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WMPO Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 29, 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
Mike Allen, Town of Belville
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Brad George, Pender County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County (alternate)
Bill Rivenbark, Cape Fear Public Transit
Authority
Dane Scalise, New Hanover County
Kevin Spears, City of Wilmington
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of
Transportation

Members Present, Remote

John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach

Others Present, In Person

Krysdan Burden, WMPO
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Tera Cline, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Tessa Jones, WMPO
Beth King, WMPO
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Greer Templer, WMPO
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
Chad Kimes, Transystems
Allison Fruitt, Kimley-Horn
Kristina Whitfield, Kimley-Horn
Chris Coudriet, New Hanover County
Karlene Ellis-Vitalis, New Hanover County

Others Present, Remote

Katie Hite, NCDOT
Stacey Mahoney, NCDOT
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
Haley Sweetland, WECT News

1. Call to Order

Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. Mike Kozlosky, WMPO Executive Director, took attendance.

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Present: Mike Allen, Kevin Spears, Lynn Barbee, Dane Scalise, Brenda Bozeman, John Ellen (remote), Brad George, Bill Rivenbark, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell, Mike Forte, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer.

2. 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. No statements were given.

3. Approval of Board Member Excused Absences

There were no excused absences to approve.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Miller requested a motion to approve the agenda as written, barring any changes requested by the Board. Luke Waddell made the motion, seconded by Brenda Bozeman. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Election of Officers

Mr. Kozlosky introduced the process to elect officers of the Board, which occurs at the first meeting of each year. Mr. Kozlosky first opened the floor to nominations for the Chair of the WMPO Board. Dane Scalise nominated Mr. Miller, which was seconded by Ms. Bozeman. After no more nominations were given, Mr. Kozlosky moved to close nominations for Chair. This motion was made by Brad George and seconded by Mike Forte. Mr. Kozlosky asked for a vote, and the Board elected Mr. Miller as Chairman unanimously.

Chairman Miller then opened the floor for nominations for the Board's Vice Chair. Ms. Bozeman nominated Mr. Waddell and was seconded by Mr. Forte. Mr. Scalise then moved to close the nominations, and the motion carried unanimously. Chairman Miller asked for a vote, and the Board elected Mr. Waddell as Vice Chairman unanimously.

6. Public Comment Period

Chairman Miller opened the public comment period. Three individuals signed up to speak during this time.

Leslie Farinella, Wilmington resident: Ms. Farinella spoke regarding concerns about the effectiveness of the overpass at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road in Wilmington. She referenced the fact that the planning for the project was over seven years ago, and voiced concerns that the project thus does not consider the changes occurring in the area since.

Ms. Farinella advocated for current traffic patterns to be reassessed to ensure the project still makes sense, referencing various new intersections and extensions that have been added to the area.

Robert Nevin, Wilmington resident: Mr. Nevin also spoke regarding the overpass at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road. Mr. Nevin expressed concerns regarding the accuracy and recency of the data used as justification for the project. He also spoke about the potential influx of beachgoers to Wrightsville Beach as a result of the overpass, which he stated was already at maximum capacity. He urged the Board to reconsider its support for the project as it stands.

Doug Pruden, Wilmington resident: Mr. Pruden discussed his concerns about the overpass project at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road. He prefaced his comments by saying he spoke at the August Board meeting about this topic, and was told that the funds programmed for the project could not be transferred to another one within the region and would be returned to the state. He then shared that in conversations with others about this topic, he has been asked two questions. First, he stated that others have shared the belief that the funds could provide greater benefit to western North Carolina, post-Hurricane Helene. Second, Mr. Pruden shared that others wonder if NCDOT and other agency staff could influence the state to agree to use the funds elsewhere, where he believes they could be of greater benefit to the region.

Bill Rivenbark then stated that issues like congestion in this area occur because infrastructure was not proactive in its design and implementation, leading to more problems over time. Mr. Rivenbark suggested that having a bus route to Wrightsville Beach could help alleviate congestion at this intersection.

