



**WILMINGTON URBAN AREA**  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**WMPO Board Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, June 26, 2024**

929 N Front Street

Wilmington, NC 28401

**Members Present**

Mike Allen, Town of Belville  
Deb LeCompte, Town of Carolina Beach  
Jonathan Barfield, Jr., New Hanover County  
Veronica Carter, Town of Leland  
Brad George, Pender County  
Frank Williams, Brunswick County  
Bill Rivenbark, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority  
Hank Miller, Town of Wrightsville Beach  
Luke Waddell, Vice Chairman  
John Ellen, Town of Kure Beach (Remote)  
Landon Zimmer, NC Board of Transportation

**Others Present**

Chad Kimes, NCDOT  
Mike Kozlosky, WMPO  
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO  
Scott James, WMPO  
Tera Cline, WMPO  
Regina Hopkins, WMPO  
Trevor Carroll, NCDOT  
Michelle Howes, NCDOT  
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO  
Greer Shriver, WMPO

**Members Absent**

Eulis Willis, Town of Navassa  
Bill Saffo, City of Wilmington

**1) Call to Order**

Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM. Mike Kozlosky, WMPO then called roll.

**Present:** Mike Allen, Deb LeCompte, Veronica Carter, Jonathan Barfield, Jr., John Ellen, Frank Williams, Luke Waddell, Brad George, Bill Rivenbark, and Landon Zimmer. **Absent:** Eulis Willis, and Bill Saffo.

**2) Conflict of Interest Statement**

Chairman Miller read the conflict-of-interest statement and asked if any Board member has a conflict of interest. Landon Zimmer requested to be recused from voting on Consent Agenda item C.

**3) Approval of Board Member Excused Absences**

Mayor Eulis Willis was excused by a motion by Jonathan Barfield, Jr. and seconded by Luke Waddell. Motion carried unanimously.

**4) Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Barfield made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Vice-Chairman Waddell and the motion carried unanimously.

**5) Public Comment Period**

No sign ups.

**6) Presentations**

**a. Recognition of Retiring NCDOT Division Engineer Chad Kimes-Chairman Hank Miller III, WMPO**

Chairman Hank Miller presented Mr. Kimes with a plaque of appreciation for his work for serving as the Division Engineer for NCDOT Division 3. Carol Stein with the MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee present Mr. Kimes with a gift of appreciation. Several Board members spoke in appreciation of Mr. Kimes' work over his years at Division 3. Mr. Kimes thanked the Board for its support and appreciation over the years.

**7) Consent Agenda**

**a. Approval of Board Regular Meeting Minutes- May 29, 2024**

**b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #24-3**

**c. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #24-5**

**d. Resolution requesting Amendments to the 2024-2033 State/MPO Transportation Improvement Programs for Bus Replacements**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the removal of item C. and Ms. Carter seconded, the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Zimmer was recused from Item C- Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications #24-5. Motion made by Mr. Williams and seconded by Mr. Allen the motion was carried unanimously.

**8) Regular Agenda**

**a. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable Funding to the Signal Pre-emption Phase 2**

Mr. Scott James, WMPO stated the City of Wilmington requested additional funding in the amount of \$197,106 from the WMPO for additional design and construction costs to complete the Traffic Signal Pre-emption for Emergency Vehicles Phase 2. The MPO Board allocated STBGP-DA funds to the City of Wilmington in the amount of \$1,016,816 with a 20% local match in the amount of \$254,204. Novant Health and New Hanover County Fire Rescue have committed the additional \$49,276 towards the completion of the project. This resolution will approve allocation of additional Direct Attributable funding in the amount of \$197,106.00 for the Traffic Signal Pre-emption Phase II.

Vice-Chairman Waddell made a motion to approve, and Ms. Carter seconded, motion carried unanimously.

**9) Discussion**

**a. 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modifications #24-6**

Mr. Kozlosky said this item is for information purposes only and will be brought back for consideration at the Board's next meeting.

