

# *BEHIND THE* **SCENES**



Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Annual Report FY 2025-2026

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**WILMYWOOD**





***In memory of the Honorable Mayor Mike Allen  
1949-2025***

***Mayor Michael “Mike” Allen dedicated his life to serving others-  
as a retired U.S. Army Command Sergeant Major, longtime law  
enforcement officer, seven-term Mayor of Belville, and valued  
member of the WMPO Board.***

***Throughout his years of public service, he championed thoughtful  
growth, downtown revitalization, and regional collaboration. Mayor  
Allen’s leadership, integrity, and unwavering commitment to his  
community leave a lasting legacy.***



*Photo courtesy of Jace Sanchez, Town of Belville*

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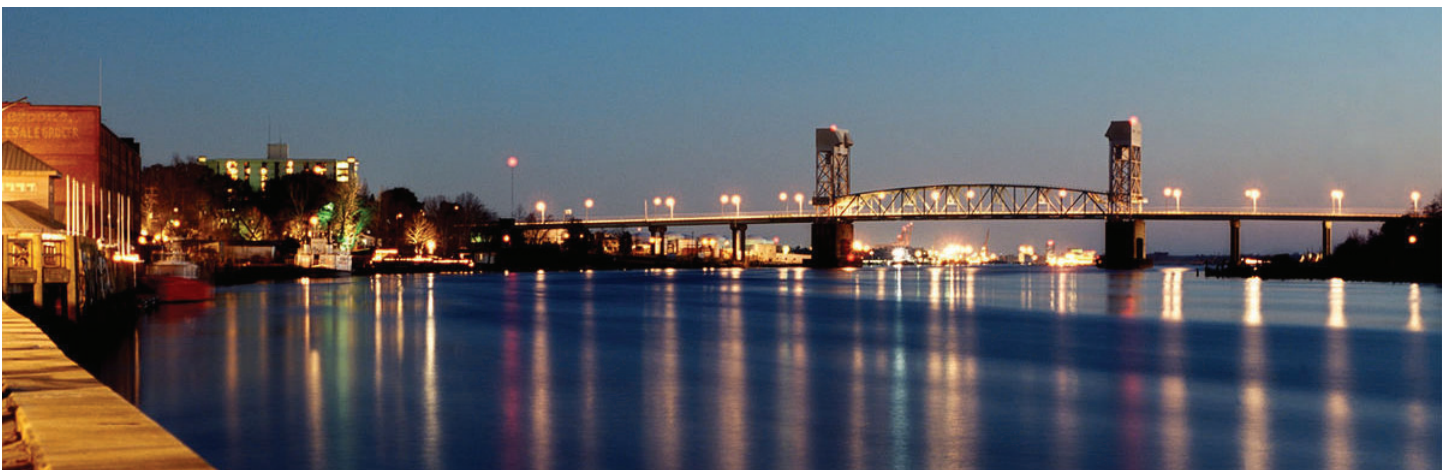
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## MISSION STATEMENT

