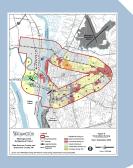
DATA REVIEW DETAILS

This Screening Report is an initial step in the environmental review process; therefore, the existing conditions and environmental impacts are based on a screening of readily available GIS datasets. Please note that a more detailed impacts analysis, which makes use of field verified data, will be conducted later in the environmental review process once route options have been further refined through this initial screening process.

Any data to add?

Do a deeper dive by stopping at the interactive mapping station!

Land Use



Human Environment and Socioeconomics



Hazardous Materials Sites



Community Resources



Cultural Resources



Natural Resources







New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Study Area County Boundary Upgrade Existing Railroad

Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

Screening Study Options

Industrial Zoning (I)

Cemetery Zoning (CE) Conservation Zoning (CN)

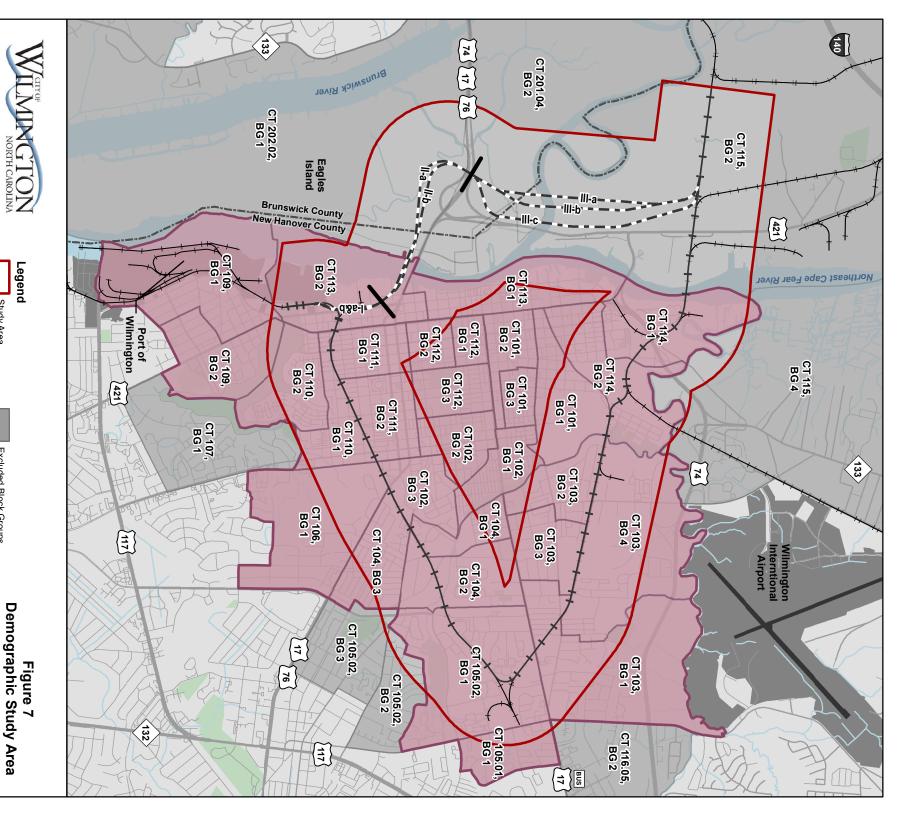
> Generalized Zoning Figure 6

Mixed Use Zoning (MU) Commercial Zoning (C)

Date: October 2020

0.25 0.5 Miles

1 inch = 4,000 feet



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2018 Census Block Groups New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Realignment Project

Wilmington Rail

County Boundary

Railroad

Excluded Block Groups

Upgrade Existing

Study Area

Park

Demographic Study Area

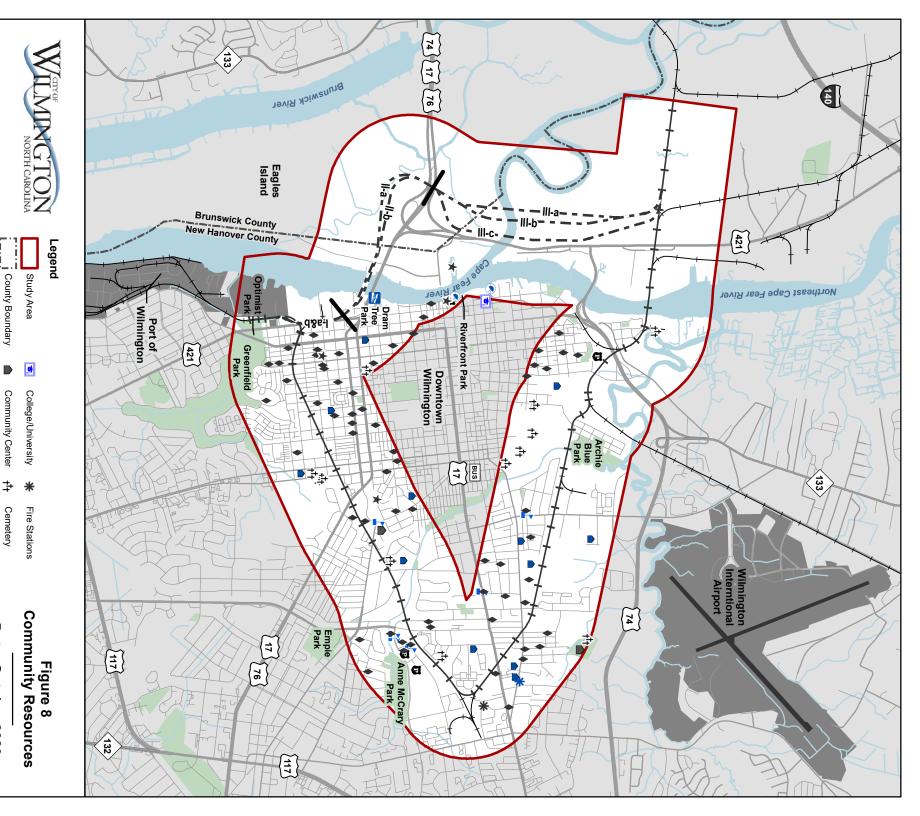
Screening Study Options

DSA Block Groups

0.25 0.5

Date: October 2020





Source: NC OneMap Data & Google Maps

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Park Railroad

Realignment Project Wilmington Rail

■ Upgrade Existing Screening Study Options

Beach Access Site

NR Historic Resource

Place of Worship

Law Enforcement Location

Date: October 2020

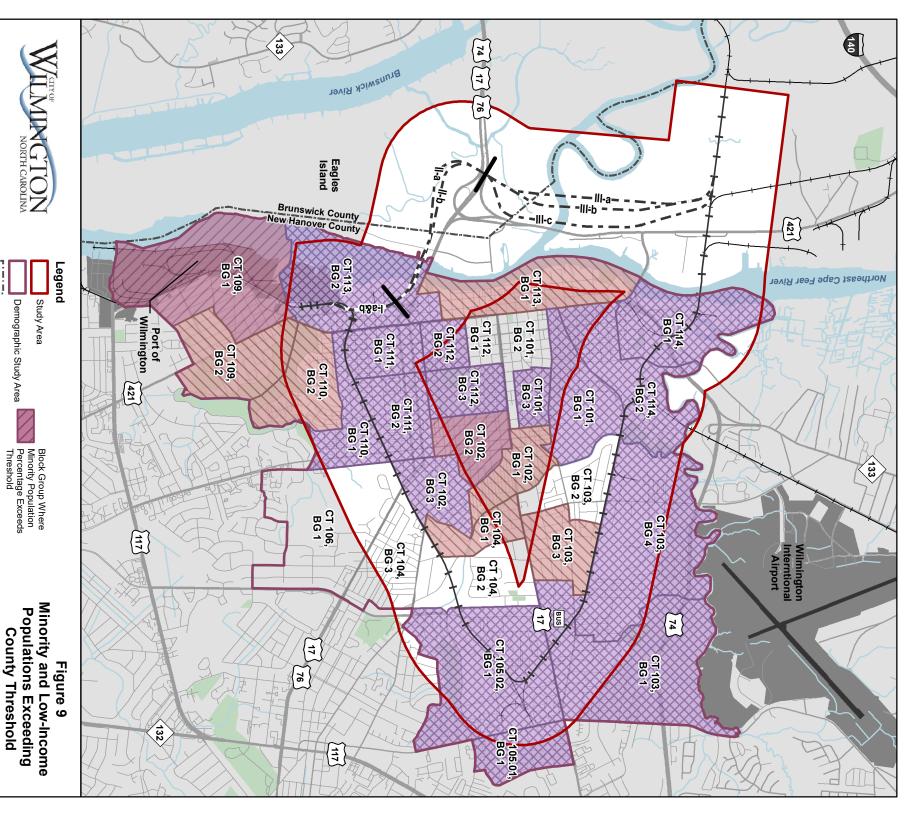
School

EMS

Childcare Facility

0.25 Miles

1 inch = 4,000 feet



Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2018 Census Block Groups & American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (2014-2018) ļ Screening Study Options

+ Railroad

→ Upgrade Existing

Block Group Where Threshold is Exceeded for Both Minority and Poverty Block Group Where Poverty Rate Exceeds Threshold

Date: October 2020

0.25

1 inch = 4,000 feet

0.5 Miles

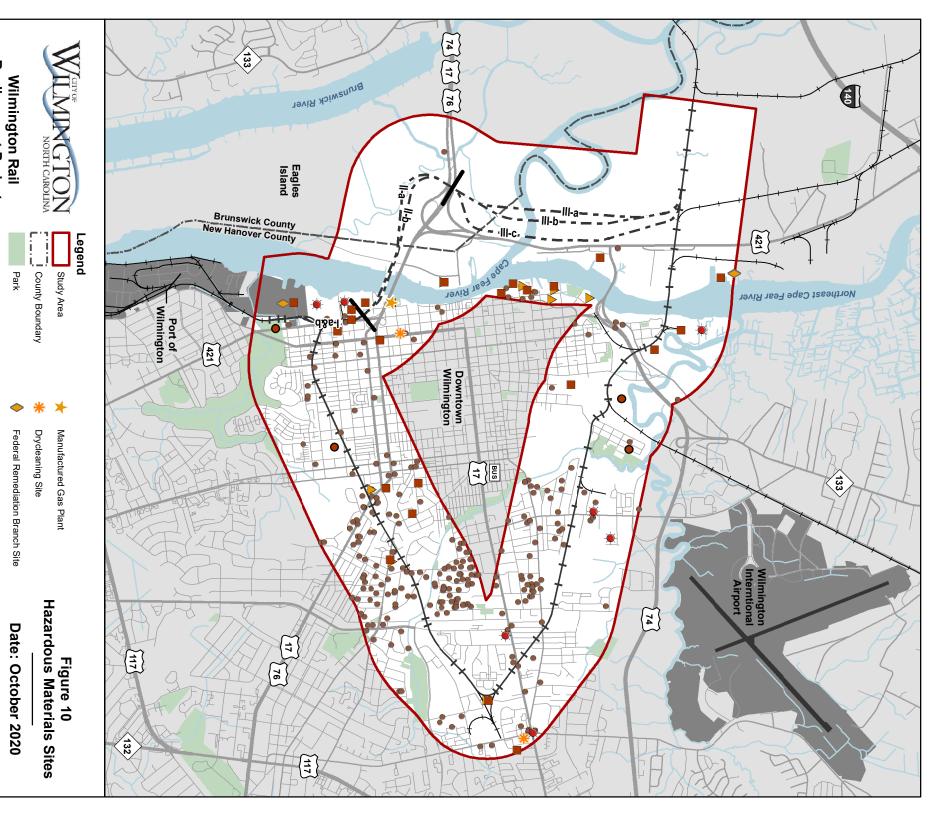
New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Realignment Project

Park

County Boundary

Wilmington Rail



Source: NCDEQ Data

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Upgrade Existing

Brownfield Site

0.25

Hazardous Waste Site

Inactive Hazardous Site

Railroad

Screening Study Options

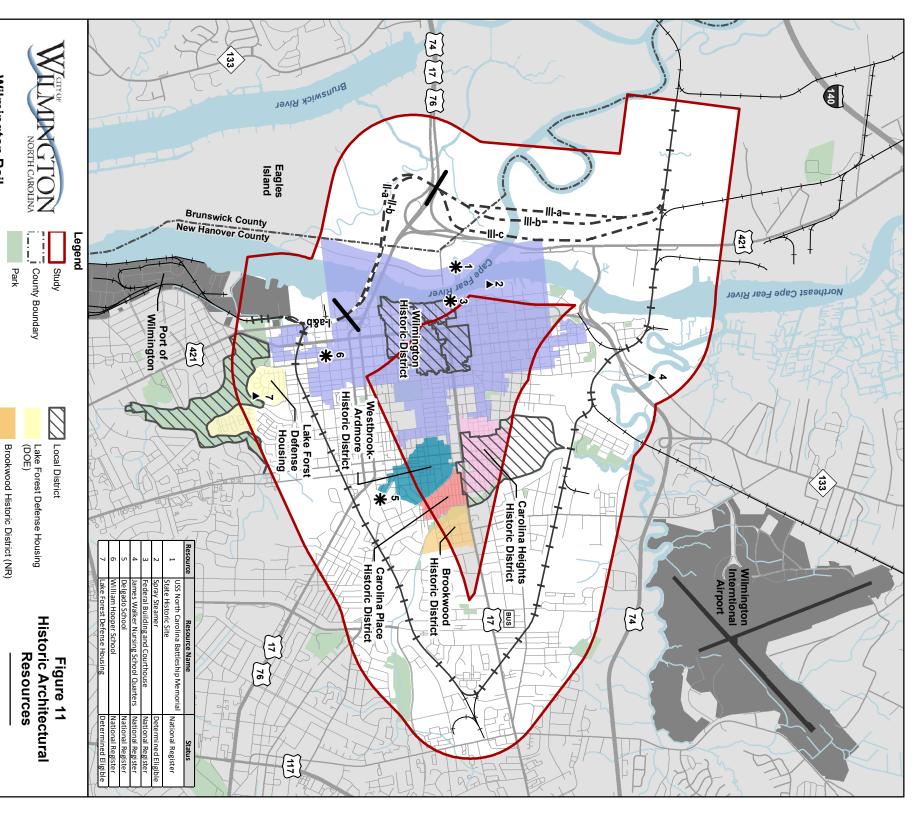
Pre-Regulatory Landfill Site

Underground Storage Tank Incident

1 inch = 4,000 feet

Miles

Realignment Project



Source: NCHPO Data

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Screening Study Options National Register (NR) Resource

Westbrook- Ardmore Historic District (NR)

Wilmington Historic District (NR)

1 inch = 4,000 feet

Miles

Carolina Place Historic District (NR)

0.25

NR-Determined Eligible (DOE)
Resource

Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

■ Upgrade Existing

Carolina Heights Historic District (NR)

