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Create and execute continuing, cooperative and comprehensive regional long-range planning efforts that pro-actively drive transportation decisions to improve safety, connectivity, economic development and quality of life in the Wilmington region.

TO: Wilmington Urban Area MPO Board's Boundary, Governance, and Structure
Subcommittee Members
FROM: Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director
DATE: August 10, 2023
SUBJECT: August 14th Special Meeting

The Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Board's Boundary, Governance, and Structure Subcommittee will hold a Special meeting on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the 4th Floor Technology Conference Room located at 305 Chestnut Street in downtown Wilmington, North Carolina. Members of the public, MPO Board Subcommittee Members and MPO Staff can attend the meeting in person and virtually through the Zoom platform. The meeting will be streamed live online so that simultaneous live audio, and video, if any, of the meeting is available at the following URL:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83969107282>

The public may also dial in and listen to the simultaneous live audio of the remote meeting at the following dial in number: (309) 205-3325 or (312) 626-6799. And when prompted, enter:
Meeting ID: 839 6910 7282

The following is the agenda for the meeting:

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Minutes- May 2, 2023
3. Update on Discussions regarding potential boundary expansion
4. Discussion on Recommended Next Steps
5. Adjourn

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

City of Wilmington • Town of Carolina Beach • Town of Kure Beach • Town of Wrightsville Beach
County of New Hanover • Town of Belville • Town of Leland • Town of Navassa • County of Brunswick
County of Pender • Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority • North Carolina Department of Transportation

**Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Board's
Boundary, Governance, and Structure Subcommittee
Tuesday, May 2, 2023, Meeting Minutes**

In-person Members

Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach
Frank Williams, Brunswick County

Remote Members

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

Others Present

Sam Boswell, Cape Fear Council of Governments
Rob Kohler, AirSage
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Alan Serkin, Cape Fear Council of Governments
Greer Shivers, WMPO

Absent Members

Luke Waddell, Chairman, City of Wilmington

1. Call to order

MPO Deputy Director Abby Lorenzo called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. and called the roll as follows:

Present: Lynn Barbee, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Frank Williams. **Absent:** Jonathan Barfield and Luke Waddell.

A quorum was present. In the absence of a Chairman Waddell, Ms. Lorenzo requested that a temporary chair be elected.

Mr. Williams nominated Mr. Barbee as temporary chairman, seconded by Ms. Fletcher-Hardee, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote as follows:

Ayes: Lynn Barbee, Wendy Fletcher-Hardee and Frank Williams. **Nays:** None. **Absent:** Jonathan Barfield and Luke Waddell.

2. Review of 2020 Urban Area Boundaries and Federal Regulations for Planning Boundary Expansion.

Ms. Lorenzo distributed copies of the presentation slides and reminded subcommittee members that this item, which was prompted by the release of the 2020 Census and defined Urban Areas, was presented to the MPO Board at its February meeting. She said that MPOs are federally required to be established any time an Urban Area exceeds 50,000 in population. Also, federal code requires that MPOs review their current planning area boundary, governance, and structure with the release of updated Census information.

Ms. Lorenzo said that there are more criteria to define an Urban Area than a planning area boundary. She noted that at a minimum, the MPO boundary shall encompass the entire existing urbanized area, plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The planning area boundary can be expanded to encompass the entire Metropolitan Statistical Area or Combined Statistical Area, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. Furthermore, the code states the MPO boundary can encompass more than one Urbanized Area and the MPO boundary may be established to coincide with the geography of regional economic development and growth forecasting areas.

Ms. Lorenzo gave an overview of potential pros and cons of a planning area expansion identified by staff, beginning with potential pros as follows:

- A federal transportation planning process for a rapidly growing region with new Urban Areas.
- Greater regional coordination, collaboration, strengthening the region's influence.
- Additional relationships with communities in Pender County and Brunswick County.
- Expanded opportunities for transportation planning for additional infrastructure facilities such as U.S. 17 and NC Highway 50 and NC Highway 133, 211, and 87 corridors.
- Additional funding for planning and project implementation from NCDOT.

Ms. Lorenzo noted that the staff-identified cons of expansion may include the following:

- Increased demand on MPO staff and budgetary resources
- Increased cost of the MPO to provide its transportation planning services.
- Increased competitiveness of projects selected for submittal to NCDOT's prioritization process and for Direct Attributable funding.
- Dilution of the voting membership depending on the governance structure.
- Difficulty maintaining a quorum with additional membership.

