



WILMINGTON URBAN AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

WMPO Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

525 N 4th Street

Wilmington, NC 28401

Members Present

Mike Allen, Town of Belville
Deb LeCompte, Town of Carolina Beach
Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Brad George, Pender County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Luke Waddell, City of Wilmington
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Bill Saffo, City of Wilmington
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation
Hank Miller, Chairman

Others Present

Chad Kimes, Transsystems
Trevor Carroll, NCDOT
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
Tera Cline, WMPO
Zach Bugg, Kittelson
Adrianna Cox, NCDOT
Jeff Bourk, ILM
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Adrienne Harrington, Belville
Greer Templer, WMPO
Mark Hairr, WAVE
Zach Bugg, Kittelson
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO

Members Absent

Bill Rivenbark, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

1) Call to Order

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Mike Kozlosky, WMPO then called roll.

Present: Mike Allen, Bill Saffo, Deb LeCompte, Brenda Bozeman, John Ellen, Brad George, Mike Forte, Luke Waddell, Eulis Willis, Hank Miller, Landon Zimmer, and Jonathan Barfield Jr. **Absent:** Bill Rivenbark.

2) Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Miller read the conflict-of-interest statement and asked if any Board member has a conflict of interest. Landon Zimmer requested to be recused from voting on Consent Agenda item 7C.

3) Approval of Board Member Excused Absences

Bill Rivenbark was excused on a motion by John Ellen, seconded by Brenda Bozeman. The motion carried unanimously.

4) Approval of the Agenda

John Ellen motioned to approve the agenda, adding Item 9D, a resolution revision for the Pine Grove Bridge, with a second by Landon Zimmer. The motion was carried unanimously.

5) Public Comment Period

No sign-ups for public comment

6) Presentations**a. Gullah Geechee Feasibility Study-Zach Bugg, Kittleson**

Mr. Bugg stated that the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor runs from Jacksonville, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida. It was created to celebrate the historical and cultural contributions of the Gullah Geechee people and associated activities, especially agriculture. The National Park Service also recognizes it.

The leadership of this study was run through NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division on behalf of the WMPO, which applied to the feasibility study for the trail. However, it was also completed in close partnership with local agencies like Brunswick County, the Town of Bellville, the Town of Leland, and the Town of Navassa.

The agencies worked closely with a project steering committee formed with historians, some of whom were located outside the State in academic institutions and local cycling interest groups.

He stated the study's objectives were to assess the feasibility of constructing the trail through Brunswick County, from Phoenix Park in Navassa down to the Brunswick Nature Park in Brunswick County. An additional goal was a preferred alignment that could be moved forward to the design phase. He was pleased to share that parts of the trail are already under construction or very close to it, and the goal is to identify applicable funding sources and a path toward implementation.

Mr. Bugg stated that this study is unique and special to this area, given the cultural significance of the Gullah Geechee people within Brunswick County and the region. Some of the specialized goals are to provide a way to make this trail a destination and support ecotourism and economic development. He noted there are many other goals for the feasibility study.

He noted the project kickoff meeting was in June 2023. The draft report was submitted in June 2024, and the revised study was submitted in July 2024.

Mr. Bugg stated the first round of public engagement in the fall of 2023, then the alternatives, development, and assessment over the winter, and then this past spring, the second round of public engagement was held before getting into the preferred alignment and project recommendations. The preliminary alignments generally stayed within the right of way of existing roadways, the major ones being Cedar Hill Road and Navassa Road in Navassa, as well as Navassa Road and Village Road in the Town of Leland. The other portion is River Road in the town of Belville, another portion of the town of Leland, and into unincorporated Brunswick County. The nine segments were split to develop and evaluate alternative alignments. In addition to these preliminary alignments, some off-road options and the utility easement extending from near the start to the end of the feasibility study limits were examined.

Mr. Bugg noted that the community engagement events had a good number of folks both in person and online. There was vast excitement and support for the trial, and it didn't get much dissension or folks bringing up controversial elements regarding impacts. The public engagement was completed in 2 phases.