Date: October 2020

Railroad



Source: NCDEQ Wetland Data

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

Study Area

County Boundary

→ Upgrade Existing

Date: October 2020

0.25

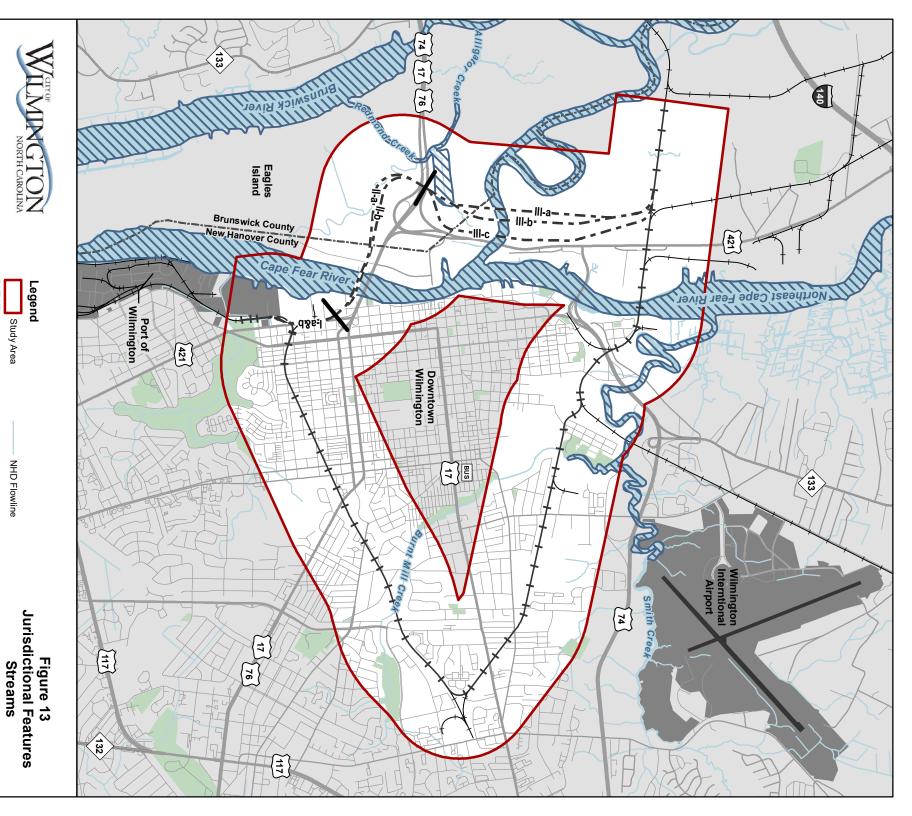
1 inch = 4,000 feet

0.5 Miles Railroad

Screening Study Options

Park

NCDEQ Wetlands



Source: NCDEQ & USGS Data

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

NCDEQ Major Hydrology

NHD Water Area

County Boundary

Railroad

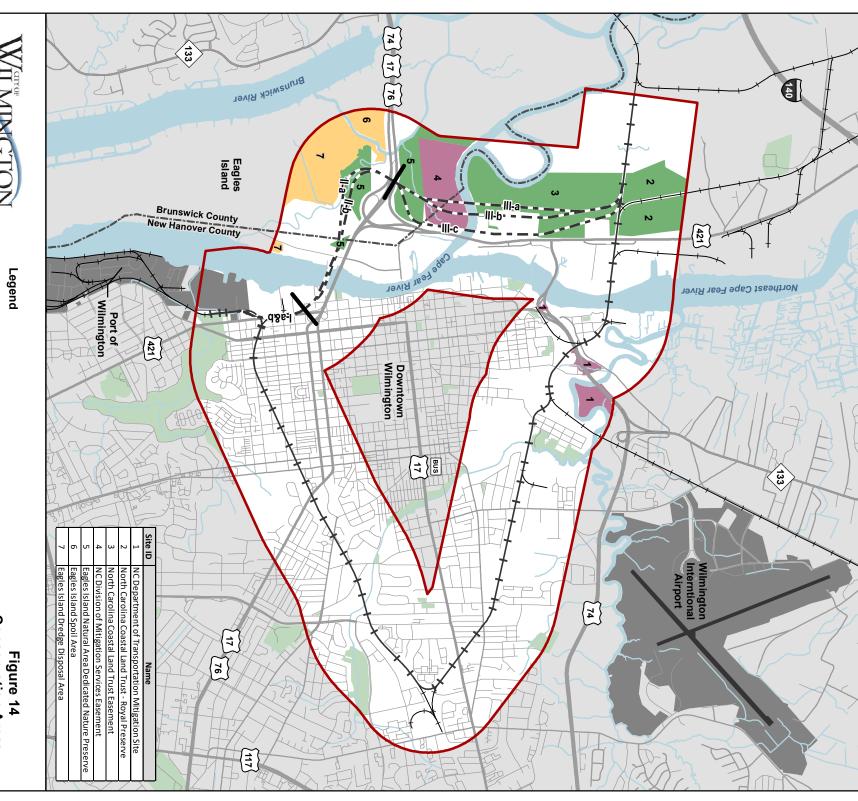
Upgrade ExistingScreening StudyOptions

Date: October 2020

0.25

1 inch = 4,000 feet

0.5 Miles Wilmington Rail Realignment Project



Source: NC OneMap - Managed Areas

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

Mitigation Site

Spoil/Disposal Area

Realignment Project Wilmington Rail

Legend

Study Area

Railroad

County Boundary

Park Conservation Area

♣ Upgrade Existing

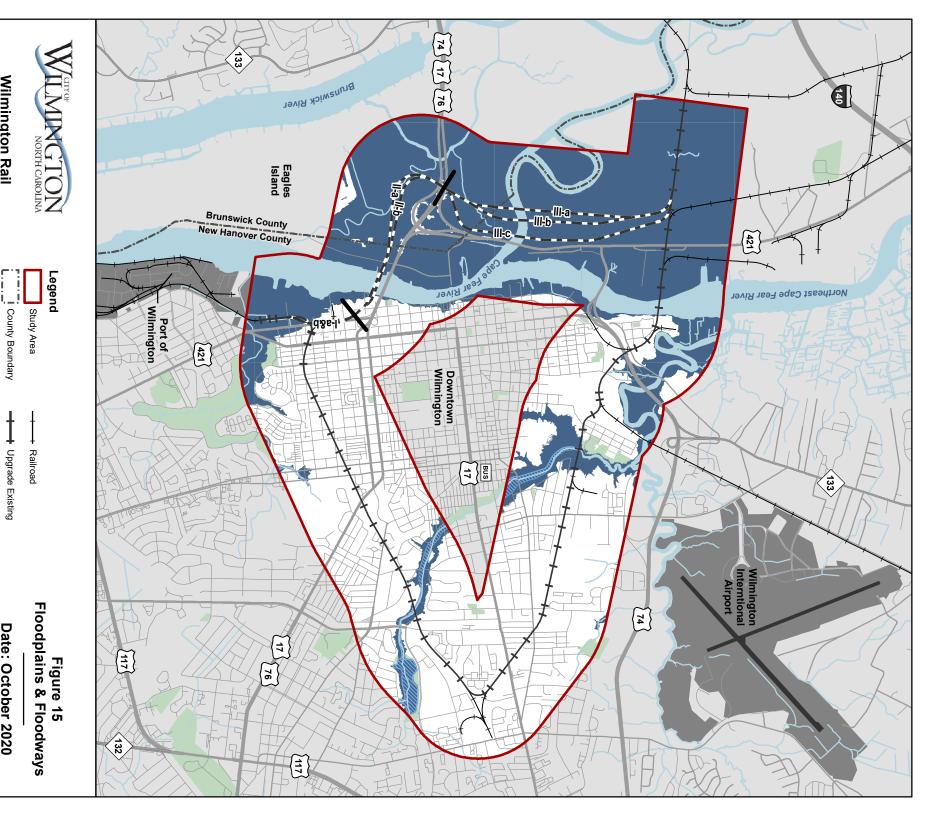
Screening Study Options

Conservation Areas & Mitigation Sites

Date: October 2020

0.25 0.5

1 inch = 4,000 feet Miles



Source: NC FRIS Data

New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

100-Year Floodplain (1% annual chance) Regulatory Floodway

Screening Study
Options

Date: October 2020

0.25 0.5

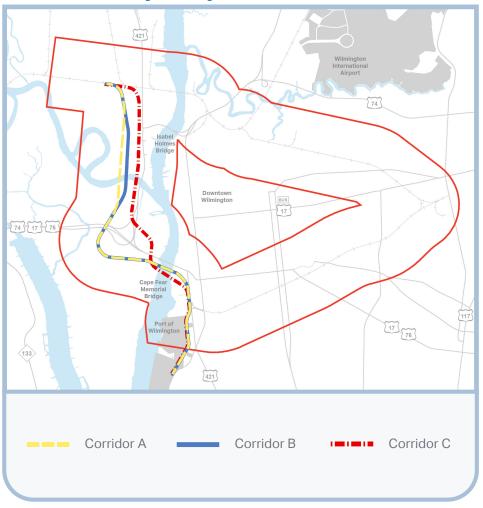
1 inch = 4,000 feet

Miles

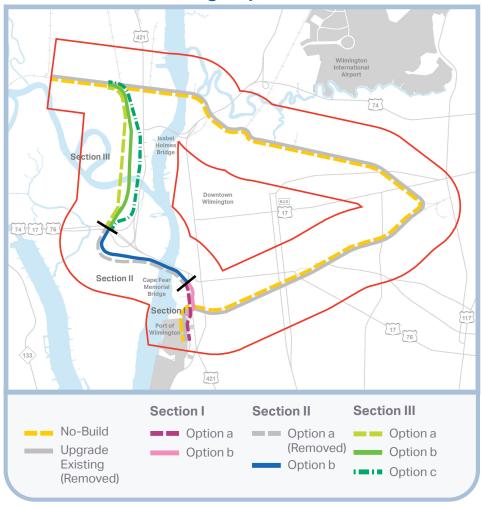
Realignment Project Wilmington Rail

INITIAL RESULTS

2017 Feasibility Study Results

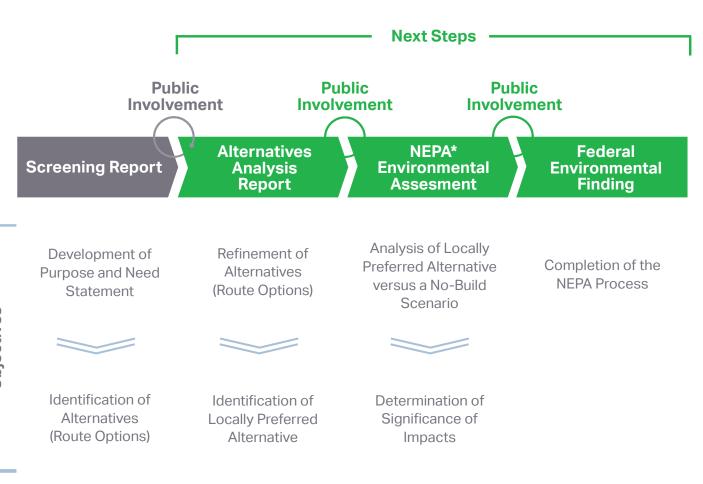


2020 Initial Screening Report Results





NEXT STEPS





^{**} FRA= Federal Railroad Administration









APPENDIX H1.2: VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE #2 MATERIALS



About the Project

The City of Wilmington (City) is proposing a bypass route for the existing freight rail line between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The proposed bypass route would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, regional transportation mobility and public safety.

We hope you join the conversation. Your voice can help shape the way the Rail Realignment Project moves forward.

This virtual open house will allow you to explore potential options that are being considered for the rail bypass route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington.

YOU'RE INVITED!

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Where wrr.nepa.ai

When Monday June 28th, 2021 - Monday July 26th, 2021

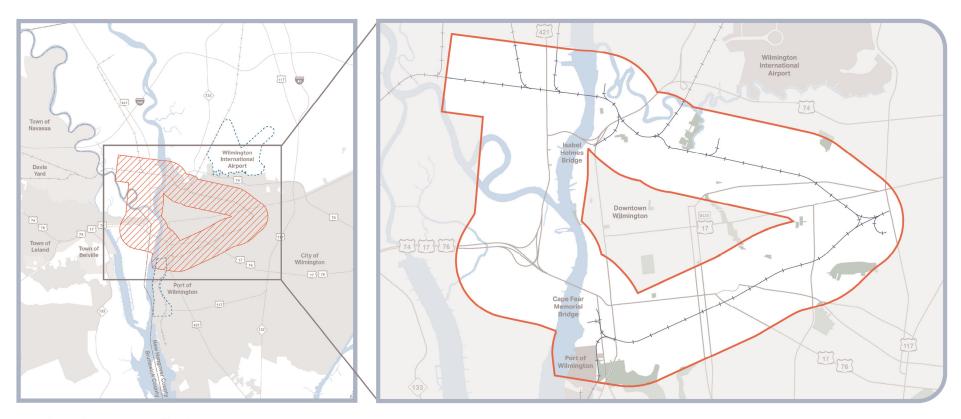
Visit <u>wrr.nepa.ai</u> anytime between Monday June 28th and Monday July 26th to learn about the project and to submit comments.

For more information or to sign up to receive updates on the Rail Realignment Project, visit: www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail

Join One of the Virtual Meetings!

Our project team will be available to answer questions and receive comments through Zoom (link accessed through www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail) on Tuesday July 6th from 4PM to 6PM and on Monday July 19th from 5PM to 7PM.

DESCRIPTION



The City of Wilmington (City) is proposing a bypass route for the existing freight rail line between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The proposed bypass route would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, regional transportation mobility and public safety.

The Project Study Area is located primarily within the City of Wilmington but also extends into Brunswick County and New Hanover County. The Project Study Area encompasses approximately a one-mile area centered on the existing CSXT rail line from east of Navassa to the Port of Wilmington through downtown Wilmington and along the proposed new location corridors west of the Cape Fear River.



PURPOSE & NEED

The primary purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to improve safety and regional transportation mobility, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington.



Improved Safety

considerably reduce the number of crossing conflicts between vehicles and freight trains on the route nington. Eliminating crossing o eliminates the risk of fire and response times being inhibited rains, thereby enhancing the to save lives and property.



Improved Regional Transportation Mobility

The Project would considerably reduce the the potential for freight rail operations to obstruct regional public mobility.

Vehicular traffic as well as the length and frequency of freight trains are expected to grow rapidly in the region.

Improved Resiliency

The resiliency of the sole freight rail route serving the region would be improved by providing higher river crossings and infrastructure ned to mitigate flood related



Improved Reliability

Reliability of travel in the region would improve as crossing conflicts and delays across Wilmington's main thoroughfares are o, compared to the existing ute, newer infrastructure would downtime for maintenance



Improved Operational Fluidity

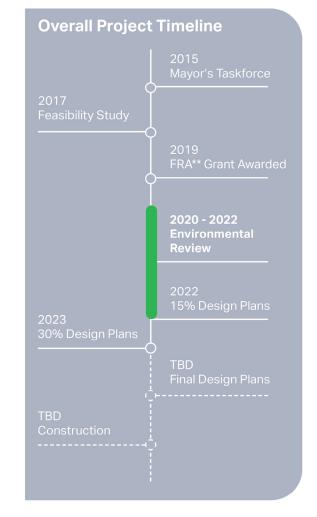
The Project would reduce the length of the freight rai route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington by half resulting in travel and increased throughput

time savings and increased throughput capacity.



TIMELINE

Environmental Review Public Public Public Involvement Involvement Involvement We are here NEPA* **Alternatives** Federal **Env**ironmental **Analysis Environmental** Report **Assesment Finding** Analysis of Preferred Development of Refinement of Completion of the Purpose and Need Alternatives Alternative versus a **NEPA Process** No-Build Alternative (Route Options) Statement Identification of Identification of Determination of Alternatives Significance of Preferred (Route Options) **Impacts** Alternative

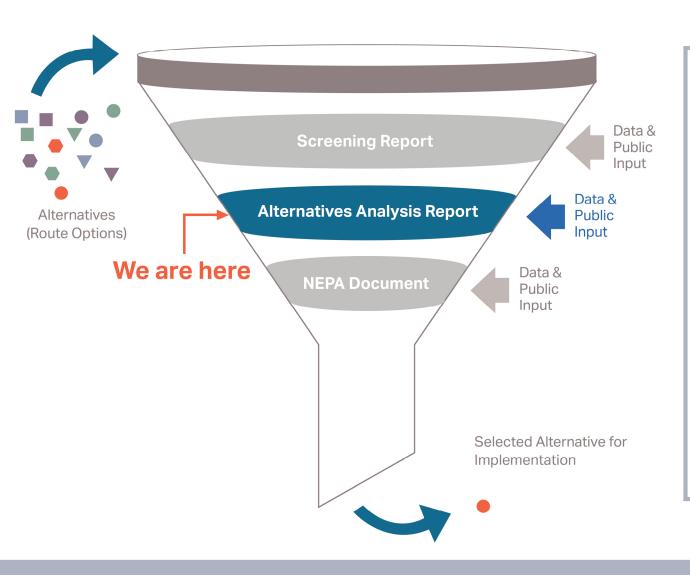




^{*} The environmental review process will be carried out pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

^{**} FRA= Federal Railroad Administration

HOW IS A ROUTE SELECTED?



A multi-step environmental review process will allow the City of Wilmington to iteratively involve the public, community groups and regulatory partners in the process of generating scientific reports which will narrow down alternatives (route options) for a new bypass rail route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington. This second round of public input coincides with the release of a Draft Alternatives Analysis Report (available in full on the center table of this virtual room). Public comments received will inform the completion of the Alternatives Analysis Report and the remainder of the environmental review process.

Additional public outreach and agency coordination will occur throughout the environmental review process to select an alternative for implementation.



The Alternatives Analysis Report starts where the Screening Report left off by further analyzing the six (6) remaining Build Alternatives for a bypass route connecting the Port of Wilmington to Davis Yard in Navassa. Adhering to federal NEPA requirements, the Alternatives Analysis Report also carries forward a No-Build Alternative from the Screening Report.

+ No-Build **Alternative**

Want More Data?

Do a deeper dive by stopping at the interactive mapping station!

Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3



Alternative 4



Alternative 5



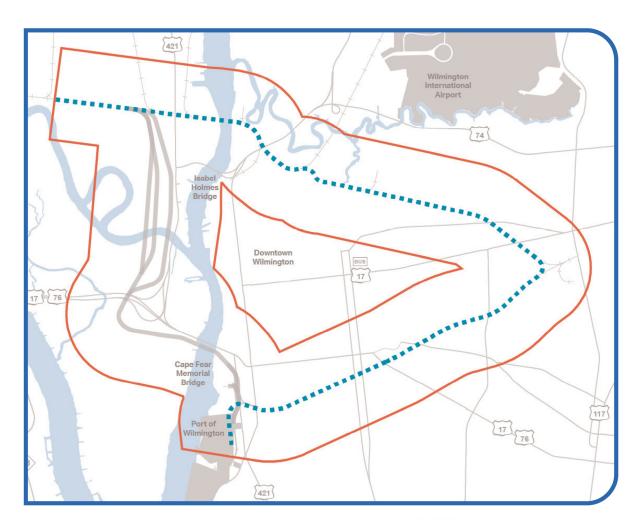
Alternative 6





No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes the existing Beltline through the City and provides a connection between the Port of Wilmington and Davis Yard via the CSXT SE line. It is approximately eight miles in length and has 32 atgrade crossings. Under the No-Build, no new elements or improvements would occur (other than standard maintenance). All existing conditions would remain the same except for improvements planned as part of the Wilmington Beltline Improvement Project (North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Project P-5740) and two additional grade-separated crossings that are planned as part of the Independence Boulevard Project (NCDOT STIP U-4434). Freight rail traffic would continue to operate along the Beltline through the City at restricted speeds due to existing track conditions. The numerous at-grade crossings create a safety concern through the City due to the potential for rail/ vehicle conflicts and pedestrians crossing the rail tracks. Regional mobility and reliability would continue to worsen due to increases in population and freight operations within the Study Area.