Ms. Lorenzo said that staff has been gathering data to analyze growth patterns and areas where the region appears to be headed in terms of urbanizing over the next 20 or 25 years. She noted that staff has provided three possible planning area boundary expansion scenarios as follows:

- a. Expansion to the northeast in Pender County to include Topsail Beach and Surf City.
- b. Expansion to the west and south to include northeastern Brunswick counties with jurisdictions such as Northwest, Sandy Creek, Boiling Springs Lakes, Bolivia, Saint James, Oak Island, Caswell Beach, Southport, and Bald Head Island.
- c. A combination of the two previous scenarios.

3. 2045 Wilmington Urban Area Boundary Projections

Ms. Lorenzo reminded subcommittee members that the impetus behind this deep dive is the federal code stating that MPO boundaries shall encompass the entire existing Urban Area plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast, which is no easy task.

WMPO GIS Analyst Greer Shivers gave an overview of how the Census Bureau delineates Urban Areas and MPO staff gathers data from future plans and approved developments to help forecast where growth is occurring. She noted that Brunswick County is of particular interest since Surf City and Topsail Beach are already developed and are in the Hampstead Urbanized Area (UA), having met delineation criteria. She noted that this time, 2020 Census determined Urban Areas are based on housing unit density, rather than on population alone as in past Census data.

Ms. Shivers said that an area is delineated as an Urban Area if it meets the following criteria:

- Minimum of 2,000 housing units
- Density of 425 housing units per square mile
- At least 20% impervious surface for one-third of a Census block
- 40% of the Census block contiguous with qualifying territory

- At least 200 housing units per square mile filling the remainder of the Urban Area
- Having a high-density nucleus with at least one Census block reaching a threshold of 1,275 housing units per square mile, contiguous with qualifying territory, and with a high level of imperviousness.
- Group quarters with a population of 500 if adjacent to an existing UA Census block.
- Connectivity achieved through "hops" (half-mile connections) and "jumps" (maximum 1.5-mile connections), with only one jump permitted per connection.

Ms. Shivers said that low-density blocks (less than 200 housing units per square mile) and areas with wetlands or water bodies are excluded. However, a high degree of imperviousness can help determine if a block will become urban. She noted that the following may still be considered:

- Non-residential areas with a high level of imperviousness, contiguous with an Urban Area
- Blocks within a half-mile of the UA with at least 1,000 jobs (determined by Lotus Data collected by the Census)
- Blocks that don't meet the density threshold that are surrounded by qualifying blocks, or water on one side and a qualifying block on the other.

Ms. Shivers displayed maps of existing Urban Areas and qualifying blocks. She noted that the distance between Wilmington's Urban Area and Hampstead's Urban Area is 3.5 miles. If projecting to 2050 with current regional trends, she noted that the gap may close to within the 1.5-mile range and ultimately be absorbed into the WMPO's jurisdiction.

Ms. Shivers said that Saint James and Oak Island have their own Urban Areas, and that Oak Island's includes Southport. She noted that although the Boiling Spring Lakes area has the 425 housing units per square mile for some of its blocks, and the 200 housing units or more per square mile, it lacks a high-density nucleus. She added that in the past it was determined to be an Urban Cluster, but with the changes in the 2020 Census, it is not considered an Urban Area, although it has potential.

Mr. Williams asked if a jurisdiction not required to be an MPO could have that option if desired.

Ms. Shivers responded that it depends on whether the jurisdiction thinks it would be good for regional collaboration.

Ms. Lorenzo pointed out that while there are additional Urban Areas in the vicinity of the Wilmington Urban Area, such as Hampstead, Oak Island and St. James, they don't meet the 50,000-population threshold that distinguishes an MPO. She added that the federal code allows a planning area boundary to include more than one Urban Area.

Ms. Shivers pointed out that much development tends to grow along the major corridors.

Temporary Chairman Barbee commented that the density of buildable land appears to be much higher than one might think.

Ms. Shivers responded that Boiling Spring Lakes' Future Land Use Plans show that residential development is restricted along NC-87 due to Red-cockaded woodpecker habitat, which is conservation area. She noted that there are some small pockets of developable land, but they are unlikely to be developed. She pointed out that Boiling Spring Lakes is sitting in a small pocket surrounded by wetlands.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Williams, Ms. Shivers responded that Leland is considered part of the Wilmington Urban Area due to its contiguousness and the way growth is situated.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Barfield, Ms. Lorenzo recapped the reasons for boundary expansion and the benefits to the region. Mr. Barfield commented that he doesn't see Pender County and Hampstead urbanizing in 20 years. Ms. Lorenzo said that staff considered Pender, but based on the data received, most growth is occurring in Brunswick County.

