

**Wilmington Urban Area MPO
Technical Coordinating Committee
Wednesday, October 16, 2024,
Remote Meeting Minutes**

Members Present in Person

Mike Kozlosky, TCC Chairman, WMPO
Carolyn Caggia, WMPO
Sam Boswell, Cape Fear Council of
Governments

Members Absent

Michelyn Alston, Town of Navassa
Robert O'Quinn, Town of Wrightsville Beach
Granseur Dick, Wilmington International Airport
Mandy Sander, Town of Kure Beach

Others Present In-Person

Tera Cline, WMPO
Tessa Jones, WMPO
Greer Shivers, WMPO
Beth King, WMPO
Regina Hopkins, WMPO
Chad Staradumsky, Town of Belville

Members Present Remote

Helen Bunch, Brunswick County
Mark Hairr, Cape Fear Public
Transportation Authority
Adrienne Harrington, Town of Belville
Gloria Abbotts, Town of Carolina Beach
Denys Vielkanowitz, City of Wilmington
Karlene Ellis Vitalis, New Hanover County
Stephanie Ayers, NC State Ports Authority
Nazia Sader, NCDOT
Ashli Barefoot, Town of Leland
Justin Brantley, Pender County
Michelle Howes, NCDOT
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT

Others Present Remote

Trevor Carroll, Division 3
Nick Morrison, FHWA
Zack Bugg, Kittleson
Kristina Whitfield, Kimley Horn
Rachel McIntyre, COW
Abby Lorenzo, WMPO

1) Call to Order

Chairman Mike Kozlosky called the meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee to order at 10:00 a.m., confirmed a quorum was present, and called the roll as follows:

Present In Person: Mike Kozlosky, Sam Boswell, and Carolyn Caggia. **Present Remotely:** Helen Bunch, Mark Hairr, Adrienne Harrington, Gloria Abbotts, Deny Vielkanowitz, Stephanie Ayers, Nazia Sader, Ashli Barefoot, Justin Brantley, and Michelle Howes. **Absent:** Michelyn Alston, Robert O'Quinn, Granseur Dick, and Mandy Sander.

2) Approval of Agenda

Sam Boswell made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Ashli Barefoot, and the motion was carried unanimously.

3) Presentations

a. Gullah Geechee Feasibility Study-Zach Bugg, Kittleson

Mr. Bugg stated that the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor runs from Jacksonville, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida. It was created to celebrate the historical and cultural contributions of the Gullah Geechee people and associated activities, especially agriculture. The National Park Service also recognizes it.

The leadership of this study was run through NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division on behalf of the WMPO, which applied to the feasibility study for the trail. However, it was also completed in close partnership with local agencies like Brunswick County, the Town of Bellville, the Town of Leland, and the Town of Navassa.

The agencies worked closely with a project steering committee formed with historians, some of whom were located outside the State in academic institutions and local cycling interest groups.

He stated the study's objectives were to assess the feasibility of constructing the trail through Brunswick County, from Phoenix Park in Navassa down to the Brunswick Nature Park in Brunswick County. An additional goal was a preferred alignment that could be moved forward to the design phase. He was pleased to share that parts of the trail are already under construction or very close to it, and the goal is to identify applicable funding sources and a path toward implementation.

Mr. Bugg stated that this study is unique and special to this area, given the cultural significance of the Gullah Geechee people within Brunswick County and the region. Some of the specialized goals are to provide a way to make this trail a destination and support ecotourism and economic development. He noted there are many other goals for the feasibility study.

He noted the project kickoff meeting was in June 2023. The draft report was submitted in June 2024, and the revised study was submitted in July 2024.

Mr. Bugg stated the first round of public engagement in the fall of 2023, then the alternatives, development, and assessment over the winter, and then this past spring, the second round of public engagement was held before getting into the preferred alignment and project recommendations. The preliminary alignments generally stayed within the right of way of existing roadways, the major ones being Cedar Hill Road and Navassa Road in Navassa, as well as Navassa Road and Village Road in the Town of Leland. The other portion is River Road in the town of Bellville, another portion of the town of Leland, and into unincorporated Brunswick County. The nine segments were split to develop and evaluate alternative alignments. In addition to these preliminary alignments, some off-road options and the utility easement extending from near the start to the end of the feasibility study limits were examined.

