



MPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 26, 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
Jonathan Barfield, New Hanover County
Brenda Bozeman, 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
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

Others Present in Person

Chuck Bost, Town of Belville
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Jon Dodson, Wave Transit
Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Scott A. James, WMPO
Vanessa Lacer, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Rachel McIntyre, City of Wilmington
Caitlin Melvin, NCDOT
Rebekah Roth, New Hanover County
Greer Shivers, WMPO
Emma Stogner, WMPO

Others Present Remotely

Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
LB Haviland, NCDOT
Jennifer Harris
Katie Hite, NCDOT
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Jamar Johnson, WMPO
William Kincannon, HDR
Tyler Newman, ncBASE
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT

1) Call to Order

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

2) Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Miller 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.

MPO Executive Director Mike Kozlosky called the roll as follows:

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

Mr. Kozlosky noted that a quorum was present in-person, so no need for roll call votes.

3) Approval of Board Member Excused Absences

Mr. Kozlosky said that Wendy Hardee-Fletcher has requested to be excused. Mr. Barfield made a motion to excuse Ms. Hardee-Fletcher, seconded by Mr. Ellen and the motion carried unanimously.

4) **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Forte made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mr. Barfield, and the motion carried unanimously.

5) **Public Comment Period**

Mr. Kozlosky noted that no one was present to give public comment.

6) **Presentations**

a. **Walk Wilmington Pedestrian Plan Update**

Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo gave an overview of the Walk Wilmington Pedestrian Plan 2023 Update. She noted that the plan update was funded by an NCDOT Transportation Planning Grant, and over the course of about a year, beginning in early 2022, the City of Wilmington worked with the WMPO and a consultant to update to the 2009 Walk Wilmington Plan. She added that the Wilmington City Council adopted the plan update last week.

Ms. Lorenzo pointed out that the update builds on an already successful plan and aims to guide the development of pedestrian infrastructure projects, policies, and programs to address the changing needs of the community due to population growth and continuing development. She noted that the focus of the plan is to make walking a safe and comfortable mobility choice for residents and visitors. She added that the update was prompted by the city's high pedestrian crash rates and need to improve safety.

Ms. Lorenzo said that the plan's development involved collaboration with a steering committee and public engagement. She noted that six primary goals were identified, with a strong emphasis on safety, equity, and connectivity. An assessment of the existing pedestrian network, highlighting areas for improvement and opportunities, was at the update's foundation. She noted that a high-risk network comprising about 10% of Wilmington's routes was identified, as well as where conflicts and injuries were most common. This network also intersected with areas where transportation-disadvantaged communities relied heavily on walking, making safety improvements crucial.

Ms. Lorenzo said that public engagement efforts included surveys and interactive maps, and the community's feedback emphasized the importance of safety, equity, and connectivity. As a result, the plan's priorities were aligned with these aspects. She noted that the plan sought to utilize data and analysis to make informed decisions about where to invest in pedestrian infrastructure improvements, focusing on the identified goals and the areas with the highest need for safety enhancements. She gave an example of recommendations and noted that the update includes an implementation plan with action steps and planning strategies.

Ms. Lorenzo noted that today's consent agenda includes a resolution for the MPO Board's consideration to adopt the Walk Wilmington Pedestrian Plan Update.

Mr. Ellen asked about the basis for the crash statistics. Ms. Lorenzo responded that the statistics were based on population in the large city category for the number of incidents and incidents where serious injury or death occurred.

b. **Terry Benjey Foundation (TBF)**

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Eileen McConville, President, Terry Benjey Bicycling Foundation (TBF), and a member of the Cape Fear Cyclists Board of Directors, who gave a presentation to the New Hanover Board of Commissioners several months ago, who suggested she give a presentation to the MPO Board.

Ms. McConville gave an overview of both bicycling organizations and their commitment to assisting municipalities with bicycle and pedestrian plans. She pointed out that the Federal Infrastructure Bill, signed into law last November, included unprecedented levels of funding for active transportation and the safety of vulnerable road users, which represents an important step toward building more livable communities.