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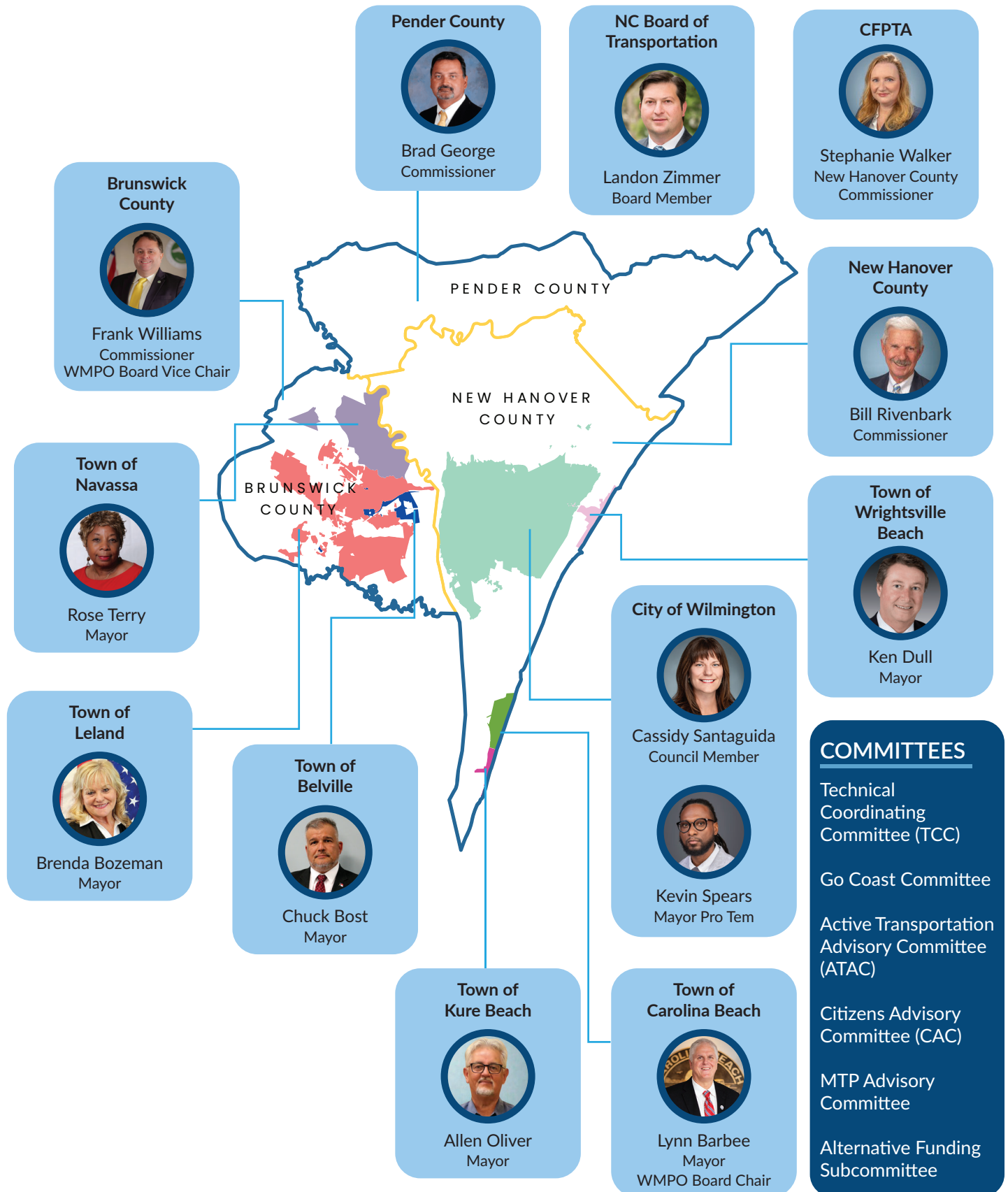
To proactively lead transportation planning and decisions in the lower Cape Fear region by fostering collaboration and strategic actions that deliver safer, more connected communities, economic opportunity, and an elevated quality of life.

## VISION STATEMENT

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Our vision is to deliver safe, reliable, and seamless multimodal solutions that meet the evolving needs of everyone in our dynamic and growing region as a collaborative leader, partnering with member jurisdictions, residents, businesses, the legislature, stakeholders, and visitors to proactively shape the future of transportation in our region.

# BOARD & COMMITTEES



# FROM THE DIRECTOR

At the close of each fiscal year, I take time to reflect on the organization's work over the past 12 months. Each year, I am reminded of just how much our staff accomplishes and the quality of that work. None of it happens without their dedication, or without the strong leadership and support of the WMPO Board.

Over the past fiscal year, we have helped set the course for transportation in our region through thoughtful planning and programming. This includes the adoption of *Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050*, our long-range metropolitan transportation plan; the adopted 2026–2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Program, which programs funding for critical transportation priorities over the next decade; and the 2026-2031 WMPO Strategic Plan, which will guide the organization over the next five years. We also advanced our commitment to emerging technologies by adopting an updated Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Plan.

In addition, the Board adopted a Vision Zero statement in July 2025, and the WMPO continued development of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Safety Action Plan in partnership with NCDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and our member jurisdictions.

This past year also reflected the continued momentum of our region as growth, change, and opportunities continue to shape how and where people move. That requires us to remain innovative and strategic as we plan and program investments that improve mobility, safety, and connectivity across the region.

We also recognize that broader policy shifts are ahead. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is set to expire in September 2026, and a new federal surface transportation reauthorization bill is currently being developed. These changes will require continued focus and adaptability as we move forward.

None of this work happens in isolation. It is made possible through collaboration with our member jurisdictions and partners, including our member jurisdictions, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority, the North Carolina State Ports Authority, and many others. In the year ahead, we look forward to strengthening those relationships while building new ones. Together, we will continue working together to improve transportation across our region, our state, and beyond.



