



525 N. Fourth Street, Wilmington, NC 28401
P.O. Box 1810, Wilmington, NC 28402
O: (910) 341-3258 | F: (910) 341-7870
www.wmpo.org

WMPO Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

525 N 4th Street

Wilmington, NC 28401

Members Present, In person

Hank Miller, Chairman, Town of
Wrightsville Beach
Luke Waddell, Vice Chairman, City of
Wilmington
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach
Dane Scalise, Cape Fear Public
Transportation Authority
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Brad George, Pender County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Kevin Spears, City of Wilmington

Tessa Jones, WMPO
Krysdan Burden, WMPO
Beth King, WMPO
Caitlin Cerza, WMPO
Ronda Hogan, WMPO
Ronald Sulak, Wilmington Resident
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
John Emrich, Wilmington Resident
Debbie Champagne, Wilmington Resident
Sue Bulluck, WBCC
Janet Pruden, Wilmington Resident
Myron Irving, Wilmington P.D.
Chris Ngel, Wilmington P.D.
Richard M. Collier, McKim & Creed

Members Present, Remote

Landon Zimmer, NC Board of
Transportation

Members Absent

Bill Rivenbark, New Hanover County
Chuck Bost, Town of Belville

Others Present, In Person

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Trevor Carroll, NCDOT
Matt Nichols, Law Office of Matt Nichols
Doug Pruden, Wilmington Resident
Bijan Salehi, A Caring Heart
Mark Hairr, WAVE
Greer Templer, WMPO

Others Present, Remote

Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
William Kincannon, HDR
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Katie Hite, NCDOT
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT
Travis Henley, City of Wilmington
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Eric Seidel, CFPWA
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Eric Ritzel, NCDOT
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
Veronica Newsome, NCDOT
Chad Kimes, TransSystems

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.

Chairman Miller made an announcement that Mike Allen, a member of this Board representing the Town of Belville, passed away last night. Chairman Miller asked for a moment of silence to honor Mr. Allen.

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO Deputy Director, called the roll.

2. Roll Call

Present: Lynn Barbee, Brenda Bozeman, John Ellen, Hank Miller, Dane Scalise, Kevin Spears, Luke Waddell, Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, Brad George and Landon Zimmer

Absent: Bill Rivenbark and Chuck Bost

3. Conflict of Interest Statement

Chairman Miller read the conflict-of-interest statement as required by General Statute and requested any conflicts of interest be disclosed by the Board. Chairman Miller submitted a conflict-of-interest statement for item 9a. on the agenda, the public hearing. Mr. Williams made a motion to accept Chairman Miller's conflict-of-interest statement, Mr. Barbee seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Board Member Excused Absences

Ms. Lorenzo reported that Bill Rivenbark and Chuck Bost had requested excused absences. Ms. Bozeman entered a motion to approve of their absences, seconded by Mr. Waddell. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Miller requested a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Scalise made the motion, seconded by Mr. Waddell. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Public Comment Period

Chairman Miller opened the public comment period.

Ronald Sulak, 10-year Wilmington resident, would like the Board to request the NCDOT to hold a public hearing to explain the 2025 version of the U-5710 project. He believes this project will have a significant negative effect on thousands of Wilmington residents daily, stating that four years of construction and the moving of one traffic light will not be beneficial for the residents. He stated that if there was some publicity made for the project already underway, Centerpoint, directing traffic that way, it would eliminate the traffic issues that U-5710 is supposed to address. Mr. Sulak concluded his comments by

again asking the WMPO Board to request a public hearing from the NCDOT regarding U-5710.

Bijan Salehi, Wilmington resident, Mr. Salehi requested bike trails, bike trail extensions, pedestrian crossings, sidewalk extensions, road widenings and repaving from the WMPO Board.

John Emrich, Wilmington resident, former Director of NC Port's Authority, requested the WMPO's support in requiring the NCDOT to have a public hearing regarding U-5710. Mr. Emrich believes the model for traffic flow was flawed in 2022 and the new flyover will create chaos and hurt or destroy local businesses. Mr. Emrich questioned why the request for a public hearing has been ignored. He would like the Board's support in requesting a public hearing or he would like the WMPO to hold a public hearing to explain why they support the project.

Doug Pruden, Wilmington resident, Mr. Pruden spoke to the Board regarding the U-5710 project. He stated that he has been putting a lot of time and energy into informing residents and business owners about U-5710 and has been surprised at the lack of awareness and knowledge about the project. He is requesting a meeting in hopes of making everyone aware of why they oppose the spending of taxpayers' dollars on this project. He stated that if the DOT or WMPO could offer a clear explanation of how the project will improve traffic flow in the area, the opposition would go away.

7. Presentations

a. North Carolina State Ports Update, Stephanie Ayers, NCSPA

Ms. Ayers introduced herself and explained her role at the North Carolina Ports. She began her presentation sharing the mission statement of the NC Ports and giving a quick overview of the financial structure. Ms. Ayers explained that NC Ports has two deepwater ports as well as an inland port, making themselves strategically located. She highlighted the capital improvements that they have been making and why they have been making them. Ms. Ayers explained the master plan for their general cargo, stating it is an important revenue component, and this is their focus, moving ahead for the next 5 years. Ms. Ayers asked if there were any questions, there were none.

8. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of WMPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes – June 25, 2025
- b. Opening of a 30-day public comment period for 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs Amendment #25-4
- c. Resolution approving the 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs Administrative Modifications #25-5
- d. Resolution adopting the WMPO's Safe Streets and Roads for All Commitment

Dane Scalise made a motion to approve the consent agenda; Frank Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Public Hearing

- a. Resolution adopting the 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs

Chairman Hank Miller requested that Vice-Chair, Luke Waddell guide the Public Hearing due to Mr. Miller's Conflict of Interest Statement. Vice-Chair Waddell stated the rules for the Public Hearing and introduced Abby Lorenzo to explain the resolution. Ms. Lorenzo explained that the final 2026-2035 State/MPO TIP, included in the packet, is a cumulation of two years of work from the NCDOT and the WMPO working through the Prioritization 7.0 process. Ms. Lorenzo relayed the results of the public comment period, mentioning that there were sixty-one comments received within the 30-day period, and they were presented to the Board. The second step in the public participation process is a Public Hearing, which was the item before the Board. John Ellen made a motion to open the Public Hearing; Frank Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, Vice Chairman Waddell opened the public hearing.

Susan Bulluck, Chair of the Wrightsville Beach Chamber of Commerce, Ms. Bulluck requested to have U-5710 removed from the 2026-2035 State/MPO TIP. She would like the project reviewed, rescheduled and maybe repurposed. Ms. Bulluck mentioned that the U-5710 project goes back to 2013-2017 and has seen multiple changes without public input. Ms. Bulluck also noted the absence of the replacement of the Heide Trask lift bridge, and she would like the project to be included in the 2026-2035 plan.

John Emrich, Wilmington resident, re-read his comments from the public hearing portion of this meeting.

There were no additional people wishing to speak.

Lynn Barbee made a motion to close the Public Hearing; Frank Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Vice-Chair Luke Waddell commented that it is his understanding that changing the STIP that has been approved by the Board of Transportation has severe and significant impacts to funding far outside of a singular project. That said, Vice-Chair Waddell also stated that he is aware that there are mechanisms that can allow to bring a project back after the STIP is approved. Trevor Carroll stated that there is a process in place

which requires a lot of conversations, and that he was unaware of when, if ever, it had happened before.

Lynn Barbee made a motion to approve the 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs; Frank Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Regular Agenda

- a. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable Funds to the Navassa Park Multi-use Path (U-5534U) project

Caitlin Cerza, WMPO Transportation Planning Engineer, gave an overview of the information provided in the packet regarding the Navassa Park Multi-use Path and the shortfall of funds. Ms. Cerza reported that the Town of Navassa has requested \$468,940.00 to complete the project, the town is prepared to provide the 20% local match. The project is ready for the construction phase, pending the approval of additional funds. Frank Williams made a motion to approve the resolution; Brenda Bozeman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Discussion

- a. 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #25-6

Abby Lorenzo stated that this modification is for informational purposes only and it will be brought back to the Board at the next meeting for approval. Ms. Lorenzo opened the floor for questions, there were none.

- b. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Public Outreach and Recommended Changes

Greer Templer, WMPO Senior Transportation Planner, gave an overview of the Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 public comments that have been received and the changes to the draft plan that have been recommended by staff. Ms. Templer also highlighted the next steps for the plan and opened the floor for questions. John Ellen questioned if he missed the appendix dealing with air transportation. Ms. Templer answered that there is an appendix but because ILM has its own strategic plan and capital plan, the WMPO largely differs to their expertise. Ms. Lorenzo added that the air transportation projects tend to move a lot quicker, with a shorter timeline, so although the WMPO will continue to work with ILM their projects are not prioritized in the MTP.

- c. Prioritization 8.0 Draft Project Submittals

Abby Lorenzo gave an overview of all the Prioritization 8.0 Draft Project Submittals; Aviation, Bicycle and Pedestrian, Ferry and Water, Public Transportation, Rail, and Roadway and highlighted on maps the project locations. Ms. Lorenzo explained that the project lists were developed through coordination

with planning partners and member jurisdiction staff. Ms. Lorenzo stated that any requested changes should be communicated to staff and that project lists would be brought before the Board in August for approval. Submissions are due by September 30th. Ms. Lorenzo opened the floor to questions, which there were none.

12. Updates

a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO

Abby Lorenzo gave the updates for the WMPO, beginning with the newest staff member, Amanda Halbert. Ms. Halbert is the new WMPO GIS Analyst. She introduced herself and everyone welcomed her to the team. Regina Hopkins, WMPO Accounting Manager, gave an update on federal rules for grant funded projects. Abby Lorenzo also presented the Board with the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the WMPO.

b. Cape Fear Public Transit Authority

Updates are in the packet.

c. NCDOT Division 3

Updates are in the packet, however Trevor Carroll also provided new updates on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Grant, reporting that it is now “un-paused” from the Executive Order issued back in February and is moving forward. Mr. Carroll also gave an update on the Hampstead 3300-A project, stating that NCDOT opened bids earlier in the month and that the project has been awarded and will be moving forward.

d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Nazia Sarder stated that the committee for Pender County Comprehensive Transportation Plan met on Monday, to review and finalize the Bicycle Pedestrian Network.

e. WMPO Board Members

Eulis Willis thanked the Board for supporting the Navassa Project. Frank Williams gave a quick update from the Alternative Funding Committee, highlighting what the committee will be focusing on and the funding options that are before the committee.

13. Next Meeting— August 27, 2025

14. Adjourn

Mr. Ellen made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Williams seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 4:13pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky

Executive Director

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS
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