The first was in the fall when we gathered preliminary alternative information. Then, feedback on two alternatives for each trail segment was requested in the spring.

He stated that four in-person events per phase were conducted: a more traditional open house, a drop-in-style event in Navassa and Leland, and an outdoor pop-up event in Belville. The first was the Heritage Bike Ride in the fall of 2023, and the second one, in advance of the second round of public engagement, was the NC Rice festival in Brunswick town in March.

He noted various means of online data collection and public engagement through the project website hosted by WMPO. These included an online comment map prepared by Kittleson and online surveys prepared by WMPO. The numbers were in the hundreds with the online surveys and between 90 and 120 in-person conversations.

Mr. Bugg shared some of the unique features of the area were the multiple historic sites that the trail had the objective of connecting to and fostering a lot of excitement around providing connections, whether it was running the trail up to the historic site like the Reef Chapel historic site or providing a spur alignment so that folks could go from the trail to each of the sites. He noted that private funding allocation is also being considered in all the developments. He said there are a lot of existing parks, trails, schools, and other destinations that this trail would serve both from a recreational and a transportation and commuting standpoint.

He stated that several in-process transportation projects, including the trail, are under construction. The utility easement, which is not owned by the state or any town or utility company, did provide some open space to potentially help support some alternatives to the trail away from the roadway and many wetlands and other sensitive environmental areas to navigate. The trail was narrowed to 2 preferred or two potential alignments after the initial round of public engagement and a brainstorming session with the Project steering committee.

Within each segment was an opportunity to deviate from the roadway and potentially have a more natural off-road alignment. The ability to mix and match from one segment to the next was included. This study had a vital environmental component. The preferred alignment was determined after the second round of public engagement in the spring and another work session with the steering committee. There was a strong preference to have the trail be more natural and off the road. Therefore, there are a few spurs back to Cedar Hill Road to connect to existing land uses and historical sites, but generally, their road would be on its own. The trail would be on its right of way through the Town of Navassa. Then, run near existing roads in Leland, getting into Belleville, and then the opportunity off River Road, through Mallory Creek, and into a portion of Brunswick Forest, using that utility easement. He then noted as you get down to the southern portions, some of the environmentally sensitive areas were being avoided.

Mr. Bugg shared some pictures of the project with a brief overview of each.

In conclusion, he stated that building this has a cost element. The trail is split into nine segments in hopes of helping move the project forward to implementation and identifying funding sources for each segment.

b. Wilmington International Airport Update-Jeff Bourk, ILM

Mr. Bourk noted that Wilmington International Airport now has 20 nonstop routes out of Wilmington, some of which are served by multiple carriers. There are 6 airlines compared to three years ago, when there were only 8 nonstops on 3 airlines. He stated that ILM is going to top 1.5 million passengers by the end of this year.

Mr. Bourk noted all the increases in volume and passengers at the airport since 2019 to 2024 and what challenges go along with these increases.

He then gave a brief overview of the terminal curb, roadways and parking projects that have started at the airport. The phases of this project include remote parking, and rerouting of roads, etc. all while keeping the airport business open and running.

The upgrades include more parking, new covered passenger and shuttle drop-off canopy, pedestrian tunnel from parking to terminals, and as well as an expanded atrium option.

He then gave a brief overview of the 23rd street additional turn lane NC DOT companion project that is in the design phase. Mr. Bourk showed the layout of the custom slot shuttle lot. This lot will be located down the road from the airport and shuttles will be utilized to transport passengers and employees to the terminal.

Mr. Bourk then stated that 3 additional gates will be added and opened by spring of 2027. They will also be adding additional ticket counters for 3 additional airlines.

He stated that runway 624 is set to be overlaid in January of 2026 with funds from a discretionary grant with the FAA for \$10 million dollars. He noted that additional private and cooperate hangers are being built as well.