Mike Kozlosky

“

None of this work happens in isolation. It is made possible through collaboration with our member jurisdictions and partners.





# BOARD ACTION

The WMPO is governed by a 13-member Board composed of 12 local elected officials and one appointed representative. The Board provides the policy direction for the WMPO and serves as the region's transportation policy-making body. The Board also provides oversight for the metropolitan planning and programming process.

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



The WMPO Board adopted its 2026 Legislative Agenda, outlining state and federal transportation priorities that support the region's long-term mobility, safety, and economic growth. Key priorities included securing sustainable transportation funding, advancing the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, protecting state roadway

maintenance funding, recognizing Metropolitan Planning Organizations as public authorities, and supporting legislation related to electric bicycles and other emerging transportation technologies. Throughout the year, the WMPO worked with state and regional partners to advance these priorities, with statewide e-bike legislation advancing during the legislative session.

## FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

The WMPO continued monitoring federal transportation policy changes that could impact future funding and project delivery. In March 2026, the WMPO Board adopted a resolution supporting the Bridge and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act (H.R. 7437), which aims to strengthen federal investments in transportation planning, infrastructure, and safety. The WMPO also tracked the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization process, including proposed legislation such as the BUILD America 250 Act, as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) approaches its September 2026 expiration.

## INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD EXTENSION

In May 2026, the WMPO Board voted to remove the Independence Boulevard Extension (U-4434) from the adopted 2026–2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP/TIP) due to project cost and public feedback. The project remains in the *Cape Fear Navigating Change* 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, recognizing the continued need to improve north-south connectivity in central Wilmington. WMPO staff will continue working with regional partners to identify more feasible transportation solutions that address the corridor's long-term mobility needs.



# BOARD ACTION

## ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SUBCOMMITTEE

To expand opportunities for delivering major transportation projects, the WMPO Board established an Alternative Funding Subcommittee to evaluate innovative funding strategies identified in the *Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050* Metropolitan Transportation Plan. During FY 2025–2026, the subcommittee reviewed legislative updates, explored funding models used across the state, and began developing recommendations for the Board.

## CAPE FEAR MEMORIAL BRIDGE PROJECT

The Cape Fear Memorial Bridge remains the WMPO's top priority project and a critical connection between New Hanover and Brunswick Counties. As one of the region's most significant transportation investments, replacing the aging bridge will require continued collaboration, innovative funding strategies, and coordination among local, state, and federal partners.

Throughout FY 2025–2026, the WMPO continued advancing efforts to identify a feasible path forward for the bridge replacement. Following the WMPO Board's May 2025 resolution supporting the continued consideration and pursuit of all possible funding options, the Board established an Alternative Funding Subcommittee to explore innovative approaches for delivering major transportation projects. In September 2025, the subcommittee recommended the exploration of a local option sales tax.

In February 2026, NCDOT received a conceptual unsolicited proposal from Delivering Bridges, LLC to replace the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. In accordance with NCDOT's Public-Private Partnership (P3) Guidelines, the WMPO provided written consent for NCDOT to complete an initial assessment of the proposal. The assessment evaluates technical, environmental, engineering, financial, and legal considerations.

While the unsolicited proposal undergoes review, the WMPO will continue working with NCDOT and regional partners to evaluate all potential funding and delivery options. The WMPO remains committed to advancing a solution that improves reliability, supports future growth, and strengthens this vital regional connection.

## CFMB AT A GLANCE

### BUILT

1969

### DAILY TRAFFIC

~65,000 Vehicles

### PROJECTED 2045 TRAFFIC

80,000+ Vehicles

### ORIGINAL REPLACEMENT COST

\$485 Million

### CURRENT PROJECTED COST

\$1.1 Billion

### FEDERAL LARGE BRIDGE GRANT AWARD

\$242 Million





# FUNDING

## 2026-2035 MPO/STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

The WMPO Board adopted the 2026-2035 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Program (State/MPO TIP) on July 30, 2025, following a 30-day public comment period. The 2026-2035 State/MPO TIP included funding for two additional WMPO priority projects: the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Replacement (Toll Option) and the US 17 Reduced Conflict Intersections project in Hampstead.



