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, February 26, 2025
525 N 4th Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

Members Present, In person
Hank Miller, Chairman, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Chuck Bost, Town of Belville (alternate)
Brad George, Pender County
Bill Rivenbark, New Hanover County
Dane Scalise, Cape Fear Public Transit Authority
Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

Members Present, Remote
Luke Waddell, Vice Chairman, City of Wilmington
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland

Members Absent
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Kevin Spears, City of Wilmington

Others Present, In Person
Krysden Burden, WMPO
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Tessa Jones, WMPO
Beth King, WMPO
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Greer Templer, WMPO
Trevor Carroll, NCDOT
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
Ben Hughes, NCDOT
Chad Kimes, Transystems
Chris Coudriet, New Hanover County
Len Anthony, Wrightsville Beach Chamber
Susan Bulluck, Wrightsville Beach Chamber
Susan Baum, Resident
Kristen Dunn, Resident
Natalie English, Wilmington Chamber
Mark Hairr, Wave Transit
Adrienne Harrington, Smart Moves Consulting
Andrew Meeker, East Coast Greenway Alliance
Robin Summerlin, Resident

Others Present, Remote
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland
Travis Henley, City of Wilmington
Andrew Barksdale, NCDOT
Katie Hite, NCDOT
Stacey Mahoney, NCDOT
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT
Tony Elkins, Resident

1. **Call to Order**
   Chairman Hank Miller called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. Mike Kozlosky, WMPO Executive Director, called the roll.

   Present: Chuck Bost, Veronica Carter, Brad George, Bill Rivenbark, Dane Scalise, Hank Miller, Luke Waddell (remote), Frank Williams, Eulis Willis, and Landon Zimmer.

   Absent: Lynn Barbee, John Ellen, Kevin Spears

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**
   Mr. Kozlosky reported that John Ellen and Brenda Bozeman had requested an excused absence. Dane Scalise entered a motion to approve of their absences, seconded by Frank Williams. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Approval of the Agenda**
   Chairman Miller requested a motion to approve the agenda as written, barring any changes requested by the Board. Mr. Williams made the motion, seconded by Chuck Bost. The motion carried unanimously.

5. **Public Comment Period**
   Chairman Miller opened the public comment period. Four individuals signed up to speak during this time.

   Susan Bulluck, Wrightsville Beach Chamber of Commerce: Ms. Bullock spoke regarding State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) project U-5710, the Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road Interchange. Ms. Bulluck is requesting that the Board and NCDOT delay the implementation of this overpass until after the completion of the bridge replacements that are planned in Wrightsville Beach. She shared that she believes U-5710 is no longer useful as designed and planned, stating concern that the project would lead to worse roadway conditions rather than improvements. Ms. Bulluck requested that the project be delayed until the bridge replacements are completed, and that a reevaluation of the traffic in the area take place to ensure the project is effective and efficient.

   Len Anthony, Wrightsville Beach Chamber of Commerce: Mr. Anthony also spoke regarding the overpass at Military Cutoff and Eastwood Road. He requested that the

Board and NCDOT consider delaying the project in the STIP until after the bridge replacements are completed, noting concerns about traffic, worse roadway conditions, and the potential loss of large events and other impacts he believes would occur if the projects are not staggered.

Robin Summerlin, Wrightsville Beach Property Owner: Mr. Summerlin discussed his concerns about traffic flow coming in and out of Wrightsville Beach. He explained how the disbursement of traffic lights controlling vehicle flow is unbalanced and creates stressful situations. He stated that he believes a more balanced disbursement of signalization would lead to safer conditions and better flow.

Natalie English, Wilmington Chamber of Commerce: Ms. English spoke regarding the Chamber's strong support for a replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge that maintains the current clearance of 135 feet. She stated that a lower bridge could impact landowners' property north of the bridge. In addition, Ms. English shared that she spoke with Senators Lee and Rabon, voicing concern that the cost estimate for the replacement project may not be accurate. She concluded by requesting that the Board remain open to creative funding mechanisms for the replacement and to think proactively when selecting an alternative for the bridge height.

6. **Presentations**

   a. **Island Greenway Feasibility Study – Andrew Meeker, East Coast Greenway Alliance**

   Mr. Kozlosky introduced Andrew Meeker, North Carolina Manager with the East Coast Greenway Alliance.

   Mr. Meeker began the presentation with an overview of the East Coast Greenway Alliance and its work. He then overviewed the Kure Beach Island Greenway Feasibility Study. Included in the presentation were information on the project area, alternative alignments, community involvement, estimated project costs and phasing, and next steps.

