**WMPO Board Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 28, 2024**6th Floor Training Conference Room

320 Chestnut Street, Wilmington, NC 28401

**Members Present Others Present**

Mike Allen, Town of Belville Chad Kimes, NCDOT

Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach Mike Kozlosky, WMPO

Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County Abby Lorenzo, WMPO

Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland Mark Eatman, NCDOT

John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach Michelle Howes, NCDOT

Brad George, Pender County Matt Nichols, MPO General Counsel

Frank Williams, Brunswick County (REMOTE) Regina Hopkins, WMPO

Bill Rivenbark, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority Vanessa Lacer, WMPO

Bill Saffo, City of Wilmington Catherine Peele, NCDOT

Luke Waddell, City of Wilmington Carolyn Caggia, WMPO

Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa Greer Shriver, WMPO

Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation Tracy Manning, City of Wilmington

Scott James, WMPO

Caitlyn Melvin, NCDOT

Mike Forte, Brunswick County

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1. **Call to Order**

Mike Kozlosky called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. He welcomed Mr. George to the Board. He then called roll.

**Present:** Mike Allen, Lynn Barbee, Brenda Bozeman, Jonathan Barfield, Jr., John Ellen, Luke Waddell, Eulis Willis**,** Brad George, Bill Rivenbark, Bill Saffo, and Landon Zimmer.

**Present Remotely**: Frank Williams **Absent**: Chairman Hank Miller

1. **Conflict of Interest Statement**

Mike Kozlosky read the conflict-of-interest statement and asked if any Board member has a conflict of interest. No one indicated that they had a conflict.

1. **Approval of Board Member Excused Absences**

Chairman Hank Miller had requested to be excused. Mr. Ellen made a motion to excuse Mr. Miller, Mr. Allen seconded, motion carries unanimously.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

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

1. **Election of Officers**

Mr. Kozlosky noted that at the last meeting the nominations for Mr. Barbee and Mr. Waddell for Vice Chairman were not closed. He asked if there were any additional nominations, no, then he would entertain a motion to close the nominations. Ms. Bozeman made a motion to close nominations and Mr. Ellen seconded.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that he was going to conduct a roll call vote for the Vice Chairman.

Mr. Barbee requested Board members vote their conscious and stated that this was not a competition between himself and Mr. Waddell.

Mr. Kozlosky called for each Board member’s vote noted below.

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|  | **Barbee** | **Waddell** |
| Mike Allen |  | **X** |
| Lynn Barbee | **X** |  |
| Jonathan Barfield, Jr |  | **X** |
| Brenda Bozeman |  | **X** |
| John Ellen | **X** |  |
| Brad George | **X** |  |
| Bill Rivenbark |  | **X** |
| Bill Saffo |  | **X** |
| Luke Waddell |  | **X** |
| Frank Williams |  | **X** |
| Eulis Willis |  | **X** |
| Landon Zimmer | **X** |  |
|  | **4** | **8** |

Mr. Kozlosky congratulated Mr. Waddell and he took his seat as Vice Chairman.

P**ublic Comment Period**

No sign ups.

1. **Presentations**
   1. **NCDOT Ferry Division Update, Catherine Peele, NCDOT**

Catherine Peelegave a brief overview of the North Carolina ferry system. She stated that the

ferry system is the second largest state-operated ferry system in the country. It has served the

state for over 75 years, has transported 1.57 million passengers in FY 2022-23 and generates $735

million in economic output for North Carolina annually. She noted the ferry system also provides

$40 million in net travel benefits for ferry passengers annually. Ms. Peele stated there are

currently 23 ferry vessels and 10 support fleet vessels, 7 year-round vehicle ferry routes and 1

seasonal passenger ferry route and operates across 3 highway divisions.

She noted that the ferry system has 3 main pilers: operations, asset management, and

planning and programming. They employ around 493 employees, and have their own

state owned shipyard. Most of the work like painting and welding etc., is all done in this shipyard.

Ms. Peele stated that the ferry division was legally allowed to overspend their budget, meaning

they can take from future years to pay back what is spent in the current year, but they have

gotten better about the budget process and falling within the expenditures. Large vessels that

are aging need to be replaced, and they operate in very shallow conditions so there is also a lot

prop damage. She noted the cost of fuel being a hit to the budget as well as emergency

repairs.