Ms. McConville said that the Terry Benjey Bicycling Foundation was established in 2013 as a nonprofit to honor Terry Benjey, a long-time cycling advocate who succumbed to a bicycling accident in 2013. She added that Mr. Benjey was one of a small group who worked with the Wilmington City Council in 1972 to create the scenic byways of Wilmington, the first of which was the Greenfield Lake Bikeway. She added that Mr. Benjey was also Cape Fear Cyclists' first president and was appointed to the inaugural NCDOT Bicycle Advisory Committee in 1978 by Governor James Hunt. She noted that the foundation's goal is to continue Mr. Benjey's vision.

Ms. McConville said that the TBF is an active partner with Cape Fear Cyclists with the goal of promoting the use of bicycles in the Cape Fear region not only for recreation but also for fitness and for safely getting from point A to point B as more trails are created and bicycling becomes a more popular means of transportation. Other active partnerships include those with the East Coast Greenway Alliance, Bike Walk North Carolina, Kure Beach Bike-Pedestrian Committee, the Gullah Geechee Heritage Trail, and the WMPO. She pointed out that the foundation's partnership with Kure Beach is a model bicycle safety education program supported by community volunteers.

Ms. McConville said that the foundation's successes include the installation of bike racks and corrals, providing grants, education, and curriculum development. She noted that the TBF is an active participant with the NCDOT Free Helmet Program. Additionally, she commented that the foundation is glad to be a resource and partner, and to provide letters of support for grant applications, and postings to social media.

Mr. Ellen encouraged Board members to join the Cape Fear Cyclists. He noted that some local bicycle shops provide a 10% discount to members.

c. Wilmington Urban Area MPO's Direct Attributable Program Update

Senior Transportation Planning Engineer Scott A. James gave a brief update on the WMPO's Direct Attributable (DA) Program. He said that a call for projects was issued on July 7th. He noted that this is an annual event with a July call, an August pre-submittal deadline, a September final deadline, and an October award. He noted that this call has the same guidelines and rules that were established last year. He added that the allocation is also the same: an amount of approximately \$4 million in Direct Attributable funds with slightly more than \$500,000 in Transportation Alternative Set Aside funds and slightly less than \$550,000 for the Carbon Reduction funds. To date, staff has fielded three questions on potential projects and anticipates at least two others.

Mr. Barfield expressed appreciation for the briefness of Mr. James' presentation.

7) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes from June 28, 2023**
- b. Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Amendments #23-3**
- c. Resolution approving 2020-2029 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #23-4**
- d. Resolution supporting the award of Section 5310 Community Grant Project Funds**

- e. Resolution adopting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's 2023 Organizational Assessment
- f. Resolution adopting the 2023 Walk Wilmington Pedestrian Plan Update
- g. Resolution supporting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's efforts to secure a Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program grant to complete a Resiliency Improvement Plan for the Wilmington Urban Area

Mr. Ellen made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Ms. Bozeman, and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Presentations (continued)

d. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Senior Transportation Planner Vanessa Lacer gave an update on the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). She reminded Board members that federal law mandates that all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) adopt a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update every five years. She pointed out that this plan is crucial for transportation planning in the region and covers a 25-year outlook. She noted that the plan must encompass all six transportation modes: aviation, bicycle and pedestrian, ferry and water transportation, rail, public transportation, and roadway. She added that the plan needs to be fiscally constrained, have a 20-year minimum planning horizon, involve public participation, and align with local land use plans.

Ms. Lacer said that the plan serves as a blueprint for regional transportation efforts and connects projects to funding opportunities. She noted that projects included in the plan become eligible for state and federal funding and prioritizing them for implementation. She added that the planning process involves multiple phases, including public outreach and involvement of two steering committees: the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), appointed by the MPO Board, and the technical steering committee (MTPC). She explained that the CAC focuses on public engagement, while the MTPC consists of subject matter experts who work on plan details, criteria, and project evaluation. She noted that the public outreach campaign involves surveys, interviews, public meetings, media promotion, and contests to gather input from the community.

Ms. Lacer concluded the presentation with a description of the ongoing and upcoming phases of the planning process. She said that Phase 1 launches on August 1st with an online survey and runs through November. She noted that public outreach includes in-person and virtual public meetings, stakeholder interviews, email blasts, and social media posts to promote the survey and interactive map. She encouraged members to attend the kick-off meeting on August 3rd.