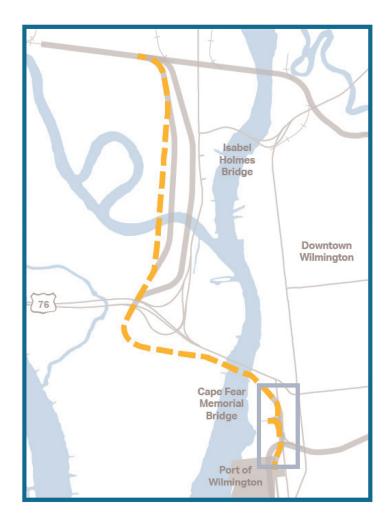


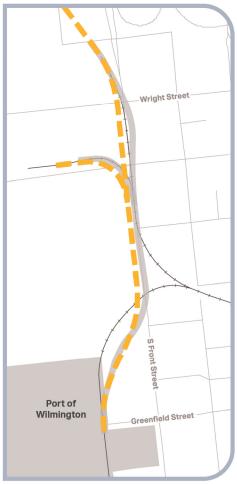


Alternative 1

Alternative 1 begins by tying into the existing Wilmington Terminal Railroad (WTRY) line at Greenfield Street, then follows along the west side of Front Street. At Wright Street, this Build Alternative turns northwest to cross Surry Street and crosses the Cape Fear River on structure for approximately one mile before turning north and crossing over US 17 just west of the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange. Alternative 1 then crosses the western leg of the Cape Fear River and returns to grade before continuing north to tie into the existing CSXT SE Line approximately 0.4 mile west of US 421.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 1 remains on the west side of Front Street.



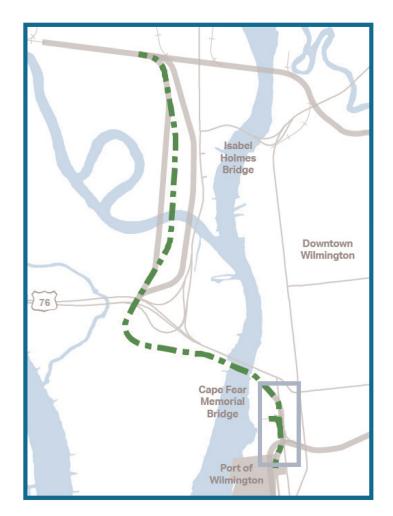


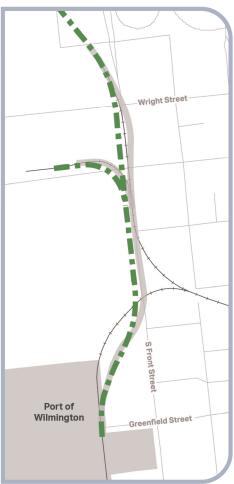


Alternative 2

Alternative 2 begins by tying into the existing WTRY line and follows the same alignment as Alternative 1 along the west side of Front Street and the crossing of the Cape Fear River. After crossing the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange and the western leg of the Cape Fear River, the centerline of Alternative 2 travels north parallel to US 421 approximately 400 feet east of the centerline for Alternatives 1 and 4 and ties into the existing CSXT SE Line approximately 0.4 mile west of US 421 at the same approximate location as Alternatives 1 and 4.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 2 remains on the west side of Front Street.



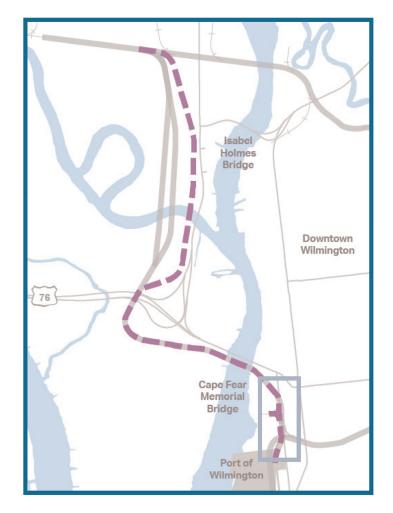


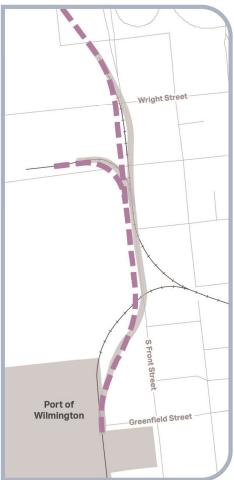


Alternative 3

Alternative 3 begins by tying into the existing WTRY line and follows the same alignment as Alternatives 1 and 2 along the west side of Front Street and the crossing of the Cape Fear River. After crossing the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange and the western leg of the Cape Fear River, the centerline of Alternative 3 travels north parallel to US 421 approximately 700 feet east of the centerline for Alternatives 2 and 5, and ties into the existing CSXT SE Line approximately 0.3 mile west of US 421.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 3 remains on the west side of Front Street.



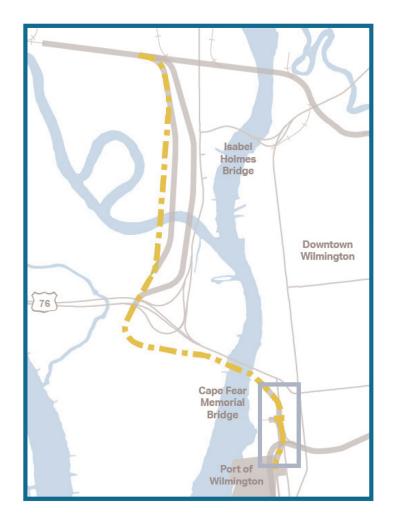


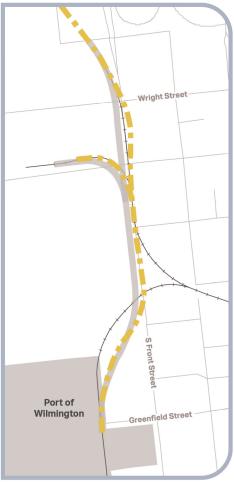


Alternative 4

Alternative 4 begins by tying into the existing WTRY line at Greenfield Street, follows north along existing Front Street until Meares Street, then crosses Front Street to continue slightly east of Front Street. At Wright Street, Alternative 4 turns northwest to cross Surry Street, crosses the Cape Fear River on structure for approximately one mile before turning north and crossing over US 17 just west of the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange. Following the same alignment as Alternative 1 west of the Cape Fear River, the alternative then crosses the western leg of the Cape Fear River and returns to grade. Alternative 4 continues north to tie into the existing CSXT SE Line approximately 0.4 mile west of US 421.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 4 traverses Front Street from west to east just north of Greenfield, then east to west near Wright Street.



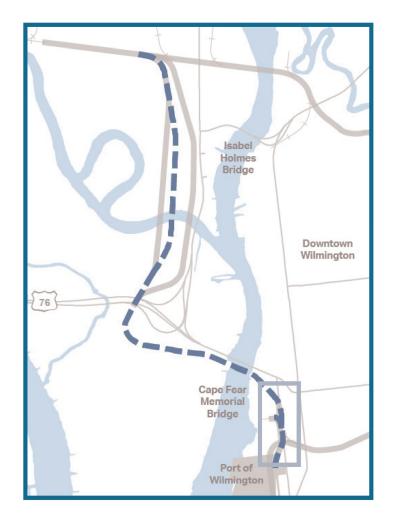




Alternative 5

Alternative 5 follows the same alignment as Alternative 4 starting at the existing WTRY line. After crossing the Cape Fear River, Alternative 5 turns north and crosses over US 17 just west of the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange. The centerline for this concept travels north parallel to US 421 approximately 400 feet east of the centerline for Alternatives 1 and 4 and ties into the existing CSXT SE Line at the same approximate location as Alternatives 1 and 4.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 5 traverses Front Street from west to east just north of Greenfield, then east to west near Wright Street.



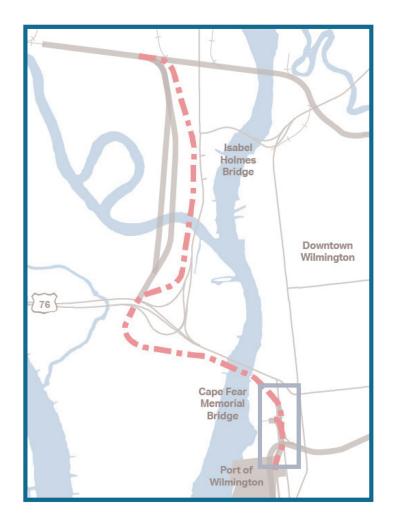


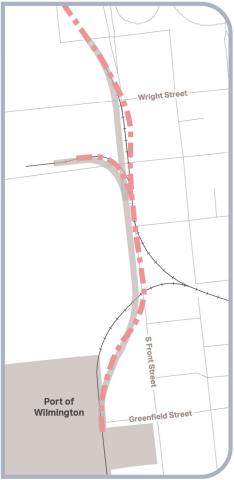


Alternative 6

Alternative 6 follows the same alignment as Alternatives 4 and 5 starting at the existing WTRY line at Greenfield Street. After crossing the Cape Fear River, Alternative 6 turns north and crosses over US 17 just west of the existing US 17/US 421/US 74/US 76 interchange. The centerline for this concept travels north parallel to US 421 approximately 700 feet east of the centerline for Alternatives 2 and 5, and ties into the existing CSXT SE Line approximately 0.3 mile west of US 421.

The detail view map shows how Alternative 6 traverses Front Street from west to east just north of Greenfield, then east to west near Wright Street.







DETAILED DATA & ANALYSIS

This Alternatives Analysis Report builds off of the results of a Screening Report finalized in January 2021 to continue the Wilmington Rail Realignment's environmental review process. This Alternatives Analysis process involved field reviews and the development of multiple technical reports. See some of the data below, excerpted from the report, to understand some of the criteria that were used to analyze each of the Build Alternatives and the No-Build Alternative.

Want More Data?

Do a deeper dive by stopping at the interactive mapping station!

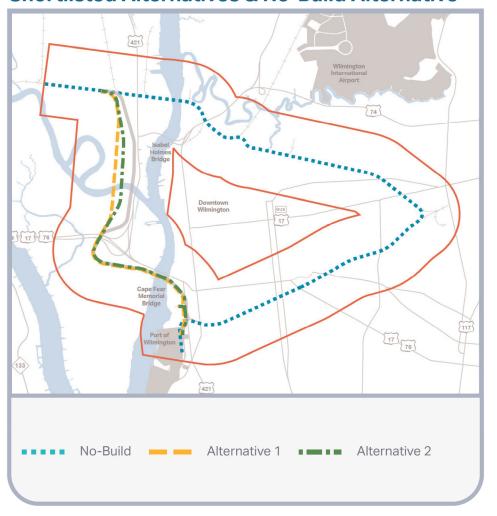
certit	No-Build	Alt. 1	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6
Length of new track/length of existing track (miles)	0/8	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0
Number of public at-grade crossings	30	1	1	1	4	4	4
Total acreage of high-quality wetlands	-	54	46	46	54	46	46
Total linear feet of Streams	-	2,344	1,608	1,527	2,344	1,608	1,527
Consistency with Planned Isabel Holmes Bridge Interchange	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Number of major Transmission Line crossings	n/a	1	3	3	1	3	3
Total # of noise-sensitive parcels (all categories)	1,851	227	233	263	226	229	261
Total # of vibration-sensitive parcels (all categories)	253	7	7	7	18	18	18
Acres of total Conservation Areas	-	36	22	32	36	22	32
Total acreage of Primary Nursery Areas	-	19	6	3	19	6	3

*Refer to the full Draft Alternatives Analysis Report for more detail (located on the center table of the virtual meeting room).



DRAFT RESULTS

Shortlisted Alternatives & No-Build Alternative



erot	No-Build	Alt. 1	Alt. 2
Length of new track/length of existing track (miles)	0/8	4/0	4/0
Number of public at-grade crossings	30	1	1
Total acreage of high-quality wetlands	-	54	46
Total linear feet of Streams	-	2,344	1,608
Consistency with Planned Isabel Holmes Bridge Interchange	n/a	Yes	Yes
Number of major Transmission Line crossings	n/a	1	3
Total # of noise-sensitive parcels (all categories)	1,851	227	233
Total # of vibration-sensitive parcels (all categories)	253	7	7
Acres of total Conservation Areas	-	36	22
Total acreage of Primary Nursery Areas	-	19	6

^{*}Refer to the full Draft Alternatives Analysis Report for more detail (located on the center table of the virtual meeting room).



Development of Purpose and Need Statement Refinement of Alternatives (Route Options) Analysis of Preferred Alternative versus a No-Build Alternative

Completion of the NEPA Process



Objectives

Identification of Alternatives (Route Options)

Identification of Preferred Alternative

Determination of Significance of Impacts



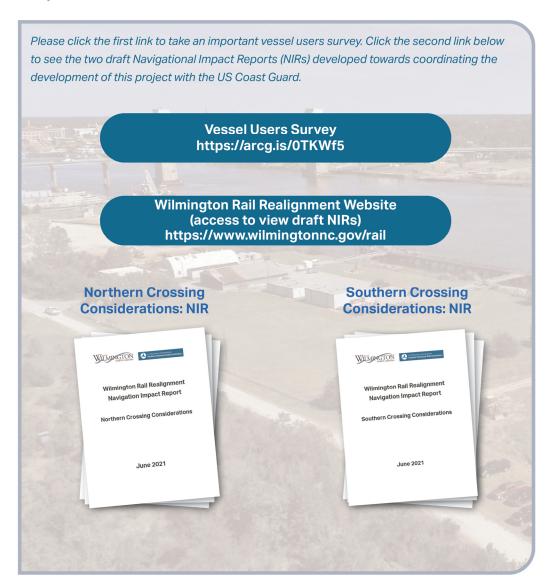


^{*} The environmental review process will be carried out pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

^{**} FRA= Federal Railroad Administration

NAVIGATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you navigate or are interested in the navigation of the Cape Fear River, we would like to hear from you!