## NCDOT PRIORITIZATION 8.0

The WMPO continued its role in NCDOT's Prioritization 8.0 (P8) process, the data-driven system used to evaluate and program transportation projects for funding in the 2028–2037 State and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP/TIP). During the FY 2025–2026 cycle, the WMPO submitted 42 projects across six transportation modes for consideration:

**AVIATION: 9**  
**BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN: 7**  
**FERRY: 2**

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION: 6**  
**RAIL: 8**  
**ROADWAY: 10**

In February 2026, the WMPO Board adopted the Prioritization 8.0 Local Input Point (LIP) Methodology, establishing the process for assigning the MPO's 1,600 Local Input Points to Regional Impact and Division Needs projects. The methodology combines quantitative and qualitative criteria to ensure local transportation priorities are reflected in the state's funding process.

In May 2026, NCDOT released the P8 quantitative scores and announced the first projects selected for funding. Two aviation projects submitted by the WMPO on behalf of Wilmington International Airport (ILM) were programmed in the Statewide Mobility tier, securing \$1 million in funding:

**Runway 35 Wind Cone/PAPI Replacement – \$500,000**  
**Upgrade Visual Approach Aids & Runway Lighting – \$500,000**

# FUNDING

## LOCALLY ADMINISTERED PROJECTS PROGRAM STATUS



The WMPO currently oversees 27 Direct Attributable (DA) funded projects across the region. As a Transportation Management Area, the WMPO receives a direct allocation of Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds for distribution to eligible local transportation projects. The WMPO awards funds through the Board's adopted Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP). The projects shown are in various stages of development, from planning and design to construction. During FY 2025-26, three projects reached completion.

### LEGEND

#### Project Status

- Planning/Design
- Pre-construction
- Construction
- Complete

# FUNDING

## WMPO LOCALLY ADMINISTERED PROJECTS PROGRAM (LAPP)

The FY 2026–2030 Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP) funded five locally sponsored transportation projects selected through a competitive application and scoring process. Approved by the WMPO Board, these projects will enhance safety, connectivity, and mobility throughout the region.

LAPP is a biennial WMPO program that distributes federal Surface Transportation Block Grant–Direct Attributable (STBG-DA), Transportation Alternatives (TA), and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) funds to support high-impact transportation projects. Projects are selected using Board-adopted criteria aligned with the goals of the *Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050* Metropolitan Transportation Plan, including safety, fa, connectivity, resiliency, and proactive planning.

This funding cycle, the WMPO received 10 applications requesting more than \$14.4 million in federal funds. Based on project scores and available resources, the Board approved the following five projects:

### **KERR AVENUE MULTIUSE PATH - \$2,681,347**

Construction of an 8'-10' multiuse path (MUP) starting at the intersection of Kerr Ave. and Patrick Ave. The MUP will run south along Kerr Ave., then turn east along Fountain Dr., and finally turn north at S. College Rd., ending at the intersection of S. College Rd. and Hoggard Dr.

### **S. COLLEGE ROAD MULTIUSE PATH - \$2,628,755**

Construction of a 10' multiuse path (MUP) that runs parallel to S. College Rd. and Carolina Beach Road, north to S. 17th St. extension for 2.41 miles.

### **LANVALE SIGNAL - \$1,500,000**

Installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of SR 1438 (Lanvale Rd.) and SR 1472 (Fletcher Rd. NE/ Village Rd.) in the Town of Leland, Brunswick County.

### **SLOOP POINT & COUNTRY CLUB SIGNAL - \$1,508,119**

Installation of a traffic signal and turn lane at the intersection of SR 1563 (Sloop Point Loop Rd.) and SR 1565 (Country Club Dr.) in Pender County.

### **LAKE PARK BOULEVARD SIGNAL - \$191,204**

Traffic signal addition at the intersection of US 421 (Lake Park Blvd.) and Federal Point Driveway in New Hanover County.

## FEDERAL FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION APPROVAL

The WMPO completed its Federal Functional Classification update, a federally required review conducted after each U.S. Census to ensure roadway classifications reflect growth, development, and travel patterns across the region.

Working with NCDOT, the Cape Fear Rural Planning Organization, and member jurisdictions, the WMPO developed and submitted roadway classification updates, which were fully approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in December 2025. Functional classification plays an important role in determining roadway eligibility for federal transportation funding and supports long-range transportation planning.

# PLANNING & POLICY

## CAPE FEAR NAVIGATING CHANGE 2050

In October 2025, the WMPO Board adopted *Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050*, the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Required by federal law and updated every five years, the MTP serves as the blueprint for transportation investments across the lower Cape Fear region for the next 25 years.

