

**Wilmington Urban Area MPO
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, January 17, 2024
Remote Meeting Minutes**

Members Present in Person

Sam Boswell, Cape Fear Council of Governments
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Mike Kozlosky, TCC Chairman, WMPO
Karlene Ellis Vitalis, New Hanover County
Michelle Howes, NCDOT

Members Absent

Michelyn Alston, Town of Navassa
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Mark Hairr, Cape Fear Public Transit Authority
Gloria Abbotts, Town of Carolina Beach

Members Present Remote

Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority
Adam Moran, Pender County
Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport
Adrienne Harrington, Town of Belville
Nazia Sarder, TCC Vice Chair, NCDOT
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington
Jessica Moberly, Town of Leland
Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport
Mandy Sanders, Town of Kure Beach

Others Present

Tera Cline, WMPO
Scott A. James, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Greer Shivers, WMPO
Emma Stogner, WMPO
Jon Dodson, Cape Fear Public (Remote)
Transportation Authority
Vanessa Lacer, WMPO

1) Call to Order

Chairman Mike Kozlosky called the meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee to order at 10:01 a.m., confirmed a quorum was present, and called the roll as follows:

Present In Person: Sam Boswell, Carolyn Caggia, Mike Kozlosky, Karlene Ellis Vitalis, and Michelle Howes.

Present Remotely: Adam Moran, Helen Bunch, Adrienne Harrington, Jessica Moberly, Nazia Sarder Stephanie Ayers, Mandy Sanders, and Denys Vielkanowitz. **Absent:** Gloria Abbotts, Mark Hairr, Michelyn Alston, Robert O'Quinn

2) Approval of Agenda

Stephanie Ayers made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Adrienne Harrington, and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Election of Officers

Mike Kozlosky opened the floor for nominations for Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Stephanie Ayers nominated Mike Kozlosky for Chairman and Nadia Sarder for Vice Chairman, seconded by Adrienne Harrington

Motion to approve the nominations as presented made by Granseur Dick and seconded by Jon Dodson, motion passes unanimously.

4) **Presentations**

a. NCDOT's policy regarding Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)

Mark Eatman, NCDOT, presented to the TCC 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 CO₂ 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.

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 those 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.

Mr. Eatman explained the process for submitting an application and how to handle it if you have a multi-jurisdictional project.

b. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Public Outreach Phase 1 Results

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 TCC 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 for 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 in total. 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 group. She told the group that 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.

5) **Consent Agenda**

- a. **Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- November 15, 2023**
- b. **Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #23-2.**
- c. **Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #23.-3**
- d. **Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #24-1**
- e. **Resolution supporting Process Improvements for the Utilization of the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's Direct Attributable Funds**
- f. **Resolution adopting the Wilmington Urban Area MPO's member jurisdiction population numbers from the 2020 Census data**
- g. **Resolution supporting the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's application for the North Carolina Department of Transportation Bicycle Helmet Initiative**

Nazia Sarder made a motion to approve the consent agenda and it was Seconded by Sam Boswell. Motion carried unanimously.

6) **Regular Agenda**

a. **Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for the FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program**

Mr. Kozlosky presented the draft Unified Work Program (UPWP) that is being proposed. He presented the draft UPWP and proposed expenditures. In the next fiscal year, it will include several different funding sources, including our PL funds, and Direct Attributable funds as well as Safe Streets for All program funds. He explained that there were some increases in population from the census. He noted some of our member jurisdictions increased and others decreased in population.

Mr. Kozlosky explained that the 2020 member populations will be used to determine the local match for our members moving forward over the next decade.

He added that the proposed budget includes several enhancement requests that have come before the committee and will carry forward to the Board. The first is a marketing coordinator to focus more on communication and outreach and utilizing and enhancing our use of social media. He explained that the MPO identified the need for a communication specialist to assist the MPO with improving communication both internally and externally.

Mr. Kozlosky continued with the next enhancement is a request for a Grant Specialist. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act both include funding for discretionary grants. In the 2023 organizational assessment, the recommendation was hiring of a funding specialist.

The proposal includes the completion of a Intelligent Translation Systems plan, as a special study. This is a recommendation that came out of our certification review. The MPO is required to be certified at least every 4 years by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. As part of that certification, there were commendations as well as recommendations. One of the recommendations was that we work with NCDOT to update the regional ITS architecture plan and then incorporate that plan into the MTP. The proposed MPO budget is \$100,000 and , NCDOT's Traffic Operations and Management Division will be applying for \$200,000 in State Planning and Research funds (SPR) to work collaboratively to develop this regional ITS plan.

