



February 2017

Greetings!

This is the second update on the Mayor's Task Force on Rail Realignment activity and progress. Please let me know any questions or concerns that need to be addressed. Please feel free to respond back to me at Laura.lwpadgett@gmail.com or call me at 910-262-4025. Thanks.

1. Southeastern North Carolina has the opportunity to benefit from a realignment of the existing heavy rail corridor that currently runs through the City of Wilmington to a safer, more direct route into and out of the Port of Wilmington and the creation of a public use right-of-way/greenway.
2. Moffatt & Nichol, Consulting Engineers, have been working towards the completion of the Feasibility Study, which they anticipate will be complete around the end of March. The Task Force and City Council will first see the final report and we expect it to be public in early April.
3. The Task Force will provide a recommendation to the City of Wilmington in April. This effort has been a partnership of the NC Department of Transportation, the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the City of Wilmington as the primary sponsor.
4. This update does not attempt to detail the reports we've received so far, which are in Draft/Incomplete form at this time, but here are the reports we have:
 - a. The Draft Physical Conditions Report reviews the Railroad history of Wilmington and SE NC. At its rail peak, Wilmington was served by five rail lines, radiating outward like spokes of a wheel from the west to the northeast, beginning with the Wilmington & Raleigh (which became Weldon) in 1835. Current rail service consists of manifest mixed-freight trains that serve the Port five to seven days per week depending upon volumes. The new Queen City Express intermodal service train will add service on Saturdays and Mondays. Enviva wood pellet trains have begun operating. Other issues addressed include uses of the track, other transportation modes, etc.
 - b. The Draft Socio-Economic Conditions Report describes the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of New Hanover and Brunswick Counties, and the City of Wilmington. Various data provides an analysis of the current situation and what impacts may occur, including maps of population centers.
 - c. The Draft Legal Conditions report confirms that CSX owns, maintains and operates on the infrastructure and bridges within the right-of-way from Davis Yard around the Beltline to the North Carolina State Ports Authority Port of Wilmington (the Port). Working with CSXT will be essential in moving this project forward.

- d. The Draft Financial Conditions report provides a significant list of potential funding sources through Federal, State and non-profit grants as well as discussion on the use of a local authority or public private partnership. It does recommend that the relocation of the rail line and the re-purposing of the beltline through the City be done as separate and separately funded projects and discusses ways to phase the projects. Further analysis of funding potential is not yet finished.
 - e. There are three draft transit reports in: the Draft Transit Environmental Summary, the Draft Transit Analysis and the Draft Transit Economic Benefit Report which presents relevant data points that aid in selecting a preferred route for a future streetcar system.
 - f. The Draft Rail Environmental Report and the Draft Rail Environmental Summary Report are in and confirm that there would be impacts from building new rail on the West side of the Cape Fear River, as well as Conservation Easements affecting some of the potential alignments. It is important to point out that the reports are not final, but the impacts may be managed through structuring the rail.
 - g. The Draft Engineering Report has just arrived.
5. We have received a preliminary map of possible alternative routes which are being further assessed and which indicates that there are workable routes.
 6. The Consultant and City and NCDOT staff team and I have met each month to review progress and are pleased that so far, there appears no 'show-stopper' in the Consultant's work. The last few reports to come in will contain Financial and Funding Analysis and the all-important Cost Estimates, and recommended three to four alignments!

Mike Kozlosky, the CEO for the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, continues work on the Rail realignment as Project Manager. He and Moffatt & Nichol's team have kept the project moving and on time!

There will be two Open Houses on the Rail Realignment project to receive public interest, concerns and questions: February 20, Leland Town Hall, 5-7 PM and February 22, Wilmington City Hall, 5-7 PM. The Consultant will be part of the Open Houses.

Any person or organization that you feel we should contact, please let me know. Thank you for your interest and I am happy to receive questions.



Laura Padgett, Chair
Wilmington Mayor's Task Force on Rail Realignment

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