

Wilmington Urban Area MPO  
Technical Coordinating Committee  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024,  
Remote Meeting Minutes

**Members Present in Person**

Mike Kozlosky, TCC Chairman, WMPO  
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO  
Michelle Howes, NCDOT  
Sam Boswell, Cape Fear Council of  
Governments

**Members Absent**

Michelyn Alston, Town of Navassa  
Karlene Ellis Vitalis, New Hanover County  
Adam Moran, Pender County  
Gloria Abbotts, Town of Carolina Beach  
Mandy Sanders, Town of Kure Beach

**Members Present Remote**

Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority  
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County  
Mark Hairr, Cape Fear Public  
Transportation Authority  
Adrienne Harrington, Town of Belville  
Nazia Sarder, TCC Vice Chair, NCDOT  
Jessica Moberly, Town of Leland  
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington  
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville  
Beach  
Granseur Dick, Wilmington International  
Airport

**Others Present**

Tera Cline, WMPO  
Scott A. James, WMPO (remote)  
Greer Shivers, WMPO  
Vanessa Lacer, WMPO  
Beth King, WMPO  
Eddie McFalls, NCDOT (remote)  
Chad Staradumsky, Town of Belville  
(remote)

**1) Call to Order**

Chairman Mike Kozlosky called the meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee to order at 10:00 a.m., confirmed a quorum was present, and called the roll as follows:

**Present In Person:** Mike Kozlosky, Michelle Howes, Sam Boswell, and Carolyn Caggia. **Present Remotely:** Helen Bunch, Adrienne Harrington, Stephanie Ayers, Mark Hairr, Nazia Sarder, Denys Vielkanowitz, Robert O'Quinn Jessica Moberly, and Granseur Dick . **Absent:** Michelyn Alston, Karlene Ellis Vitalis, Adam Moran, Gloria Abbotts, and Mandy Sanders

**2) Approval of Agenda**

Helen Bunch made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Mark Hairr, and the motion carried unanimously

**3) Presentations**

**a) Wilmington Urban Area Travel Demand Model, Nazia Sarder, NCDOT**

Nazia Sarder, NCDOT, provided a brief background on the socio-economic data for the 2050 WMPO Travel Demand Model (TDM). She stated every five years before the MPO starts working on their next Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) the process is started by updating or creating a new TDM to facilitate the MPO testing MTP projects.

She stated that a model is a representation of something in the real world that accounts for its relevant properties. In transportation, the model used is called the travel demand model, (TDM). The TDM is a systematic process for translating land use and transportation supply into projections of travel demand. Local land use plans, the road network, and other socioeconomic data is used to project what the model demand will be in the future. A TDM requires several types of information to be placed as what is called input to achieve useful results.

The data that is gathered includes the number of households, jobs, school enrollment, vehicle ownership, and road network. Just to name a few components. The accuracy of the TDM relies heavily on having good, verified input data to understand what is needed for future transportation solutions.

Ms. Sarder presented the model area for the TDM includes all New Hanover County, all of Pender County, and parts of Brunswick County. She explained the reason all of Pender County was being included even though most of the county is part of the Cape Fear RPO is because Pender County is developing a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), and that data is included. Brunswick County was also extended out due to possible new urban areas based on the Census that was completed when the model started in 2022.

Collaboration between WMPO and county staff was required to provide the socio-economic data for population and employment data. It was provided in low, medium, and high growth rates on a census block level. She stated that the modeler at the Transportation Planning Division took the data to estimate growth rates based on the Office of State and Budget Management (OSBM) predictions and Info U.S.A. data. The base year for the model is 2021, because that is the information we had available when we started in 2022, and the future year of the model is 2050 for the MTP.

Ms. Sarder stated that 2021 population and 2050 populations and growth rate maps are shown on an annual level from base year to future year. She explained that even though New Hanover and Pender Counties are fully included in the model, Brunswick County is only partially there. She noted that the populations in the model are household populations, which means they do not include group corridors, such as prisons, nursing homes, etc. Certificate of Occupancy data was provided by the WMPO, and seasonal population was included into the model as well. Over 600 Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) were included.

She shared some total population numbers based on 2021 information according to the Office of State Budget and Management. Brunswick County in 2021 population is approximately 138,000.00, Pender County was approximately 63,000 and New Hanover County was approximately 230,000. She then gave a brief presentation of the maps associated with this information and the keys attached.

