

**Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPO Board
Conflict of Interest Statement**

In accordance with Senate Bill 411, it is the duty of all MPO Board members, alternate or designee to disclose in writing any conflicts of interest. The statement will be attached to the minutes of the meeting in which any discussion or vote is taken relating to that conflict's disclosure.

I, Henry E Miller II do hereby disclose that I have a conflict of interest relating to Item number 8d on the agenda for the MPO Board meeting on June 28, 2023.
(MEETING DATE)

In accordance the Senate Bill 411, I request to be recused from participating in the matter.


(MEMBER/ALTERNATIVE/DESIGNEE SIGNATURE)


Mike Kozlosky, Secretary
MPO Board



WILMINGTON URBAN AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 28, 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
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Dane Scalise, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority
Luke Waddell, City of Wilmington
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

Others Present in Person

Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Bob Campbell, ILM
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Granseur Dick, ILM
Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Vanessa Lacer, WMPO
J. Scott Lane, J. Scott Lane & Co.
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Chad McEwen, City of Wilmington
Caitlin Melvin, NCDOT
Laura Padgett
Aubrey Parsley, City of Wilmington
Roger Rochelle, H&H
Rebekah Roth, New Hanover County
Bijan Salehi
Emma Stogner, WMPO
Rose Terry

Members Present Remotely

Jonathan Barfield, New Hanover County
Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Pender County

Others Present Remotely

Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Jon Dodson, Wave Transit
Travis Gilbert, Historic Wilmington Foundation
Cheryl Hannah, HDR
LB Haviland, NCDOT
Katie Hite, NCDOT
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Trace Howell, NCDOT
Grayson Jackson
Jamar Johnson, WMPO
Tiffany Jones, WECT News
Jeff Kramer, CUTR/USF
Jody Lewis, NCDOT
Bill Marley, FHWA
Amy Passaretti, Port City Daily
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT
Brayton Willis

1) Call to Order

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. MPO Executive Director Mike Kozlosky called the roll, and a quorum was present as follows:

Present: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Hank Miller, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Johnathan Barfield.

2) **Conflict of Interest Statement**

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

Mr. Kozlosky said that there were no requests for excused absence.

4) **Approval of the Agenda**

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

Ayes: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee, Hank Miller, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Johnathan Barfield. **Nays:** None.

6) **Public Comment Period**

Bijan Salehi, 7209 Orchard Trace, Wilmington, expressed concerns regarding the lack of sidewalks and drainage issues in the Masonboro area, improvements of which would benefit pedestrians, especially those with disabilities who are prevented from driving. He expressed frustration with current standing water issues, especially during hurricane season. He noted that he has attempted to contact the responsible authorities without satisfactory results, which he attributed to some political obstacle.

Mr. Salehi said that he has been in contact with Adrienne Cox of NCDOT, who is aware of his personal challenges. He pointed out that individuals such as himself are capable of and proficient at advocating for themselves, such as his passion regarding insufficient public transportation during a meeting at Forden Station. He expressed appreciation for Wave Transit's micro transit system, which he uses daily to reach essential destinations.

Mr. Anderson suggested that Mr. Salehi contact the New Hanover County Commissioners and NCDOT regarding his concerns. Although, Mr. Barfield noted that counties do not build sidewalks.

Ms. Rose Terry, 1789 Cedar Hill Road, Navassa, said she is a retired educator who at resides on NC-1430 on a severe curve, and shares the road with the River Bend Mine. She noted that many trucks travel the road daily, however, the road's width is insufficient for maneuvering. Consequently, as trucks enter the narrow passage, she has witnessed several near accidents over the years. She explained that the trucks come across the road, to the center line, carrying dirt, rocks, and soil, and since they can't navigate the turn successfully, they go into the ditch area. Currently, there are virtually no borders on the road, which poses a significant problem.

Since there was no signage regarding trucks entering the road, Ms. Terry said she contacted the DOT, which resulted in compliance and helped tremendously. She offered to provide copies of her correspondence with NCDOT in Raleigh, and Mr. Kimes obtained her phone number.

7) **Presentations**

a. **North Carolina Department of Transportation Rail Division Update- Jason Orthner, NCDOT**

NCDOT Rail Division Director Jason Orthner gave an update on the Rail Division's projects impacting the region and future access to the region including:

- **Piedmont Atlantic Intermodal Rail System** (funded by a 2017 grant): improvements to transform movement of rail containers from the Port of Wilmington to Charlotte and the CSX intermodal network with **Wilmington Beltline Project** (P-5740) to begin this year.
- **Southeastern North Carolina Passenger Rail Service Feasibility Study:** Two routes under evaluation. Draft study anticipated by this summer. Twelve corridors have been submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor ID Program.