APPENDIX H2: AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE





APPENDIX H2.1: SUMMARY TABLE OF AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE TO DATE





Agency Correspondence to Date

Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
6/11/2018	WAVE	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
6/18/2018	Brunswick County	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
6/18/2018	Pender County	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
7/18/2018	Columbus County EDC	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
9/5/2018	NCSPA	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
9/5/2018	Cape Fear COG	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
8/1/2019	USACE	Meeting	Jurisdiction over construction / fill of wetlands
8/12/2019	New Hanover County	Meeting	Informational
8/13/2019	New Hanover County	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
8/16/2019	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Introductions and informational
8/28/2019	STB	Meeting	Introductions and informational
8/29/2019	USACE	Meeting	Introductions and informational
9/1/2019	STB	Meeting	Jurisdiction over construction, purchasing and disposition of rail assets
9/6/2019	Pender County & Brunswick County	Meeting	Informational
9/10/2019	NCSPA	Meeting	Introductions and informational
9/16/2019	USACE	Meeting	Informational
9/24/2019	NCRR	Meeting	Informational
9/25/2019	STB	Meeting	Coordination
9/26/2019	Office of Senator Richard Burr	Meeting	Informational
9/26/2019	Office of Congressman David Rouzer	Meeting	Informational
9/26/2019	Governor's Office	Meeting	Informational
9/27/2019	Office of Congressman David Price	Meeting	Informational
9/27/2019	Office of Senator Tillis	Meeting	Informational
9/30/2019	NCHPO	Letter ²	Concerns related to cultural resources in study area





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
10/1/2019	USCG	Meeting	Jurisdiction over navigational waterways
10/9/2019	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response to SHPO letter
10/9/2019	USCG	Meeting	Introductions and informational
10/10/2019	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
10/14/2019	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
10/23/2019	CSXT & NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
10/25/2019	NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
11/14/2019	WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
11/20/2019	USACE	Meeting	Coordination
11/21/2019	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
11/25/2019	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
12/3/2019	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
12/10/2019	NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
12/16/2019	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
1/3/2020	NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
1/13/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
1/21/2020	Local - Brunswick County	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
1/21/2020	Brunswick County	Meeting	Informational
1/29/2020	New Hanover County Soil & Water	Meeting	Informational
2/4/2020	Offices of Senator Harper Peterson	Meeting	Informational
2/7/2020	NCRR	Meeting	Coordination
2/17/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
2/19/2020	New Hanover County Soil & Water	Meeting	Informational
2/20/2020	Local - Town of Leland	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
2/20/2020	NCRR	Meeting	Coordination
2/21/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
3/11/2020	WMPO	Meeting	Coordination





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
3/16/2020	WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
4/15/2020	New Hanover County Soil & Water	Meeting	Informational
5/1/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
5/14/2020	Federal - FRA	Meeting	FRA Grant Award Kick-Off Meeting
5/18/2020	Local - Town of Belville	Letter ¹	Letter of Support
6/2/2020	NCRR	Meeting	Coordination
6/2/2020	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
6/4/2020	WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
6/24/2020	WMPO	Letter ¹	Resolution of Support
6/29/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
6/30/2020	NCDOT & WMPO	Meeting	Coordination
7/1/2020	CSX	Meeting	Coordination
7/20/2020	Department of Commerce	Meeting	Informational
8/10/2020	NCDOT	Meeting	Coordination
8/14/2020	NC State Clearing House	Letter ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
8/19/2020	NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
8/19/2020	New Hanover County Soil & Water	Meeting	Informational
8/24/2020	NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
8/27/2020	STB	Meeting	Coordination
8/28/2020	NCDOT & NCSPA	Meeting	Coordination
9/1/2020	USFWS	Email ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/1/2020	STB	Meeting	Coordination
9/3/2020	STB	Email ¹	Cooperating Agency
9/8/2020	NCRR	Meeting	Introductions and informational
9/10/2020	USACE	Meeting	Coordination
9/11/2020	USEPA	Email ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/14/2020	NC Wildlife Resources Commission	Letter ¹	Start of Study response





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
9/21/2020	FHWA	Email ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/21/2020	WAVE	Email ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/22/2020	USACE	Letter ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/22/2020	US Coast Guard	Letter ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
9/25/2020	US Coast Guard	Email	Coordination
9/28/2020	WAVE	Email	Request of GIS files
10/6/2020	NCHPO	Letter ¹	Response to Start of Study Letter
11/12/2020	ALL	Meeting ¹	WRR Agency Coordination Meeting #1
11/18/2020	NC Ports Authority	Meeting	WRR & U-5734 Coordination
11/18/2020	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	WRR & U-5734 Coordination
12/8/2020	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	WRR Agency Coordination Meeting
12/11/2020	USEPA	Email	Screening Report comments
2/4/2021	USACE	Meeting	Purpose and Need Statement/Corridor Screening Report Discussion
2/9/2021	USCG	Email ¹	Project Initiation Request submittal
2/9/2021	ALL	Email	Purpose and Need Statement and Corridor Screening Report Update
2/19/2021	NCHPO	Letter ²	Section 106 initiation letter
2/22/2021	NCHPO	Letter ²	Participating Agency invitation letter
3/1/2021	STB	Letter ¹	Cooperating Agency acceptance letter
3/3/2021	USCG	Letter ¹	Cooperating Agency acceptance letter
3/3/2021	OSA	Letter ²	Participating Agency acceptance letter
3/5/2021	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	WRR & U-5734 Coordination
3/8/2021	USEPA	Letter ¹	Cooperating Agency acceptance letter
3/10/2021	USACE	Letter ¹	Cooperating Agency acceptance letter
3/11/2021	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	WRR & U-5734 Coordination
3/17/2021	NC Ports Authority	Meeting	WRR & U-5734 Coordination





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
3/24/2021	NC Historic Wilmington Foundation	Letter ²	Response to Screening Report
4/23/2021	NC Historic Preservation Office	Meeting	Rail Operations
4/30/2021	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	S Front Street Discussion and Updates
05/21/2021	USCG	Meeting	Coordination Meeting
6/18/2021	NCDOT Rail Division	Meeting	Project Update
6/18/2021	NC Ports Authority	Meeting	Project Update
6/23/2021	All	Meeting	WRR Agency Coordination Meeting
7/14/2021	NC Ports Authority	Meeting	Project Update
7/14/2021	WMPO	Meeting	Project Update
7/16/2021	Eagles Island Task Force	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/19/2021	Eagles Island Task Force	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party acceptance
7/27/2021	Catawba Indian Nation	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/27/2021	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of Archaeological Resources Technical Study and Reconnaissance-Level Historic Architectural Study; Consulting Party outreach notification
7/28/2021	WMPO	Meeting	Project Update
7/28/2021	NC Historic Preservation Office	Letter ²	Alternatives Analysis comments
7/28/2021	North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs	Letter ²	Section 106 Consultation: Identification of Known and Potential Historic Properties
7/29/2021	North Carolina Commission of Indian Affairs	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	Historic Wilmington Foundation	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	US Coast Guard	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	USACE	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	Eagles Island Coalition	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	Waccamaw-Siouan Indian Tribe	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation
7/29/2021	Tuscarora Nation	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party invitation





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
8/6/2021	USCG	Meeting	Project Update & NIR Discussion
8/23/2021	USACE	Meeting	Alternatives Analysis - Preferred Alignment
8/23/2021	NC Historic Preservation Office	Letter ²	Section 106 coordination
8/27/2021	USS North Carolina Battleship Commission	Email ²	Section 106 Consulting Party acceptance
8/27/2021	Catawba Indian Nation	Letter ²	Section 106 Consulting Party response
9/21/2021	All Cooperating Agencies	Meeting ¹	Cooperating Agency Meeting - Project Status
9/22/2021	USACE	Meeting	Section 408 Civil Works Property Impact discussion
9/24/2021	US Coast Guard	Email ¹	Submittal of Navigation Impact Reports
9/24/2021	STB	Email ²	Request to be Section 106 consulting party
11/17/2021	Section 106 Consulting Parties	Meeting ²	Project update and request feedback on historic property identification
11/22/2021	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response to Alternatives Analysis
11/30/2021	NCDOT Division 3	Meeting	Discuss location of WRR alignment adjacent to CFM feasibility alignment
12/3/2021	NOAA-NMFS	Letter ¹	Cooperating Agency acceptance letter
12/9/2021	NCDCM	Meeting ¹	Verification of coastal wetlands in Study Area
12/16/2021	USCG	Letter ¹	Letter confirming review of NIR
1/5/2022	US Coast Guard	Letter ¹	Distribution of USCG APPN for navigation public notice
1/5/2022	US Coast Guard	Email	Letter confirming APPN distribution
1/7/2022	NCDCM	Email	Concurrence on coastal wetland boundaries
1/18/2022	NOAA-NMFS	Meeting	EFH/Section 7 Coordination Meeting
1/26/2022	USFWS	Email	Decline invitation to be cooperating agency/Bald eagle info
1/26/2022	USFWS	Meeting	Coordination to discuss Section 7
2/17/2022	Unique Places to Save, NOAA-NMFS	Meeting	Alligator Creek Restoration Project Coordination
2/23/2022	Section 106 Consulting Parties	Meeting ²	Project update and request feedback on historic property identification
3/4/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response to Consulting Parties meeting





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
3/31/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Consultation - Architecture
3/31/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Consultation - Archaeology
4/4/2022	USCG	Letter	Preliminary Navigational Clearance Determination
5/5/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response to consultation – Architecture and Archaeology
5/16/2022	All Cooperating Agencies	Meeting	WRR Agency Coordination Meeting – Project Status
6/2/2022	NOAA-NMFS	Letter ³	Essential Fish Habitat Assessment information
6/2/2022	NOAA-NMFS	Letter ³	Section 7 Coordination
6/2/2022	USFWS	Letter ³	Section 7 Coordination
6/10/2022	OSA	Meeting	Discussion of Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey
6/21/2022	USFWS	Letter ³	Section 7 Coordination
7/12/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey
7/20/2022	OSA	Meeting	Discussion of Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey
8/4/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response from NCHPO on Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey
8/10/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of Archaeological Survey Report
9/8/2022	NOAA-NMFS	Letter ³	Section 7 Coordination
9/14/2022	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response from NCHPO on Archaeological Survey Report
2/8/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of archaeological dive work plan
3/9/2023	USDA	Letter ¹	Receipt of NRCS-CPA-106 Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form
3/16/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Approval from NCHPO on archaeological dive work plan
3/21/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of Assessment of Effects (Historic Architecture) Report
4/20/2023	Section 106 Consulting Parties	Meeting ²	Project update and review of recommendations of Assessment of Effects (Historic Architecture) and results of underwater archaeological survey
5/15/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of updated Archaeological Survey Report
6/30/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response from NCHPO with concurrence on results of Archaeological Survey Report





Date	Agency	Correspondence Type	General Subject
7/3/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Submittal of revised Assessment of Effects (Historic Architecture) Report to NCHPO
7/14/2023	STB	Letter ²	Designation of FRA as lead agency in Section 106 review
7/25/2023	Section 106 Consulting Parties	Meeting ²	Project update and review of updated recommendations of Assessment of Effects (Historic Architecture) and results of underwater archaeological survey
8/9/2023	NCHPO	Letter ²	Response from NCHPO with concurrence on effects assessment of historic architecture properties
8/10/2023	NCHPO	Email ²	Email to NCHPO notifying intent to classify Section 4(f) effects on historic properties as <i>de minimis</i> impacts

¹Letter, meeting summary, or other supporting documentation included in Appendix H2.

² Letter, meeting summary, or other supporting documentation included in Appendix B1: Section 106 Coordination.

³Letter or other supporting documentation included in Appendix F: Section 7 Coordination.





APPENDIX H2.2: AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE – LETTERS, MEETING SUMMARIES, AND OTHER MATERIALS



Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority

P.O. Box 12630 • Wilmington, NC 28405 • (910) 343-0106 • (910) 343-8317 fax, • wavetransit.com

June 11, 2018

Ms. Laura Padgett
Coordinator - Wilmington Rail Realignment Task Force
City of Wilmington
P.O. Box 1810
Wilmington, NC 28402

Dear Ms. Padgett,

On behalf of Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority I would like to extend support for the relocation of the CSX rail line and accompanying grant applications. The project would offer significant benefit to the Authority by reducing traffic congestion, improving transit on time performance, and providing infrastructure which will allow Wave Transit to offer improved public transportation initiatives throughout the region. Additionally, funding from the Federal Railroad Administration to begin the PE/NEPA process will significantly move this project forward and maximize our efforts to improve non-highway modes of transportation throughout the region.

The Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority is prepared to assist you and the Task Force with the project and technical assistance as needed. We wish you the best of luck in your efforts and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the future of transit in Southeastern North Carolina.

Cordially,

William Bryden

Chairman



Board of Commissioners
George R. Brown, Jr., Chairman
Archibald "Fred" McCoy, Vice Chairman
Jaqueline A. (Jackie) Newton
David A. Piepmeyer
J. David Williams, Jr.

County Manager Randell K. Woodruff

County Attorney Carl W. "Trey" Thurman

June 18, 2018

Federal Railroad Administration Washington, DC.

Re: Wilmington Rail Realignment Project
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety
Improvements (CRISI).
Wilmington, North Carolina

Dear Sir or Ms.:

This letter is being submitted to strongly indicate the support of Pender County Government for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project for a Federal DOT grant through the Federal Railroad Administration, for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program (CRISI).

The purpose of the Rail Realignment Project is to relocate the freight use of the Wilmington beltline rail from the center of the congested heart of the City to the west side of the Cape Fear River through less inhabited areas to provide a direct access from the Port of Wilmington to the CSX Davis Railyard. The new route provides significant new economic development opportunities for shipping from surrounding counties and the Southeast U.S. to the Port of Wilmington.

Relocating the track will eliminate the 'last-mile' delay into the Port and improve the Port's current efficient operations, improve safety of the rail line, relieve road and track conflicts and open-up freight line access to new industrial sites near the City and in nearby rural and small urban areas in four counties. Pender County believes this improvement will be benefit the area tremendously as well as providing new opportunities for the Pender Commerce Park located along US421 just north of Wilmington.

Pender County supports the City of Wilmington's effort to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project can move forward benefitting the entire region of Southeastern North Carolina. Enclosed with this letter is a resolution in support of this effort which was passed by the Board of Commissioners this evening. If the County can provide any additional information or supporting materials please feel free to contact us at 910-259-1200.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter of support!

Respectfylly

George Brown, Chairman Board of Commissioners



Board of Commissioners
George R. Brown, Jr., Chairman
Archibald "Fred" McCoy, Vice Chairman
Jaqueline A. (Jackle) Newton
David A. Piepmeyer
J. David Williams, Jr.

County Manager Randell K. Woodruff

County Attorney Carl W. "Trey" Thurman

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT

WHEREAS, The purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to relocate the freight use of the Wilmington beltline rail from the center of the congested heart of the City to the west side of the Cape Fear River through less inhabited areas to provide a direct access from the Port of Wilmington to the CSX Davis Railyard; and

WHEREAS, The new route provides significant new economic development opportunities for shipping from surrounding countles and the Southeast U.S. to the Port of Wilmington; and

WHEREAS, Relocating the track will eliminate the 'last-mile' delay into the Port and improve the Port's current efficient operations, improve safety of the rail line, relieve road and track conflicts and open up freight line access to new industrial sites near the City and in nearby rural and small urban areas in four counties; and

WHEREAS, Pender County believes this improvement will be beneficial to all of Southeastern NC and may provide new opportunities for the Pender County Industrial Park.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Pender County Board of Commissioners support the City of Wilmington's effort to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project can move forward.

Adopted this the 18th day of June, 2018.

George R. Brown, Chairman

Pender County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Melissa Long

Clerk to the Board





US Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Attn: Office of Program Delivery 1200 New Jersey Ave SE Washington, DC 20509 July 18, 2018

Re: Support for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project & CRISI grant application

Dear Sir or Madame,

As the Economic Development Director for Columbus County, I receive inquiries from industries interested in our area every month. A large number of these inquiries are from companies seeking sites that are served by rail. Most are also looking for sites that have good access to the State Ports at Wilmington. As a result of the numerous inquiries we receive from companies needing both rail and port access, we have been actively partnering with the City of Wilmington in their efforts to streamline rail access into the Port of Wilmington as well as improving access to the Port by the RJ Corman Railroad Company here in Columbus County.

The RJ Corman Railroad Company and the Columbus County Economic Development Commission are actively working with the Rail Division of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to evaluate the costs associated with reconnecting the existing short line rail service that currently ends in Whiteville, North Carolina to its former connection point in Brunswick County near Malmo, North Carolina. This reconnection would give a direct connection to the Port of Wilmington for industries located in Marion County and Horry County in South Carolina, as well as to Columbus County and Western Brunswick County industries in North Carolina. Efficiency, however, will still be critical to all rail users in the region. Moving freight into and out of the Port of Wilmington by rail in an efficient manner is extremely important, and this is where the rail realignment efforts underway by the City of Wilmington can have a significant impact upon economic development for the entire region.

We fully support the City of Wilmington's effort to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project can move forward to benefit all of Southeastern NC, and ultimately, our neighbors in northeastern South Carolina. Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you have any questions. We look forward to seeing this important project move forward!

My Best Regards,

Gary A. Lanier, Ed.D., Director



Serving Local Government in:

Brunswick
County
Bald Head Island
Belville
Boiling Spring Lakes
Bolivia
Calabash
Carolina Shores
Caswell Beach
Holden Beach
Leland
Navassa

Ocean Isle Beach Sandy Creek Shallotte Southport St. James

Northwest Oak Island

Sunset Beach Varnamtown

County

Boardman
Bolton
Brunswick
Cerro Gordo
Chadbourn
Fair Bluff
Lake Waccamaw
Sandyfield
Tabor City
Whiteville

New Hanover County

Carolina Beach Kure Beach Wilmington Wrightsville Beach

> Pender County

Atkinson Burgaw St. Helena Surf City Topsail Beach Wallace Watha

Affiliate Members Holly Ridge North Topsail Beach Wallace

PROGRESS COPERATION September 5, 2018

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE Washington, DC 20509 ATTN: Office of Program Delivery

Re: Wilmington Rail Realignment Project Application for CRISI Grant

Dear Sir or Madam:

The purpose of this letter is to support the efforts of the City of Wilmington, NC to obtain a CRISI grant from the FRA. The grant will assist in the relocation of the freight use of the Wilmington beltline rail, which is owned and operated by CSX, from the center of the congested heart of the City to the west side of the Cape Fear River through uninhabited areas to provide a direct access from the Port of Wilmington to the CSX Davis Rail Yard at Navassa, NC. The new route will increase efficiency and save time between the Davis Rail Yard and the Port of Wilmington. The relocation will also allow for a re-purpose of the right-of-way for public use.

Future near term and long-term growth in shipping, train length and speed, and general traffic congestion, including trucks, within the City will necessitate consideration of solutions to the benefit of the Port of Wilmington, CSX and public health and safety. Having a direct route into the Port will be especially important should there be catastrophic events that stop train traffic through the City of Wilmington at a time when it may be most critical to reach the Port.

The Cape Fear Council of Governments would like to see the City of Wilmington's effort be successful to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project for SE North Carolina can move forward.

Respectfully,

Chris May Executive Director

1480 Harbour Drive, Wilmington, NC 28401-7776 * (910) 395-4553 * (910) 395-2684 Fax www.capefearcog.org



September 5, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao Secretary of Transportation U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing in support of the City of Wilmington's **Rail Realignment Project** grant application for the United States Department of
Transportation's Federal Rail Administration Consolidated Rail
Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.