Ms. Sarder then shared the total population numbers based on 2050 growth rate maps. Brunswick County as a whole is projected to be 268,000. This model population is lower because the entire county is not included, it's about 157,000. Pender County is projected to be about 96,000 and New Hanover County is projected to be 320,000.

She then touched on the employment maps; these were created the same way as the population maps. The locals provided the input on low, medium, and high growth rates. U.S.A. data was used instead of OSBM to estimate the employee totals and distributed by certain percentages just based on those growth rates. Employment numbers in 2021 for Brunswick County are 21,000, New Hanover County was about 109,000, and Pender County 16,000. She explained that the ranges vary a little from the population maps. The employment maps go from 0 to 250 all the way down to 2,000 to 100,000.

Ms. Sarder presented the growth maps for employment for 2050, Brunswick County is predicted to be about 36,000, New Hanover County at 231,000 and Pender County would be about 18,000.

In closing, Ms. Sarder stated the anticipated model completion date will be the end of June. It can then be utilized by the WMPO and will provide support in testing the projects for the MTP. The model will become official when the MTP is adopted.

**b) Wilmington to Raleigh Passenger Rail Study Update-Eddie McFalls, NCDOT**

Mr. McFalls introduced himself and stated he would be presenting an update on the passenger rail feasibility study for Wilmington and a new program called the Corridor Identification Program through the Federal Railroad Administration.

Mr. McFalls proceeded to explain what to do if a vehicle, or object gets hung up on a railroad crossing or there is an issue with the crossing. He stated each crossing should have a blue sign attached to it stating the crossing number and a telephone number to call that is linked directly to the railroad.

He then explained the three types of rail services. The first being intercity passenger rail service. This service connects cities and towns to each other, has longer distances between stations, with longer trip durations and possible baggage and food service. The second type of rail service is commuter rail, it is typically supported by the Federal Transit Administration and is known for shorter commutes, that connect suburbs and outlying areas to a city center. The final type is light rail which is a separate track from freight. This service is known to move people through urban areas.

Mr. McFalls noted the significant increase in ridership since the pandemic. He explained the ridership survey that is done every year. The survey captures trip purpose, ethnicity, and employment status as well as how many train trips within the past year, mode of transportation if train service was not available, and most important factor for choosing the train.

A draft of the Southeastern North Carolina Passenger Rail feasibility study has been provided to the WMPO for sharing and comments. Mr. McFalls stated they are looking for comments by early June. He said it's an update of the previous study that was done that looked at passenger rail between Wilmington and Raleigh. He stated the study includes high level capital costs, approximate trip times, information on those routes, and a ridership projection. The preliminary service model includes three round trips per day, departures in the morning, midday, and afternoon/evening and will connect the Southeastern corridor service in Raleigh. Mr. McFalls stated NCDOT has applied for a Corridor Identification and Development Program grant with the Federal Railroad Administration for both corridors. He stated being awarded this program will allow for more detailed studies to help with both corridors' implementations.

Mr. McFalls explained the bipartisan infrastructure law in regard to the Corridor Identification and Development Program. He stated the goals of this law is to modernize the Northeast corridor, bring world-class passenger rail service to regions across the country, renew Amtrak fleet and facilities, deliver high-quality intercity passenger rail service, build the foundation for a long-term rail program, and grow a safer, cleaner, more equitable rail system. He noted North Carolina's corridors are intended to operate as a system; in cooperation rather than in competition. He stated the corridor ID creates a foundational framework for identifying and developing new or improved intercity passenger rail (IRP) services. Under the program, FRA will solicit proposals for implementing new or improving existing IRP services and select corridors for development. Also, they will partner with corridor sponsors to prepare (or update) a Service Development Plan (SDP). He noted the SDP will include a "corridor project inventory" and that inventory will populate a prioritized "pipeline" of projects and noted projects in the Corridor ID pipeline are eligible for funding under the FRA's financial assistance program.

Mr. McFalls then shared a draft of the Corridor ID project lifecycle stages and corresponding FRA funding programs. This includes system planning, project planning, project development, final design, construction and operation.

He stated the seven corridors awarded funding were Charlotte to Washington, DC, Salisbury to Asheville, Raleigh to Wilmington, Charlotte to Kings Mountain, Raleigh to Fayetteville, Raleigh to Winston Salem, and Charlotte to Atlanta.