Mr. Bourk noted that the cost of all expansion projects is around \$ 185,000,000 million dollar year capital program. ILM is currently about \$50 million committed. He stated the remaining balance of the entire project is being funded by Federal, State, and local sources as well as the airports healthy reserve. He noted no local tax dollars are being used.

He concluded by giving a brief overview of outreach events and programs that are sponsored by Wilmington International Airport.

Landon Zimmer asked if additional levels of parking could be added. Mr. Bourk stated that additional parking garages will be built as needed that because of engineering and rental car facilities additional levels of parking are not planned.

Bill Saffo asked if there were any plans to expand the runway. Mr. Bourk stated that there is no need to extend the runways.

7) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board Regular Meeting Minutes- September 25, 2024
- b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #24-5
- c. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #24-9 and #24-10
- d. Resolution accepting donations for the Get There Greener Challenge
- e. Resolution supporting the naming of the Military Cutoff Road Bridge over Market Street the Cornelius E Nixon Bridge

Brenda Bozeman made a motion to approve the consent agenda excluding item C and Eulis Willis seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Brenda Bozeman then made a motion to approve consent agenda item C with the recusal of Landon Zimmer. Eulis Willis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

8) Regular Agenda

a. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound Loop and Porters Neck Walmart Connector (BL-0040)

Mike Kozlosky stated the WMPO Board allocated funds to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound Loop and Porter's Neck, Walmart, Connector Trail Project. The county has worked through the design and have identified a need for additional funds. The county has requested an additional \$705,512 dollars and will commit \$176,378 dollars of that. We have about \$800,000 in reserve, and Staff would recommend approval of this item.

Motion to approve the resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to New Hanover County made by Mr. Barfield and seconded by Mr. Zimmer. The motion passes unanimously.

b. Resolution awarding the WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable Funds

Abby Lorenzo WMPO stated that a copy of the resolution is included in the agenda packet. She then noted that for federal Fiscal Year 2025, beginning October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025, the WMPO anticipates receiving the following approximate amounts in direct attributable funding:

Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) - \$ 4,502,892

Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TA) - \$752,086

Carbon Reduction Efforts (CR) - \$801,858

In addition to the anticipated FY 2025 funding amounts, \$99,561 in funding is available from the WMPO's FY 24 direct attributable allocation.

The WMPO typically utilizes a portion of its annual direct attributable funding to supplement the organization's annual operations and planning activities through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Additionally, increasing construction costs over the past several years has resulted in significantly greater project costs, requiring many previously awarded and funded projects to request additional funding to complete construction. Based on these factors, WMPO staff recommend holding a total of \$2,100,000 of available direct attributable funding for the development of the FY 26 UPWP and additional funding requests for existing funded projects. This results in an estimated total of WMPO direct attributable funding to award to projects for FY 25 of **\$4,056,397**.

The WMPO issued a call for project applications for FY 25 STBGP, TA, and CRP funding on July 5, 2024, with a deadline for submittal of September 13, 2024. A total of nine (9) complete applications were received and evaluated based on the WMPO's adopted scoring process. The following table lists each of these projects, evaluated score, rank, and project cost.

Based on the scores and the associated costs of the nine project applications, WMPO staff recommend funding the following projects for FY 25:

17th Street MUP

City of Wilmington

Requested Amount: \$2,400,000

Gullah Geechee Trail Gap
Town of Belville
Requested Amount: \$720,000

Country Club Drive MUP Design
Pender County
Requested Amount: \$886,000

Total sum of recommended FY 25 awards: \$4,006,000

She then stated that due to the requested funding amount of the third ranked project, and based on conversations with the applicant, WMPO staff recommend funding the fourth ranked project (Country Club Drive MUP Design) with FY 25 funding and preemptively programming a portion of its anticipated FY 26 federal funding amounts to the third ranked project (S. College Road MUP Construction). The anticipated FY 26 federal funding amount is estimated to be consistent with the FY 25 allocations less the UPWP contribution and recommended fund reserve set aside.