   Chairman Miller opened the floor to questions or comments, of which there were none.

b. **Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road Interchange Update- Trevor Carroll, NCDOT Division 3**

Mr. Kozlosky overviewed the item, stating that the presentation was at the request of the Board from the January meeting, and following that meeting's public comment period.

Mr. Carroll began the presentation with a graphic overviewing the entire extent of the project area, illustrating the significance of the project and drawing attention to other aspects of the project outside of the intersection at Eastwood and Military Cutoff Roads. He then displayed a closer image of the intersection, describing what the traffic flow would look like with the planned interchange.

Mr. Carroll then addressed specific questions that were asked during the January meeting's public comment period. First, regarding concerns that the traffic forecast was obsolete, Mr. Carroll stated that the traffic forecast was updated in 2022, which confirmed that a grade separation is needed for the intersection.

Next, regarding funding, Mr. Carroll stated that STI Law prevents the transferring of dollars from one project to another without going through the prioritization process. In addition, he noted that STIP funding cannot be leveraged as emergency response funds for Hurricane Helene relief.

Mr. Carroll concluded with the project timeframe, including that construction of the project is currently scheduled for 2027. He requested WMPO Board collaboration throughout the process. He then opened the floor to any questions or concerns from the Board.

Vice Chairman Luke Waddell spoke regarding the possibility of delaying the project a few years, saying that the opening of the Drysdale Extension may result in traffic changes and emphasizing the opportunity to gather updated traffic data for the area. He asked what that process would look like, specifically in how the Board could collaborate with NCDOT. Mr. Carroll said the delay of U-5710 could be accommodated through Board action in collaboration with NCDOT. Mr. Kozlosky added that the Board would need to take action to provide the direction to delay the project, and this would require mutual agreement from NCDOT. He said that if this is something that the Board would like to do, WMPO staff request that direction at this or a future meeting.

Bill Rivenbark asked if the funds could get pulled if the project is delayed. Mr. Kozlosky said the funds would be delayed in the STIP. Landon Zimmer added

that it is likely that the cost of the project will go up if delayed, so the funding available now may not cover the project in the future. He stated that he believes the project should not be delayed ensuring the funding is secured. Mr. Carroll agreed that an increase in cost is an impact that is important to consider in these conversations.

Vice Chairman Waddell asked what the total funding for the project is. Mr. Caroll stated that he believes it is in the range of $85 million. Vice Chairman Waddell then asked what timeframe the Board has to take action, if desired, on this issue. Mr. Kozlosky said action would need to be taken before May 1, 2025.

Dane Scalise stated his appreciation for the comments that people have made regarding the project, but shared his belief that the focus should be long-term. He stated that he does not presently believe that a delay in the project is the right thing to do. Mr. Rivenbark agreed.

Mr. Williams also agreed with Mr. Scalise, stating that he has concerns about an increase in price for the project making it more difficult for the interchange to be implemented in the future if delayed. He asked if there was any way to alleviate the impacts people are concerned about without delaying the project. Mr. Carroll said NCDOT staff will be discussing that and can provide more information at future meetings.

7. **Consent Agenda**
    a. Approval of WMPO Board Special Meeting Minutes- December 17, 2024
    b. Approval of WMPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes- January 29, 2025
    c. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #25-1

Chairman Miller asked for any additions or concerns about the consent agenda items to be raised. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Mr. Zimmer. The motion passed unanimously.

8. **Regular Agenda**
    a. **Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to the Town of Belville for the Rice Hope Multi-use Path project (EB-6025) and Belville Elementary School Multi-use Path project (EB-6026)**
    Mr. Kozlosky overviewed the item, stating that both projects are under construction and have encountered underground utilities that were not in the plans or permits, increasing the costs of the projects. He stated that the WMPO does

have the funds available to be allocated to these projects, so staff recommend approval.

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Eulis Willis. The motion passed unanimously.

b. **Resolution supporting the removal of the connection between 23rd to 26th Streets (U-5926) and NC 133/Castle Hayne Road and 23rd Street Roundabout from the Adopted 2024-2033 and Draft 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the 23rd to 26th Streets project is jointly funded between the City of Wilmington and NCDOT. He explained that due to right-of-way concerns, the recommendation is to not move forward with the purchase of the right-of-way and fold that project into the Independence Boulevard extension project.

Additionally, Mr. Kozlosky stated the NC133/Castle Hayne Road and 23rd Street roundabout has been evaluated by NCDOT and determined to fail. Based on this analysis, no improvements are recommended at that intersection and thus staff recommend the removal of the project from the STIP.

Mr. Kozlosky opened the floor to questions or concerns. Mr. Scalise made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Mr. Zimmer. The motion passed unanimously.