Mr. Kozlosky also mentioned, there are funds in the proposal that are not eligible for grant expenditures such as promotional items. These funds would be used to promote our TDM program to purchase things like bike helmets, water bottles, key chains. Etc.

Also, staff have been working with our Board to adopt a legislative agenda on an annual basis. Lobbying is not an eligible expense under the grant program, however, in discussions with leadership at the MPO, there is a desire to hire a lobbyist to advance the Legislative agenda. The proposed budget is \$60,000 in local only funds, no federal, or state funds to pursue advancing the MPOs Legislative agenda. The proposal includes Section 5303 funds passed through to WAVE for transit planning activities. This is done on an annual basis.

He then explained employee compensation and recognizing that we need to hire and retain talented employees. In order to do that, we must reward and compensate the employees adequately. This draft includes 10% increase for employee compensation. It's important point out that this is a placeholder, and the city will determine the final compensation.

The enhancement proposal will also include a proposal to reclass the Senior Accountant to the Accounting Manager.

Ms. Hopkins and Mr. Kozlosky then gave a brief overview of general expenditures and general operating cost for next year.

Mr. Kozlosky then overviewed with the TCC the proposed member contributions and the comparison from last year. He also indicated that the WMPO was awarded \$400,000 from USDOT to complete a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.

He concluded by explaining the City of Wilmington only contribution and key deadlines.

Mike Kozlosky made a motion to recommend opening the 30-day public comment period for the draft UPWP and Sam Boswell seconded it. All in favor.

b. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable Funds to the Town of Belville of the Rice Hope Multi-use Path (EB-6025) and Belville Elementary Multi-use Path (EB-6026)

The WMPO Board allocated FY 2017 STBG-DA funds to the Town of Belville for the Rice Hope Connection Multi-use Path (\$160,000) and Transportation Alternatives Program-Direct Attributable (now known as TASA) funds to the Town of Belville for the Belville Elementary Multi-use Path (\$120,000). On September 28, 2022, the WMPO Board approved an additional allocation of Direct Attributable funding in the amount of \$275,892 to the Town of

Belville for the Belville Elementary Multi-use Path. The Town of Belville has opened bids for both construction projects and the bids exceeded the grant funds available for the projects.

The Town of Belville Board of Commissioners approved requesting an additional \$151,839 in funding from the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Rice Hope Multi-use Path (EB-6025) and \$394,920 for the Belville Elementary Multi-use Path (EB-6026). The Town of Belville has committed to providing the additional local match required in the amount of \$37,960 for the Rice Hope Multi-use Path (EB-6025) and \$98,731 for the Belville Elementary Multi-use Path (EB-6026).

Scott James, WMPO confirmed with the TCC that the correct amount the Town of Belville has requested is \$394,921.

Adrienne Harrington made a motion to approve allocating additional funds and seconded by Jon Dodson. All in favor.

c. Resolution supporting the move of funding to P.E. Only for the Kerr Avenue Extension (U-6201) to provide for NCDOT's committed Economic Development funding for a project in Brunswick County

In October, it was announced that Epsilon Advanced Materials, Inc., a global provider of synthetic graphite used in electric vehicle batteries, will build its first manufacturing facility in the United States in Brunswick County, thus creating 500 jobs. The Indian-based company will invest \$649.9 million at the Mid-Atlantic Rail Industrial Park in Brunswick County. As part of the economic support to attract Epsilon Advanced Materials, Inc. to the Mid-Atlantic Rail Industrial Park, NCDOT Division 3 committed \$10M for transportation improvements that include road improvements on US 74, as well as the road into the site. The funding comes from the Division Needs tier for programming in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

At the time of NCDOT's commitment, there were sufficient funds in the Division Needs tier to accommodate this commitment. Since that time, NCDOT has re-evaluated their funding and there is now a negative amount in the Division Needs tier for Division 3. \$10M will need to be provided from the NCDOT Division 3's Division tier.

In December, WMPO staff were contacted requesting feedback on options for delaying projects funded within the WMPO's planning area to free up this \$10 million. The Mid-Atlantic Rail Park is located outside of the WMPO planning area boundary, however there are no Brunswick County projects in the Cape Fear Rural Planning Organization to delay.

There are two projects in Pender County, but to delay those projects would defund them both and the Division's goal is to not have to defund any projects with the limited amount of funds available in Prioritization 7.0. The adopted 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs includes the Kerr Avenue Extension (U-6201) which would construct a roadway on new location between Wrightsville Avenue and Oleander Drive and the Kerr Avenue Extension (U-6201) project is funded at the Division Needs tier.