**b. Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050 Alternative Funding**

Kristina Whitfield and Allison Fluitt, Kimley Horn and Associates, stated that alternative funding allows better service for local priorities. Alternative funding allows a bigger pie, less reliance on NCDOT and reliable local matches for federal and state programs. They noted that traditional revenue streams are tied to assumptions and trends that have quickly become obsolete.

There was a commission study at the Statewide level to look at how to adapt and change in the coming years. There were some recommendations that came out of that for the statewide level. There is this statewide emphasis put on this, but that doesn't stop the need to look at it from the local funding perspective.

They noted that funding available for Prioritization 7.0 (2026-2035) for Region B (Divisions 2&3) is negative \$32 million and Division 3 is negative \$54 million. This deficit is mainly due to high inflationary factors and extreme construction costs.

Ms. Whitfield presented the average cost by mode for WMPO projects submitted in P 7.0. Bike/Ped amount was \$4.7 million, highway projects \$133 million, transit projects \$144 million, rail projects \$192 million and aviation projects \$2.5 million. She noted that the issue of costs and deficits are an issue across the country not just in North Carolina.

She then went over the alternative funding considerations based on the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). These include the following:

- Quarter-cent local option sales tax
- Quarter-cent local option sales tax for transit
- Vehicle registration fee
- Motor vehicle license tax
- Motor vehicle license tax for transit
- Vehicle rental tax
- Bicycle registration fee
- Transportation bonds
- Tolling

Allison Fluitt presented the Board the different funding mechanisms beginning with local option sales tax which is something that is implemented at a county-by-county level and is implemented via a voter referendum. Through that referendum there is a measure of public control that can impart to folks by helping them understand. She also noted that it does not have to be tied to specific projects and there is no funding sunset. Mr. Zimmer stated he has seen this implemented in other states and regions that have a lot of tourists. There was a brief discussion on the advantages of tying the tax to a specific project(s) or project category. They confirmed that revenue estimates for each county only includes the WMPO areas.

Ms. Fluitt moved on to discuss the local option sales tax-for transit option. She stated that this is implemented at the county level and requires voter referendum and county approval. Only counties that operate public transportation systems can consider this sales tax, and the revenues must be used to finance, construct, operate, and maintain the transit system.

Ms. Fluitt stated that vehicle registration fees can be implemented following a successful vote by the Board of County Commissioners for a county that operates a transit system can charge a maximum of \$7.00 dollars for every registered vehicle with some exceptions. A tax for vehicle registration, can sometimes be a little bit more challenging, since some of our vehicle owners that are not transit users may have some more resistance in supporting this tax for something that they don't feel that they're going to receive a direct benefit.

Ms. Whitfield added that their research showed this was tried in 2008 here in the region and it was voted down, and instead went back and raise the per transit ride by cents.

The motor for vehicle license tax is something that can be levied up to \$30 and in this area it's only up to \$25. There are some kind of specificities within the language that are focused on transit and a transit agency specific designation. The transit system within this region does not actually meet the threshold for the receipt of funding under the motor vehicle license tax currently. It would require a legislative action to redesignate the transit authority in this area to be eligible to receive this type of funding. This tax does not generate funds from vehicles registered in other counties and cannot be leveraged on the state highway system. Mr. Waddell stated the City of Wilmington just adopted a budget with a \$25 dollar fee after looking at the market across the state.

Ms. Fluitt moved on to a vehicle rental tax which is a tax that counties in North Carolina can levy on the gross receipts of passenger vehicle rentals at the rate of 1.5%. The advantages of this tax are, it's a consistent funding source, it targets non-residents, the tax will be charged at the rental location where the customer takes the vehicle, and regional public transportation authorities can also levy taxes. She stated that one of the disadvantages is it could potentially disincentivize local car rentals. There was discussion on if this tax would apply to Uber's or Lyft's and golf carts. Ms. Whitfield stated they would investigate these options and let the Board know the results.