She noted that last year’s budget was around $62.28 million, which included a highway fund

loan in the amount of $1.75 million. FY 24 budget is $72.28 million, with $56 million for

operations and maintenance. The General Assembly appropriated $15.42 million one-time

expansion funds. These expansion funds are outside of normal operating costs and have funded

several additional projects. She stated the base budget has not changed therefore operations

budget is still the same.

Ms. Peele stated that the ferry division competes at two levels for STIP funding. The

Regional Impact includes new installation of ramp and gantry, bulkhead expansion, additional

mooring slips and new vessels. At the Division level, they will be submitting a vessel replacement plan. The projects that are being included in this submission include anew ramp at Southport/Fort Fisher, new river class vessel, Fort Fisher visitor center reconstruction, and replacing the vessels at Southport/Fort Fisher. She then went over the system wide projects that include dorm construction at the shipyard, water system improvements, and refurbishing of synchro-lift.

She then gave a brief overview of ridership numbers and tolling. She stated ridership has returned

since Covid19 . She stated the tolls that are collected must be used for vessel replacement in the division it is collected. On average, the Southport/Fort Fisher route collects around $900,000 dollars in tolls per year.

Ms. Peele stated that on average with the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge closure it appears that an additional 250 passengers daily are using the Fort Fisher/Southport Ferry route.

**b. NCDOT’s policy regarding Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) funding-Mark Eatman, NCDOT**

Mark Eatman, NCDOT, presented to the Board the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality fund (CMAQ) and the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). He stated that CRP and CMAQ program are 2 federal grant programs that fund transportation projects with the goal of reducing harmful emissions. The CRP started in 2022 with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The goal with the CRP is to reduce CO 2 carbon dioxide emissions. North Carolina gets approximately $34 million each year, about $12 million of that is set aside for MPOs. Mr. Eatman touched briefly on the CMAQ program, even though that doesn't apply to Wilmington since Wilmington doesn't have any air quality issues in terms of violating the standards that are set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

He noted that the two Federal Grant programs are not like traditional grants, they are more like reimbursement programs. Reimbursement is made as the project goes on.

The CMAQ program began about a little over 30 years ago. Mr. Eatman stated they get a little bit more money with that program each year. It's about $50 million and of that roughly $27 million is set aside for MPOs and RPOs in eligible counties. Another $22 million is set aside for statewide use within eligible counties.

He noted that CRP funding distributed in North Carolina is done basically in 5 categories and by population. He gave a brief breakdown of the categories and roughly how much money is provided.

Mr. Eatman stated that projects eligible under CRP include sidewalks, greenways, multi- paths, intersection improvements projects, as well as transit projects. He stated that technically under the federal law and legislation you can do EV chargers and alternative fuel vehicles and things like that, but they are subject to Buy America requirements.

Mr. Eatman stated that a few years ago they implemented a policy that state funds can be used in lieu of the local match. This applies to projects that are only on the state highway system and only for motorists. He said that CRP or CMAQ are not subject to STIP. He said if the MPO and the Division both have a desire for the project and there is strong local support, CRP funds can be pursued.

Mr. Eatman stated that MPOs should fully utilize their CRP direct allocation funds. Applications for NCDOT’s program are taken on a continuous basis. He noted that jurisdictions must have the money up front, and DOT reimburses for the project.

He noted that an 80% Federal/20% local match is preferred, but you can use more local share, but it needs to be in increments of 5%. He stated you do not have to calculate emissions for this program to be eligible, but you can use an emissions calculator toolkit to see how much the project is saving in terms of CO2.

Mr. Eatman explained the process for submitting an application and how to handle it if you have a multi-jurisdictional project. He noted they are working on an online application.

He concluded his presentation by letting the Board know about the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program. He stated that NEVI chargers are being placed in Leland at US- 74/US-17 and Village Road exit. There will be 4 -150kw (or higher) chargers.

Mr. Barfield asked if New Hanover County had asked for any money for trails?