Mr. McFalls noted the Corridor ID process beginning with step 1; Scoping; \$500,000 funding with no match required for CID grants. Step 2; Project Planning/SEP Development; \$1.5 million to \$4 million range with 10% match required. He noted the match would be dependent on the corridor complexity. Step 3; Preliminary Engineering/Environmental Process/Project Development with cost to be determined with a 20% match required.

He then touched on the planning process to include project administration, stakeholder engagement, alternatives analysis, technical analysis, environmental analysis, financial planning, governance, and service development plan.

In closing Mr. McFalls, stated the SDP outcomes (results of study) includes operational plans for how service works, list of projects that must be built, and feeds the next steps for NEPA with projects and cost estimates. He then noted that CID will need the MPO's to ask questions and promote community readiness during this first phase. Soon they will ask for a non-federal match, respond to RFP, start stakeholder engagement and work on alternative analysis. Later they ask for plan concurrence, STI collaboration and Corridor champions.

### **c) Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Draft Financial Forecast and Alternative Funding and Financing Opportunities, Kristina Whitfield, Kimley-Horn & Associates**

Ms. Whitfield stated she was sharing a brief presentation reviewing some high-level numbers from our financial forecast and the process that went into that. Alternative funding and financing mechanisms are being explored with the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Committee. A forecast for the reasonably expected revenues for transportation projects will be based on historically available data, and then cost estimate for those projects and match them up to balance. The Wilmington MPO on its own is not required to look at non-traditional funding sources that may be used to help bridge funding needs. This is not a federal requirement. The Wilmington MPO has done this for many cycles now and is going above and beyond the federal requirements.

Looking at the financial forecast, it starts with a review of historical data from the last two cycles. We had a lot of meetings with our modal experts. Then meetings with modal experts like WAVE, ILM, the ferry division, and NCDOT Division 3 and allowed them to weigh in with any input that is valuable. This information was then reviewed and refined into the forecast. The last two steps are the prioritization metrics. The MTPC approved these at the last meeting. Staff will now prioritize the projects and then use that priority list partnered with the cost estimates to constrain the projects against the available revenues. And using this approach will provide a better understanding of what the funding gap is. For the major funding sources, three buckets are looked at. The federal sources that are out there, the state sources and the local sources. As well as some possible new funding with IJA that was not available when the last MTP was updated.

Ms. Whitfield then explained the capitol numbers for each of the modes between now and 2050. Highways are at \$4.1 billion, airports \$631 million, bike/pedestrian \$108 million, transit \$94 million, ferry \$70 million, and rail \$53 million. She stated highways have gone up a decent amount and that's to be expected with some of the new funding through the IJA, as has airports and ferry both of those got infusion from some of the newest legislation. In aggregate, across the 2050 horizon year, you can see the breakdown here of federal, state and local funds, and this underscores why it's so important for us to talk about that local funding component right now with our existing revenue sources. only 7% of our transportation funding comes from local sources. It is anticipated that there will be a significant funding gap between the needed projects and the financially constrained projects. Local and alternative funding is a funding mechanism that allows the cities, member jurisdictions, and county's priorities to serve a more local need. Ms. Whitfield explained that alternative funding options means a bigger pie, more money to spread around to more projects. This allows more local control and less NCDOT reliance. North Carolina having a large state-maintained roadway system, they're always going to be a very strategic and an important partner.

She stated the Inflation Reduction Act, has been a huge infusion of discretionary grant programs and alternative funding sources that gives the tools to have a reliable local match for some of those federal and state grant programs. The NC First Commission released their report and stated that traditional revenue streams are tied to assumptions and trends that are very quickly becoming obsolete.

Ms. Whitfield then gave a quick recap of some of the funding mechanisms.

