

The Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization serves as the intergovernmental organization for local elected officials, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and residents of Brunswick, Columbus, and Pender Counties to work cooperatively to address transportation issues.

Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)

Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2024 • 9:00 AM

Cape Fear Council of Governments • Wilmington, NC

Voting Members Present

Frank Williams, Brunswick County
Mike Forte, Brunswick County
Mark Martin, Oak Island
Dave DeLong, St. James

Terry Mann, Whiteville
Garry Keaton, Sandyfield
Hugh Cannady, Surf City
William Rivenbark, Burgaw

Others Present

Rich Alt, Southport
Jeff Winecoff, Boiling Spring Lakes
Steve Smith, Topsail Beach
Stephanie Ayers, NC Ports
Eddie McFalls, NC Rail
Chad Kimes, NCDOT Div. 3
Trevor Carroll, NCDOT Div. 3
Michelle Howes, NCDOT Div. 3
Adrienne Cox, NCDOT Div. 3

Lee Jernigan, NCDOT Div. 6
Bill Hammond, NCDOT Div. 6
Philip Hart, NCDOT Div. 6
Ken Clark, NCDOT D6, District 3
Hemal Shah, NCDOT TPD
Michael Raynor, NCDOT
Ty Cheek, Kerr-Tar COG
Allen Serkin, Cape Fear COG
Sam Boswell, Cape Fear RPO

I. START-UP

- 1. Call to Order** – RTAC Chair Frank Williams called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.
- 2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance** – Mr. Frank Williams led the group in an invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. Roll Call** – RPO Staff took a roll call of all attendees.
- 4. Ethics Awareness & Conflict of Interest Statement** – Mr. Frank Williams read the ethics awareness statement.

5. **Additions or Corrections to the Agenda** – There were no changes to the agenda. *Mr. Terry Mann made a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Mike Forte seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.*

*Frank Williams, Yes
Mike Forte, Yes
Mark Martin, Yes*

*Dave DeLong, Yes
Terry Mann, Yes
Garry Keaton, Yes*

*Hugh Cannady, Yes
William Rivenbark, Yes*

The motion passed unanimously.

6. **Approval of Minutes** – The April 12, 2024 meeting minutes were considered. *Mr. Mike Forte made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Terry Mann seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.*

*Frank Williams, Yes
Mike Forte, Yes
Mark Martin, Yes*

*Dave DeLong, Yes
Terry Mann, Yes
Garry Keaton, Yes*

*Hugh Cannady, Yes
William Rivenbark, Yes*

The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Public Comment** – There were no comments from the public at this meeting.

II. PRESENTATIONS

8. **North Carolina Ports** – Stephanie Ayers, NC Port’s Senior Director of Real Estate and Planning, presented to the RTAC on the Port of Wilmington’s grant pursuits as well as its infrastructure improvement work. The Port of Wilmington is one of two deep water ports in North Carolina, and in 2022 was ranked the #1 most efficient port in North America. Ms. Ayers provided updates on the Port’s progress with its Infrastructure Improvement Plan, which includes projects such as the refrigerated container yard, the intermodal rail yard, and the new North Gate and north property rail storage.

Looking toward the future, the Port has the following goals: (1) the continued growth of cargo volumes, (2) to expand the global coverage of vessel services, (3) to engage and support state-wide economic development projects, (4) to develop the talent pipeline, and (5) to build the NC Ports brand.

9. **Southeastern North Carolina Passenger Rail Feasibility Study** – Eddie McFalls, representing the NCDOT Rail Division, provided updates on passenger rail initiatives across the state. The most recent ridership data shows the highest passenger rail ridership numbers in the Division’s 33-year history. A recent onboard survey gives insights into who’s riding the passenger routes in North Carolina, including a large increase in student passengers. Mr. McFalls then provided updates on the Division’s draft passenger rail feasibility study for southeastern North Carolina. The route examined would include passenger rail service from

Raleigh to Wilmington, and would most likely pass through Selma, Goldsboro, Wallace, Burgaw, and Castle Hayne. This route uses an existing alignment, part of which has been abandoned. The study's analysis includes a high-level capital cost estimate, approximate trip time, and ridership projections. The preliminary service model includes three round trips per day, with departures in the morning, midday, and afternoon/evening. The locations of future stations/stops along the corridor have not yet been determined.

Mr. McFalls then provided information on the Corridor ID program, which is a tool funded through IIJA to expand passenger rail across the country. Corridor ID creates a foundational framework for identifying and developing new or improved intercity passenger rail services. In the first round of applications, North Carolina applied for 12 corridors and was awarded funding for 7 of them (one of which was Raleigh to Wilmington). This funding will go towards creating a Service Development Plan (SDP), which provides the following: (1) operational plans for how the service works, (2) a list of projects that must be built, and (3) a list of next steps for the NEPA process.