Mr. Eatman deferred to Mr. Kozlosky who stated that the North College Trail, which is from Gordon Road up to Northchase was approved by the MPO, through Direct Attributable funds. He did not know of any other project requests regarding trails.

**c. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Public Outreach Phase 1 Results-Vanessa Lacer, WMPO**

Vanessa Lacer, WMPO, stated that the team’s public outreach strategy was threefold and included a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee was tasked with helping staff develop public outreach strategies. Staff also used survey advertisements. She stated that quantitative and qualitative data collection was used. She also explained the stakeholder interviews and what jurisdiction they were from.

Ms. Lacer gave the Board an overview of the timeline. She stated the effort started in August and concluded in November. Staff conducted 5 in- person public meetings as well as email and media events. In September, collection of the survey data began, a virtual public meeting was held, and staff conducted pop-up events and continued media events through email promotion. In October, the CAC convened again to check in to see how the efforts were going and if there were any changes that needed to be made. Staff continued with survey data collection, presentations to local governing boards and stakeholder interviews. In November, final presentations to local governing boards were completed and a total of 10 were done.

In summary, staff conducted 4 CAC meetings, 6 public meetings, 13 presentations and 16 outreach events . To summarize the data collection efforts, staff conducted 9 stakeholders, received 2,347 survey responses and 96 in-person comments. The in-person comments came from those public meetings and pop-up outreach events. She stated in total 2,303 survey responses were received as well as 5,840 map pins dropped on the interactive map. She stated that roadway led the way followed by pedestrians.

She then went through the survey results with the Board. She told the Board that the next steps were to go through all the comments, classify them, and put it all together to present to the Board in 2025 for adoption.

Mr. Kozlosky recognized staff for their work and dedication to this project.

Ms. Lacer explained to everyone that this information has been shared with various Boards, committees, newsletters, and outreach events across the region. Mr. Kozlosky recommended a press release announcing the information in Phase 1. Mr. Barfield stated that he thought presenting this at a New Hanover County Commissioners meeting would be very beneficial as well.

1. **Consent Agenda**
2. **Approval of Board Regular Meeting Minutes- January 31, 2024**
3. **Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #24-1**
4. **Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #24-2**
5. **Resolution adopting the 2024 Legislative Agenda**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the consent agenda and Mr. Zimmer seconded, motion carried unanimously.

1. **Regular Agenda**
   1. **Resolution adopting the WMPO’s Local Input Methodology for Prioritization 7.0**

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, gave a brief overview of the local input methodology for Prioritization 7.0. She stated that the 2013 Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) law is the formula to determine how NCDOT, in partnership with local governments will fund and prioritize transportation projects. The prioritization process evaluates eligible projects at three different tiers. The top tier being the Statewide tier which addresses significant congestion and bottleneck projects. Projects are evaluated, scored, and prioritized solely 100 % on data. In the Regional Impact and Division Needs tiers, there is an opportunity for local input from NCDOT Division 3, as well as the WMPO. The score on a project falling under the Reginal Impact tier is 70% data driven and the remaining 30% local input is split between the Division and the MPO. At the Division Needs tier, it is 50% data driven, and the other 50% local input is split between Division 3 and WMPO.

Ms. Lorenzo explained that a process was developed for assigning local input points, based on GS 136-18.42 These standards include a minimum of 2 criteria, (at least on qualitative), public input process, and process for documenting deviation from methodology. New for P7.0, up to 500 points can be flexed between the Regional and Division tiers and this methodology must be easily accessible to the public. She noted the WMPO point allotment is 1600 for Regional tier and 1600 for Division tier scoring.

She stated that the last adopted Local Input methodology was Prioritization 5.0. She stated the criteria for P5.0 was quantitative score, from 5.0 and P4.0., consistency with adopted plans, status of project development, and inclusion in WMPO Strategic Business Plan.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that with Prioritization 7.0,the WMPO is proposing the following criteria for scoring: P7.0 quantitative score, WMPO and NCDOT Division3 coordination, consistency with adopted plans, status of project in development, and the number of prioritization cycles. She gave a brief explanation of the first criteria of P7.0 methodology which is quantitative score provided by SPOT for each project. The Reginal Impact quantitative score will be out of 70 and the Division Needs score will be out of 50 and the score will be converted to a 100-point scale, meaning Regional Impact quantitative score will have plus 30 and Division Needs score will have plus 50.