Frank Williams asked if the NCDOT submission for the Lanvale signal installation is the intersection at Lanvale and Village Road. Trevor Carroll, NCDOT did confirm that is correct. Mr. Williams stated that this intersection is a major safety issue and that he agrees the other projects are good but to him the Lanvale intersection signal is his top priority due to safety. He also asked if there were other funding options for the signal installation. Trevor Carroll stated that Division 3 has explored other funding options, and they have not been able to tap into enough funds to upgrade the intersection to add a signal.

There was further discussion on the intersection and the safety of it and the possibility of getting it added for next year's funds and the scoring criteria.

Mike Kozlosky stated that one of the things that we've been talking about internally as Staff is back in 2020. Staff had come to the board with a proposal to create a 5-year plan, much like a capital improvement program.

At that time WMPO didn't get enough projects to fill the 5-year program at that time we went back to having an annual call and the number of projects that met the amount of available fund. We got way more projects than we've ever received before as well as funds. Staff has been discussing going back and trying the 5-year program again with the 1st and 2 years committed, and then the next 3 years would be for planning purposes.

That would allow us to fund some of these additional projects. They could move within the years based on how the projects are progressing, because one of the things that we see is that you know, even though we award these projects that there's a significant time between the time that we award and the time that we deliver and projects move, based on different schedules based on the different jurisdictions that are working on them. That would provide some flexibility to allocate additional funds, but also to move projects within years.

Mr. Williams asked how that would affect the ability to get this project on one of those lists. Mike Kozlosky stated it would be evaluated, and staff would come back with the recommendation.

Mr. Williams then stated that if projects were committed and then ones are on the planning horizon, what could be done to make sure that this Lanvale project can be placed near the top of the planning horizon. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the call for projects would need to be changed, and the 5-year program would have to be implemented.

Abby Lorenzo stated that staff would like to work with the Board over the coming months to revise the process to develop the 5-year plan.

Jonathan Barfield, Jr. made a motion to approve the resolution approving the WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable funds, John Ellen seconded. Motion passed with the following roll call votes.

Ayes: Mike Allen, Bill Saffo, Deb LeCompte, Jonathan Barfield, John Ellen, Brad George, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer. **Nays:** Frank Williams and Brenda Bozeman **Absent:** Bill Rivenbark

c. Opening of a 14-day public comment period for WMPO's Prioritization 7.0 Draft Division Tier Point Assignment

Abby Lorenzo stated that due to the deficit of funds at the Division level that a 14-day public comment period be opened to allow public input on any projects that are listed.

Frank Williams made a motion to approve the opening of the 14-day public comment period for the WMPO's P 7.0 draft Division Tier point assignment. Landon Zimmer seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

9) Discussion

a. 2050 MTP Development-Draft Fiscally Constrained Projects

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, stated that staff has been working hard on developing 2050 MTP, Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050. The one element we work with a consultant on is the financial element. Over the past few months, we have been working closely with our consultant, Kinley Horn, to develop a financial forecast, look at alternative funding, and, most recently, develop fiscally constrained project lists. Kristina Whitfield from Kimley Horn is here today to present, discuss fiscally constraining our plan, and provide information on the three fiscally constrained scenarios that staff with Kimley Horn have developed.

Kristina Whitfield and Kimley Horn presented the tables of the three scenarios. She then noted that the WMPO has historically, with long-range plans, fiscally constrained all modes of transportation moving into it. Fiscal constraints will only be on the roadway recommendations for this MTP. This is in alignment with the Federal requirements in 23 CFR and 440.324. That code essentially specifies that you must only fiscally constrain projects that are of regional significance.

Ms. Whitfield stated that many of our smaller bike-ped projects don't rise to that level of regional significance, which aligns with what almost all the other MPOs in the State of North Carolina do.

She noted one of the significant benefits to the MPO and the governing Boards, making this modification is it minimizes the need for amendments and changes to your MTP

Ms. Whitfield stated that Kimley Horn has been working on the revenue forecasts over the past few months. Revenues for all modes are still forecasted, but today, the focus is on the roadway.