Developed through extensive community engagement and collaboration with regional partners, *Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050* identifies transportation priorities across multiple modes, including bicycle and pedestrian, public transportation, roadway, rail, ferry and water transportation, freight, and aviation. The plan provides a shared vision for a connected, safe, and resilient transportation network while guiding future investments and positioning the region to receive federal transportation funding.

Through this planning effort, the WMPO evaluated and prioritized projects that align with the region's transportation goals, community needs, and available funding opportunities. Together, these investments will help shape how people move throughout the Cape Fear region for generations to come.

### GOALS



Safe



Resilient



Fair



Proactive



Connected

### PRIORITY PROJECTS



**119**  
Bicycle & Pedestrian  
Projects



**22**  
Ferry & Water  
Transportation Projects



**8**  
Rail Projects



**73**  
Roadway Projects



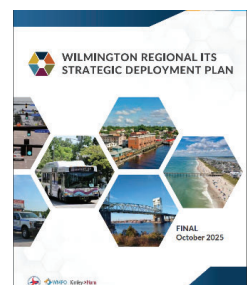
**142**  
Public Transportation  
Projects

## E-BIKE CLASSIFICATION & LOCAL REGULATION

As a priority identified in the WMPO's 2026 Legislative Agenda, the WMPO worked with partners to support legislation establishing a statewide classification system for electric-assisted bicycles (e-bikes) and enabling local regulation. The new law, HB 1094, provides greater clarity for riders, law enforcement, and local governments while supporting the safe integration of e-bikes into North Carolina's transportation network.

## WILMINGTON REGIONAL ITS STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT PLAN

In October 2025, the WMPO Board adopted the *Wilmington Regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Strategic Deployment Plan*, creating a roadmap for using technology to improve the movement of people and goods throughout the region. The plan identifies strategies to enhance traffic signal coordination, improve incident management, expand traveler information, and strengthen coordination among transportation partners, while aligning with state and federal standards to support future funding opportunities and advance a safer, more efficient transportation network.



# PLANNING & POLICY

## STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS AREAS



Engagement & Education



Planning for Growth & Development



Organizational Excellence



Funding



Regional Collaboration & Partnerships



Promotion of Alternative Transportation & Connectivity



Infrastructure & Safety



Adaptive Resiliency

## SS4A GOALS



Enhance collaboration & partnerships



Commit to fostering safe mobility for all



Advance roadway safety



Identify funding opportunities & resources



Increase community awareness of the SS4A action plan

## WMPO STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031

In June 2026, the WMPO Board adopted the WMPO Strategic Plan 2026–2031, establishing a shared vision and strategic direction for the organization over the next five years. Built around a renewed mission and vision, the plan outlines eight strategic priorities that will guide the WMPO's work and strengthen regional collaboration, and advance transportation solutions that improve safety, connectivity, and quality of life across the lower Cape Fear region.

### PRIORITY PROJECTS

#### FUNDED

- US 74 / Martin Luther King Jr Parkway & US 117 / NC 132 / College Road Interchange from SR 2048 (Gordon Road) to US 17 BUS (Market Street)
- Wilmington Citywide Signal System
- US 74 / NC 133 / Isabel Holmes Interchange
- US 421 / Carolina Beach Road Widening & Intersection Improvements from NC 132 (South College Road) to SW 1187 (Sanders Road) in Wilmington

#### NON-FUNDED

- Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Replacement
- US 117 / NC 132 (College Road) at US 76 (Oleander Drive) Intersection Improvements
- US 17 Upgrades in Leland from SR 1732 (Carol Lynn Drive NE) to ST 1702 (Zion Church Road)
- US 17 / 76 / Oleander Drive Access Management from Independence Boulevard to Greenville Loop Road
- Cape Fear Crossing from I-140 to US 421 (Carolina Beach Road)

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

In May 2026, the WMPO Board adopted the updated Public Participation Plan, reaffirming the organization's commitment to fair, transparent, and effective public engagement in regional transportation planning. The plan modernizes outreach through expanded digital engagement and accessible communication methods while ensuring compliance with federal requirements and strengthening opportunities for meaningful community involvement.

## SAFE STREETS & ROADS FOR ALL SAFETY ACTION PLAN

The WMPO continued development of its *Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan* throughout 2026, building on the initiative launched in 2025. The comprehensive, data-driven plan aims to eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 2050 through crash analysis, community engagement, and prioritized safety improvements for all transportation users. The Safety Action Plan will be presented to the WMPO Board in August 2026, with adoption anticipated in September 2026.