Chairman Miller asked Trevor Carroll, NCDOT Division 3 Engineer, to provide an update on this project at the Board's February meeting. Mr. Carroll agreed to give an update at the next meeting.

7. Presentations

a. Go Coast Update- Carolyn Caggia, WMPO

Carolyn Caggia, Associate Transportation Planner and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Coordinator at WMPO, provided the Board with an update about the Go Coast program's Quarter Two activities and what the program has planned for Quarter Three.

The presentation began with an overview of what TDM is and the purpose of the Go Coast program. Ms. Caggia then overviewed Go Coast's Quarter Two

activities, which took place from October-December 2024. Activities included the annual Get There Greener Challenge, Bike to Work Day, the distribution of children's bicycle helmets, and the completion of employer workshops as part of the TDM short-range plan update. In Quarter Three, which occurs from January-March 2025, will involve preparation for the Be A Looker educational campaign, planning the 35th Annual River to Sea Bike Ride, applying for the 2025 NCDOT Bicycle Helmet Initiative, and developing the TDM short-range plan.

b. **WMPO Communication Plan Update- Tessa Jones, WMPO**

Tessa Jones, Public Information Officer at WMPO, provided the Board with an update on the organization's communication plan for 2025.

Ms. Jones first overviewed the WMPO's communication goals and action items. She detailed the distribution of the WMPO's inaugural bimonthly newsletter, outlining the information included within it and performance metrics. Ms. Jones then overviewed other action items, including reviewing and updating the WMPO's Public Participation Plan, enhancing the organization's social media presence, and optimizing the website. Ms. Jones concluded her presentation with a list of the next steps to achieve these communication goals.

Following the presentation, Vice Chairman Waddell congratulated Ms. Jones and the WMPO on the newsletter's success and commented that having the link to the Board's agenda on the Instagram Story advertising the meeting seemed useful. He also requested that the link to sign up for the newsletter be circulated to the Board.

8. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Board Regular Meeting Minutes- November 20, 2024
- b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modification #24-11
- c. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for the 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #25-1
- d. Resolution supporting the WMPO's application for NCDOT'S Bicycle Helmet Initiative
- e. Resolution endorsing Targets of Safety Performance Measures Established by NCDOT
- f. Resolution adopting the 2025 WMPO Legislative Agenda

Chairman Miller asked for any additions or concerns about the consent agenda items to be raised. Ms. Bozeman made a motion to approve the items and was seconded by Vice Chairman Waddell. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution adopting the TDM Objectives for Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Ms. Caggia to overview the item. Ms. Caggia described the purpose of the TDM objectives for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update and how they were developed.

Referencing the TDM objective under the “Resilient” MTP goal, Mr. Forte asked Ms. Caggia how Go Coast would approach and achieve it. Ms. Caggia shared how the Go Coast implementation plan would be developed with activities and strategies which aim to accomplish the objectives established within the plan. She proposed ideas such as creating an education and outreach campaign or planning events to build excitement around alternative transportation. Ms. Caggia then outlined the objectives for each MTP goal and shared the next steps for the TDM element of the MTP.

Chairman Miller opened the floor to questions or comments. Lynn Barbee made a motion to adopt the TDM objectives as presented, seconded by Vice Chairman Waddell. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Resolution requesting the North Carolina Department of Transportation pursue contingency funding for the traffic signal and associated improvements at Lanvale Road and Fletcher Road NE/Village Road in Brunswick County

Mr. Kozlosky introduced the item, which was discussed at the Board’s October 2024 meeting. Mr. Kozlosky described the purpose of the traffic signal and roadway improvements and opened the floor to questions or comments.

Mr. Forte asked what the cost of a traffic signal is. Mr. Carroll shared that they typically cost around \$500,000, but the cost of this particular project is greater due to the associated intersection improvements.