Mr. Bugg noted that the community engagement events had a good number of folks both in person and online. There was vast excitement and support for the trial, and it didn't get much dissension or folks bringing up controversial elements regarding impacts. The public engagement was completed in 2 phases. The first was in the fall when we gathered preliminary alternative information. Then, feedback on two alternatives for each trail segment was requested in the spring.

He stated that four in-person events per phase were conducted: a more traditional open house, a drop-in-style event in Navassa and Leland, and an outdoor pop-up event in Belville. The first was the Heritage Bike Ride in the fall of 2023, and the second one, in advance of the second round of public engagement, was the NC Rice festival in Brunswick town in March.

He noted various means of online data collection and public engagement through the project website hosted by WMPO. These included an online comment map prepared by Kittleson and online surveys prepared by WMPO. The numbers were in the hundreds with the online surveys and between 90 and 120 in-person conversations.

Mr. Bugg shared some of the unique features of the area were the multiple historic sites that the trail had the objective of connecting to and fostering a lot of excitement around providing connections, whether it was running the trail up to the historic site like the Reef Chapel historic site or providing a spur alignment so that folks could go from the trail to each of the sites. He noted that private funding allocation is also being considered in all the developments. He said there are a lot of existing parks, trails, schools, and other destinations that this trail would serve both from a recreational and a transportation and commuting standpoint.

He stated that several in-process transportation projects, including the trail, are under construction. The utility easement, which is not owned by the state or any town or utility company, did provide some open space to potentially help support some alternatives to the trail away from the roadway and many wetlands and other sensitive environmental areas to navigate. The trail was narrowed to 2 preferred or two potential alignments after the initial round of public engagement and a brainstorming session with the Project steering committee.

Within each segment was an opportunity to deviate from the roadway and potentially have a more natural off-road alignment. The ability to mix and match from one segment to the next was included. This study had a vital environmental component. The preferred alignment was determined after the second round of public engagement in the spring and another work session with the steering committee. There was a strong preference to have the trail be more natural and off the road. Therefore, there are a few spurs back to Cedar Hill Road to connect to existing land uses and historical sites, but generally, their road would be on its own. The trail would be on its right of way through the Town of Navassa. Then, run near existing roads in Leland, getting into Belleville, and then the opportunity off River Road, through Mallory Creek, and into a portion of Brunswick Forest, using that utility easement. He then noted as you get down to the southern portions, some of the environmentally sensitive areas were being avoided.

Mr. Bugg shared some pictures of the project with a brief overview of each.

In conclusion, he stated that building this has a cost element. The trail is split into nine segments in hopes of helping move the project forward to implementation and identifying funding sources for each segment.

Mike Kozlowski noted that the resolution for approval would be on the agenda for the next meeting in November, and then it will be taken to various jurisdictions.

Mike Kozlosky asked that items A and C be pulled from the consent agenda. He then asked if there were any items any member desired to have pulled. He then asked for a motion to approve items B, D, and E. Mark Hairr made a motion to approve consent agenda items B, D, and E, and Adrienne Harrington seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mike Kozlosky then requested that consent agenda items A and C be removed from the agenda. Item A is the minutes from the last meeting that must be modified to reflect the correct spelling of Ashli Barefoot's name and representation from Leland, not Brunswick County. Item C was combined instead of staying separated at 24-9 and 24-10. He then requested a motion to approve modifications to items A and C.