The rail realignment project will create a new freight rail corridor to re-route rail traffic away from the City of Wilmington and create a more direct route for freight rail to CSX's main rail yard in Brunswick County, NC. This project will improve freight rail safety, efficiency, and reliability while also providing significant safety improvements to private vehicles that currently cross the existing rail track within the City limits.

The project will enhance the connection between the Port of Wilmington and freight customers in the Southeast by providing a more direct access to the Port. Other additional benefits will include local community development and investment, and regional economic development opportunities.

This CRISI application aligns with key local and regional objectives including improved economic vitality by leveraging federal funding and improved rail safety.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Cozza

Executive Director



NEW HANOVER COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

230 Government Center Drive, Suite 175, Wilmington, NC 28403 P: (910) 798-7149 | F: (910) 798-7145 | NHCgov.com

Jonathan Barfield, Jr., Chairman | Julia Olson-Boseman, Vice-Chairwoman

Patricia Kusek, Commissioner | Woody White, Commissioner | Rob Zapple, Commissioner

August 13, 2019

Bobby Lewis, Chief Operating Officer N.C. Department of Transportation 1501 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

Dear Mr. Lewis:

On behalf of the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, I write in support of the City of Wilmington's efforts to realign rail service around the city. New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington are experiencing tremendous growth, with expectations that our population will increase by as much as 50 percent over the next two decades. In addition, the Port of Wilmington is continuing to expand to accommodate more cargo and container traffic that relies on truck and rail service to move goods.

While that growth brings economic prosperity to the region, it necessarily requires us to plan for transportation needs into the future. Currently, rail service into and out of the port crosses more than 30 roads through the heart of the City of Wilmington. Many of these roads carry tens of thousands of vehicles per day, as the rail lines cross through some of the densest parts of the city.

This already results in traffic delays, but with the port's continued growth comes the expectation that future trains could be twice as long – as much as 10,000 feet in length. This could exacerbate already lengthy traffic delays.

The City of Wilmington is spearheading a plan that would take rail traffic across the Cape Fear River and through primarily undeveloped portions of Brunswick County. This could result not only in far more efficient and faster service for cargo and containers, but provide for a better flow of traffic through Wilmington and New Hanover County.

We support the City of Wilmington's efforts in this endeavor.

Jonathan Barrield Jr.

Chairman /

cc: Karen Collette, Division Engineer



NEW HANOVER COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

230 Government Center Drive, Suite 175, Wilmington, NC 28403 P: (910) 798-7149 | F: (910) 798-7145 | NHCgov.com

Woody White, Chairman | Skip Watkins, Vice-Chairman | Jonathan Barfield, Jr., Commissioner | Patricia Kusek, Commissioner | Rob Zapple, Commissioner

August 16, 2018

US Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration Attn: Office of Program Delivery 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE Washington, SC 20509

RE: Support for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project and City of Wilmington's Application for a CRISI Grant

Dear Sir or Madam:

New Hanover County fully supports the effort of the City of Wilmington to realign the existing heavy rail corridor that currently runs through the City of Wilmington to a safer, more direct access to the Port of Wilmington.

The purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to relocate the freight use of the Wilmington beltline rail from the center of the densely populated heart of the City of Wilmington to the west side of the Cape Fear River through uninhabited areas to provide a direct access from the Port of Wilmington to the CSX Davis Rail Yard at Navassa, NC. The new route provides significant new economic development opportunities for shipping from surrounding counties and the Southeast U.S. to the Port of Wilmington.

The project benefits the planned growth of the Port of Wilmington, enhancing capacity and opportunity for businesses using the river and rail. It should add to the mutual efficiency of the Port and CSX.

As the county where the NC State Port of Wilmington is located, we see the track relocation as an improvement in traffic congestion, safety, air quality and faster access to the Port. The project has wide-ranging support throughout the southeastern NC region and furthers New Hanover County's interest in regional economic development.

The project also supports the efforts of New Hanover County to add water and sewer services to the US Highway 421 industrial corridor to increase jobs and business on the west side of the Cape Fear River.

We hope that the Federal Railroad Administration will award the grant to the City of Wilmington through its Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) program. The award will contribute to the successful local efforts to move the project forward expeditiously.

Sincerely,

Woody White Chairman





Brunswick County Board of Commissioners ACTION AGENDA ITEM January 21, 2020

Action Item # V. - 2.

From: Andrea White Administration - Resolution in Support of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

Issue/Action Requested:

Request that the Board of Commissioners approve a resolution supporting the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project.

Background/Purpose of Request:

On June 18, 2018, the Board of Commissioners approved a letter of support for the City of Wilmington's application for a grant from the Federal Railroad Administration for their Rail Realignment Project. In June 2019, the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds under the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement grant program. The NCDOT's Board of Transportation approved \$250,000 in matching funds in October 2019, with an additional \$250,000 in matching funding expected in the subsequent fiscal year.

The City of Wilmington is now requesting that surrounding towns and counties consider a resolution supporting the Wilmington Rail Realignment project for the benefits of environmental sustainability, improved commuting times, public safety, quality of life, enhanced freight movement and economic development.

Fiscal Impact:

Reviewed By Director of Fiscal Operations

Approved By County Attorney:

Ves

County Manager's Recommendation:

Recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve a resolution supporting the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Resolution Supporting the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

Routing Sheet for Board Action

Date	of Meeting: <u>1/21/2020</u>		
Ref:	Administration - Resolution in Support of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project		
V V	Received by Clerk's Office Approved by Board of Commi	Date Received: 1/3/2020 ssioners 1/21/2020	# Originals: 2
V	Filed & Sent to Dept.	Date Sent: 1/27/7020	# Originals:\
	Received by Department	Date Received:	# Originals:
	Signature of Recipient:		

^{*}Upon completion of this routing sheet, please make a copy for your records and interoffice this routing sheet to Jared Galloway in the Clerk's Office*

County of Brunswick Office of the County Commissioners



RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT FOR THE BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, IMPROVED COMMUTING TIMES, PUBLIC SAFETY, QUALITY OF LIFE, ENHANCED FREIGHT MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has worked with local, regional, state, federal and private partners in the conceptualization of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2017 Wilmington City Council accepted the Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study which found no fatal flaws to the project, and supported continued development of the project; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2019 the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds under the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Board of Transportation approved during their October 2019 meeting \$250,000 in matching funds, with an additional \$250,000 in matching funding expected in the subsequent fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington is expected to commence work pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in the first half of 2020; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project promotes environmental sustainability in nearby communities along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Rail Realignment project would provide new options for the movement of goods while also enhancing mobility and public safety for the region; and

WHEREAS, the improvements associated with the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project will stimulate regional investment and economic development opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners supports the furtherance of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to provide the region of southeast North Carolina with a solid foundation for transportation on which growth and future prosperity can be built.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County of Brunswick will explore the potential for future collaboration and partnership with the City of Wilmington on the Rail Realignment Project.

This the 21st day of January, 2020.

Frank Williams, Chair

Brunswick County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Andrea White, NCCCC

Clerk to the Board

End

Of

Original

County of Brunswick Office of the County Commissioners



RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT FOR THE BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, IMPROVED COMMUTING TIMES, PUBLIC SAFETY, QUALITY OF LIFE, ENHANCED FREIGHT MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Board of Transportation approved during their October 2019 meeting \$250,000 in matching funds, with an additional \$250,000 in matching funding expected in the subsequent fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington is expected to commence work pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in the first half of 2020; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project promotes environmental sustainability in nearby communities along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Rail Realignment project would provide new options for the movement of goods while also enhancing mobility and public safety for the region; and

WHEREAS, the improvements associated with the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project will stimulate regional investment and economic development opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners supports the furtherance of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to provide the region of southeast North Carolina with a solid foundation for transportation on which growth and future prosperity can be built.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County of Brunswick will explore the potential for future collaboration and partnership with the City of Wilmington on the Rail Realignment Project.

This the 21st day of January, 2020.	
	Frank Williams, Chair Brunswick County Board of Commissioners
ATTEST:	

Andrea White, NCCCC Clerk to the Board

COUNTY OF BRUNSWICK

Mailing Address: Post Office Box 249 Bolivia, North Carolina 28422 OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BRUNSWICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
BOLIVIA, NORTH CAROLINA 28422

Telephone (910) 253-2000 (800) 442-7033 (NC) Telecopy (910) 253-2004

June 18, 2018

Ms. Laura W. Padgett Wilmington Rail Realignment Project Coordinator Post Office Box 1810 Wilmington, North Carolina 28402-1810

Dear Ms. Padgett:

cc:

This letter is in support of the City of Wilmington, North Carolina's FRA grant application for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) submitted to the Federal Department of Transportation through the Federal Railroad Administration.

Brunswick County supports the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to relocate the freight use of the Wilmington beltline rail from the center of the congested heart of the City to the west side of the Cape Fear River, through less inhabited areas, to provide a direct access from the Port of Wilmington to the CSX Davis Railyard. The new route provides significant new economic development opportunities for shipping from surrounding counties and the Southeast U.S. to the Port of Wilmington.

The removal of freight use will provide an opportunity for re-purpose of the right-of-way to alternative transportation, providing accessible, affordable housing and congestion relief. It can also provide a public transit link between the City of Wilmington and the northern part of Brunswick County, linking two more urban developed areas.

Relocating the track will eliminate the 'last-mile' delay into the Port and improve the Port's current efficient operations, improve safety of the rail line, relieve road and track conflicts, and open up freight line access to new industrial sites near the City and in nearby rural and small urban areas in four counties.

Brunswick County supports the City of Wilmington's effort to secure funding for the PE/NEPA track of the CRISI grant opportunity so this important and transformative project can move forward.

Frank Williams

Chairman

Brunswick County Board of Commissioners

Brunswick County Board of Commissioners





Resolution R20-009

Introduced By: David A. Hollis
Date: February 20, 2020

Supporting the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project for the Benefit of Environmental Sustainability, Improved Commuting Times, Public Safety, Quality of Life, Enhanced Freight Movement, and Economic Development

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has worked with local, regional, state, federal and private partners in the conceptualization of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2017, Wilmington City Council accepted the Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study which found no fatal flaws to the project, and supported continued development of the project; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2019, the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds under the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Board of Transportation approved during their October 2019 meeting \$250,000 in matching funds, with an additional, \$250,000 in matching funding expected in the subsequent fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington is expected to commence work pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in the first half of 2020; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project promotes environmental sustainability in nearby communities along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Rail Realignment project would provide new options for the movement of goods while also enhancing mobility and public safety for the region; and

WHEREAS, the improvements associated with the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project will stimulate regional investment and economic development opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Leland supports the furtherance of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to provide the region of southeast North Carolina with a solid foundation for transportation on which growth and future prosperity can be built.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Leland will explore the potential for future collaboration and partnership with the City of Wilmington on the Rail Realignment Project.

Adopted by Town Council on this 20th day of February 2020.

Brenda Bozeman, Mayor

Sabrena Reinhardt, Town Clerk





RESOLUTION BY THE BELVILLE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SUPPORTING THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT FOR THE BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, IMPROVED COMMUTING TIMES, PUBLIC SAFETY, QUALITY OF LIFE, ENHANCED FREIGHT MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has worked with local, regional, state, federal and private partners in the conceptualization of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2017 Wilmington City Council of accepted the Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study which found no fatal flaws to the project, and supported continued development of the project; and

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WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Board of Transportation approved during their October 2019 meeting \$250,000 in matching funds, with an additional \$250,000 in matching funding expected in the subsequent fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington is expected to commence work pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in the first half of 2020; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project promotes environmental sustainability in nearby communities along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Rail Realignment project would provide new options for the movement of goods while also enhancing mobility and public safety for the region; and

WHEREAS, the improvements associated with the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project will stimulate regional investment and economic development opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Belville supports the furtherance of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to provide the region of southeast North Carolina with a solid foundation for transportation on which growth and future prosperity can be built.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Belville will explore the potential for future collaboration and partnership with the City of Wilmington on the Rail Realignment Project.

SIGNED:

Mike Allen, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sharon A. Niemann, Town Clerk

ORPORATE AND A CONTROL OF SEAL OF SEAL

WILMINGTON URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION BOARD

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT FOR THE BENEFITS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, IMPROVED COMMUTING TIMES, PUBLIC SAFETY, QUALITY OF LIFE, ENHANCED FREIGHT MOVEMENT, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization provides transportation planning services for the City of Wilmington, Town of Carolina Beach, Town of Kure Beach, Town of Wrightsville Beach, Town of Belville, Town of Leland, Town of Navassa, New Hanover County, Brunswick County, Pender County, Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority and the North Carolina Board of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has worked with local, regional, state, federal, and private partners in the conceptualization of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2017 the Wilmington City Council accepted the Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study which found no fatal flaws to the project, and supported continued development of the project; and

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WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has commenced work pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act in the first half of 2020; and

WHEREAS, the development of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project promotes environmental sustainability in nearby communities along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Rail Realignment project would provide new options for the movement of goods while also enhancing mobility and public safety for the region; and

WHEREAS, the improvements associated with the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project will stimulate regional investment and economic development opportunities.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization hereby supports the furtherance of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project to provide the region of southeast North Carolina with a solid foundation for transportation on which growth and future prosperity can be built.

NOW THEREFORE, also be it resolved that the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will explore the potential for future collaboration and partnership with the City of Wilmington on the Rail Realignment Project.

ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Board on June 24, 2020.

David Piepmeyer, Chair

Mike Kozlosky, Secretary



910 341-5839 fax wilmingtonnc.gov Dial 711 TTY/Voice



August 14, 2020

Ms. Crystal Best
N. C. State Clearinghouse
Department of Administration
1301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1301

SUBJECT: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment

New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Dear Ms. Best:

The City of Wilmington, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) (Project Team), is undertaking a study to evaluate realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes a route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, public mobility, and public safety, in the region. The project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds by the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program.

The study is being conducted in phases. The first phase is a Screening Assessment that will identify feasible alternatives that could be considered. The second phase involves a more detailed Alternatives Analysis with the goal of identifying a Preferred Alternative. The third phase will be conducting an environmental review through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and preliminary engineering.

The Project is currently in the first phase, Screening Assessment. The Project Team is seeking your agency's input on the proposed project. Information provided will be used to inform the study process, evaluation and outcomes. Information regarding alternatives development, resources of concern, potential impacts, and potential permitting/approvals is appreciated. A map of the proposed Project Study Area is attached for your reference and review. If you have any recommendations on revisions to the Project Study Area, the Project Team would appreciate your input.

If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aubrey Parsley, PE (email: Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; phone: 910-341-0188). Please include the project name in all correspondence and comments.

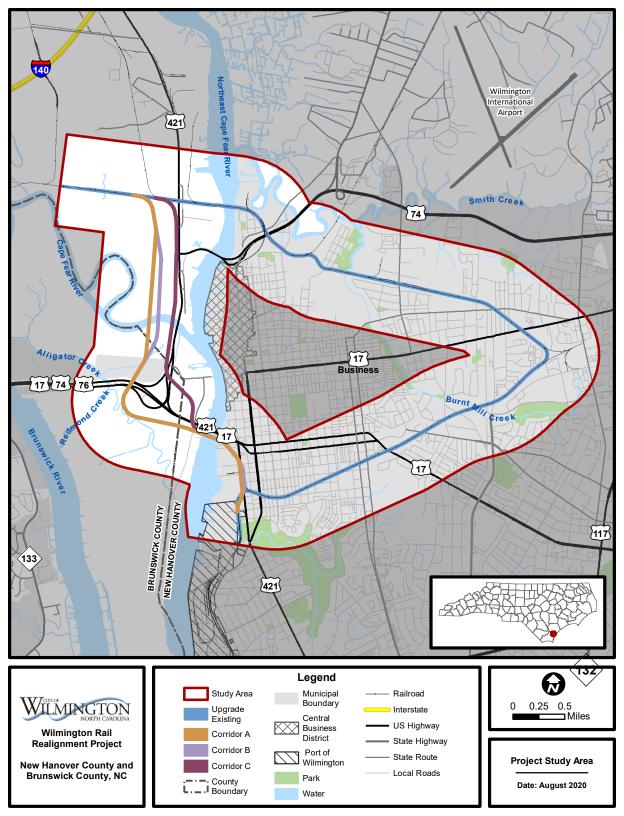
Sincerely,

Aubrey Parsley, PE City of Wilmington

Director of Rail Realignment

ang Pang

Attachments (1)



Nangle, Rachel

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 2:00 PM

To: Nangle, Rachel

Cc: Miars, Celia; Anderson, Susan

Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Fw: DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 Fw: Start of Study for the

Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Attachments: Project Study Area.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Flagged

From: Ellis, John <john_ellis@fws.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 5:36 PM

To: Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; Mann, Leigh < leigh mann@fws.gov>; fritz.rohde < fritz.rohde@noaa.gov>;

Rocco, Joanna <joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 Fw: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New

Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Joanna,

Thanks for the information. With the limited information available as of yet, the only comment I have is in regards to surveys for listed species. County lists of species are available at this website - https://www.fws.gov/raleigh/species/cntylist/nc counties.html. The Service recommends that the alternative routes should be surveyed for potential suitable habitat for listed species. If potential suitable habitat is present we recommend that surveys for appropriate species be conducted. Please keep in mind that there are survey windows for plants

- https://www.fws.gov/raleigh/pdfs/optimal survey windows for listed plants.pdf. The areas along the routes should also be surveyed for Bald eagle nests and work timed such that nesting eagles are not disturbed if the chosen alternative is near a nest.