8) Public Hearing

a. 2024-2033 State/Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Kozlosky said that the 2024-2033 Statewide/Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program (STIP/MTIP) is the culmination of more than two years work undertaken in collaboration with NCDOT and the MPO. He noted that the NC Board of Transportation adopted the 2024-2030 STIP/MTIP on June 6th. He added that the MPO Board's adopted Public Participation Plan requires a 30-day public comment period, which the Board opened in June, a Public Hearing, and adoption, which the Board will consider at its August meeting.

Vice Chairman Waddell moved to open the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Barfield, and the motion carried unanimously.

There being no one present to speak, Ms. Bozeman made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Scalise, and the motion carried unanimously.

9) **Regular Agenda**

a. **Opening of a 14-day public comment period for the Prioritization 7.0 Project Submittals**

Ms. Lorenzo said that the latest draft Prioritization 7.0 (P 7.0) Project Submittals are included in the agenda packet with changes since June summarized in a memo. She explained that the development of the draft submittals is an ongoing process. She noted that the projects were sourced from the adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and refined with input from the MPO's planning partners. Although no changes were made to the bicycle and pedestrian project list, and the public transportation project list, changes to other project lists include:

Aviation: Three projects (AV-5798, AV-5738, AV-5796) have been omitted since they are being restored in P 7.0, eliminating the need for resubmission.

Ferry: One project (F-5705 or F-3) has been omitted as a carryover project.

Rail: Four projects have been added, including a freight rail connection and passenger rail reestablishment projects.

Roadway: The Murrayville Grade Modernization and Extension Project (RW-99), has been divided into segments, with plans to submit the modernization and change portion. An expansion project is also planned. Additionally, the Cape Fear Crossing projects will be considered as carryover projects and won't require resubmission.

Ms. Lorenzo added that staff will review fiscally constrained projects from the 2045 MTP and make recommendations for additional projects.

Mr. Barfield made a motion to open the 14-day public comment period, seconded by Vice Chairman Waddell and the motion carried unanimously.

b. **Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Direct Attributable Funds to the City of Wilmington for the Hooker Road Multi-use Path, Hinton Avenue Multi-use Path, and Wrightsville/Greenville intersection improvements**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Hooker Road Multi-use Path, Hinton Avenue Multi-use Path, and Wrightsville/Greenville intersection improvements were funded in the 2013 and 2014 calls for projects. He commented that the City of Wilmington is working diligently on these projects and has requested an additional \$960,000 in Direct Attributable funds and is committing to the required 20% match in the amount of \$240,000. He noted that sufficient funding exists in the contingency fund for this allocation and staff recommends approval. He acknowledged that Rachel McIntyre, former MPO staff member, who is now managing the project for the City of Wilmington, is available to answer any questions.

Ms. Bozeman made a motion to approve the allocation, seconded by Mr. Scalise and the motion carried unanimously.

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.

NCDOT Division Engineer Chad Kimes said that he has received several calls regarding the presentation last month on a fifth alternative for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. He commented that NCDOT had concerns about the presentation, of which it took no part. He noted that NCDOT is still examining the options and anticipates giving an update on the traffic and revenue study and the merger process (planning and environmental document) to the Board in November.

Mr. Kimes added that the Military Cutoff Extension ribbon cutting will be held in September on a date has yet to be confirmed. He noted that there will be no traffic on the Military Cutoff Extension until the ribbon cutting.

Mr. Barfield expressed appreciation regarding the safety improvements to College Road at Bragg Drive, which added a pedestrian crossing and where it is now possible to see on-coming traffic.

Nazia Sarder, NCDOT Transportation Planning Unit, commented that the Brunswick County CTP updates are in the agenda packet and that the project is progressing nicely. She noted that staff is waiting on management review and plans to go to all the local adopting agencies for presentations soon. She added that the Transportation Demand Model for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is also going well and is on track.

11) **Announcements**

a. **2050 WMPO MTP Technical Steering Committee Meeting- July 27, 2023**

b. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Committee Meeting- August 8, 2023**

12) **Next meeting – August 30, 2023**

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 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.**