



December 9, 2018

Greetings!

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

This update will cover the last six months of work on the project. There is big news in this update! And as with everything else in the area, some progress was distracted by the impact of Hurricane Florence. As always, please let me know any questions, thoughts or ideas. Please feel free to respond back to me at Laura.lwpadgett@gmail.com or call me at 910-262-4025. Thanks.

The Rail Realignment Project proposes to relocate the freight use of 8.5 miles of track away from the dense urban core of the City of Wilmington and repurpose the track and right-of-way for alternative transportation, i.e., a tracked trolley or tram and biking and pedestrian paths. The freight use of the track will be moved to a new 4 to 5-mile track directly from the Port of Wilmington, across the Cape Fear River to a connection with the Davis/Navassa, NC Rail Yard. The project will improve quality of life, public safety, traffic congestion, and housing affordability within the City of Wilmington; and also create new and innovative economic development opportunities through more efficient shipping in southeastern North Carolina to the Port of Wilmington, eliminating 'last mile' delays and opening new shipping routes in rural counties.

Two big items are in this update:

First, with a great deal of help, I submitted an application to the Federal Railroad Administration for a grant of \$2 million to pay the cost of producing Preliminary Engineering up to 30% and the National Environmental Protection Act documentation which is necessary to build the project. The whole process for the grant was complicated by a very short timeframe to submit once the grant was announced and the impact of Hurricane Florence. We received letters of support from many entities which we hope will help to get the grant award:

- Counties of New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender and Columbus
- Cape Fear Council of Governments
- Cape Fear Realtors
- Cape Fear Public Transportation (WAVE)
- Congressman Rouzer
- Senator Burr
- And we believe other members of the delegation have sent letters directly.
- Wilmington Business Development
- Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
- NC State Ports
- CSXT
- NC RR Inc.
- RJ Corman Railroad Group

The City of Wilmington staff provided invaluable help in the process of writing the grant as well as the cost of a consultant to write the Benefit Cost Analysis portion of the grant. We have been informed that the FRA considers our application complete and the project eligible. The awards will be determined by around February 2019.

Second, the City has posted the job announcement for a full-time project manager/coordinator. This is a big step and shows the City's intent to move this project forward. I hope that anyone reading this who has an interest in such a position or who knows people who might be interested will visit the link below:

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/wilmingtonnc>

This position posting is a very exciting development.

We continued meetings with various organizations, building support for the project. Glenn Harbeck and I spoke to the Chamber Public Policy Committee. Contacts continue with CSX and other private rail companies, including North Carolina Railroad Company.

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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Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

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