Other passenger rail developments that will require further planning and coordination include any services from Wilmington to Charlotte as well as potential road closures in communities such as Burgaw. NCDOT and RPO staff will continue to coordinate with other partners on these initiatives and will provide updates to the RTAC when available.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- 10. FY23-24 Planning Work Program Amendment** – Final amendments to the adopted PWP for the current fiscal year must be submitted to NCDOT by June 30. This amendment does not change the RPO's overall budget; it consists of shifting funds between 2 categories in the PWP – moving \$2,000 from Program and Project Development to Prioritization. *Mr. Terry Mann made a motion to approve the FY23-24 PWP Amendment. Mr. Mike Forte seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.*

Frank Williams, Yes

Mike Forte, Yes

Mark Martin, Yes

Dave DeLong, Yes

Terry Mann, Yes

Garry Keaton, Yes

Hugh Cannady, Yes

William Rivenbark, Yes

The motion passed unanimously.

- 11. Prioritization 7.0 Quantitative Scores** – The quantitative scores for projects evaluated in P7.0 have been released by NCDOT. The P7.0 Regional Impact Local Input Point assignment window will be from Tuesday, May 28th through Friday, August 30th. RPO staff presented the P7.0 scores and highlighted the top scoring projects in the Statewide Mobility tier, which competes for funding based solely on the quantitative score. RPO staff shared a snapshot of funding availability (provided by NCDOT) in each STI funding category.

The next steps are to assign local input points in the manner dictated by the RPO's Local Input Point Methodology, which the RTAC approved during its April meeting. Although some funding categories are not projected to have funds available for new projects, the RPO is required to follow through with the local input assignment process to remain in compliance with the statewide Prioritization process.

RPO staff will meet with each county prior to the August RTCC/RTAC meetings to determine project priorities for assigning local input points. Although the RPO's Methodology only requires coordination with RTCC members for identifying project priorities, RTAC members requested to be included in these county meetings.

NCDOT is allowing Planning Organizations to assign both their Regional Impact and Division Needs local points at the same time (if desired), however RPO Staff advises committee members that both point assignment phases be completed separately, according to the original schedule. This will allow for more consistent coordination with planning partners such as NCDOT and neighboring planning organizations (WMPO, GSATS, etc.).

IV. REPORTS/UPDATES

12. Reports/Updates

- **Cape Fear RPO** – RPO Staff provided updates on the following:
 - Pender County CTP: Staff reviewed the basics of a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) and encouraged committee members to participate in the online survey, which will remain open until September 1st.
 - Revisions to 2024-2033 STIP: These updates were provided in the agenda packet.
 - Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Updates: The remainder of the projects submitted by the RPO in Spring 2023 have been awarded funding (Columbus County, St. James, and Surf City).
- **NC Ports (Port of Wilmington)** – There was no additional update by the Port.
- **NCDOT Ferry Division** – There was no update by the Ferry Division.
- **NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division (IMD)** – There was no update by IMD.
- **NCDOT Division 3 (Brunswick & Pender)** – Michelle Howes gave an update on Division 3 projects, as included in the agenda packet.
- **NCDOT Division 6 (Columbus)** – Bill Hammond gave an update on Division 6 projects, as included in the agenda packet.
- **NCDOT Transportation Planning Division (TPD)** – Hemal Shah provided TPD updates for CTPs across the RPO area, as included in the agenda packet.
- **NC Board of Transportation** – There was no update by the Board member.

VI. OTHER

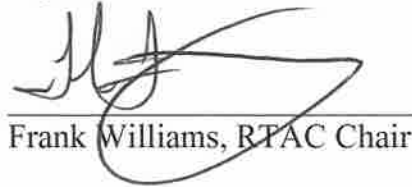
- 13. Open discussion** – Mayor Keaton raised concerns about road conditions stemming from the improvements at NC 87 and NC 11, specifically at NC 87 and Woodyard Rd. NCDOT and RPO staff will follow up on this after the meeting.

Commissioner Williams provided a follow-up to the committee regarding the health of Glen Marshall, former mayor of Sandy Creek and Cape Fear RTAC member.

- 14. Adjourn** – *The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 AM.*

Approved by the RTAC at a regular meeting on Friday, August 16, 2024.

Signed:



Frank Williams, RTAC Chair

Attest:



Sam Boswell, Secretary