Mike Kozlowski made the motion, and Caroline Caggia seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4) Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of TCC Meeting Minutes- September 11, 2024
- b. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Amendment #24-5
- c. Resolution approving 2024-2033 STIP/MPO Administrative Modifications # 24-9
- d. Resolution is accepting donations for the Get There Greener Challenge
 - e. Resolution supporting the naming of the Military Cutoff Bridge over Market Street the Cornelious E. Nixon Bridge

5) Regular Agenda

a. Resolution supporting the allocation of additional Direct Attributable funds to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound Loop and Porters Neck Walmart connector (BL-0040)

Mike Kozlosky, WMPO, stated that the WMPO Board allocated funding to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound loop, multi-use path, and the Porter's Neck Walmart Connector Project. This project has been in development for the past few years. The county has identified a need for additional funds and has requested \$705,512 from the WMPO. It is willing to commit \$176,378. There is currently about \$800,000 in reserve. Staff recommends approving these funds so this project can move to construction.

Stephanie Ayers motioned to approve a resolution supporting additional Direct Attributable funds allocated to New Hanover County for the Middle Sound Loop and Porters Neck Walmart connector, seconded by Mark Hairr. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Resolution awarding the WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable Funds

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, stated that the WMPO received nine completed applications, and they were evaluated based on the WMPO's adopted scoring process. The WMPO is anticipating over 6 million in federal funding for FY 25. WMPO staff recommend holding back approximately 2.1 million dollars of that expected revenue to potentially utilize a portion of that in the WMPO's Annual Unified Planning Work Program or UPWP to support our annual operations and planning activities for FFY 26, as well as evidenced in the previous item over the past few years we have seen significant project cost increases that have resulted in previously awarded projects determining the need for additional funding and coming back to the WMPO to ask for that funding to keep their projects moving forward. Based on holding back, that recommended 2.1 million dollars.

WMPO staff estimates that \$4,056,397 can be awarded for projects based on the scores and the rankings of the applications received. Staff recommends awarding FY 25. funding to the following projects, 17th Street, Multi-use-path, submitted by the City of Wilmington, requesting 2.4 million dollars. Second, the Gullah Geechee Trail Gap Project, submitted by the town of Belville requesting \$720,000, and the Country Club Drive multi-use path

The design project was submitted by Pender County and requested \$886,000. It is important to note that New Hanover County submitted the 3rd-ranked project for the South College Road multi-use path. The project that was applied for is for construction, and the requested amount was \$3,079,850, which far exceeded the remaining balance after leasing out the 1st two ranking projects. Based on that, WMPO staff would recommend preemptively programming a portion of its anticipated FY 26 Federal funding to the 3rd ranking project, the South College Road multi-use-path construction submitted by New Hanover County.

Staff is requesting the Resolution's approval to award FY 25 funds to the three projects outlined: the 17th Street Multi-use Path, the Gullah Geechee Trail Gap project, and the Country Club Drive multi-use path design.

Motion to approve Resolution awarding the WMPO FY 25 Direct Attributable funds made by Denys Vielkanowitz and seconded by Adrienne Harrington. The motion carried unanimously.

6) Discussion

a. WMPO's Prioritization 7.0 Division Tier Point Assignment

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, stated that the draft point assignment for P 7.0's division, which needs a local input point assignment, is included in the packet. The point assignment is based on the WMPO's adopted local input point methodology. She noted that Division 3 points have not been assigned at this time as Division 3 is still working through where they plan to put them. The committee will recall this is one of our criteria for determining our local input point assignment. Based on the conversation with Division 3, they intend to make at least a draft determination of where they are putting their points in the next week.

Ms. Lorenzo stated that this item will be brought before the WMPO Board in 2 weeks, and the points will be filled in where applicable. The Board will also be asked to approve opening a 14-day public comment period based on those draft point assignments. She noted that the STIP finding availability for Division 3 to program new projects in the division needs category is estimated in the negative 61 million dollars. This makes it very unlikely that any new projects will be funded. Local input point assignments for the division needs tier are due by November 29. Staff will be asking for approval of the draft at the November meetings.

Mike Kozlosky noted this was a discussion item and will be considered at the November meeting.

b. 2050 MTP Development-Draft Fiscally Constrained Projects

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, stated that staff has been working hard on developing 2050 MTP, Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050. The one element we work with a consultant on is the financial element. Over the past few months, we have been working closely with our consultant, Kinley Horn, to develop a financial forecast, look at alternative funding, and, most recently, develop fiscally constrained project lists. Kristina Whitfield from Kimley Horn is here today to present, discuss fiscally constraining our plan, and provide information on the three fiscally constrained scenarios that staff with Kimley Horn have developed.

