



July 10, 2018

Greetings!

Welcome to the latest update on the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project.

It has been a successful, busy 4+ months 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](mailto:Laura.lwpadgett@gmail.com) or call me at 910-262-4025. Thanks.

1. The purpose of the project is to benefit Southeastern NC by realigning the existing heavy rail corridor that currently runs through the City of Wilmington to a safer, more direct access to the Port of Wilmington which would then allow a re-purpose of the right-of-way for public use. The public use right-of-way will enhance affordable housing, aid traffic congestion and quality of life in Wilmington.

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

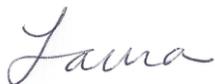
It is important to note the firm commitment of the City of Wilmington as the Lead Agency, the dedication of its staff and the strong support of the City Council to this project.

2. My primary purpose as the "Coordinator" of the Rail Realignment project has been to continue to build awareness and interest in the project and to translate that into support and a foundation to move the project forward, expeditiously. Therefore, the last few months have included presentations to Rotary; meetings with community leadership groups such as the Historic Wilmington Foundation and Wilmington Business Development; meetings with CSX locally, the Wilmington Terminal Railyard and the Port of Wilmington leadership; and individuals interested in the project.
3. Following a presentation to the Columbus County Commissioners, Columbus County has joined in supporting the project and will have much to gain from an improved access into the Port of Wilmington. There is private investment there that can make use of the improved access and a great deal of potential trade and shipping opportunity.
4. We are continuing to develop the project in a way that will encourage private investment in building the new track, hoping to make this a private-public-project (3P). We have met with one large, international infrastructure firm at their request and continue our relationship with another.
5. Our State Senate delegation has been interested in the project and has worked to gain support for it. And the NC House Transportation leadership has continued its interest and support for the project.
6. In May and June, I attended the Railway Association of NC meeting and the SE Rail Forum. John, Glenn and I had a meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers which was very positive. They encouraged us to

move forward with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process which is required for any project such as this. That was followed by a conference call with the Federal Railroad Administration(FRA) which encouraged us to apply for a grant with the FRA for funds to move forward with further engineering and the NEPA process.

7. Also in June, I went to Washington, DC and met with the FRA, the Surface Transportation Board and our Federal delegates or their staffs, all of whom agreed to provide letters of support to the FRA. All were very positive visits and there is a great deal of interest and enthusiasm to see the project move forward.
8. We are currently working on the grant application to FRA. We are in the process of collecting letters of support from the counties, Wilmington Business Development, WAVE Transit, the Port, and all our Federal delegates. My thanks to those people who have already been helpful in providing advice, maps, access to data and letters of support for the FRA grant.
9. We continue to meet with representatives of CSX and to keep awareness of their important presence in SE NC. The announcement that they will go forward with NC in building an Intermodal Terminal in Edgecombe County will be a boost to the Port of Wilmington and enhance the importance of building a direct route into the Port that does not go through a heavily populated area of Wilmington. It also shows the commitment of CSX to its business in SE NC and the Port. We hope to see the Realignment Project add to the mutual efficiency of the Port and CSX.
10. The next few months will continue further contacts, especially the NC DOT Rail Division which has a new Director and further contacts with the NC General Assembly.
11. The next big event will be the hiring of a project manager/coordinator by the City of Wilmington. That person will be tasked with moving (pushing!) this project forward. We will be looking for someone with an array of skills and experience and enthusiasm for this project. Those qualifications will include at least a Bachelor of Science Degree in a relevant field such as Transportation, Logistics, Business Management, Systems Management, Construction, Civil or Systems Engineering; and experience /education in government relations, urban planning, railroads, organizational management, public transit, and Federal and State agency operations; and while we are at it, the ability to work with officials at all levels. Please help by letting me know if you would like to receive the job announcement and can forward it to potential candidates or know of potential candidates that we can include for the announcement.

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.



Laura Padgett, Coordinator  
Wilmington Rail Realignment Project