Temporary Chairman Barbee expressed appreciation to staff and expressed a preference for the visuals as opposed to spreadsheets. Ms. Lorenzo acknowledged that the two presentations with all the visuals have been emailed to Mr. Barfield and Ms. Fletcher-Hardee, who attended the meeting remotely.

4. Update on Discussions with Potentially Interested Jurisdictions

Ms. Lorenzo said that in early April, at the direction of the MPO Board, staff sent an email to town managers, administrators, and planning directors of jurisdictions identified in the potential expansion scenarios to gauge any interest in learning more about the Wilmington Urban Area MPO and furthering conversation about potentially joining the WMPO. She noted that the jurisdictions were given a deadline to respond to the inquiry by the close of business on May 12th.

Ms. Lorenzo said that several jurisdictions have responded. She noted that in mid-April, MPO staff met with the Pender County Manager and Planning Director to provide background on this boundary expansion process. She added that several jurisdictions in southern Brunswick County also responded. She noted that this morning she gave a presentation to town managers of Saint James, Oak Island, Southport, Bald Head Island, Caswell Beach, Boiling Spring Lakes, and Brunswick County Manager Steve Stone was also in attendance. Additionally, Topsail Beach asked for a presentation to their Board of Commissioners, which is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10th. She noted that the WMPO has yet to receive a response from the jurisdictions of Bolivia, Northwest, Sandy Creek, and Surf City.

Temporary Chairman Barbee asked if there was any indication of their preference, one way or another. Ms. Lorenzo responded that there is much internal discussion within each of those jurisdictions and with their governing bodies. She noted that what's unique about these Brunswick County jurisdictions is they have another Metropolitan Planning Area just to the west, who may or may not also be reaching out to gauge interest. At the end of the day, she pointed out that this must be a coordinated and collaborative effort, and everyone must agree for it to happen. She commented that the jurisdictions recognize that the WMPO wants to find out who is potentially interested in continuing this conversation.

She commented that she had a positive takeaway from this morning's meeting, and the town and county managers were grateful for and seemed interested in the information.

Mr. Williams said that in Brunswick County, he and Commissioner Forte both also serve on the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Board. He noted that other Brunswick County Commissioners serve on the Grand Strand MPO Board and those commissioners want to encourage some their jurisdictions to go with the Grand Strand MPO. However, the jurisdictions need to make up their own minds, and don't need to be pushed in any direction. He expressed the hope that their decision will be in favor of a North Carolina-based organization. He pointed out that there's a communication disconnect between North Carolina and South Carolina. He added that it would make sense to have them working with an organization that speaks NCDOT's language as opposed to SCDOT's. He expressed the hope that if they are interested in an MPO it will be the WMPO, and, if not, that they will stay with the RPO until things change according to the numbers on the map.

Mr. Williams pointed out that there are eight municipalities under consideration, and if they were all to join, the City and New Hanover County might be opposed to adding eight more votes from Brunswick

County, which would require a major conversation about governance. He added that it would have to be something everybody could agree on, which would be challenging to find.

5. Discussion on Recommended Next Steps

Temporary Chairman Barbee said that it will be necessary gauge interest. He concurred with Mr. Williams and commented that he has no interest in pressuring the jurisdictions, especially Brunswick County. He also agreed that governance of a larger board would be challenging as well as spreading the funding further. Ms. Lorenzo responded that Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) funding is based on the Urbanized Area, and planning federal funds are based on population.

Mr. Barfield expressed concerns regarding any potential expansion from an equity standpoint. He said that adding more jurisdictions would impact distribution of funds, although New Hanover County and the City are paying the freight of the MPO and smaller jurisdiction contribute less but still have votes. He noted that there would need to be weighted voting for those who are contributing more to have a bigger say.

Temporary Chairman Barbee noted that his jurisdiction is one of the smaller ones and said he agrees conceptually with Mr. Barfield that those who contribute the most should have more representation.

Mr. Williams pointed out that the challenge will be not going so far to the extreme found in some other MPOs, with little to no representation to justify sitting at the table.

Temporary Chairman Barbee expressed a desire to receive feedback from the organizations under consideration, which may lead to further discussions with them.

Ms. Lorenzo said that staff can do some research into other larger peers in North Carolina and their governance structure.

Mr. Williams also asked for feedback from the groups contacted.

Temporary Chairman Barbee recapped the need for some examples from larger areas like Charlotte and how it manages representation, and feedback from the communities contacted. He recommended that Chairman Waddell call the next meeting and asked about the timeline.