As it appears the Cape Fear River will be crossed, we recommend that no in-water work occur during the anadromous fish spawning season which is typically Feb 15 - June 30. You should also contact National

Marine Fisheries Service for any comments they may have. I have copied Fritz Rohde, NMFS, on this message.

thanks John

Optimal Survey Windows for listed plants 2020

Title: Optimal Survey Windows for listed plants 2020 Author: dsuiter Subject: Find optimal survey windows \((seasonality\)\) and number of years a survey is valid for North Carolina's threatened, endangered, and atrisk plants.

www.fws.gov

From: Mann, Leigh < leigh mann@fws.gov > Sent: Monday, August 17, 2020 9:58 AM
To: Ellis, John < john ellis@fws.gov >

Subject: DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 Fw: [EXTERNAL] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New

Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Leigh Mann
Office Automation
USFWS Raleigh ES FO
551-F Pylon Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606

Office: 1-919-856-4520 ext. 10

Fax: 1-919-856-4556 leigh mann@fws.gov

NOTE: This email correspondence and any attachments to and from this sender is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be disclosed to third parties.

From: Wells, Emily N < emi: Monday, August 17, 2020 9:39 AM
To: Mann, Leigh leigh_mann@fws.gov>

Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties,

North Carolina

Hi Leigh,

Will you please assign a tails record/due date to this and route accordingly.

Thank you,

Emily

From: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com >

Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 2:01 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Cc: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North

Carolina

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Good afternoon,

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If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aubrey Parsley, PE (email: Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; phone: 910-341-0188). Please include the project name in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely, Joanna Rocco

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975 joanna.rocco@aecom.com

Nangle, Rachel

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 2:00 PM

To: Nangle, Rachel

Cc: Miars, Celia; Anderson, Susan

Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Fw: DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 Fw: Start of Study for the

Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

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Subject: DUE DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 Fw: [EXTERNAL] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New

Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Leigh Mann
Office Automation
USFWS Raleigh ES FO
551-F Pylon Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606

Office: 1-919-856-4520 ext. 10

Fax: 1-919-856-4556 leigh mann@fws.gov

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Emily

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Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 2:01 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Cc: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov >

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North

Carolina

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Sincerely, Joanna Rocco

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975 joanna.rocco@aecom.com

Nangle, Rachel

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 2:45 PM

To: Nangle, Rachel Cc: Niars, Celia

Subject: FW: Wilmington Rail Relocation NEPA - STB

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Flagged

From: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov>

Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 10:02 AM

To: Motsinger, Suraiya <Suraiya.Motsinger@aecom.com>; Anderson, Susan <Susan.Anderson@aecom.com>; Rocco,

Joanna <joanna.rocco@aecom.com>; Mann, Jeff <jeff.mann@aecom.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Wilmington Rail Relocation NEPA - STB

Info.

Aubrey Parsley, PE

Director of Rail Realignment 305 Chestnut Street Post Office Box 1810 Wilmington, NC 28402 (o) 910-341-0188 (c) 910-200-8382



www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail

From: Brown, Randall (FRA) [mailto:randall.brown@dot.gov]

Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 9:48 AM

To: kenneth.blodgett@stb.gov

Cc: Gatti, Jessie (FRA) < <u>Jessie.Gatti@dot.gov</u>>; Johnsen, Michael (FRA) < <u>michael.johnsen@dot.gov</u>>; Aubrey Parsley < <u>Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov</u>>; <u>dmshaeffer@transystems.com</u>; <u>bgfrost@transystems.com</u>; <u>Lee, Cynthia</u> (Volpe)

<Cynthia.Lee@dot.gov>

Subject: Wilmington Rail Relocation NEPA - STB

Ken,

Thank you for reaching out to me this morning regarding STB's interest in being a Cooperating Agency for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project NEPA. FRA welcomes your partnership and will coordinate with you and the City

throughout the process. For your reference, the City has prepared a website for the project. The City and NCDOT also prepared a comprehensive feasibility study in 2017, which essentially defined the need for the project and identified three preliminary corridor options that we expect will evolve into the Build Alternatives for NEPA review. A link to the feasibility study is posted to the website at the bottom of the page.

Michael Johnsen at FRA HQ is the primary NEPA lead for FRA on the project. He is aware of STB's interest and supports your participation. Feel free to contact him if you have any questions – michael.johnsen@dot.gov, 202-450-8540.

Project Website: https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/departments/city-manager/rail-realignment

Feasibility Study: https://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=11206

Regards,

Randy Brown

Project Manager, Southeast Region FRA Office of Railroad Policy and Development 202-309-4065 randall.brown@dot.gov

E-mail correspondence to and from this address is subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties.

Nangle, Rachel

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 9:23 AM

To: Nangle, Rachel

Cc: Anderson, Susan; Miars, Celia

Subject: FW: EPA Comments on the Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Flagged

From: Somerville, Amanetta < Somerville. Amanetta@epa.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 9:17 AM **To:** Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Cc: Kajumba, Ntale <Kajumba.Ntale@epa.gov>; Calli, Rosemary <Calli.Rosemary@epa.gov>;

Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] EPA Comments on the Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment

Dear Ms. Rocco:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the City of Wilmington and the Federal Railroad Administration start of the study request to evaluate the Wilmington Rail Realignment project to develop a route bypass of the existing freight rail route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, North Carolina. In response to your August 14, 2020 notice, the EPA has reviewed the provided information and used geospatial and environmental quality data analysis tools (please see links to online databases and tools provided at the end of this email for reference) to provide the following technical comments and recommendations:

Waters of the United States:

The proposed project will impact Eagle Island. Eagle Island is a 2,100-acre island in between the Cape Fear and Brunswick Rivers. Corridor A, Corridor B, and Corridor C alignments of the proposed railway project will cross Eagle Island in new locations potentially impacting the various creeks and navigation channels cutting through the island's marshes. Based on GIS analysis of the National Wetlands Inventory, all four of the proposed railway alternatives are located near estuarine, marine, and freshwater emergent wetlands, some of which are conservation and trust lands. Additionally, the proposed project will cross three jurisdictional waterways, the Northeast Cape Fear River, Cape Fear River, and Alligator Creek. The EPA recommends that any contractor working on-site should use best management practices and should address any potential impacts to off-site streams and waterways. The EPA also recommends that site grading, excavation, and construction plans should include implementable measures to prevent erosion and sediment runoff from the project site during and after construction.

Consistent with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the project should avoid and minimize, to the maximum extent practicable, placement of fill into jurisdictional waters of the United States, which include wetlands and streams. Please

note that jurisdictional Waters of the United States can differ from Waters of the State subject to the State of North Carolina laws and regulations, which are the basis for any County issued permits. Any fill material in Waters of the United States will potentially require permit authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Any wetland or stream losses allowed under a COE Section 404 permit should be mitigated by the applicant. This mitigation can be designed and implemented by the applicant or procured by the purchase of wetland and/or stream mitigation credits from a commercial wetland mitigation bank.

Environmental Justice

The Upgrade Existing project alternative of the proposed project will occur in an area that has a statistically significant minority and low-income population. Consistent with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-executive-order-12898-federal-actions-address-environmental-justice), the EPA recommends identifying residents in the project corridor that belong to these special populations and determining if they will be disproportionately and adversely effected by the proposed railway improvements. We recommend that New Hanover County keep the local community informed and involved as the project moves forward.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to submit scoping comments, if there are any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone at 404-562-9025 or via email at somerville.amanetta@epa.gov.

Links to online resources used in this analysis:

- NEPAssist: https://www.epa.gov/nepa/nepassist
- EJSCREEN: https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen
- EPA ATTAINS, Water Quality Assessment and TMDL Information: https://ofmpub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_index.home
- FWS Wetlands Mapper: https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html

Amanetta Somerville

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 61 Forsyth Street SW. Atlanta, Ga 30303 National Environmental Policy Act Section Strategic Programs Office

Phone: 404-562-9025

E-mail: somerville.amanetta@epa.gov



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lyn Hardison, Environmental Assistance Coordinator

Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach, DENR

FROM: Travis Wilson, Highway Project Coordinator

and

Maria T. Dunn, Coastal Coordinator Habitat Conservation Division

DATE: September 14, 2020

SUBJECT: Response to the start of study notification regarding fish and wildlife concerns for

the proposed Wilmington Rail Realignment in New Hanover and Brunswick

Counties North Carolina.

SCH # 21-0712

This memorandum responds to a request for our concerns regarding impacts on fish and wildlife resources resulting from the subject project. Biologists on the staff of the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) have reviewed the proposed improvements. Our comments are provided in accordance with certain provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

There are numerous natural resources in the project area that should be considered during the proposed study and alternative analysis. The following include resources that should be detailed after the Screening Assessment:

• The Cape Fear River and the Northeast Cape Fear River in this area are designated as Primary Nursery Areas (PNAs) by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF). They are also designated as Critical Habitat for the Atlantic sturgeon by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). These areas

provide essential habitat for a multitude of aquatic species. Any in water work will need to minimize potential impacts to those species and will likely by subject to an in-water work moratorium.

- The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust has a conservation easement on a parcel south of the existing rail line and east of Hwy 421. Activities within conservation easements are extremely limited to avoid impacts to important environmental areas.
- South of the Coastal Land Trust property referenced above is a compensatory
 mitigation site called the McIntyre Property. Activities within compensatory
 mitigation sites are extremely limited to avoid impacts to important to
 environmental resources and areas that serve as mitigated areas or mitigation
 opportunities.
- The Eagle Island Natural Area is a Dedicated Nature Preserve (DNP) and is located on both sides of US 17/74/76 within the study area.
- Alligator Creek is in the southeast portion of the study area. This portion of
 Alligator Creek is currently proposed as a potential mitigation site referenced by
 several projects in the area to mitigate unavoidable impacts in the Cape Fear
 system.

Alternatives should be developed during the second phase to avoid or minimize impacts to these resources. To help further facilitate document preparation and the review process, our general informational needs are outlined below:

1. Description of fishery and wildlife resources within the project area, including a listing of federally or state designated threatened, endangered, or special concern species. Potential borrow areas to be used for project construction should be included in the inventories. A listing of designated plant species can be developed through consultation with:

NC Natural Heritage Program
Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources
1601 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1601.

www.ncnhp.org
and
NCDA Plant Conservation Program
P. O. Box 27647
Raleigh, N. C. 27611
(919) 733-3610

- 2. Description of any streams or wetlands affected by the project, the need for channelizing or relocating portions of streams crossed and the extent of such activities.
- 3. Cover type maps showing wetland acreages impacted by the project. Wetland acreages should include all project-related areas that may undergo hydrologic change as a result of ditching, other drainage, or filling for project construction. Wetland identification may be accomplished through coordination with the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE). If the COE is not consulted, the person delineating wetlands should be identified and criteria listed.
- 4. Cover type maps showing acreages of upland wildlife habitat impacted by the proposed project. Potential borrow sites should be included.
- 5. The extent to which the project will result in loss, degradation, or fragmentation of wildlife habitat (wetlands or uplands).
- 6. Mitigation for avoiding, minimizing or compensating for direct and indirect degradation in habitat quality as well as quantitative losses.
- 7. A cumulative impact assessment section which analyzes the environmental effects of highway construction and quantifies the contribution of this individual project to environmental degradation.
- 8. A discussion of the probable impacts on natural resources which will result from secondary development facilitated by the improved road access.
- 9. If construction of this facility is to be coordinated with other state, municipal, or private development projects, a description of these projects should be included in the environmental document, and all project sponsors should be identified.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input in the early planning stages for this project. If we can further assist your office, please contact staff at either travis.wilson@ncwildlife.org or <a href="mailto:

Rocco, Joanna

From: Hoops, George (FHWA) < George.Hoops@dot.gov>

Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 4:08 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover

and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

I have no comments on the documentation provided.

From: Rocco, Joanna [mailto:joanna.rocco@aecom.com]

Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 1:29 PM

To: Hoops, George (FHWA) < George. Hoops@dot.gov>

Subject: RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Department of Transportation (DOT). Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi George,

I'm following up with folks on the start of study letter for the Wilmington Rail Realignment. Did you have any further comments or concerns with regard to the project?

Thanks, Joanna

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP AECOM Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179

Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 2:02 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Cc: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov>

Subject: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Good afternoon,

The City of Wilmington, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) (Project Team), is undertaking a study to evaluate realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes a route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, public mobility, and public safety, in the region. The project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds by the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program.

The study is being conducted in phases. The first phase is a Screening Assessment that will identify feasible alternatives that could be considered. The second phase involves a more detailed Alternatives Analysis with the goal of identifying a Preferred Alternative. The third phase will be conducting an environmental review through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and preliminary engineering.

The Project is currently in the first phase, Screening Assessment. The Project Team is seeking your agency's input on the proposed project. Information provided will be used to inform the study process, evaluation and outcomes. Information regarding alternatives development, resources of concern, potential impacts, and potential permitting/approvals is appreciated. A map of the proposed Project Study Area is attached for your reference and review. If you have any recommendations on revisions to the Project Study Area, the Project Team would appreciate your input.

If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aubrey Parsley, PE (email: Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; phone: 910-341-0188). Please include the project name in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely, Joanna Rocco

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975 joanna.rocco@aecom.com

AECOM

701 Corporate Center Drive Suite 475 Raleigh, NC 27607, USA T +1-919-854-6200 aecom.com

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Rocco, Joanna

From: Megan Matheny < mmatheny@wavetransit.com>

Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 5:55 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna

Cc: Aubrey Parsley; Motsinger, Suraiya

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover

and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Good afternoon:

Thank you for your outreach efforts and for providing further insight as to the status of the Rail Realignment Study. Members of our team, myself included, have been following closely and are excited about the progression of the project. Will you confirm the date in which feedback is to be submitted? Thank you for confirming.

Aubrey, it was a please speaking with you last week. I look forward to an opportunity for a more formal, in person introduction.

Suraiya, thank you for connecting. As always, it was great catching up with you. Congratulations to AECOM for being selected to complete the NEPA study. I know you and your team are excited and will do an amazing job!

Have a wonderful evening!

Regards,

Megan Matheny

Interim Director

Cape Fear Public Transportation Authority-Wave Transit

Office: (910) 202-2057 Fax: (910) 343-8317 mmatheny@wavetransit.com www.wavetransit.com

Like and Follow Wave Transit on social media!





From: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 1:01 PM

To: Megan Matheny <mmatheny@wavetransit.com>

Cc: Aubrey Parsley <Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov>; Motsinger, Suraiya <Suraiya.Motsinger@aecom.com> **Subject:** Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Good afternoon,

The City of Wilmington, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) (Project Team), is undertaking a study to evaluate realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes a route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, public mobility, and public safety, in the region. The project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million

in grant funds by the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program.

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If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aubrey Parsley, PE (email: Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; phone: 910-341-0188). Please include the project name in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely, Joanna Rocco

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP
Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager
Transportation
Office: 919-239-7179
Mobile: 919-607-7975
joanna.rocco@aecom.com

AECOM

701 Corporate Center Drive Suite 475 Raleigh, NC 27607, USA T +1-919-854-6200 aecom.com

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Rocco, Joanna

From: Sanders, Mickey D CIV <Mickey.D.Sanders2@uscq.mil>

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 1:51 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna

Cc: Pitts, Hal R CIV; Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover

and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Joanna,

Thank you for providing the additional information. Since one of the alternatives may involve a new bridge construction, we will send a permit required letter to the bridge owner. Can you please email me the bridge owner's point of contact information (name/title/mailing address). It's not definitive that the new bridge(s) will require a permit, it may fall into the advanced approval category. We can't make a firm decision until we have the details. The permit required letter will prompt the bridge owner to start the navigation and NEPA process while they explore the different alternatives. You will be copied on all correspondence from this office to the bridge owner. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you, Mickey

From: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com>

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 1:24 PM

To: Sanders, Mickey D CIV < Mickey. D. Sanders 2@uscg.mil>

Cc: Pitts, Hal R CIV < Hal.R.Pitts@uscg.mil>; Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick

counties, North Carolina

Aubrey reminded me of something that would be good to clarify – the build options actually would contain TWO new bridge crossings of the Cape Fear River. You can see on the attached project study area map, one would be just west of the fork between the Cape Fear and NE Cape Fear, and the other just south of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.

Thanks, Joanna

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP AECOM Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179

Mobile: 919-607-7975

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 10:40 AM

To: Sanders, Mickey D CIV < Mickey. D. Sanders 2@uscg.mil>

Cc: Pitts, Hal R CIV <Hal.R.Pitts@uscg.mil>; Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

Subject: RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Hi Mickey,

Thanks for your response. We're currently looking at both new location alternatives (with a new bridge crossing of the Cape Fear River) as well as an upgrade existing alternative that would not include any new structures over navigable waters. We're currently preparing an initial screening report to evaluate corridor options and can share mapping from that once available if that is helpful.