The next criteria being proposed to replace Prioritization 4.0 quantitative score is WMPO and NCDOT Division 3 coordination, this is assessed based upon coordination and agreement by NCDOT Division 3 to also place local input points on the project.

The next criteria Ms. Lorenzo noted was consistency with adopted plans, and this is based on whether the project is included in a WMPO adopted plan. If the project is included in the adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan it is scored with 100 points. Projects included in plans adopted by the WMPO are scored with 50 points. Additionally, projects that are adopted in plans by member jurisdictions and /or NCDOT but not adopted by the WMPO will receive no points towards scoring.

The Status of the project is assessed based on the project’s status in development. Projects that are in the right-of-way acquisition or property already acquired by the State of North Carolina score 100 points. Projects that are in the design phase (engineering, construction document preparation, or surveying) score 50 points. Projects that are in planning phase (feasibility study or environmental permitting/permitting phases) score 25 points.

The final new criteria are the number of NCDOT prioritization cycles in which the WMPO has submitted the project. She stated that projects submitted in four (4) or more consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P4.0 or earlier) score 100 points. Projects submitted in three (3) consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P6.0) score 75 points. Projects submitted in two (2) consecutive Prioritization cycles (beginning in P6.0) score 50 points. Projects submitted beginning in P7.0 score 25 points.

Ms. Lorenzo continued with an overview of project scoring. She stated projects will be ranked based on total score, with the top 16 scoring projects receiving 100 points each for Regional and Division tiers. The methodology also includes multi-modal consideration for assignment of input points. She stated that this methodology is applied to all projects and in the event that there isn’t a project for each mode that has scored in the top 16 receiving 100 points, projects may be replaced with the top scoring Bike/Ped project , the top scoring rail project, top scoring aviation project, etc. This is done to ensure points are applied from a multi-modal perspective. She noted that this methodology also allows the optional flex of up to 500 points between Regional and Division tiers. There is also a deviation allowance in this methodology and the Board must just document why the deviation is being supported.

She noted the final point assignment for all projects will be evaluated using the draft local input point assignment, deviation notes (if applicable) and final local input point assignment. This will eventually be available on the WMPO’s website. There will also be a public comment opportunity as outlined in the adopted Public Participation Policy. The final point assignment results matrix will be adopted by the WMPO Board and submitted to SPOT.

Mr. Zimmer noted NCDOT Division 3 and their work with Prioritization 7.0.

Mr. Saffo asked if the scoring criteria is the same for all projects? Mr. Kimes stated yes overall it’s the same with some small differences. Mr. Saffo requested a demonstration using two projects side by side to see the difference in scoring. Mr. Kimes stated that as the MPO, Division 3, and the Board work through Prioritization 7.0 the process of scoring will be clearer.

There was then discussion regarding College Road and if it is expanded could it be tolled? Mr. Kozlosky and Mr. Zimmer both explained if the Board wanted that option in the scoring process it could be done.

Mr. Waddell mentioned that some of the other MPO’s have different scoring criteria and asked if that is division based?

Mr. Kozlosky noted that each MPO and RPO adopt their own local methodology. Projects at the statewide level are funded based on 100% data. Projects at the Regional tier are 70% data and 30% (15% input from MPO and 15% from Division). In Division tier is 50% data and 50% (25% input from MPO and 25% from Division). Each MPO adopts their own local input methodology, but the data is all the same across the state. Each planning organization gets to adopt their own way the assign their local input points.

Mr. Barfield noted that this information is more staff driven and the MPO and Division 3 work together to come up with a local input methodology that is presented to the Board for approval.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that was correct, the MPO will bring the Board their local input methodology and how the MPO assigns points or what they would recommend that the MPO assign their points to which includes coordination with Division 3. This methodology does provide the ability to deviate if the Board desires to deviate once projects are scored, but that requires a justification from the Board. For example, there is a project has 100 points but it’s not Board priority and a lower non-scoring project is a higher priority to the Board, they can decide that they want to put those 100 points on the lower scoring project and take it from the higher scoring project. This would just require documentation and justification from the Board.

