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WMPO Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 26, 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
Brad George, Pender County
Bill Rivenbark, New Hanover County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of
Transportation
Kevin Spears, City of Wilmington
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach
Brenda Bozeman, Town of Leland
Lynn Barbee, Town of Carolina Beach

Members Present, Remote

Dane Scalise, Cape Fear Public Transit
Authority

Members Absent

Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa

Others Present, In Person

Krysdan Burden, WMPO
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Tessa Jones, WMPO
Beth King, WMPO
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO
Greer Templer, WMPO
Ronda Hogan, WMPO
Jason Pace, Exult Engineering
Eloise Eller, Eastport HOA
Doug Pruden
Crystal Wittaker, NHC
Mary Anne Collins, Eastport HOA
Scottie Pleasant, Eastport
Sadie Price, Eastport HOA

Others Present, Remote

Bill Keyrouze, AMPO
Brenda Flanagan, Port City Daily
Jeff Walton, Brunswick County
Katie Hite, NCDOT
Stacey Mahoney, NCDOT
Nazia Sarder, NCDOT
Kelly Becker, NCDOT
Katie Economou, AMPO
Emma Dill, Greater Wilmington Business
Journal

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

1. Call to Order

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

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

Absent: Eulis Willis

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 Eulis Willis had requested an excused absence. Luke Waddell entered a motion to approve his absence, seconded by John Ellen. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Miller requested a motion to approve the agenda as written. Mr. Waddell made the motion, seconded by John Ellen. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment Period

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

Eloise Eller, President of Eastport HOA: Ms. Eller spoke regarding State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) project U-5710, the Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road Interchange. Ms. Eller is requesting that the Board provide updated/current environmental, societal, transportation and otherwise impact statements that will allow citizens to better understand the need or necessity for a quicker way to get to Wrightsville Beach. It is her understanding that the improvements scheduled will allow for a two-minute improvement to get to Wrightsville Beach. She is asking, on behalf of the HOA, that a review be done, and quickly, before going forward with the proposal for a flyover which may or not make a difference to the ability to get to Wrightsville Beach. She believes the residents will be severely impacted by the approval of a project that doesn't clearly specify or indicate an appreciable efficiency for anyone.

Doug Pruden, spoke regarding the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) project U-5710, the Military Cutoff Road/Eastwood Road Interchange. He had reviewed the minutes of the last Board meeting and noticed two points that had been discussed. One point being not wanting to give up the money and two, if the project is not completed now, it will cost more in the future; while he agrees those are valid points, he would like to add an additional point that in this time of government efficiency and trying to cut ways he believes you need to look at what you will be gaining/giving up for the expenditure of the monies. Mr. Pruden did his own assessment of the affected area and did not see the benefits of the project. He is asking the Board to reconsider if this project is really a valuable contribution/solution.

6. Presentations

a. NCDOT Safety Program and Vision Zero- Brian Murphy, NCDOT
Mr. Kozlosky introduced Brian Murphy of the NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit.

Mr. Murphy stated that there will be a lot of information sent out to the Board after the meeting, but he would like to highlight some of it with everyone here tonight, especially what is relevant to WMPO directly; stating that he will talk about safety data resources. He began his presentation with how WMPO is trending in comparison to the State. The first set of data, vehicle miles traveled, showed how WMPO trends are tracking closely with the State's numbers and how both sets of data declined during 2020 due to the pandemic orders to stay at home. Since that time, WMPO's numbers have rebounded and increased since the pandemic, whereas the State numbers are back to closely where they were. The second set of data, reported crashes, again, declined in pandemic years and are also on track with the State trends. Fatality numbers, serious injury and non-motorized fatalities and unbelted fatalities have been increasing in the last few years, including pandemic years; this is not just a NC trend but a national trend.

Mr. Murphy spoke about their safety programs, specifically – Strategic Highway Safety Plan, a visionary document at the State level that sets the vision for how the State will tackle traffic safety issues. They set a goal, and the goal is to reduce all the fatalities and serious injuries by half by the year 2035 moving towards zero by the year 2050. The vision is zero, how you get there is quite complicated. Five prongs: post-crash care, safer people, safer vehicles, safer speeds, safer roads.

The NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit focuses on three main topics: lane departure, intersections and ped/bike because these topics are where the data leads. Funding

for the NCDOT Traffic Safety Unit comes from two main “pots” a federal pot of about \$75 million per year and a state pot of about \$12 million per year. The traffic safety unit tries to spread those funds across the State and have the most impact at the lowest price, projects are chosen quarterly.

The Board questioned Mr. Murphy as to how you get a potential safety concerned looked at; he responded by telling them to reach out to the Division, that is the easiest way to start the process.

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

Mike Kozlosky thanked Mr. Murphy for speaking at the meeting and sharing the information with the Board.

b. Association of MPOs (AMPO) Update – Kate Economou, AMPO

Mr. Kozlosky introduced Kate Economou and Bill Keyrouze of AMPO.

Mr. Keyrouze thanked WMPO for allowing him to speak and give an update on what is happening in Washington and around the country. He gave a brief description of AMPO and what they do and then introduced Kate Economou to offer the state of play.

Ms. Economou highlighted the current State of Play, giving an overview of what is going on in the federal environment, speaking about the changes within the administration, congress and the courts.

She stated that the administration is busy reorienting federal priorities, which has sparked some debates and interest in long term effects. The USDOT is gearing up to provide more guidance on implementing the executive orders and updating Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO's) and reviewing staffing cuts. Ms. Economou presented a USDOT timeline highlighting important dates/changes from the beginning of the year and how changes are being handled. She also spoke about the USDOT Internal Guidance memo which was distributed on March 11th which is a direct response on how to implement the executive orders on Federal Transportation Programs. Ms. Economou spoke about how the memo reviews the projects on a two-step process.

On the court side, Ms. Economou stated that there has been a flurry of litigation challenging the executive orders and agency implementation as well as temporary restraining orders. She stated that there has been a legal case cited, from South

Carolina, but it is very early in the proceedings, but they will be tracking it. Ms. Economou also highlighted the AMPO Litigation Tracker as a resource.

On the Congressional side of the State of Play the FY25 Continuing Resolution pretty much keeps transportation funding levels, however, removes FY25 earmarks. Budget negotiations, rescissions and hearings need to be monitored. Ms. Economou presented a reauthorization timeline, which she stated is more ambitious than usual, citing that Congress is looking to write this bill by the fall. Ms. Economou presented tactics to help manage uncertainty, which is super important, during this time.

Ms. Economou highlighted what AMPO is doing in response to the Administration's Actions and highlighted tools that are available for MPO's to help navigate.

Mike Kozlosky asked Ms. Economou to elaborate a bit on Secretary Duffy's memo concerning prioritizing programs, projects and policies and how the WMPO Board could provide their priorities to Congressman Rouzer. Ms. Economou stated regarding the USDOT Sound Economic Analysis Memo that came out in January, the memo outlines a few different priorities coming from the Administration. It mostly surrounds cost benefit analysis and providing clear economic justification for all projects coming out of MPO's, local governments, any recipients of Federal funds including any projects under \$200,000. Bill Keyrouze stated that he does not believe any guidance of how to implement this has come forward. As far as providing priorities to Congressman Rouzer, the best way to do that would be to bring together the local and regional voice; looking at the projects currently underway and speaking to the economic impact of them, how it delivers benefits to your residents.

7. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of WMPO Board Regular Meeting Minutes - February 26, 2025
- b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #25-1
- c. Opening of the 30-day public comment period for 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #25-2
- d. Resolution endorsing the Model Trail Lighting Policy

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

8. Regular Agenda

a. Resolution approving Amendment #3 to the FY 25 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Regina Hopkins stated that each year the WMPO is required to submit the fiscal year final UPWP to the NCDOT by March 31st. The budget shifts recommended in this amendment are just a bit of housekeeping to make sure that we adhere to the DOT guidelines, these shifts do not change the total budget for each grant or the overall budgeted amounts for federal, state or local funding. Staff requests that the board pass the resolution and approve the amendments for FY25 UPWP.

Mr. Barbee made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Ms. Bozeman. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Resolution adopting the FY 26 Unified Planning Work Program

Regina Hopkins stated that in the packet presented to the Board they have the final FY26 UPWP. Staff presented a draft to the TCC and the Board at the January 15th meeting to open the required 30-day public comment period and during that time they did not receive any comments. However, due to changes at the federal level, PL104 funds budgeted for Environmental Justice were moved to Title VI. This shift did not change the total PL104 funding or the overall budgeted amounts for Federal, State or Local Member funding. Each year the WMPO is required to submit the fiscal year's adopted UPWP to the NC DOT by March 31st.