On March 29, 2023, the WMPO Board requested NCDOT explore alternative design options for the College Road/Oleander Drive intersection improvements (U-5704) and NCDOT is currently evaluating alternative design options for this intersection.

Based on a review of the projects funded in the Division Tier within the WMPO's planning boundary, both NCDOT and WMPO staffs recommend delaying the Kerr Avenue Extension (U-6201) to provide NCDOT's committed Economic Development funding for the project in Brunswick County.

Helen Bunch made a motion to approve and seconded by Nazia Sarder, all in favor.

d. Resolution requesting a modification to the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Prioritization 7.0 (P 7.0) Project Submittal to provide Evaluation of a Toll Option for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge in P 7.0

Mr. Kozlosky stated the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) completed a feasibility study in 2020 that evaluated four potential options for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (65' fixed span, 135' fixed span, 65' movable span, and 65' movable span with rail) and the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

On February 23, 2022, the WMPO's Board adopted a resolution urging consideration of all possible options including tolls and previous proposals for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

At the July 27, 2022 WMPO Board meeting and in response to the resolution adopted by the WMPO Board in February 2022, NCDOT identified that it would evaluate options for delivering the project using a three-pronged approach of traditional delivery, conventional tolling, and alternative delivery as well as consider grant opportunities, NCDOT completed a Traffic and Revenue forecast for the project which was presented to the WMPO Board at their November 29, 2023 meeting and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL) includes several discretionary grant programs that may be available to fund a portion of the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

December 2023, NCDOT applied to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Bridge Investment Program- Large Bridge Grant for \$242 million to assist in replacing the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. The WMPO and NCDOT will continue to evaluate potential grant opportunities to replace the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

The replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge did not score high enough in Prioritization 6.0 to receive funding for implementation and is programmed for preliminary engineering only in the 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program (MPO TIP). Prioritization 7.0 is the prioritization process that will be used to evaluate projects for the 2026-2035 STIP/MPO TIP, NCDOT and WMPO both submitted the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge for consideration in Prioritization 7.0 and both NCDOT's and WMPO's submittals for the replacement will be scored identically as a non-tolled alternative in Prioritization 7.0 through traditional delivery.

The current state law requires tolling to be a local decision, and therefore only WMPO can submit the project for scoring in Prioritization 7.0 as a toll facility, NCDOT has provided WMPO until February 1, 2024, to modify the replacement project submittal for scoring as a toll facility in Prioritization 7.0. The proposed submission of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge as a toll option would be for scoring purposes only and would not commit the project to being programmed and delivered as a toll facility. Future affirmation by the WMPO Board would be required for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge to be implemented as a toll facility and, further the WMPO Board can withdraw any approval of a toll option up until the Department advertises for a contract to construct the replacement bridge.

Sam Boswell asked if this was just about the scoring process. Mr. Kozlosky confirmed, yes.

Denys Vielkanowitz asked if this is just comparing a toll option to a non-toll option? Mr. Kozlosky explained that yes, DOT and WMPO submitted the project under the traditional scoring. This request would be to modify our submittal to be scored as a toll option. Denys Vielkanowitz confirmed stating the DOT and MPO project submittals will be able to be compared.

Sam Boswell made a motion to forward the resolution to the WMPO Board for discussion and review. Seconded by Denys Vielkanowitz, all in favor.

7) **Discussion**

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

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

b. **2024 Draft Legislative Agenda**

Feedback from the TCC was requested on the included draft legislative agenda. No changes were purposed, and it will be presented to the MPO Board for consideration.

c. **2022-2026 Wilmington Urban Area MPO 2023 Accomplishments**

Mike Kozlosky gave a brief overview of accomplishments. A full listing is included in the packet.

d. **2022-2026 Wilmington Urban Area MPO 2024 Work Plan**

Feedback from the TCC was requested on the draft work plan. No changes were purposed, and it will be presented to the MPO Board for consideration.

8) **Updates**

a. **Wilmington Urban Area MPO**

Updates included in the packet.

b. **Cape Fear Public Transit Authority**

Jon Dodson stated that the update was in the packet. In addition to that there will be a special Wave Board workshop looking at various service plan scenarios as part of the short-range transit plan. He stated they will also be discussing possible additional service with the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Preservation project starting soon.

c. **NCDOT Division**

Updates included in the packet.

d. **NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Updates included in the packet.

9) **Announcements**

a. **MTP Citizens Advisory Committee- January 17, 2024**

b. **MTP Technical Advisory Committee-January 18, 2024**

c. **Wilmington MPO Bike/Ped Advisory Committee- January 23, 2024**

Next meeting- February 14, 2024

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.
THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.