Mr. Zimmer stated that members could contact Chad at Division 3 with comments or questions regarding this presentation. He explained that big statewide projects are all 100% data. Then Regional (Division 2 and Division 3) tiers are considered Regional and then you look at Division needs where local input has more weight.

Ms. Lorenzo added that she has included with the packet which projects are eligible and in which tier they fall under.

Mr. Waddell asked for a motion to adopt the MPO’s Local Input Methodology for Prioritization7.0.

Mr. Zimmer made a motion to adopt the resolution and Mr. Ellen seconded, the motion carried unanimously.

* 1. **Resolution supporting NCDOT’s application to the USDOT Bridge Investment Program (BIP) for the Replacement of the Wrightsville Beach**

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Barfield, seconded by Mr. Barbee.

Mr. Ellen noted that the resolution needed to be updated to note regular meetings, not special.

Mr. Barfield and Mr. Barbee accepted the amended motion with the language update and motion carried unanimously.

1. **Discussion**
2. **2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #24-2**

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

1. **Draft FY 25 UPWP**

Mr. Kozlosky noted that the 30-day public comment period was opened for the draft Unified Planning Work Program which is the MPO’s budget for next year. No comments have been received to date. The Board is required to adopt the UPWP by the end of March. The next meeting is March 27th and the MPO will ask the Board to take action on this at that time. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the MPO wanted to present the draft UPWP to get any input or questions from the Board. No feedback or questions were provided by the Board.

1. **MPO Work sessions**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Organizational Assessment that was approved in 2023 outlined some operational and organizational efficiencies. One of those recommendations was a joint TCC and Board work session and the another was an annual Board work session. He stated he wanted to gauge the Board’s interest in having a joint TCC and Board work session in June or July and he recommended a work session with the Board at the end of November or early December. This session will be an early discussion on the Unified Work Plan Program and also discuss some accomplishments with the strategic plan for the current calendar year and develop some action items for the next year.

The Board agreed to have a work session in June with TCC. Mr. Waddell recommended to schedule the work session with TCC for the same day as a Board meeting to help with availability and time. Mr. Kozlosky stated that a doodle poll will be sent to the Board and TCC to confirm a date and time.

1. **Updates are all included in the Agenda Packet**
2. **Wilmington Urban Area MPO**

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Beth King, the new intern with the WMPO. Beth introduced herself to the Board. He noted that Emma and Jamar will be leaving two vacancies open.

1. **Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority**

Mark Hairr, WAVE, gave a brief update stating that RideMICRO services were up 38% with the expansion to help with the bridge closure.

1. **NCDOT Division**

Chad Kimes, NCDOT, showed the Board some pictures of the work being done to the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. He stated that the work is looking good for the Azalea Festival. The project is going as scheduled and planned.

He also noted that NCDOT met with the Federal Highways Administration concerning the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge grant proposal. They addressed a few questions and are making some revisions. It’s due back March 12th. He expects to have an answer in a few months. He also stated they will continue to apply for grants over the next 4 years.

Mr. Waddell asked Mr. Kimes if there was any indication of how many large bridge projects there were? Mr. Kimes stated only 2 from this state.

Mr. Kimes stated that he will be retiring September 1st, 2024.

1. **NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Nazia Sarder, NCDOT, indicated that related to the Wilmington Travel Demand model, the MPO is working with the counties to verify the socio-economic data. Once that has been sent back, we will incorporate it into the model, and she will present it to the TCC and the Board. The next one is the Brunswick County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. During the month of February, they have been going around making presentations on CTP. Half of the municipalities and GSATS, have adopted it. The Pender County CTP steering committee has started a meeting. All other updates are included in the packet.

1. **Announcements**
2. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee- March 12, 2024**
3. **MTPC Technical Steering Committee- March 28, 2024**
4. **NC Ethics Information Due-April 15, 2024**
5. **Next meeting – March 27, 2024**

The meeting adjourned at 4:35p.m. Motion made by Mr. Ellen and seconded by Mr. Saffo.

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.**