- The local option sales tax. This is a referendum that gives the voting public control. It doesn't have to be tied to specific projects, and it doesn't have a funding sunset. Counties can leverage up to a quarter of a penny for this.
- There is also a local option sales tax for transit similar to the local option sales tax for more general use, but specifically tailored revenues must be used for financing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the transit system.
- Vehicle registration fees are another one of the traditional funding mechanisms available to counties in North Carolina. The Board of County Commissioners can have a vote, and they can essentially tack on up to \$7.00 dollars for every registered vehicle in their county, and that would go towards improvements for transportation.
- Municipalities can levy an annual general motor vehicle tax up to \$30.00 dollars in the state and \$5.00 dollars of that can go to any lawful purpose, \$5.00 dollars for transit, and the rest can be used for public streets that are not part of the state highway system.
- The vehicle rental tax, counties in North Carolina can levy taxes on the gross receipts of vehicle rentals at the rate of 1 ½%.
- The bicycle registration fee was dropped as an option by the MTPC due to being regressive and could penalize people who must use a bicycle as their primary means of transportation.
- Transportation impact fees are illegal in the state of North Carolina, but they are included for awareness.
- Tolling

She noted there are two different types of bonds that are typically used in North Carolina for transportation facilities, the first being revenue bonds. These are bonds that are paid back by user generated revenues. They're typically used in the transportation space and public transportation ferry, or on the rail system. Those are all great examples of projects that could potentially be funded with revenue bonds. Then there is the more traditional bond in the state of North Carolina, that is our general obligation bond. They are backed by the full faith and credit of the municipality or county that's leveraging them. They can be backed by any revenue source, but here in North Carolina, we most typically see this as property tax increases. They do require voter approval,

whereas the revenue bond does not. One more option that is getting used more and more in North Carolina especially for some of our bigger transit type projects is Public Private Partnerships and this is where the private sector and the public sector partner together for project delivery.

Ms. Whitfield touched on is Tax Increment Financing that was authorized by the General Assembly back in 2004. The advantages to this are it can grow the tax base and raise value of tax base. It can revitalize areas that may be in decline or have been underinvested in the past and can alleviate burdens on developers. The disadvantages are the need to mediate between multiple groups, assessing incremental gain in tax revenues related to TIF project and can contribute to displacement via gentrification.

She closed by stating the next steps are to finalize revenue projections for existing funding sources, conduct further research and forecast alternative funding sources. A future presentation will be scheduled for financially constraining the projects.

#### **d) May is Bike Month, Carolyn Caggia, WMPO**

Carolyn Caggia stated that May is National Bike Month. National Bike Month is promoted by the League of American Bicyclists every May. This has been celebrated since 1956. National Bike and Roll to School Day is hosted by the National Center for Safe Routes to School on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Go Coast Bike Month will challenge bicyclists to log their miles traveled by bike during May 2024. Go Coast will also collect optional demographic data. Participant will log distance, ride type, and if they wore a helmet. The Go Coast Bike Month numbers to date are 1,193 miles reported, 28 participants, 48 people filled out interest forms and 77 members in the Go Coast Strava club. She noted that other activities included in Bike Month are proclamations, press releases, social media posts, email blasts, and Strava group post.

Ms. Caggia noted that Local Bike to School Day is Friday May 17<sup>th</sup>. This local effort is led by Terry Benjey cycling Foundation. Local participating schools are Carolina Beach Elementary School and Pine Valley Elementary School. There are 4 bike routes per school with multiple stops. The routes will be led by volunteers with police support and all the maps will be posted online.

She closed stating the WMPO supported was with staff volunteers and worked with Terry Benjey Bicycling Foundation on route identification and testing. The WMPO also offered aerial drone photography at the schools.

#### **e) WMPO Drone Usage-Greer Shivers, WMPO**

Ms. Shivers presented the idea for getting the drone. She came to the WMPO having already obtained a Part 107 Certified Remote Pilot License. WMPO staff wanted a way to obtain aerial imagery to assist WMPO operations including Traffic Impact Analyses, help bolster social media content, and bolster planning documents. WMPO is the first MPO in North Carolina to create a drone program.

The acquisition of the drone consisted of collaboration with NCDOT, FHWA, and the City of Wilmington to purchase the recommended drone and secure an insurance policy.

The drone selected for purchase was the DJI Mini 3 (More Fly Combo) which includes the DJI Mini 3 drone, RC Remote Controller, 3 Intelligent Flight Batteries, 3 propeller sets, 18 replacement screws, a screwdriver, gimbal protector, 2 USB cables, 2-way charging hub, a shoulder bag, a hard-shell travel case, a lens care and cleaning kit, an ND filter set, a landing pad, and 128GB microSD card. She shared the following specifications, each battery allows for 38 minutes of uninterrupted flight time, under 0.5 lbs. including the battery, it captures 4K video and 12MP stills, it captures true vertical shooting with a gimbal that can rotate 90°, it has 4x digital zoom, and has a flight speed up to 36 mph.