She then touched on the bicycle registration fee. This would require bicyclists to register their bicycles. Some of the disadvantages to this fee are limited data availability, difficult to enforce, no precedent in North Carolina, may discourage biking as a mode of transportation, and has high administrative cost. The steering committee recommended not to consider this one moving forward. The question was asked about bicycle rentals and if this fee could be applied to that. Ms. Whitfield stated she would research and find out.

Transportation impact fees were mentioned, but they are currently illegal in the state of North Carolina.

The next funding mechanism discussed was tolling. This has a unique ecosystem within the State of North Carolina and is something that can be used to accelerate project development and funding.

The MTP steering committee was given scorecards and asked to rank each of funding sources in terms of how they would think that these are viable options here in this region. At the top of the list was the vehicle rental tax followed by local option sales tax-for transit and local option sales tax then tolling.

Ms. Whitfield and Ms. Fluitt then presented information on transportation improvement bonds. Advantages to these bonds include accelerated project funding, the public can see the benefits of specific projects, it is a well-known and understood funding mechanism, and it can be structured as a GO bond or revenue bond. The disadvantages are it may be accompanied by a property tax rate increase and a new referendum is required each time a bond package is pursued, along with new public education campaign.

Ms. Fluitt then presented details on revenue bonds. These bonds are paid back by user-generated revenues. Allows revenue bonds to be utilized for public transportation systems, facilities, or equipment, including but not limited to bus, truck, ferry, and railroad terminals, depots, trackage, and vehicle/vessels as well as mass transit systems. One disadvantage to this type of bond is it's more vulnerable to economic downturns than general obligation bonds.

Ms. Whitfield continued giving an overview of general obligation bonds. These bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the borrower and , therefore, are paid back by any revenue source. All capital projects can be financed with general obligation bonds, but voter approval is typically needed.

She then presented the Board with an overview of public-private partnerships. Public-private partnerships are a type of project delivery vehicle that obtains private funding through sponsor investments and loans from outside lenders. The advantages to these types of partnership are the private sector expertise with public sector accountability, and the public sector does not incur any borrowing. The disadvantages are potentially complicated contracts and negotiations, and some sort of project-specific revenue source must be in place prior to implementation (e.g. tolling, tax increment financing)

Ms. Whitfield continued with an overview of tax increment financing (TIF). This type of financing enables local government or redevelopment authorities to leverage future tax gains resulting from current improvements to fund the implementation of the improvements. Some advantages to this financing are it can grow tax base and raise the value of the tax base; it can revitalize areas that may be in decline or have been underinvested in the past and can alleviate a lot of burden on developers. Several disadvantages are the need to mediate between multiple groups, it can be difficult to assess incremental gain in tax revenues related to TIF project, and it may contribute to displacement via gentrification.

She then presented examples of other financing mechanisms such as special assessment districts which the MTP steering committee discussed. This is somewhat like the TIP but different in the way that after that geography is established, the property owners within that geography opt to tax themselves at a higher rate than the going property tax rate in the city or the county. and that delta goes back to a pool of funds that is dedicated and sent within that exact geography.

Ms. Whitfield presented the Board with the MTP steering committee rankings on the financing options. Number one was transportation improvement bonds closely followed by general obligation bonds and third was public-private partnerships. Followed by tax increment financing and revenue bond.

There was discussion on what the Board would like to see moving forward. Local options sales tax and bonds and rental vehicle tax and vehicle registration fee were noted to Kimley Horn and Associates to investigate.

**10) Updates are all included in the Agenda Packet**

**a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO**

Mr. Kozlosky updates are included in the packet.

**b. Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority**

Updates included in the packet.

**c. NCDOT Division**

Updates included in the packet

**d. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division**

Amanda Killian, NCDOT, stated the Brunswick County CTP is complete. The Pender County survey opened June 1st, and it will close on September 1st.

11) **Announcements**

- a. **Wilmington MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan Technical Steering Committee (MTPC) meetings will continue in June 2025**

**Next meeting – July 31st, 2024**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Kozlosky  
Executive Director  
Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

**THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.  
THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.**