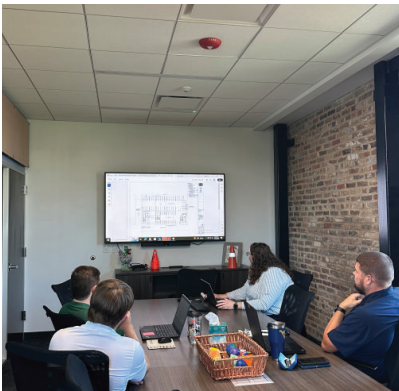


# TECHNICAL SERVICES

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS, TIAs, & TRAFFIC COUNTS

The WMPO's Technical Services provides data collection, project support, and technical review to help local governments make informed decisions, improve mobility, and ensure transportation investments align with regional priorities. The WMPO provides the following technical services:

- ◆ Development Review
- ◆ Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) Coordination and Review
- ◆ Traffic Counts
- ◆ Project Management Assistance
- ◆ Management of the Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP)





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Connecting with our region through communication, collaboration, and public participation.

## INFORM

How the WMPO kept residents and stakeholders informed about transportation planning and opportunities to get involved.

**17** newsletters published (WMPO & Go Coast)  
**12,237** newsletter subscribers  
**46.5K** social media views WMPO | **31k** views Go Coast  
**214,815** WMPO unique website visits | **11,466** Go Coast



## ENGAGE

Creating opportunities for the public to help shape the future of transportation in the Cape Fear region.

**4** Signature campaigns  
**40+** Community events attended  
**2,388** Survey & map comments



## COLLABORATE

Working alongside local governments, agencies, and community organizations to strengthen regional transportation planning.

**10** Member jurisdictions served  
**40** Partner organizations collaborated with  
**494** Square miles served!



## EDUCATE

The WMPO strengthened regional collaboration by hosting four training opportunities designed to build transportation knowledge and support informed decision-making. Trainings included:

WMPO 101: **1** session | **35+** participants  
ATAC Training: **1** session | **15** participants  
LAPP Training: **2** sessions | **40+** participants  
TIA Training: **2** sessions | **10** participants

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## SPOTLIGHT: RIVER TO SEA EXPO

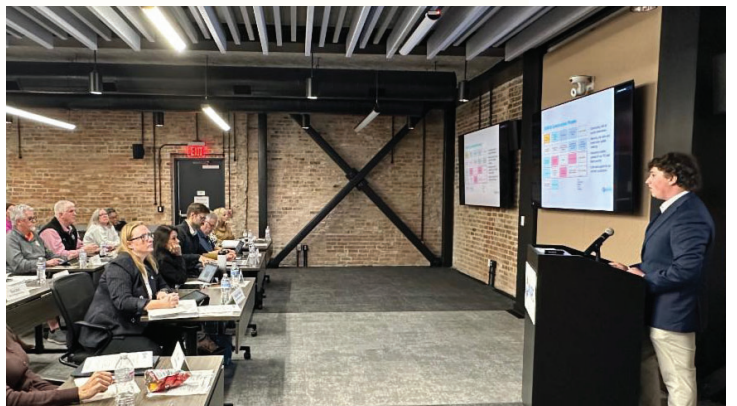
Although the weather canceled the 36th Annual River to Sea Bike Ride, the inaugural River to Sea Bike Ride Expo successfully brought the community together to celebrate National Bike Month. Nearly **100 attendees** connected with local sponsors, learned about bicycling resources, enjoyed interactive activities, and received free bicycle maintenance, demonstrating the region's continued enthusiasm for active transportation.

## SPOTLIGHT: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ATAC)

The WMPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) transitioned to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC), with updated bylaws and an expanded focus to better represent all active transportation modes. The WMPO also welcomed **five new members** appointed by the WMPO Board, bringing additional expertise and community perspectives to guide recommendations on bicycle, pedestrian, and other active transportation initiatives throughout the region.

## SPOTLIGHT: WMPO 101

The WMPO hosted its first-ever WMPO 101 training, bringing together more than **30 Board and committee** members for an in-depth look at the organization's programs, planning process, and regional initiatives. The training strengthened relationships between staff and partners while providing a greater understanding of the WMPO's role in shaping transportation across the Cape Fear region.