She stated the WMPO received the drone in October 2023 and the maiden flight was traffic monitoring to capture existing conditions of the roadways prior to the directional closures of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. Ms. Shivers then gave a brief overview of flight logistics and examples of applications that the drone has been used for.

In closing Ms. Shivers noted that the WMPO is continuing the drone program to bolster planning activities that are provided to our region and member jurisdictions and create a Drone Operation Policy.

#### **4) Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- April 10, 2024
- b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #24-4
- c. Resolution supporting the award of the FY 25 Section 5310 Community Grant Project Funds
- d. Resolution amending the TCC and WMPO Board meeting schedule for a Joint Special Meeting at 2 pm on June 26, 2024

Nazia Sarder made a motion to approve the consent agenda; Mark Hairr seconded it. Motion passes.

#### **5) Regular Agenda**

##### **a. Resolution adopting the Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Vision, Goals, and Modal Objectives**

Vanessa Lacer, WMPO gave a brief update from the technical steering committee's adoption of the vision statement, goals, and modal objectives. She read the vision statement and goals and noted the modal objectives.

Chairman Mike Kozlosky made a motion to approve the resolution; Adrienne Harrington seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

##### **b. Resolution approving the WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable Project Submittal Guidelines and Scoring Criteria**

Mike Kozlosky, WMPO stated that included in the packet are the Submittal Guide and scoring criteria, which are the same as they were for FY24. Important dates to notice are the official release will be July 5th. A pre-application review on August 9th. Electronic application submittals are due no later than 5:00 PM on September 13th and we anticipate the award being October 30th of 2024. Scott James, who's the Transportation Planning Engineer, is managing this project and program. If there's additional questions, members are encouraged to reach out to Scott.

Motion to approve WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable Project submittal guidelines and scoring made by Mark Hairr; seconded by Michele Howes. Motion passed unanimously.

## 6) Discussion

### a. 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #24-4

Mike Kozlosky stated this was for informational purposes only and will be brought back at the next meeting for approval.

### b. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Modal Project List

Vanessa Lacer and Greer Shivers, WMPO gave a brief overview and presentation outlining the modal project lists. Ms. Lacer stated in fall of 2023, WMPO staff began coordinating with member jurisdictions and modal planning partners on project submissions for Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050, to include projects for six modes of transportation: bicycle and pedestrian, ferry and water transportation, public transportation, rail, and roadway. A draft list was compiled in December 2023. In January 2024, members and planning partners were provided results from the recently completed Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 public engagement process and were offered the opportunity to make any changes/additions/subtractions to their project submissions at that time. At the conclusion of the submission process a total of 374 projects, inclusive of all modes, were identified, however some changes to public transportation project submissions are anticipated, pursuant to the adoption of Wave Transit's Short-Range Plan, which is expected in May 2024.

The draft project lists presented today has been reviewed by the Cape Fear Navigating Change Technical Steering Committee as well as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and comments received have been incorporated.

In spring/summer 2024, projects included in the draft project lists will be scored using modal scoring matrices developed by the Cape Fear Navigating Change Technical Steering Committee and project costs will be developed by the plan's financial element consultant, Kimley-Horn. Following the scoring and cost estimation of projects, draft fiscally constrained project lists will be developed and provided to the TCC and WMPO Board for their review in fall of 2024.

Greer Shivers, WMPO gave a tutorial on how to overview the list using the Navigating Change 250 Draft Modal Projects web maps.

## 7) Updates

### a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO

Mike Kozlosky noted that updates are included in the packet.

### b. Cape Fear Public Transit Authority

Mark Hiarr, WAVE, stated updates were in the packet.

### c. NCDOT Division 3

Michelle Howes gave an update on completed and ongoing projects.

### d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Nazia Sarder, NCDOT, stated he NCDOT Board of Transportation adopted the CTP on May 1st. The Pender County CTP had their last meeting on April 23rd and will have a survey out on June 1st for the public, which closes on September 1st. All other updates are included in the packet.



**9) Announcements**

- a. **MTP Technical Advisory Committee- May 9, 2024**
- b. **MTP Technical Advisory Committee-May 14, 2024**

**10)** Next meeting- June 12, 2024

There being no further business Sam Boswell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Chairman Kozlosky and the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

**THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.**

**THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.**