Ms. Whitfield then began to explain the revenue forecasting process using historical data available through the STIP and the local CIPS. That historic revenue, which the region has received for real projects, is projected out through the life of the MTP. That gives the total amount expected to be available for funding projects through 2050.

Ms. Whitefield quickly highlighted what the upcoming plan looks like. Once what's been

programmed in the STIP is taken out, funds are shown in the out years of the STIP that are subject to reprioritization. About 3.3 billion dollars is left for roadway projects based on kind of historic resources captured in the Wilmington region.

Kimley Horn is working with MPO staff and TPD to model the three scenarios to move projects forward. The first scenario accounts for seven intersections and 28 different corridors. The second scenario accounts for 12 intersections and 36 corridors. Scenario three accounts for 12 intersections and 35 corridors.

She noted the modeling shows how these various scenarios impact congestion in the region. The team from Kimley Horn stated that the discussion of alternative revenue sources that may be available to the region is ongoing and they have developed the actual revenue forecasts for those, and they will be brought back to the November meeting to start understanding how much those could move the needle on additional dollars available for the region for consideration.

b. Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Aesthetics Subcommittee

Mike Kozlosky stated the board created an Aesthetics Subcommittee to look at the aesthetics of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement. It was brought to his attention by NCDOT and State Historic Preservation Office (SHIPPA) that replacement of the bridge and tearing down of the existing bridge is an adverse effect. With that information NCDOT will be creating a charrette that will start in January, and it will focus on mitigation due to the adverse effect of tearing down the bridge. Mr. Kozlosky stated that in an email he sent to the Board he did not believe it would be prudent for the Board to spend \$75,000 dollars for consultation for the subcommittee.

c. December WMPO Board Work Session

Mike Kozlosky, WMPO stated that December 17th was selected as the best date for the December work session from 10 am to 12 pm.

Brenda Bozeman made a motion to have the work session on December 17th at 10 am. And Luke Waddell second. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Revised resolution supporting the City of Wilmington's Bridge grant application for the Pine Grove Bridge project

Mike Kozlosky stated that in September the Board adopted a resolution supporting the city's application to the bridge investment program for the 4th Street Bridge and the Pine Grove Bridge Replacement Project.

The city has done an analysis of a benefit cost analysis, and the 4th Street Bridge doesn't pencil out. You must meet a certain number to even be considered, and the 4th Street Bridge brought the project scores down. The city is desiring to only submit the Pine Grove drive bridge replacement project.

Staff is requesting that the Board adopt a revised resolution which you have at your place. That supports the city's application for only the Pine Grove Bridge replacement project.

Landon Zimmer made a motion to approve the revised resolution and Jonathan Barfield seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

10) Updates are all included in the Agenda Packet

a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO

Mike Kozlosky that the updates are included in the packet, and in addition to those updates he announced the NCDOT Mobi award for the Park Avenue multi-use trail phase 2 project. He also noted his appreciation to the Board and staff for the completion of the new WMPO building at 525 N 4th street. He invited everyone to stay for the ribbon cutting and refreshments after the meeting.

b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

Updates included in the packet.

c. NCDOT Division

Trevor Carroll, NCDOT stated that the updates are being presented a little different now and if anyone had any questions to please reach out to him. He gave a brief update on the bridge grants stating that the Mega grant and the Infa grant, and they were notified they were not awarded for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement project. He assured the Board that NCDOT is still pursuing additional funding sources.

d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Nazia Sadar NCDOT, stated the 3 scenarios were discussed for the Mtp projects. Those were finish running today and sent back to the WMPO for the volume and capacity. And as it was mentioned, that will be discussed at the next meeting.

Pender County, CTP had the survey close last month they had about 500 people take that survey and will be discussing those results at the next steering committee meeting.

11) Announcements

a. WMPO Bike and Pedestrian Committee Meeting-December 10, 2024

Next meeting – November 20, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 4:17 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.