Mr. Scalise then made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Vice Chairman Waddell. The motion passed unanimously.

c. **Resolution supporting the WMPO’s application for the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) grant program**

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Greer Templer, Senior Transportation Planner at WMPO, to overview the item. Ms. Templer provided an explanation of the PROTECT grant program and the intention of the WMPO to identify projects to enhance the resilience of the region’s transportation network.

Vice Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve the resolution of support, seconded by Mr. Barbee. This motion carried unanimously.

d. **Opening of the 30-day Public Comment Period for the FY 26 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Regina Hopkins, Accounting Manager at WMPO, to overview this item. Ms. Hopkins described the budgeted activities contained in the draft UPWP, including operational funds and additional funds for special studies, rent, and a grant assistance pilot program. She requested the Board open the 30-day comment period for the draft, with final adoption required per NCDOT guidelines by March 31, 2025.

Mr. Barbee moved to open the comment period, second by Vice Chairman Waddell. This motion passed unanimously.

e. **Resolution amending the 2025 TCC/Board Meeting Schedule**

Mr. Kozlosky shared that WMPO staff is requesting a change to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Board meeting schedule for 2025. First, WMPO is requesting to move the TCC’s April meeting to April 9 due to the NCAMPO conference being held in Wilmington later in the month. In addition, WMPO staff requested that a joint TCC and Board meeting be held on June 25, and a Board work session take place December 3.

Mr. Kozlosky added that WMPO staff understand some Board members may have conflicts with one or more of the existing Board meeting dates and asked if the Board would still like to meet at the adopted dates if there is a quorum. The Board agreed that these dates are acceptable as long as there are enough members in attendance to make up a quorum.

Landon Zimmer commented that it may be useful in the future to consider moving meeting times to after traditional work hours so that the public can attend

meetings without taking off work. Chairman Miller said that this could be considered in the future.

A motion to amend the 2025 meeting schedule was introduced by Mr. Scalise, seconded by Vice Chairman Waddell. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Discussion

a. 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #25-1

Mr. Kozlosky introduced the item for information-purposes only, and will be brought back at the Board's February meeting for consideration. Mr. Kozlosky opened the floor to any questions or comments, of which there were none.

b. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Alternative Funding Mechanisms

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Kristina Whitfield and Allison Fluitt of the consulting firm Kimley-Horn to overview this item.

Ms. Whitfield and Ms. Fluitt first reviewed the funding sources that have been discussed in the context of the projects that have been identified in the fiscally constrained project lists. The consultants displayed the revenue potential of each source over the life of the 2050 MTP and what projects could be made possible through them. Ms. Fluitt also described how they were able to estimate the funding potential of each option.

Referring to the vehicle registration fees option, Kevin Spears asked the consultants what the cost of that fee would be. Ms. Whitfield shared that the state of North Carolina General Statute allows up to a \$7 additional fee at vehicle registration.

Ms. Whitfield closed out the presentation with other alternatives that are more difficult to estimate. She also reviewed how the MTP Steering Committee ranked the alternatives presented, as well as what the TCC had preferred. Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director at the WMPO, stated that staff is requesting the Board identify what alternatives they would like to be included in the 2050 MTP.

The Board then engaged in discussion about preferred options. Mr. Zimmer commented that the local option sales tax seems to be the fairest option, as it would be paid by individuals who use the infrastructure the most. He also stated that thinking outside the box for transportation funds would be necessary moving

forward. Mr. Rivenbark agreed with Mr. Zimmer that the sales tax seems like a viable option.

Mr. Forte shared that he believes the local option sales tax alternative would not be viable in Brunswick County. He also shared that many of his constituents have expressed concern over vehicle license fees.

Mr. Zimmer asked the consultants if the local option sales tax is applied to groceries. Ms. Whitfield explained that groceries are currently exempt from sales tax in North Carolina.