- **Freight Rail and Rail Crossing Safety Program**

Mr. Anderson asked about the number of intersections without crossing arms and expressed concerns regarding horn sounding complaints. Mr. Orthner responded that he would research the number. However, he noted that the horn rule of specific sounding patterns for different crossings is federally required for safety reasons.

Mr. Barbee asked for a copy of the schedule of Wilmington Beltline improvements, as follows:

- (Market Street and Wrightsville Avenue, complete)
- June 28 & 29: 17th Street will be closed the first day at 5 a.m. and will reopen the day after at 5 a.m. (detour route and traffic control are in place).
- June 29 & 30: 16th Street will be closed and reopen the day after at 5 a.m.
- July 21: Princess Street crossing work tentatively scheduled
- Mid-Sept.: Oleander Drive crossing work tentatively scheduled
- Nov. '23: Railroad crosstie and rail replacement work tentatively scheduled
- March '24: Grade crossing warning device replacements; Roadway improvements withing the railroad corridor tentatively scheduled
- May '24: Navassa and Hilton Bridge modernization; Burnt Mill Creek Bridge replacement; New track construction west of King Street Crossing tentatively scheduled

Mr. Williams expressed concerns regarding intersection closings without prior notice.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Ellen regarding high-speed trains, Mr. Orthner said that an equipment vendor has been identified and the trains are capable of speeds of greater than 100 mph, although speeds of 80 mph are being considered.

b. Wilmington International Airport Update, Jeff Bourk, ILM

Deputy Airport Directors Granseur Dick and Bob Campbell gave an update on Wilmington International Airport (ILM).

Mr. Dick said that the Airport Authority completed its first five-year vision plan in January and will implement annual updates, which will coincide with updates to the MPO Board. He reminded Board members that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommends commercial service airports operate self-sufficiently. He noted that leases are one revenue stream and gave an overview of active business park projects in due diligence or design, which include expansions of the CIO cold storage and 84 Lumber facilities, development of an on-airport hotel, an auto warehouse, corporate aviation hangars, a flight school, a general aviation manufacturing training and maintenance center, and a hanger complex for private aircraft.

Mr. Dick reported that the airport terminal itself has new tenants including Port City Java and Flying Machine Brewery, expected to be operational by Thanksgiving. Other new tenants will include Dunkin' Donuts, Jimmy Johns, and a retail convenience center.

Mr. Dick gave an overview of Capital Projects aimed at supporting the airport's growth. He noted that projects include improvements to parking, realignment of Airport Boulevard, the potential addition of a parking deck, further airline terminal expansion, noise studies, and general airfield projects. He emphasized that the parking project is crucial due to its revenue generation and the airport's need to alleviate congestion. He added that the plan involves lengthening the curb line, and adding dedicated passenger vehicle and commercial service lanes. He noted that the project will break ground in January 2024 and is anticipated be complete in two years. Another project is

the widening 23rd Street to alleviate traffic congestion, and improve signage to assist travelers in finding parking and other relevant information.

Mr. Dick said that the terminal expansion project, which has already exceeded its design capacity, will undergo an environmental assessment to justify a future expansion. Additionally, runway rehabilitation, taxiway realignment, airfield drainage, and other smaller projects are also planned. He noted that the airport was awarded a FAA grant to conduct a Part 150 noise compatibility study to assess noise levels from military and commercial aircraft and explore potential mitigation measures. Finally, an update to the airport's master plan is planned once major construction projects are completed.

Mr. Campbell said that the most recent economic impact study by NCDOT, estimated ILM's impact on the local economy at \$2.5 billion. He commented that extrapolations show impressive figures for an airport of its size, including the generation of more than \$9 million in business sales tax. As an example of impact, one additional flight from New Haven, Connecticut, which assumes 53% of 14,210 passengers as visitors to Wilmington, results in over \$9 million in visitor spending.

Mr. Campbell reported that the airport is self-sufficient from an operating standpoint and doesn't rely on local tax dollars for operations. He noted that although expenses increased from FY22 to FY23, revenues increased as well with a 17% increase in passengers. He estimated that the airport is expecting a record of \$16 million in operating revenue and \$13.8 million in operating expenses. He noted that the \$2 million net difference will be allocated toward capital projects that are estimated to cost \$24 million in FY24.