Kristina Whitfield and Kimley Horn presented the tables of the three scenarios. She then noted that the WMPO has historically, with long-range plans, fiscally constrained all modes of transportation moving into it. Fiscal constraints will only be on the roadway recommendations for this MTP. This is in alignment with the Federal requirements in 23 CFR and 440.324. That code essentially specifies that you must only fiscally constrain projects that are of regional significance.

Ms. Whitfield stated that many of our smaller bike-ped projects don't rise to that level of regional significance, which aligns with what almost all the other MPOs in the State of North Carolina do.

She noted one of the significant benefits to the MPO and the governing Boards, making this modification is it minimizes the need for amendments and changes to your MTP

Ms. Whitfield stated that Kimley Horn has been working on the revenue forecasts over the past few months. Revenues for all modes are still forecasted, but today, the focus is on the roadway.

Ms. Whitfield then began to explain the revenue forecasting process using historical data available through the STIP and the local CIPS. That historic revenue, which the region has received for real projects, is projected out through the life of the MTP. That gives the total amount expected to be available for funding projects through 2050.

Ms. Whitefield quickly highlighted what the upcoming plan looks like. Once what's been programmed in the STIP is taken out, funds are shown in the out years of the STIP that are subject to reprioritization. About 3.3 billion dollars is left for roadway projects based on kind of historic

resources captured in the Wilmington region.

Kimley Horn is working with MPO staff and TPD to model the three scenarios to move projects forward. The first scenario accounts for seven intersections and 28 different corridors. The second scenario accounts for 12 intersections and 36 corridors. Scenario three accounts for 12 intersections and 35 corridors.

She noted the modeling shows how these various scenarios impact congestion in the region.

Abby Lorenzo, WMPO, closed by stating that these scenarios have been shared with the TPD, and staff is awaiting information after they review the draft 2050 model. Staff hopes to ask for approval of one of the scenarios from the TCC and MPO Board next month so that alternative funding can be considered and what projects may be able to be included as fiscally constrained.

7) Updates

a. Wilmington Urban Area MPO

Mike Kozlosky stated updates are included in the packet.

b. Cape Fear Public Transit Authority

Mark Hiarr, WAVE, stated that updates are included in the packet.

c. NCDOT Division 3

Adrienne Cox, Division 3, stated that Division 3 is considering changing how and what information is shared with everyone. She stated that the presentation she is sharing with the group is more beneficial with the visuals to see the project and better understand where it is and where it's in the region compared to the boundaries of the MPO. The regular update is usually a list of updates included in the packet. Then, she noted that projects and development are also included to date. She explained that out of the three pages of projects programmed for the WMPO boundary area, only one is left this year: the Gordon Road project. This project is supposed to be pushed out in November. If you note, through the three pages, the only ones listed are the ones that will be left this year. The next item is the WMPO projects under construction list. Division 3 will start including a map of the project with this list, with relevant information on the project listed as well. This information includes construction progress, comments, and details.

Ms. Cox then presented the maps and information on the projects to the group and noted that they were in the packet. She then said that the following list is WMPO resurfacing projects. She presented the source for a GIS map that can be used to pull up the projects on the HMIP NCDOT portal.

Mike Kozlosky confirmed that the lists and visuals will still be available.

d. NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division

No Update.

e. NCDOT Transportation Planning Division

Nazia Sader, NCDOT, stated that the three scenarios for the Travel Demand Model have been received, and they plan on running the model with those projects. The Brunswick County CTP was adopted and completed in the spring, and the booklets will be sent out to the adopting agencies soon. The Pender County CTP survey closed on September 1, and that will be presented at the next CTP meeting.

Announcements

a. WMPO BPAC meeting December 10, 2024

10) Next meeting- November 13, 2024

There being no further business, Carolyn Caggia motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Helen Bunch, and the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS.

THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED DIGITALLY AS PART OF THIS RECORD.