Mr. Scalise shared that he would need more time to look over the specifics presented before voicing a preference.

Mr. Spears commented that while he agreed a sales tax is often a hard sell, he believes that this is because groups may not understand what the tax being levied is and what the benefit of it is. He stated that he believes it is a good option but requires education to get passed. He also shared that a vehicle license fee of \$25 may be a high price for some individuals to handle, and this should be considered when identifying the fee levied. Mr. Spears emphasized the importance of taxpayers understanding where their money is going to increase the favor of these additional fees.

Mr. Barbee stated that while a vehicle registration tax would be relatively easy to pass in Carolina Beach, he believes that kind of fee may harm low-income communities whose transportation expenses are already a high portion of their budgets. He then stated that the sales tax would allow communities to benefit from tourists who visit the area and shop while they are in town.

Mr. George shared that it would be hard to pass the quarter cent sales tax in Pender County as well. He stated that this is because a large portion of the residents in Pender County do their shopping in New Hanover County, which already levies this sales tax. He stated concern that this option would not make it past a discussion among Pender County Commissioners.

Mr. Zimmer asked Mr. Carroll if the Board would have access to the updated STIP project list at their next meeting, allowing members to see what projects were selected or not selected for funding. Mr. Carroll responded that it would be provided at the next meeting. Chairman Miller agreed that seeing this list would

help identify what projects will need to secure alternative funding, at what magnitude.

Eulis Willis commented that the Board should retain a focus on future realities versus the current one alone. He emphasized the need to look toward 2050 instead of focusing on what could or could not be done now. Mr. Spears agreed with this sentiment.

Ms. Lorenzo agreed with Mr. Willis' statement, emphasizing that this exercise is meant to keep the conversation going versus committing any individuals or communities to certain options. Mr. Kozlosky added that inclusion in the plan allows for the continuation of the conversation about these alternatives as needed. WMPO staff and Kimley-Horn thanked the Board for their consideration of the funding alternatives.

c. **WMPO Subcommittee Membership**

Mr. Kozlosky overviewed the three subcommittees of the WMPO Board. Following the 2024 local elections, new members have joined the 2025 Board leading to vacancies in all three subcommittees. Mr. Scalise offered to serve on these subcommittees to fill the vacancies from New Hanover County. The motion for Mr. Scalise to join the subcommittees was introduced by Vice Chairman Waddell and seconded by Ms. Bozeman. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Updates

a. **WMPO**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the updates are included in the agenda packet. He also added that the City of Wilmington was awarded the Bronze designation from the League of American Cyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community. In addition, he announced that Tera Cline, Administrative Support Specialist at the WMPO, would be leaving the WMPO on January 31, 2025. Lastly, Mr. Kozlosky shared that the Board will be using tablets to navigate the agenda for all subsequent Board meetings.

John Ellen then asked Mr. Kozlosky about the status of federal funds per Executive Orders issued by President Trump. Mr. Kozlosky responded, stating that there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the Executive Order and associated memo. He assured the Board that staff will keep the Board updated as information is provided. Mr. Carroll reiterated that operations are moving forward as usual, and he will update the Board as needed.

Vice Chairman Waddell also took a moment to introduce Mr. Spears formally to the Board.

b. **Cape Fear Public Transit Authority**

Included in the agenda packet.

c. **NCDOT Division 3**

Mr. Carroll indicated that the updates are included in the packet and added that the 2024-2033 STIP is planned to be released soon. He also recognized Michelle Howes as the newly appointed Deputy Division Engineer.

d. **NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division**

Included in the agenda packet.

e. **NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Nazia Sarder indicated that the updates are included in the packet and added that the WMPO Travel Demand Model is under refinement and that the Pender County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is in progress.

12. Announcements

- a. WMPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee- February 11, 2025

13. Next Meeting— February 26, 2025

14. Adjournment

Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky
Executive Director
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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