Ms. Lorenzo said that federal guidelines require that the MPO make changes to the MPO's Planning Area Boundary by the adoption of the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is due on November 18, 2025. However, if changes are to be made, they must be incorporated into the MTP. She added that the MPO Board has appointed a subcommittee to discuss these difficult questions, work closely with staff and walk through this process, but no other timeline has been set.

In response to an inquiry by Temporary Chairman Barbee, Ms. Lorenzo said that there's no rush, but the decision should be made within a year. She noted that staff wants subcommittee members to be thoughtful in this process and have all the information they need to make recommendations.

6. Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Note: This is not a verbatim transcription of the meeting.



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MEMORANDUM

TO: MPO Board's Boundary, Governance, and Structure Subcommittee Members

FROM: Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director

DATE: August 8, 2023

SUBJECT: Wilmington Urban Area MPO Boundary Discussion Update

Following each Decennial Census, the Census Bureau updates existing and identifies new Urban Areas (UA). On December 29, 2022, the US Census released the Wilmington UA Census data with additional mapping information was released in January 2023. The UA boundaries are based on the updated UA criteria revised from the 2010 Decennial Census. NCGS § 136-200.2. Decennial review of metropolitan planning organization boundaries, structure, and governance requires that “– Following each decennial census, and more frequently if requested by an individual metropolitan planning organization, the Governor, and the Secretary of Transportation, in cooperation with the affected metropolitan planning organization or organizations, shall initiate an evaluation of the boundaries, structure, and governance of each metropolitan planning organization in the State. This review could require changes to the organizational boundaries, structure, and/or governance.”

The Code of Federal Regulations provides guidance for this decennial review of an established MPO's planning boundary, also called the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). CFR § 450.312 Metropolitan Planning Area boundaries stipulates that “At a minimum, the MPA boundaries shall encompass the entire existing urbanized area (as defined by the Bureau of the Census) plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period for the metropolitan transportation plan.” The section also details that MPA boundaries can encompass more than one urban area and may “be established to coincide with the geography of regional economic development and growth forecasting.”

Based on the release of the 2020 UA data, NC General Statute, and federal regulations, WMPO staff presented several scenarios to the MPO Board for consideration of potential MPA boundary expansion. At the March 29th MPO Board meeting, the Board authorized staff to reach out and gauge interest from potential members based on these scenarios. At the May 31, 2023, Board meeting, consensus of the Board was to receive any formal responses requesting consideration for inclusion no later than July 31, 2023.

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

As an update on discussions with potential members, MPO staff met with representatives from the county and municipalities in Brunswick County on May 2nd. MPO staff provided presentations to the Topsail Beach Town Council on May 10th and Surf City Town Council on May 19th. MPO staff have been notified by the Town of Surf City and Town of Topsail Beach that they desire to remain with the Cape Fear Rural Planning Organization.

On July 13th the Southport Board of Alderman expressed interest in the Cape Fear RPO, Wilmington Urban Area MPO, and Grand Strand Study Area MPO. MPO staff along with staff from the Cape Fear RPO provided presentations to the Southport Board of Alderman on August 4th. The Grand Strand Study Area MPO is scheduled to present to the Southport Board of Alderman in September.



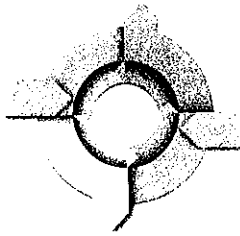
NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MPO BOUNDARY, GOVERNANCE, AND STRUCTURE SUBCOMMITTEE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the MPO Boundary, Governance, and Structure Subcommittee of the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) Board will hold a special meeting to discuss the MPO boundary, governance, and structure. The meeting will be held on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. in the 4th Floor Technology Conference Room, at 305 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Henry E. Miller III
MPO Board Chairman

Posted: August 7, 2023

If you have any questions, please contact
Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director,
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization,
(910) 341-3258.



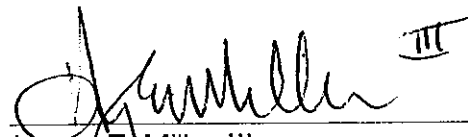
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REVISED NOTICE NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MPO BOUNDARY, GOVERNANCE, AND STRUCTURE SUBCOMMITTEE

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Henry E. Miller III
MPO Board Chairman
August 9, 2023

Posted: August 9, 2023

If you have any questions, please contact
Mike Kozlosky, Executive Director,
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization,
(910) 341-3258.