Thanks, Joanna

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP AECOM Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager Transportation Office: 919-239-7179

Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975

From: Sanders, Mickey D CIV < Mickey. D. Sanders 2@uscg.mil >

Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 1:18 PM **To:** Rocco, Joanna < <u>joanna.rocco@aecom.com</u>>

Cc: Pitts, Hal R CIV < Hal.R.Pitts@uscg.mil >; Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties,

North Carolina

Good afternoon Ms. Rocco,

You may need a Coast Bridge (CG) permit if you plan to replace/modify or build a new bridge in a different location. In addition, you may not need a CG Bridge Permit if you only plan to maintenance/rehab/repair the bridge. We can't make a solid recommendation until we know for certain what your plan is for the bridges in the project area.

Thank you, Mickey

From: Pitts, Hal R CIV < Hal.R.Pitts@uscg.mil > Sent: Monday, August 24, 2020 9:38 AM

To: Whitfield, Traci G CIV < Traci.G. Whitfield@uscg.mil >

Cc: Sanders, Mickey D CIV < Mickey.D.Sanders2@uscg.mil >; joanna.rocco@aecom.com

Subject: FW: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties, North Carolina

Importance: High

Ms. Whitfield,

Please assign this project () to Mr. .

Respectfully,

Mr. Hal R. Pitts Chief, Bridge Branch Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street Portsmouth, VA 23704 (757) 398-6222 Hal.R.Pitts@uscg.mil

For Ms. Rocco – The project officer will contact you when prepared to process this request. Please do not follow up on this request with the project officer earlier than 30 days from the date of this email.

From: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com >

Sent: Friday, August 14, 2020 2:02 PM

To: Rocco, Joanna < joanna.rocco@aecom.com >

Cc: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov>

Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment - New Hanover and Brunswick counties,

North Carolina

Good afternoon,

The City of Wilmington, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) (Project Team), is undertaking a study to evaluate realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes a route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, public mobility, and public safety, in the region. The project was announced as a recipient of up to \$2 million in grant funds by the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program.

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If you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Aubrey Parsley, PE (email: Aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov; phone: 910-341-0188). Please include the project name in all correspondence and comments.

Sincerely, Joanna Rocco

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP
Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager
Transportation
Office: 919-239-7179
Mobile: 919-607-7975
joanna.rocco@aecom.com

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WILMINGTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS 69 DARLINGTON AVENUE WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28403-1343

September 22, 2020

Regulatory Division

Action ID No. SAW-2016-00594 (New Hanover/Brunswick Counties)

City of Wilmington Rail Realignment

Ms. Joanna Rocco Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager AECOM 701 Corporate Center Drive Suite 475 Raleigh, NC 27607

Dear Ms. Rocco:

Reference is made to your email request of August 14, 2020, regarding the screening assessment for a study referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project) which proposes to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The letter requested initial Corps input regarding the project. Please also reference our September 10, 2020 teleconference which included Mr. Aubrey Parsley of the City of Wilmington and other AECOM and Corps staff members.

We have reviewed the subject documents and determined that, based upon a review of the information provided and available maps, the construction of this project will likely have impact to streams and/or wetlands and navigable waters subject to both Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbor Act permitting authority, respectively, depending on the scope of the project. Please be aware that any discharge of excavated or fill material into waters of the United States and/or any activities within navigable waters of the United States would require Department of the Army (DA) permit authorization. The type of DA authorization required (i.e., general or individual permit) will be determined by the location, type, and extent of jurisdictional area impacted by the project, and by the project design and construction limits.

A review of our database indicates that multiple jurisdictional determinations have been completed with the project study area. Until additional data is furnished which details the extent of the construction limits of the proposed project, and an onsite inspection is completed with regard to determinations of the presence of jurisdictional waters within the study area, we are unable to verify that the project will not have jurisdictional impacts, or to provide specific comments concerning DA permit

requirements or a recommendation of alternatives. To assist you with determining permitting requirements, we recommend that you perform a detailed delineation of the streams and/or wetlands present on the project site. When this information becomes available, it should be forwarded to our office for review and comment, as well as a determination of DA permit eligibility.

Based on our internal database search, the NCDOT has completed projects and studies in the area and may have delineations that comprise the majority of the current study area. These projects include P-5740 (NCDOT Rail Division), U-5731, Br008 Br#7, R-3601, U-4738, and U-5734 all currently being managed by the local NCDOT Division 3 office. It may be in your best interest to reach out to the NCDOT Division 3 office and see what they can share with your team prior to investing significant resources delineating the study area.

Additionally, the Corps searched another internal database that provides locations of resources that will require consideration under NEPA and the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines. Based on this search the following resources are expected to be within your study area; Section 408 navigation project, USACE Federal property, Wilmington Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Property, Primary Nursery Areas, Northern Long Eared Bat Range, Atlantic/Shortnose Sturgeon species, Atlantic Sturgeon Critical Habitat, NOAA Essential Fish Habitat, Anadromous Fish Spawning Areas, West Indian Manatee, and Areas of Environmental Concern under the Coastal Zone Management Act. Each of these must be addressed in the Corps permit review process.

In the State of North Carolina, a transportation project with this number of competing resources typically goes through review under the NC DOT Merger Process, a collaborative effort by the Corps and other responsible permit and resource agencies to blend the NEPA and Section 404(b)1 process. Based on our September 10th conversation, the Federal Rail Authority has indicated that Merger will not be implemented for this project. Please be advised that a project delivery team approach is encouraged such that the responsible permit and resource agencies may be engaged early and often to avoid any unresolved conflicts at the time of permit request. Once a permit application is submitted to our office for the identified applicant's preferred alternative, the Corps will issue a public notice in advance of any permit process giving agencies the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments regarding the project. These comments must be addressed in the permit process, therefore if these comments and concerns can be worked out early it will lead to a more streamline process.

The applicant is encouraged to allow the multi-discipline project delivery team to weigh in on major milestones such as Purpose and Need, Detailed Study Alternatives, and ultimately the Least Environmental Damaging Practicable Alternative. All rationale and reasoning for the elimination of alternatives stemming from the Feasibility Study should be detailed in the Environmental Assessment for this project.

Should you have any further questions for this project, please contact me at 910-251-4811

Sincerely,

SUGG.MICKEY. Digitally signed by SUGG.MICKEY.T.1229800830 Date: 2020.09.22 10:20:27 -0400'

Mickey Sugg, Chief Wilmington Regulatory Field Office

Copies Furnished (electronic):

Mr. Aubrey Parsley- City of Wilmington

Mr. Mason Herndon- NCDOT Division 3

Mr. Michael Johnsen- Federal Rail Authority

Mr. Jonathan Howell- NC Division of Coastal Management

Ms. Tara McPherson- NC Division of Coastal Management

Mr. Robb Mairs- NC Division of Water Resources

Mr. Paul Wojoski- NC Division of Water Resources



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper Secretary Susi H. Hamilton Office of Archives and History Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

October 6, 2020

Aubrey Parsley, PE Director of Rail Realignment City of Wilmington aubrey.parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov

RE: Start of Study for the Wilmington Rail Realignment, New Hanover and Brunswick Counties,

ER 19-2629

Dear Mr. Parsley:

We have received notification from the State Clearinghouse about the above-referenced undertaking and the project team's request for our agency's input on the proposed study area. Given that the current screening assessment is to evaluate the appropriateness of the study area for realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits, the study area appears appropriate.

We would note that there are numerous National Register of Historic Places-listed and eligible properties within the study area that will need to be considered under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act as planning progresses. In addition, to the National Register properties and districts, there are also several locally designated districts that are regulated by the City Historic Preservation Commission.

As you are aware, the Historic Wilmington Foundation has already expressed concern about the proposed realignment and requested that it be included in the planning. We have, therefore, copied Ms. Beth Rutledge with our comments.

There are no known archaeological sites within the proposed project area. Based on our knowledge of the area, it is unlikely that any archaeological resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by the project. We, therefore, recommend that no archaeological investigation be conducted in connection with this project.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

Sincerely,

Ramona Bartos, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Beth Rutledge, HWF cc:

Rence Gledhill-Earley

Crystal Best, SCH

rutledge@historicwilmington.org

crystal.best@doa.nc.gov

Meeting name

WRR Agency Coordination Meeting #1

Meeting date

11/12/2020 & 12/08/20

Location

Microsoft Teams

Project

Wilmington Rail Realignment

Attendees

George Hoops – FHWA Randall Brown – FRA Michael Johnsen – FRA Jessie Gatti – FRA John Winkle – FRA

Fritz Rohde – NOAA - NMFS Brian Rosegger – NOAA - NMFS Mickey Suggs – USACE

Mickey Suggs – USACE Brad Shaver – USACE Greg Currey – USACE

Amanetta Somerville – USEPA

John Ellis – USFWS

Kathryn Matthews – USFWS

Emily Wells - USFWS

Renee Gledhill-earley – SHPO
Cathy Brittingham – NC DCM
Stephen Lane – NC DCM
Kimberlee Harding NC DMF
Kathy Rawls – NC DMF
Amy Champman – NC DWR
Robb Mairs – NC DWR
Joanne Steehuis – NC DWR
Shelton Sullivan – NC DWR
Paul Wojoski – NC DWR

Maria Dunn – NC WRC Travis Wilson – NC WRC

James Bridges – NCDOT Rail Division Undrea Major – NCDOT Rail Division Eddie McFalls – NCDOT Rail Division Jason Orthner – NCDOT Rail Division Julie White – NCDOT Rail Division

Aubrey Parsley – City of Wilmington - Rail Glenn Harbeck – City of Wilmington - Planning Abby Lorenzo – City of Wilmington - Planning

Mike Kozlosky – WMPO
Stephanie Ayers – NCSPA
Tolga Cankurtaran – NCSPA
Kenneth Blodgett – STB
Susan Anderson – AECOM
Tom Hepler – AECOM
Jeff Mann – AECOM
Celia Miars – AECOM
Suraiya Motsinger – AECOM

Joanna Rocco – AECOM Nathan Ellis – WSP Tom Harris – WSP Amanda Johnson – WSP Adam Karagosian – WSP Jeff Weisner – WSP

The project team held the Wilmington Rail Realignment Agency Coordination Meeting #1 on November 12, 2020 via Microsoft Teams. The primary purpose of this meeting was to present project information and receive feedback from regulatory and other agencies on the draft Purpose and Need Statement, Project Study Area, preliminary Screening Report findings, and other information for the Proposed Wilmington Realignment Project (Project).

Aubrey Parsley began the meeting and noted the Project is not included in the NEPA/ Section 404 Merger Process; however, similar milestones and coordination efforts will occur.

Joanna Rocco completed introductions and began the meeting presentation (attached).

Discussion points from the meeting are below.

- FRA NEPA Process: It was noted the goals of the Pre-NEPA phase is to determine a locally
 preferred alternative and then move into the NEPA phase studying this alternative in detail.
- Purpose and Need of the Project:
 - The draft Purpose and Need Statement is currently under review by FRA and will be distributed to agencies for review upon approval.
 - The USACE asked for additional clarification in the difference between regional transportation mobility and improved reliability. The project team discussed improved reliability is focused on the local movements of the transportation network (i.e. fewer train movements through the city and more local travel times savings) as well as improved facilities and therefore fewer maintenance delays. Regional transportation mobility pertains to reducing the potential for freight rail operations to obstruct regional public mobility.
 - The USACE noted the needs of the project should be quantifiable.
 - The Director of Planning from the City of Wilmington asked if the Project is assessing how the rail will be used in the future for alternative transportation. It was noted this is described in the Purpose and Need statement as a potential secondary benefit to the Project; however, it is not being evaluated at this stage and is not part of the scope of the project at this time.
 - NCDOT asked if there are projections from the Port of Wilmington that this Project would increase freight movement at the Port. The Port of Wilmington noted there are other stakeholders that would benefit from the project.
 - The Port of Wilmington also noted the Wilmington Rail Improvements Project (P-5740) that proposes to upgrade several at-grade crossings and remove approximately three at-grade crossings. AECOM stated this project is discussed in the draft Purpose and Need statement and the draft Screening Report.
 - The WMPO asked if the Purpose and Need statement should include economic development as a purpose of the project. The project team discussed economic developed is included indirectly in the discussion of the draft Purpose and Need statement, however it is not identified specifically as it would be difficult to quantify. Economic development will also be discussed further in the Environmental Assessment.
 - NCDOT Rail Division asked if there was any consideration for the ultimate disposition
 of the current rail line. The project team noted this would be considered at a later
 phase in the project. The proposed action of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project
 is the realignment of the existing freight rail through the City of Wilmington.

Preliminary Screening Report:

- The Screening Report begins by completing a qualitative analysis of the feasibility study corridors developed in the 2017 Feasibility Study and determining which ones should be carried forward to the next step of the analysis. It was noted a quantitative analysis of remaining/modified/added corridors is completed in the second phase of the screening analysis.
- The USACE asked if the City of Wilmington has taken preemptive action to preserve the proposed corridors analyzed for the Project. The City of Wilmington noted the corridors to the west of the Cape Fear River are not within City Limits, however the Project is included in the City's comprehensive plan and has been taken into account with regards to current rezoning requests. The City also noted much of the new location corridors west of the Cape Fear River are on undeveloped lands that are not suitable for development. The portion of the corridors within the City of Wilmington (east of the Cape Fear River) are in densely developed areas.
- The USACE noted much of the Project Study Area has already been delineated from other projects. AECOM noted the project team is coordinating with NCDOT Division 3 to obtain existing delineation information and other pertinent information.
- USFWS asked if the project team knows how much of the proposed facility will be on structure. The project team noted it is anticipated a substantial portion of the Project will be on structure due to the floodplains, wetlands, and river crossings. When proposed hydraulic structures have been developed, the project team will coordinate with the agencies again to discuss hydraulic crossings.
- The City of Wilmington noted there is an abandoned railbed that essentially functions as a causeway to the west of US 421, west of the Cape Fear River. It was noted **Section III Option b** utilizes this element.
- The EPA asked if the Upgrade Existing Corridor was analyzed to determine if any benefits would result from this corridor. The project team noted an Upgrade Existing Corridor was studied in the Screening Report. The report analyzes the projects/improvements that are already proposed along the existing route and an initial assessment of at-grade crossings that may be converted to grade separated crossings.
- NCDOT Rail Division asked if cost estimates have been completed to analyze maintaining the existing route versus constructing a new route. The project team noted designs have not been developed far enough along for cost estimates, however, in the Screening Report the length of track, utility crossings, and high-level right-of-way relocation estimates are included. NCDOT requested more information on anticipated costs (maintenance) to the state and public. The USACE requested the project team consider cost as the USACE uses cost considerations when analyzing alternatives from a practicability standpoint, in accordance with Section 404 (b) (1) of the Clean Water Act.
- NOAA (Fritz) noted the upstream crossing of the Cape Fear River and Alligator Creek are Primary Nursery Areas (PNAs) and critical habitat for the Atlantic Sturgeon. It was noted this information is included in more detail in the Screening Report. NOAA also

- discussed past projects that received funding for damaged lands in this area and he will provide this additional information.
- SHPO noted the project team should keep in mind the slope of the proposed rail line as it crosses over the Cape Fear River as this will likely have effects on the Wilmington Historic District. It was also noted the state archaeologist has stated the Project will require an Archaeological Survey. FRA noted we are keeping this in mind as there may also be visual impacts as well as Section 4(f) triggers.
- The USACE asked about the future funding schedule for construction. It was noted this is still being put together and when there is additional information this will be discussed with the agencies.
- USFWS noted there may be bald eagle nests within the study area and an eagles permit may be needed.
- The NCWRC discussed the importance of documenting the reasons for eliminating the Upgrade Existing Corridor as the new location corridors will bisect many conservation easements and may require mitigation efforts. Additionally, NCWRC will resend their initial scoping comments.
- NCDCM noted the potential for coastal wetland impacts that should be avoided if possible and minimized to the greatest extent practicable.
- The USACE discussed the goal of the project is to satisfy NEPA and the project team should include Section 404(b)(1) guidelines and incorporate these factors that satisfy Section 404 into the screening criteria.
- The USACE noted their coordination with the USACE real estate/operations department for another project in the vicinity of their boatyard. It was suggested the project team include USACE Operations in future conversations.
- The USACE requested a call with FRA to discuss cooperating agency agreements and responsibilities.
- The draft Screening Report is currently under review by FRA and will be distributed to agencies for further review upon FRA's approval.
- A brief discussion was held regarding the approach the project team is recommending for the Alternatives Analysis, once the Purpose and Need Report and Screening Report are finalized. The approach includes preparing end-to-end alternatives with the options carried forward for further evaluation in the Screening Report. The designs of these alternatives would be refined and then be evaluated based on engineering criteria and human and natural environmental impacts. The goal of the Alternatives Analysis will be to identify the FRA Locally Preferred Alternative.
- A virtual public meeting is being held from November 16th through December 15th to solicit feedback from the public on the project's Purpose and Need and preliminary screening results. The agencies will be sent additional information on how to access this meeting.

Actions moving forward are discussed below.