Mr. Campbell said that other revenue sources for capital projects include entitlement grants based on enplanements, \$6.7 million from the state budget, passenger charges and rental car fees. He noted that over the next five years the airport expects to have access to \$106 million. Despite a \$60 million shortfall, \$30 million in discretionary grants, debt capacity, and the \$20 million from reserves released recently by the Airport Authority should cover the capital plan shortfall anticipated over the next five years.

Mr. Campbell said that the airport's marketing and air service efforts have contributed to its growth, becoming the fastest-growing airport in North Carolina and the third fastest-growing airport in the country. He attributed the increased passenger numbers to the addition of new non-stop routes from Delta and partnerships with airlines like Avelo and Sun Country. He added that the airport's marketing campaign, "ILM: I Love My Airport," aims to promote the airport as a low-cost option and attract travelers who previously went to Myrtle Beach.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Anderson, Mr. Dick said that the airport terminal and runway can handle expansion of the airport for the next 30 to 40 years. He commented that the only thing the runway can't handle are wide-body aircraft (Airbus 380 Air Force 1).

Mr. Ellen recommended that the airport work with the cruise ship lines to capture those passengers. Mr. Barbee pointed out that ingress/egress should be addressed with NCDOT and the WMPO, and that signage should be introduced to encourage alternative routes to the airport. Mr. Barfield expressed kudos to the airport and its authority for the economic impact to the region.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Carter, Mr. Dick said that the airport is working with the FAA to have an optimal noise study. She pointed out that not only is the airport growing, but the population is as well. Mr. Ellen suggested that noise from the military be discounted since it is the "sound of freedom."

c. **Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Shared Use Bridge Concept / Bridge Compatibility Study- Roger Rochelle, Hardesty Hanover**

City of Wilmington Economic Development Director Aubrey Parsley gave a brief overview of the proposed alternatives for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, and introduced the concept of a triple-mode alternative compatible with the Rail Realignment Project and the widening of South Third Street.

Alternative Delivery Director Roger Rochelle, Hardesty & Hanover, gave a presentation on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Shared Use Bridge Concept. He acknowledged the presence of Chief Technical Officer Keith Griesing (New York), and Senior Bridge Engineer Megan Young (Raleigh).

Mr. Rochelle said the study is a detailed concept providing a fifth, high-level option for the Express Design Feasibility Study presented by NCDOT. He noted that the concept is neither a final engineering design nor intended to advocate for any given solution. He said that the final report distributed to MPO Board members provides much greater detail.

Mr. Rochelle described the process of determining the best superstructure or bridge component for spanning the river. He noted that the chosen option is a five-span, steel girder with a steel truss vertical lift span for the rail. He compared alternative options, including a parallel option and a nested or stacked option. He commented that the nested option, where the rail goes underneath the roadway bridge, is favored due to benefits such as improved safety, reduced foundation size, and reduced environmental impact. He compared separate structures to the nested option and pointed out the advantages of separate structures for greater vertical clearance and easier maintenance and constructability, and highlighted the benefits of the nested option for aesthetics and navigability.

Mr. Rochelle gave an overview of the cost estimates for the different options, indicating that the nested option at \$548 million is estimated to cost less than separate structures. He said the concept considers the possibility of adding rail to the roadway bridge in the future, which would require adaptations during initial construction.

In response to inquiries, Mr. Kimes said that aesthetic options could be considered. And Mr. Rochelle noted that the concept includes a pedestrian walkway.

d. **Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Organizational Assessment- J. Scott Lane, J. Scott Lane & Company**

Consultant J. Scott Lane, J. Scott Lane & Company, gave an overview of the WMPO's Organizational Assessment, timeline and recommendations. He said that the study involved assessing strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities through interviews, remote meetings, stakeholder engagement and comparison of five peer agencies, each of which are unique. He commented that the survey results were positive, indicating good responsiveness. He emphasized the importance of objective opinions and acknowledged the challenges faced by participants. He noted that the report includes recommendations, focusing on survey options, staff behavior, relationships, and collaboration.

Mr. Lane gave an overview of study highlights including the strengths of the organization, which are strong external communications. He noted that for organizations of more than 12, internal communications and relationships become more critical, and are important to improving staff attraction and retention. Other recommendations included creating value for core MPO products, continuing to find innovative ways of engaging people inside and outside of the organization, and

minor documentation and process guidance improvements as well as picking up specializations such as land use integration, technology, and multi-modal transportation planning.

Mr. Lane said that the recommendations focus on staffing, implementation, and organization. He noted that the study suggests hiring a funding specialist, active transportation specialist, communication specialist, addressing implementation challenges, and considering partnerships with smaller entities. Other recommendations include Board member retreat and training, and a joint meeting with the Technical Coordinating Committee in addition to updating documents such as the Lead Planning Agency Agreement, the Unified Planning Work Program, and Memorandum of Understanding, and increasing public participation.