# INITIATIVES

## DIGITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The WMPO continued improving its digital resources to increase accessibility and user experience. Website updates included a comprehensive audit, color contrast corrections, alternative text for images, PDF remediation, and improved navigation to better align with WCAG 2.1 AA standards. The GIS Data Hub was also updated with new request forms, improved navigation, and transitioned interactive maps to the ArcGIS Experiences platform, making transportation information easier to access while supporting ongoing accessibility efforts.



## GO COAST PROGRAM

Through Go Coast, the WMPO continued promoting sustainable transportation options that help reduce traffic congestion by encouraging alternatives to driving alone. The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program emphasizes moving people, not just vehicles, through walking, biking, transit, carpooling, vanpooling, and other travel options that improve mobility while reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips.

Throughout FY 2025–2026, Go Coast connected with the community through outreach events, educational campaigns, and regional partnerships. Highlights included the annual Get There Greener Challenge, Bike Month activities, and Bike to Work Day pit stops, all designed to encourage residents to rethink how they travel. The program also distributed bicycle helmets through the NCDOT Bicycle Helmet Initiative, helping make active transportation safer and more accessible for riders of all ages.

15 Community events attended  
4,294 Sustainable miles logged during Get There Greener  
3,786 lbs of carbon dioxide emissions saved during Get There Greener  
\$1,200+ in local business sponsorships  
68 Children's bicycle helmets distributed

## CAPE FEAR TRAILS

A major milestone this year was the release of the *Cape Fear Trails Signage Guide* in April, establishing regional recommendations for trail branding, wayfinding, and pavement markings. The WMPO also launched the Trail Etiquette Toolkit, featuring eight easy-to-share reminders and customizable outreach materials to help communities promote safe, courteous trail use and create a welcoming experience for users of all ages and abilities.



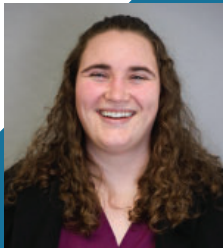






# WMPO STAFF

## WELCOME NEW STAFF!



**CAITLIN CERZA**  
Transportation Planning  
Engineer



**RONDA HOGAN**  
Administrative Support  
Specialist



**LUKE HUTSON**  
Engineering Associate



**AMANDA HALBERT**  
GIS Analyst

### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO WORK IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?

**CAITLIN:** *Having the unique opportunity to work directly with a variety of stakeholders to help mitigate traffic impacts to the transportation network is very rewarding.*

**RONDA:** *I enjoy learning how government strives to work for the community, whether on the local or regional level.*

**LUKE:** *Working in transportation is especially rewarding because it allows me to contribute to a system that people depend on every single day.*

**AMANDA:** *I enjoy transportation planning because of the intersection of public service, planning, and application of GIS in my work.*

- |                |                                          |
|----------------|------------------------------------------|
| Mike Kozlosky  | Executive Director                       |
| Abby Lorenzo   | Deputy Director                          |
| Regina Hopkins | Accounting Manager                       |
| Greer Templer  | Senior Transportation Planner            |
| Carolyn Caggia | Transportation Planner / TDM Coordinator |
| Beth King      | Transportation Planner                   |
| Krysdyn Burden | Grants Coordinator                       |
| Tessa Jones    | Public Information Officer               |
| Greg Laughter  | Traffic Counter                          |

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Adoption of SS4A Safety Action Plan  
September 2026

Park(ing) Day  
September 18, 2026  
Global event where curbside parking is temporarily transformed into parks, social spaces, or art installations.

Go Coast Commuter Challenge  
October 5-18, 2026  
Annual challenge where folks try alternative transportation for a chance to win prizes.

LAPP Awards  
October 2026

## 2027 SAVE THE DATES!

Brunswick Heritage Riverside Ride  
March 2027  
A fun, relaxed-pace group ride through Brunswick County's historic Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. Registration required.

National Bike Month  
May 2027  
An annual celebration of all things biking!

River to Sea Bike Ride & Expo  
May 2027  
WMPO's largest annual event, the River to Sea Ride takes cyclists from downtown Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach and back. Registration required.

Kick off River to Sea Weekend and Bike Month at the annual River to Sea Expo!





## STAY CONNECTED

Wilmington Urban Area  
Metropolitan Planning  
Organization

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[Wilmington Urban Area  
Metropolitan Planning  
Organization](https://www.linkedin.com/company/wilmington-urban-area-metropolitan-planning-organization)