Staff requests the Board approve the FY26 UWPW.

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

c. Resolution certifying the FY 26 Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Planning Process

Regina Hopkins stated that included in the annual UPWP, is the WMPO's self-certification process. This process is to certify to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that the WMPO's planning processes are addressing the major issues facing the MPO's area and is being conducted in accordance with all applicable federal requirements.

Staff requests the Board support the resolution to certify the WMPO's FY26 transportation planning process.

Mr. Barbee made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Mr. Ellen. The motion passed unanimously.

d. Resolution requesting a 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment for the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority for project TM-6113 Shelter Upgrades

Mr. Kozlosky stated that the WMPO has received a request for upgrades to the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority bus shelters, if the Board should vote in favor of this request, it would be submitted to the NCDOT, and they would later see an amendment reflecting this request.

Mr. Zimmer made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Mr. Spears. The motion passed unanimously.

e. Resolution requesting NCDOT evaluate the intersection of Causeway Drive and Salisbury Street in Wrightsville Beach

Mike Kozlosky stated that the long-term plan for this intersection would be a roundabout, however this resolution would request NCDOT look at any interim solution that could be identified.

Mr. Waddell made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Mr. Allen. The motion passed unanimously.

f. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to the City of Wilmington for the Downtown Trail Phase I

Abby Lorenzo presented a resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to the City of Wilmington for the Downtown Trail Phase I design project in the amount of \$431,200. The project was federally funded (for design only) in 2022 with the WMPO's direct allocation of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act ("CRRSAA") funds. These one-time allocated funds were granted at 100% federal share with no local matching contribution required of the City. The project began in late 2022 with necessary coordination with the railroad owners of property, NCDOT Rail and CSX, whose proposals regarding the trail resulted in a nearly 2-year pause on the design effort. Additionally, new design elements (including the moving of a retaining wall in the "Gulch" corridor) have been identified as conditions for the future trail's location within NCDOT's owned property. The two-year delay and new design elements have caused a significant increase to the cost to complete the design project, so the staff is requesting the Board's support of the resolution for the allocation of additional direct attributable funds to the City of Wilmington for the Downtown Trail Phase I.

Mr. Waddell made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Ms. Bozeman. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Discussion

a. DRAFT 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs

Abby Lorenzo opened the floor to the Board for any questions they may have about the information presented to them in their packet about the 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Program. Mr. Kozlosky stated that the Board needs to concur with any changes by May 2, 2025.

b. 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #25-2

Mike Kozlosky opened the floor to any questions the Board may have about the administrative modifications #25-2; this modification will be brought back to the board for approval at their next meeting.

c. NCAMPO 2025 Conference

Tessa Jones, WMPO Information Officer gave an overview of the NCAMPO 2025 Conference being held April 15th – April 17th. Ms. Jones went over the schedule for the conference and opened the floor for questions.

Board member Mr. Ellen questioned Ms. Jones if she had contacted anyone at Kure Beach as to whether the police department needs to know about the bike ride in town, or if roads were being blocked off.

10. Updates

a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO

Mike Kozlosky introduced two new WMPO employees, Caitlin Cerza and Ronda Hogan and gave an update on Tessa Jones who was married on Monday the 24th.

Mr. Kozlosky announced that there was a Senate bill introduced by Senators Lee and Lazzara regarding e-bikes, which would define e-bikes and allow for local regulations. This was one of the Boards legislative items and Mr. Kozlosky stated that he will provide updates as they become available.

b. Cape Fear Public Transit Authority

No additional updates

c. NCDOT Division 3

No additional updates

d. NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division

No additional updates

e. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Nazia Sarder, NCDOT TPD; continuing to work with the MPO and Division 3 to add projects to run the model (Wilmington travel demand model) for the next

MTP; Pender County CTP just had the last meeting to go over the future year hiring recommendations; next meeting will be April 28th.

f. WMPO Board Members

Mr. Barbee stated that he appreciates all the work from everyone to get the e-bike legislation started.

11. Announcements

Next Bike/Ped meeting is scheduled for April 8th.

The NC State Ethics forms are due from the Board by April 15th

12. Next Meeting— April 30, 2025

13. Adjournment

Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:16pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky

Executive Director

Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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