8) Consent Agenda

- a. **Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from May 31, 2023**
- b. **Resolution requesting Administrative Modifications to the 2020-2029 and 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs for Public Transportation Projects**
- c. **Resolution requesting Amendments to the 2020-2029 and 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs for Public Transportation Projects**
- d. **Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #23-3**
- e. **Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Amendment #23-4**
- f. **Opening of the 30-day public comment period for the 2024-2033 State/Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Programs**

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Williams, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Johnathan Barfield, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee.

9) Discussion

- a. **2020-2029 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #23-4**

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

- b. **2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Logo and Branding**

Associate Transportation Planner Carolyn Caggia presented logo and branding proposals for the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Technical Coordinating Committee's (TCC) recommendations.

Following a lengthy debate, Mr. Anderson made a motion to approve logo and branding concept D3 (Cape Fear Navigating Change with the compass rose), seconded by Mr. Williams, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Johnathan Barfield, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer.

Absent: Wendy Fletcher-Hardee.

- c. **NCDOT Prioritization 7.0 Update**

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo said that MPO staff has contacted the MPO's modal planning partners to compile a list of projects for submission. She noted that Prioritization 7.0 (P 7.0) submission window will open July 10th.

A question/answer/discussion period. Mr. Kozlosky clarified that project F3 is a ferry project. He asked Board members to review the list and provide feedback at the next Board meeting. He encouraged members to work with their local jurisdictions to identify projects to be considered and for bicycle/pedestrian funding where there is a willingness to commit to the 20% local match.

Ms. Carter inquired about the widening project on page 94. Mr. Kozlosky responded that the Cape Fear Crossing project is the new location facility from US-17 to the Independence Boulevard area. He noted that its inclusion acknowledges the importance of the project, although it is not on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). He added that the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is in the STIP.

Mr. Anderson asked about projects just short of being funded. Mr. Kozlosky responded that staff would provide the requested information.

Mr. Williams left the meeting.

Mr. Ellen recommended that the State discuss not allowing children under the age of 18 to use electric scooters and electric bikes.

d. Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road interchange

Chairman Miller turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Waddell for the discussion of this item.

NCDOT Division 3 Engineer Chad Kimes gave an overview of an alternative design for the Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road Interchange, which would save about \$6 million and have no impact on the projected level of service, which would be kept at an acceptable level.

Mr. Kimes said that due to the volume of concerns regarding impacts to two areas, NCDOT considered a redesign, which was substantial enough to bring it back to the Board. He gave a brief overview of the project timeline and current design. He noted that the redesign would leave Commonwealth Drive alone except for a cul-de-sac, and the intersection at Progress Point would become a full movement. He provided an overview of the change in turning movements from all directions and the changes in levels of service.

A brief question/answer/discussion period was held to clarify the movements and the cost savings. Mr. Kimes responded the savings would return for use in the Regional Tier. He requested support for the alternative design.

Mr. Anderson made a motion to recuse Chairman Miller, seconded by Mr. Barbee and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Johnathan Barfield, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Frank Williams.

Mr. Ellen made a motion to approve the recommended amendment to the design of the Military Cutoff/Eastwood Road Interchange, seconded by Mr. Carter, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Mike Allen, Neil Anderson, Lynn Barbee, Johnathan Barfield, Veronica Carter, John Ellen, Dane Scalise, Luke Waddell, Eulis Willis and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Frank Williams. **Recused:** Hank Miller

Chairman Miller resumed presiding over the meeting.

e. **PROTECT Grant**

Ms. Lorenzo stated that staff requests consensus from the WMPO Board to move forward with applying for a planning grant to develop a Resilience Infrastructure Plan for the WMPO planning area. She noted that the 2020-2021 Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) introduced the PROTECT Grant program making available two types of grants: planning and implementation. The FY23 PROTECT Grant Notice of Funding Opportunity was posted in April with applications for this funding cycle due on August 18, 2023. She added that the planning grant award is at 100% federal share, meaning that no local matching funds are required.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Carter, Ms. Lorenzo clarified that this grant money would be available to all regional members. Mr. Kozlosky reiterated that only consensus is requested today, and noted that a resolution will be brought to the MPO Board at its next meeting.

There was no opposition to the WMPO's application for the PROTECT Grant.

10) **Updates**

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

Mr. Kozlosky said that the updates are included in the agenda packet.

11) **Next meeting – July 26, 2023**

There being no further business, Mr. Ellen made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Carter, and the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 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.**