. Kimes said that U-3300B project is under construction and U-3300A will be let in July of 2025, thanks to the MPO Board and NCDOT. He noted that the interchange near the high school is on schedule. He commented that this project will help tremendously when open. Mr. Kimes said that the Military Cutoff Extension will be celebrated around Labor Day. He added that the section of Market Street to Marsh Oaks should wrap up by the end of the year.

Mr. Kimes said two studies are under way and will be reported in July – traffic and revenue, and the planning document for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. He noted that the bridge deck did not last ten years and needs to be replaced again, this time costing \$15 million to \$20 million. He added that traffic from the Ports is at an all-time high, and rehab projects will be needed more frequently.

Mr. Anderson inquired about repurposing the bridge. Mr. Kimes responded that the bridge could only be used for scrape by NCDOT unless a government entity formally requests it. He added that the Town of Sunset Beach kept a small portion of the Pontoon Bridge for educational purposes.

Although not in the jurisdiction but a top priority for NCDOT and related to the bridge, Mr. Kimes said that South Carolina is going to extend SC 31, bringing a six-lane facility into North Carolina and NCDOT is working on the merger document. He noted that South Carolina's portion is fully funded

but North Carolina's portion is not. He commented that this gateway from the south is a huge challenge.

In response to an inquiry by Chairman Miller, Mr. Kimes said that this presentation will be forwarded to Board members.

**b. WMPO/Go Coast Digital Communication Updates- Carolyn Caggia, WMPO**

WMPO Associate Transportation Planner Carolyn Caggia gave an update on WMPO/Go Coast Digital communications including website changes to improve navigation and add content to [www.wmpo.org](http://www.wmpo.org) and [www.gocoastnc.org](http://www.gocoastnc.org). Ms. Caggia said that new social media accounts include LinkedIn and Nextdoor, with a potential reach of 368 neighborhoods and more than 100,000 audience members. She noted that on average, each of the last three social media posts has reached 3,000 viewers.

Mr. Anderson expressed concerns about the public understanding what the MPO does. Ms. Caggia suggested that key words be added to meta data for search engine optimization.

**9) Consent Agenda**

**a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from March 29, 2023**

**b. Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Amendment #23-2**

**c. Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Amendment #23-3**

Ms. Boseman made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Allen, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Johnathan Barfield and Landon Zimmer.

**10) Regular Agenda**

**a. Resolution approving the WMPO FY 24 Direct Attributable Project Submittal Guidelines and Scoring Criteria**

Senior Transportation Engineer Scott A. James gave an overview of the FY24 Direct Attributable (DA) project submittal guidelines and scoring criteria and said that these would be the same as last year. He noted that the proposed schedule for this year includes a call for projects on July 7<sup>th</sup>, with a pre-submittal deadline of August 8<sup>th</sup>, a final deadline of September 15<sup>th</sup>, and awards to be announced in October. He added that safety and congestion management remain priorities in the scoring criteria.

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve the FY24 DA submittal guidelines and scoring criteria, seconded by Mr. Willis, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Johnathan Barfield and Landon Zimmer.

**b. Resolution approving NCDOT Funding Swaps for Federal August Redistribution**

Mr. Lorenzo said that the agenda packet includes a revenue neutral funding swap of \$1,599,313 in the WMPO's Carbon Reduction (CR) program and Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) funds in exchange for the same amount of the State's Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Any Area funds. She noted that this is part of NCDOT's efforts to prepare for the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) annual August redistribution of funds that will not be used by the close of

the federal fiscal year ending September 30th. She added that every July, NCDOT submits a request for additional funds to ensure that the largest amount of funds coming into State of North Carolina remains authorized.

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve NCDOT Funding Swaps for Federal August Redistribution, seconded by Ms. Boseman, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None.

**Absent:** Johnathan Barfield and Landon Zimmer.

## 11) Discussion

### a. 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #23-3

Mr. Kozlosky said that this item is for informational purposes only and will be brought back for consideration at the Board's next meeting.

### b. Final Draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program and Project Changes

Ms. Lorenzo said that two items are included in the agenda packet: changes to the draft STIP based on schedule changes and swaps, and the proposed draft of the 2024-2033 STIP, which is going before the Board of Transportation (BOT) for consideration next week. Once approved by BOT, she noted that this item will return for the MPO Board to consider the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) this summer.

### c. NCDOT Prioritization 7.0 Update

Mr. Kozlosky said that with the approval of the draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the next cycle of prioritization, Prioritization 7.0 (P 7.0), will begin.

Ms. Lorenzo said that a schedule for P 7.0 has been included in the agenda packet. She noted that the methodology for P 7.0, which remains largely the same as P 6.0, will also be considered next week at the Board of Transportation meeting. She added that in preparation for P 7.0, MPO staff has contacted the MPO's modal planning partners to compile a list of projects for submission. She noted that submission window will open July 10<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Lorenzo said that with the release of the 2020 Census, the WMPO will be eligible to submit up to 20 projects per mode of transportation. Also, she noted the MPO will also have an additional 100 local input points, an increase from 1,500 points in P 5.0 to 1,600 points in P 7.0.

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

Mr. Kozlosky reminded Board members that this item is a continuous discussion, which, based on state and federal laws, the MPO is required to evaluate with the release of Census data (last December and January). He noted that staff sent an email to the various jurisdictions related to the three expansion scenarios presented to the MPO Board and Ms. Lorenzo met with several jurisdictions in Brunswick County and gave presentations to Topsail Beach and Surf City. He added that the MPO Board-created steering committee met once. He reminded the Board that the MPO Planning Area Boundary is what is expected to be urbanized in the next 20 years. He recommended that next steps include gauging formal interest by email with a deadline for response by July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Waddell said that the subcommittee is still waiting for responses and expressed support for the July 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. Mr. Kozlosky said that staff will send out the email with the deadline for response.

**12) Updates**

**a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO**

Mr. Kozlosky acknowledged the presence of new Senior Transportation Planner Vanessa Lacer. Ms. Lacer expressed appreciation and gave a brief overview of her professional background.

**b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority**

**c. NCDOT Division**

**d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Mr. Kimes acknowledged the presence of NCDOT Division 3 Corridor Development Engineer, Michelle Howes. Ms. Howes expressed appreciation and gave a brief overview of her professional background.

**13) Announcements**

**a. WMPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee meeting- June 13<sup>th</sup>**

**14) Next meeting – June 28, 2023**

Chairman Miller expressed congratulations to Vice Chairman Waddell and welcomed Mr. Scalise.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Allen, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

**Ayes:** Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, Dennis Panicali, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte and Eulis Willis. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Johnathan Barfield, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Landon Zimmer.

The meeting adjourned at 5:09 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.**