9. <u>Discussion</u>

a. **Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Alternative Funding Mechanisms**

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Abby Lorenzo, Deputy Director of the WMPO, to overview the item. Ms. Lorenzo stated that the WMPO has explored alternative funding and financing options that could, if implemented, provide additional resources to deliver additional projects beyond traditionally funded projects. She added that it also allows more projects to be fiscally constrained within the plan.

Ms. Lorenzo explained that based on the discussion at the Board's January meeting, and further discussion with consultant Kimley-Horn, WMPO staff recommends that the Board not formally endorse any of the alternative funding options, but that all the funding options be included in the financial element of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). She stated that this will provide any member jurisdiction interested in moving forward with any funding options a starting point.

She opened the floor to any questions or comments, of which there were none.

b. **Draft Model Trail Lighting Policy**
Mr. Kozlosky introduced Carolyn Caggia, Associate Transportation Planner and TDM Coordinator at the WMPO, to go over this item.

Ms. Caggia provided background on the model policy, stating that it was developed by WMPO staff and vetted by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Technical Coordinating Committee. She explained that it is intended to act as a guide for WMPO member jurisdictions to determine when lighting should be considered for installation on new and existing trail facilities. She then overviewed the recommendations within the model policy, including regarding lighting locations and characteristics. Ms. Caggia requested that any comments on the model policy from the Board be provided to WMPO staff within two weeks to be incorporated into a final version.

Mr. Williams asked for confirmation that this policy is only intended to be used as a model, not a requirement. Mr. Kozlosky responded that this was correct.

c. **DRAFT 2026-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs**
Ms. Lorenzo overviewed changes from the currently adopted State/MPO Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the draft 2026-2035 STIP. The presentation included new projects, projects with schedule changes, projects with unchanged schedules, projects funded for PE only, and unfunded projects. Following this overview, Ms. Lorenzo shared next steps and opportunities for public comment on the draft STIP to NCDOT.

Vice Chairman Waddell voiced his disappointment in the Oleander Drive at College Road intersection improvements moving to unfunded in the draft State/MPO TIP. He asked if there was a way for this project to move back into being funded in the State/MPO TIP. Mr. Carroll explained that the reason the project moved from being funded to being unfunded was because the scope of the project changed. He stated that a new design for the intersection may allow the project to score better and help it get funded in resubmittal.

Mr. Kozlosky added that the Board has until May to work collaboratively with NCDOT Division 3. He requested that the Board identify projects that they would like to have revisited in terms of schedules so that more scenarios can be run and information taken back to the Board for consideration.

Vice Chairman Waddell stated that the project he would like to have reconsidered is the Oleander Drive/College Road intersection. Chairman Miller agreed.

Mr. Kozlosky stated that there are some restrictions in the restructuring of projects in the State/MPO TIP, and projects can only be moved within the same tier they are funded in, and projects must be similar in cost to be swapped. He requested that the Board provide any other comments on the projects in the draft State/MPO TIP be provided to WMPO staff in the next two weeks. He also added that this item would be brought back at the Board's next meeting as a follow-up discussion.

Chairman Miller asked for any other questions or comments, of which there were none.

10. <u>Updates</u>

a. **WMPO**

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the updates are included in the agenda packet. He also added that no comments were received during the 30-day public comment period for the UPWP, and that it would be brought back to the Board at its March meeting for approval. Additionally, Mr. Kozlosky shared that a staff member from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) is going to present at the March Board meeting on what is happening on the federal level, and how it is impacting MPOs and transportation planning. Lastly, he reminded the Board that their ethics information is due April 15, 2025.

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. He also provided an updated cost estimate for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement, which is now estimated to cost $1.1 billion for a fixed, 135-foot span bridge.

Mr. Rivenbark stated his surprise regarding the price increase and emphasized a need to get the project done.

Vice Chairman Waddell asked if there were cost estimates on other bridge alternatives, and Mr. Carroll stated that there were, and those numbers would be shared at the appropriate time. He stated that the focus on the cost estimate for the

fixed, 135-foot span bridge is due to that option being used for STIP prioritization and grant applications. Vice Chairman Waddell asked when the other estimates would be announced. Mr. Carroll stated that NCDOT is working on formulating correct answers to those questions, rather than providing quick answers. He shared that they are expecting information about minimum clearances allowed from the US Army Corps of Engineers later in the spring.

Chairman Miller stated that he did not think it was the Board's place to take a position on height of the bridge. Mr. Kozlosky agreed, stating that the WMPO is a signatory agency to the merger team, and will not be making decisions regarding height and thus recommends that the Board not take a position on the height of the bridge.

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. She also shared that the Brunswick County CTP is completely closed out following the distribution of the plan to each adopting agency.

11. Next Meeting— March 26, 2025

12. Adjournment
Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky
Executive Director
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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