

CITY of WILMINGTON

North Carolina

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8/18/2015

City Council
City Hall
Wilmington, North Carolina 28401

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers:

The CSXT rail line enters New Hanover County from Brunswick County, crossing the Cape Fear River into the City of Wilmington just north of the Isabel Holmes Bridge. The rail line then continues eastward through the City before turning south and west again--back toward the river and the Port of Wilmington. The sweeping path of the rail line thus forms a large "U" or a "V" (on its side) which, at one time, wrapped around the eastern limits of the City. Today, this same rail line passes through the heart of the City of Wilmington, resulting in thousands of motor vehicle rail crossings each day and adversely impacting the quiet enjoyment of many neighborhoods in the City. The current route also impedes safe, efficient rail access to the Port of Wilmington and reduces Port competitiveness.

A potential solution would be to relocate the existing rail line to a crossing of the Cape Fear River close to the Port property, thereby eliminating rail traffic through the City, and dramatically improving rail access to the Port. The relocation of the rail line would be beneficial to CSXT, the Port of Wilmington and the City of Wilmington by eliminating about 180,000 at-grade vehicular rail crossings daily, improving mobility throughout the City, and improving rail operations and safety en route to the Port. Improved rail access to the Port would also have benefits of statewide significance, in terms of economic development of business and industry throughout North Carolina.

In addition, the proposal may provide an opportunity to convert the existing heavy rail corridor, with all of its related safety and noise issues, into a much quieter transit corridor. Such a conversion would improve the quality of life for nearby neighborhoods and all citizens of Wilmington, as well as reducing traffic congestion on city streets. Such a transit service would stimulate investment in the many vacant and underperforming properties along the existing rail corridor, particularly on the south side of town.

On November 18, 2014 City Council passed a resolution in support of a feasibility study to evaluate the relocation of the CSXT rail line across the river, providing for more direct rail access to the Port and eliminating train traffic through the City. Since that time, preliminary research and discussions with the NCDOT Rail Division have revealed sufficient evidence to warrant near-term action on a feasibility study.

The estimated cost of completing the feasibility study is \$300,000. The current proposal is for a cost-sharing by the City of Wilmington, the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the North Carolina Department of Transportation, with each entity contributing \$100,000 toward the study.

Based on this information, the accompanying resolution affirms Council's support for a future allocation of funds in the amount of \$100,000 for the completion of the feasibility study. At least \$100,000 lapsed at the end of the last fiscal year unspent and specifically earmarked for Council Contingency / Economic Development purposes. If the City is subsequently required to provide a cost share, a supplemental appropriation ordinance will be necessary.

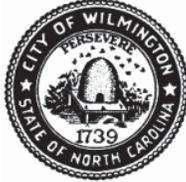
Adoption of the resolution is consistent with City Council's adopted Focus Areas including Create a Safe Place, Foster a Prosperous, Thriving Economy, Support Efficient Transportation Systems, Engage in Civic Partnerships, and Provide Sustainability and Adaptability.

Passage of the attached Resolution is recommended.

Respectfully submitted,

Sterling B. Cheatham,
City Manager

Resolution



City Council
City of Wilmington
North Carolina

Introduced By: Sterling B. Cheatham, City Manager

Date: 8/18/2015

Resolution Supporting the Allocation of Funds in the Amount of \$100,000 to Complete a Feasibility Study to Evaluate the Relocation of the Rail Line from the City of Wilmington, to Provide Improved Access to the Port of Wilmington, and to Recommend Alternative Transportation Uses for the Existing Rail Line

LEGISLATIVE INTENT/PURPOSE:

WHEREAS, the CSXT rail line enters New Hanover County from Brunswick County, crossing the Cape Fear River into the City of Wilmington north of the Isabel Holmes Bridge. The rail line then continues eastward through the City before turning south and west again--back toward the river and the Port of Wilmington. The sweeping path of the rail line thus forms a large "U" or "V" (on its side) which, at one time, wrapped around the eastern limits of the City; and

WHEREAS, today, this same rail line passes through the heart of Wilmington, resulting in tens of thousands of motor vehicle rail crossings each day and adversely impacting the quiet enjoyment of many neighborhoods in the City; and

WHEREAS, the current route also impedes safe, efficient rail access to the Port of Wilmington and reduces the competitiveness of this important state-owned facility, as well as other nearby industries served by rail; and

WHEREAS, a potential solution would be to relocate the existing rail line to a crossing of the Cape Fear River close to the Port property, thereby eliminating rail traffic through the heart of the City, and dramatically improving rail access to the Port; and

WHEREAS, the relocation of the rail line would be beneficial to CSXT, the Port of Wilmington and the City of Wilmington by eliminating tens of thousands of at grade vehicular rail crossings on a daily basis, improving mobility throughout the City of Wilmington, and improving rail operations and safety en route to the Ports; and

WHEREAS, improved rail access to the Ports would also have benefits of Statewide significance, in terms of economic development of business and industry throughout North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, in addition, this proposal may provide an opportunity to convert the existing heavy rail corridor, with all of its related safety and noise issues, into a quiet transit corridor; and

WHEREAS, such a transit service would stimulate investment in the many vacant and underperforming properties along the existing rail corridor, particularly on the south side of town; and

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2014 the City Council of Wilmington encouraged the MPO, NCDOT and CSXT to complete a feasibility study to evaluate the relocation of the CSXT rail line across the river via a route that eliminates rail traffic through the heart of the City and which would provide a more direct rail access corridor to the Port of Wilmington; and

WHEREAS, the estimated cost to complete a feasibility study is \$300,000; this cost could be shared between the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and North Carolina Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the current proposal is for a cost-sharing with each entity contributing \$100,000 toward the completion of this feasibility study.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT, the City Council of Wilmington hereby supports the future allocation of funds in the amount of \$100,000 for the completion of a feasibility study to evaluate the relocation of the existing rail line from the heart of the City of Wilmington, to provide improved access to the Port of Wilmington, and to Recommend Alternative Transportation Uses for the Existing Rail Line; and a supplemental appropriation ordinance will be required if the feasibility study is funded.

Adopted at a _____ meeting
on _____ 2015

Bill Saffo, Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Penelope Spicer-Sidbury, City Clerk

City Attorney