



February 12, 2018

Greetings!

Welcome to another update on the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project, formerly designated the Mayor's Task Force on Rail Realignment.

A lot has happened since the last update. As always, please let me know any questions or concerns you feel 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. To repeat the purpose of this project: 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 which would then allow a re-purpose of the right-of-way for public use.

The project has benefits for Economic Development, Port of Wilmington growth, health, safety, and quality of life for the four county region of New Hanover, Pender, Brunswick and Columbus, including the City of Wilmington. This project can enhance capacity for the Port of Wilmington and other companies using the river and rail.

2. The Mayor's Task Force completed its work on the feasibility study by Moffatt & Nichol which indicated that the project is feasible and that there are no major barriers from engineering or the environment to building the new track across the Cape Fear River and up the west side along the 421 Highway corridor. That is not to say, there are no challenges . . . there are. The Task Force did recommend the City move forward with the project and on July 18, 2017, the Wilmington City Council accepted the Feasibility Report and committed to working on the project as the lead agency, needing many partners, of course.
3. Thank you to the members of the Task Force for their efforts in assessing this project, guiding the Feasibility Study and for their considered recommendation to the City of Wilmington.
4. The project is now entering the next phase. January 9, 2018, the City Council appointed me the Coordinator for the Project for the City for the coming year. This further demonstrates the City's commitment to the project. Much of my work will be building partnerships for the project and transitioning the accomplishments to a full time employee as project manager with the City. My primary concentration will be on relocating the freight rail use to a new track facility across the Cape Fear River. I look forward to continuing to work closely with Glenn Harbeck, the City's Director for Planning, Development and Transportation; and with John Cease whose insight, relationships, and knowledge of the rail industry will continue to be invaluable.

5. While there has been something of a lull since July, there have still been a number of things happening. Several presentations to organizations and community groups, as well as meetings with individuals in the community, were made in an effort to both keep the community informed about the project and continue to gain knowledge that would help the project.
6. The end of May, Glenn Harbeck and John Cease made a presentation to the NC Railway Association Annual Conference when it met in Wilmington.
7. In September, Glenn and I participated in the American Institute of Architects NC annual meeting in Wilmington regarding design and quality of life opportunities created by using the rail right-of-way for public transportation. Also in September, I conducted a webinar for the Professional Engineers of NC on the RR Project.
8. In November, Glenn and I were asked to make a presentation at the Port to the NC House Committee on Transportation Strategic Planning and Funding. About 60 people, many of them NC Legislators, heard the presentation and it was well-received. Thanks to Glenn for his great PowerPoint.
9. We continue to see rapid change in area freight. The Queen City Express from the Port to Charlotte is running most days. Enviva continues their shipping and growth. The Carolina Connector in Rocky Mount has become a question but appears not gone although perhaps changed. There are changes in CSXT's management with the arrival of E. Hunter Harrison to lead and his untimely death before Christmas. CSXT continues to make major changes in its business model as it moves toward Precision Scheduled Railroading. There are other changes across the industry's leadership as well.
10. The Port of Wilmington and NC DOT are working on a study produced by Mott McDonald to recommend ways to improve train speeds and track conditions from the Davis (Navassa) Rail Yard through Wilmington to the Port, including significant upgrades to track at the Port. That study predicted 8 round trip trains per week by 2021 and longer trains up to 10,000 feet. The Port has completed significant improvements to enhance their capability to handle 10,000 foot trains. The prospect of nearly 2-mile-long trains blocking 30+ crossings within Wilmington for nearly a half hour each, including 11 major thoroughfares, lends urgency to the Realignment Project.
11. We continue to work with potential private partners, the NC Legislature and our Federal delegates.

The Project has benefitted greatly from the people, organizations and businesses who have shared the privilege of their time to talk with us. 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 and comments.



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