• The project team will continue drafting the Purpose and Need Statement and the Screening Report incorporating comments from today's call which include:

- Ensuring needs of the project are quantifiable
- Clarification of secondary benefits including future transit use and economic development
- Better defining improved regional transportation mobility and improved reliability
- Obtaining previous wetland delineation data
- Re-evaluating the Upgrade Existing corridor and considering whether it should be carried forward for further screening
- Including Section 404.b(1) guidelines into the screening criteria
- NOAA will provide additional information regarding past projects that received funding for damaged lands within the Project Study Area.
- NCWRC will resend initial scoping comments. *Update: Comments received on 11/12/20.*
- FRA and USACE will coordinate regarding cooperating agency agreements and responsibilities.

Update:

The project team held an alternate Agency Coordination meeting with representatives from NCDOT Division 3 who were unable to attend the original meeting date on 11/12/20. The project team presented the same meeting materials. The primary purpose of this meeting was to present project information and receive feedback from NCDOT Division 3 on the draft Purpose and Need Statement, Project Study Area, preliminary Screening Report findings, and other information for the Proposed Wilmington Realignment Project (Project). NCDOT Division 3 noted the proposed interchange improvements at the intersection of the Isabella Holmes Bridge and US 17/421 (STIP Project No. U-5731). NCDOT Division 3 will provide the project team with roadway designs. The Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is not within the footprint of U-5731.

Attendees

Katie Hite – NCDOT Division 3 Chad Kimes – NCDOT Division 3 Bill Kincannon – NCDOT Division 3 David Leonard – NCDOT Division 3 Caitlin Marks – NCDOT Division 3 Aubrey Parsley – City of Wilmington Susan Anderson - AECOM
Jeff Mann – AECOM
Celia Miars – AECOM
Suraiya Motsinger – AECOM
Joanna Rocco – AECOM
Jay Watson - WSP

Attachments:

- Presentation
- Meeting Informational Packet

Wilmington Rail Realignment City of Wilmington New Hanover and Brunswick County

Agency Coordination Meeting – NCDOT Division 3 November 11, 2020 & December 8, 2020



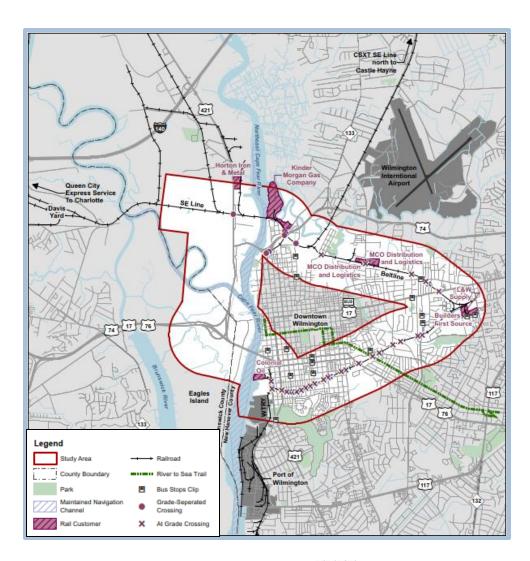
AGENDA

- Introductions and Purpose of the Meeting
- Project History
- FRA NEPA Process
- Agency Coordination and Public Involvement
- Purpose and Need Discussion
- Screening Report Discussion
- Alternatives Analysis Approach
- Next Steps

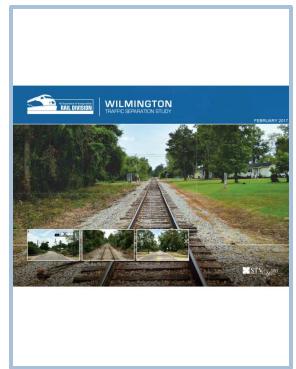


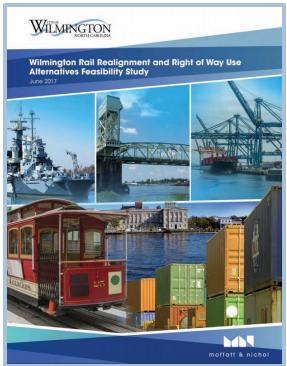
PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

- Present the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project
- Receive Feedback on:
 - Purpose and Need Statement
 - Project Study Area
 - Corridor Screening Report
- Proposed Action:
 - New route to bypass existing freight route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington
- Project Study Area











PROJECT HISTORY

- November 2014 Resolution encouraging a feasibility study
- February 2017 Wilmington Traffic Separation Study published
- June 2017 Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study published
- September 2017 Landside Rail Improvements Service the Port and Moving Trains Safely Through the Community published
- 2019 CRISI Grant awarded federal funding for preliminary engineering and NEPA studies



FRA NEPA PROCESS

Pre-NEPA

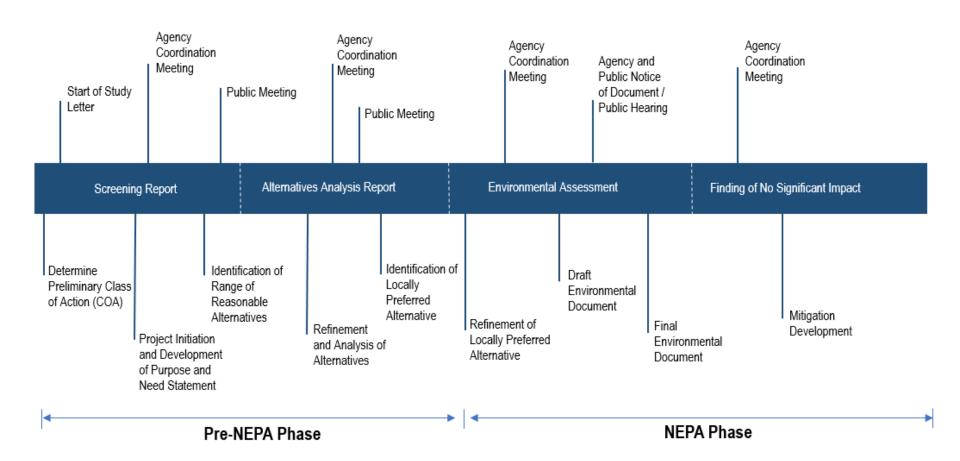
- Preliminary Class of Action (COA)
- Coordination Plan
- Draft Purpose and Need
- Corridor Screening
 - Identify preliminary range of reasonable alternatives
- Alternatives Analysis
 - Identify Locally Preferred Alternative

NEPA

- Refinement of Preferred Alternative
- Draft/Final Environmental Document
- Decision Document



AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



PURPOSE AND NEED

Purpose:

The primary purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to improve safety and regional transportation mobility, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

Needs:

- Efficient Freight Movement
- Improved Safety
- · Improved Regional Mobility

Project Benefits:

Improved Safety



Improved Regional Transportation Mobility



Improved Resiliency



Improved Reliability



Improved
Operational Fluidity





SCREENING REPORT

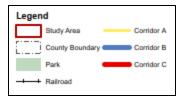
2017
Feasibility
Study
Corridors

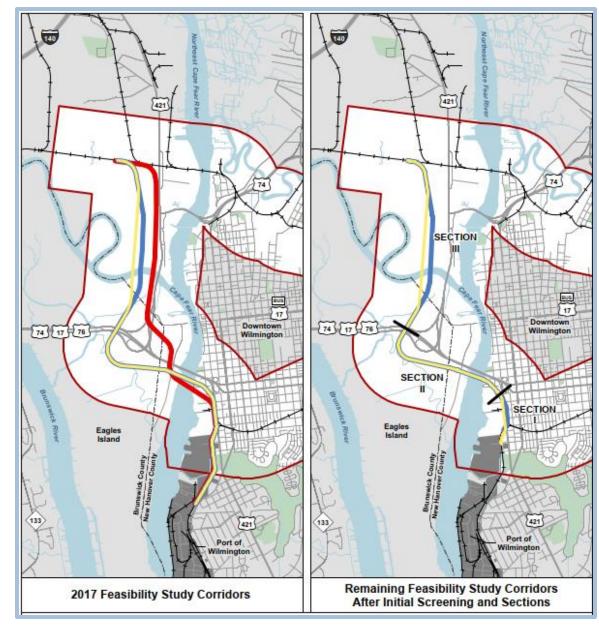
Initial Screening (Qualitative) Secondary
Screening
(Quantitative)



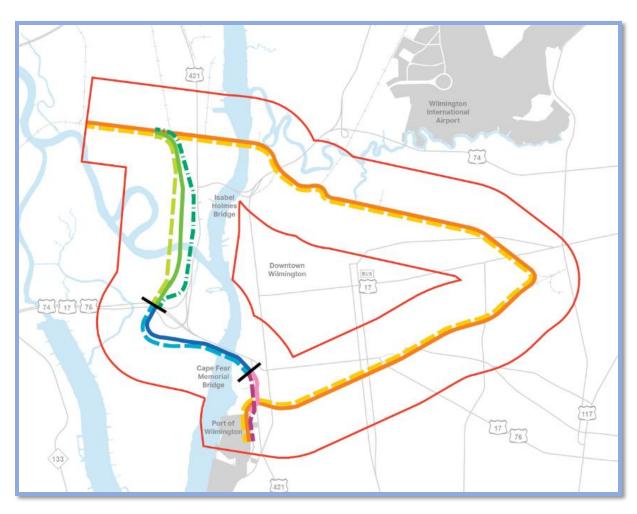
Screening Report: Initial Screening

- 2017 Feasibility Study Corridors
- No-Build
- Initial Screening Criteria
 - Ability to meet the Purpose and Need
 - Consistency with planned transportation projects
 - Operational considerations
 - Historic property considerations



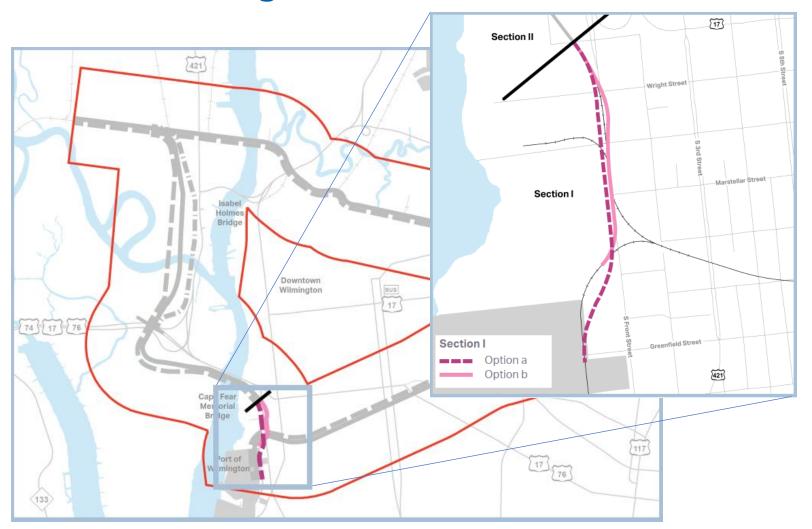


Screening Report: Secondary Screening



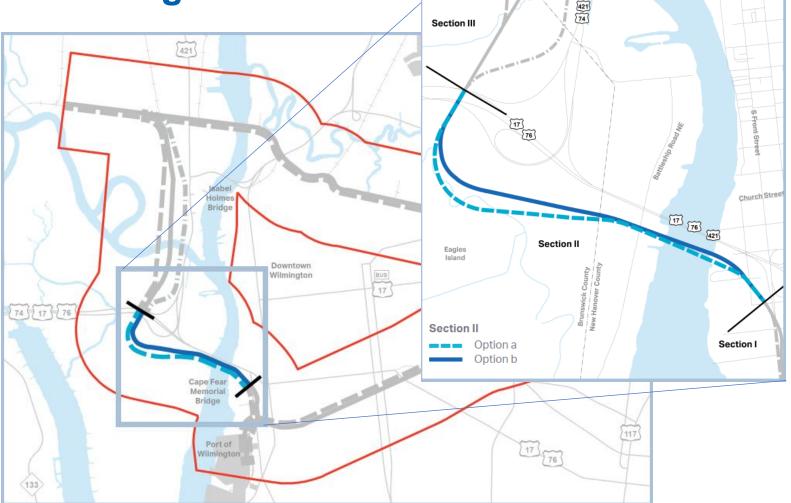
- Modifications to Feasibility
 Study Corridors
- Upgrade Existing Corridor
- Secondary Screening Criteria
 - Engineering considerations
 - Human Environment
 - Socioeconomic considerations
 - Cultural environment
 - Physical environment
 - Natural environment

Section I: S. Front Street and Port of Wilmington Area

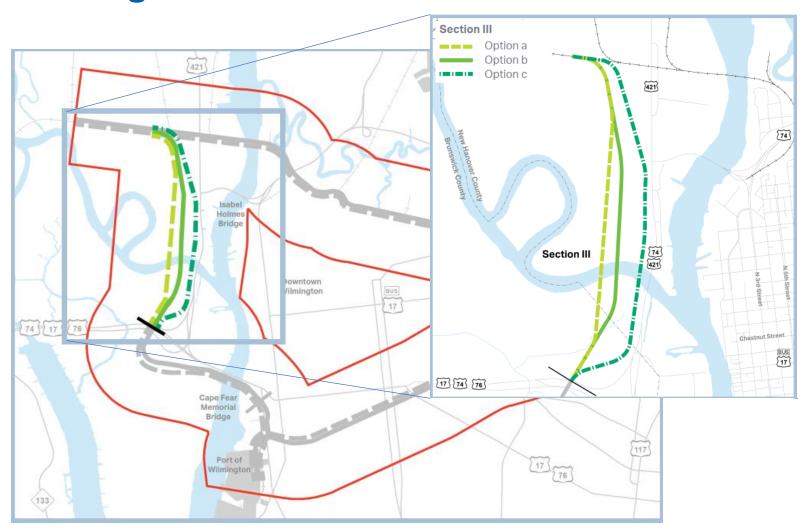


Section II: Crossing of Cape Fear River and Area South of US 17/74/421

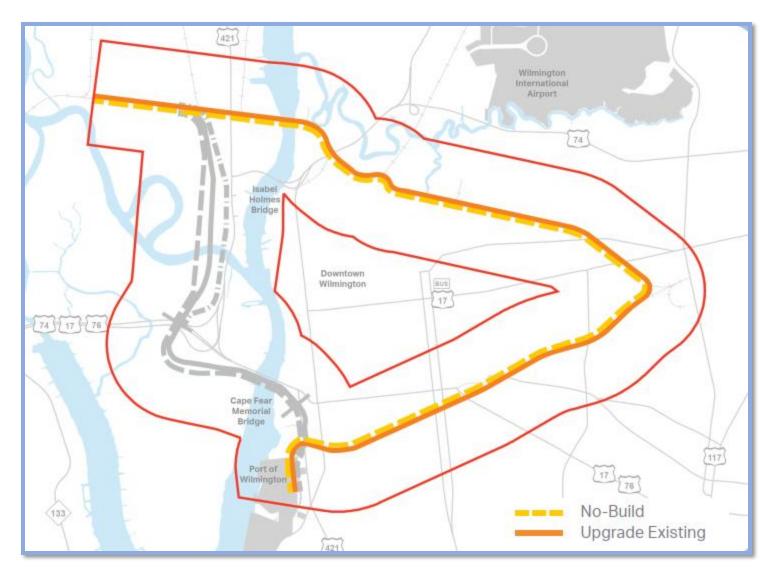
Interchange



Section III: US 17/74/76 to Existing CSXT SE Line



Upgrade Existing Corridor



Community Resources

Legend

Study Area

County Boundary

Upgrade Existing

Screening Study

College/University

Community Center

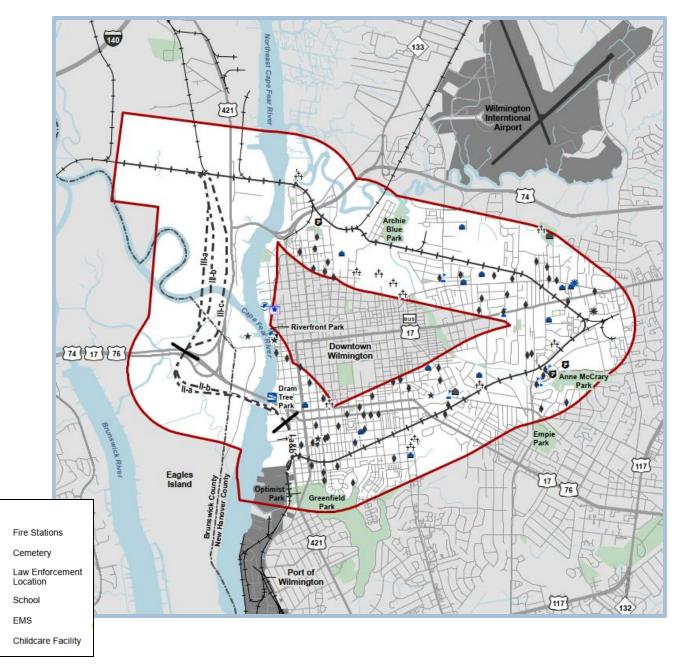
Beach Access Site

Place of Worship

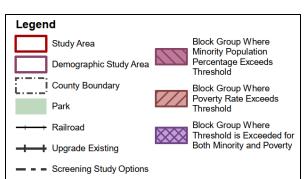
NR Historic

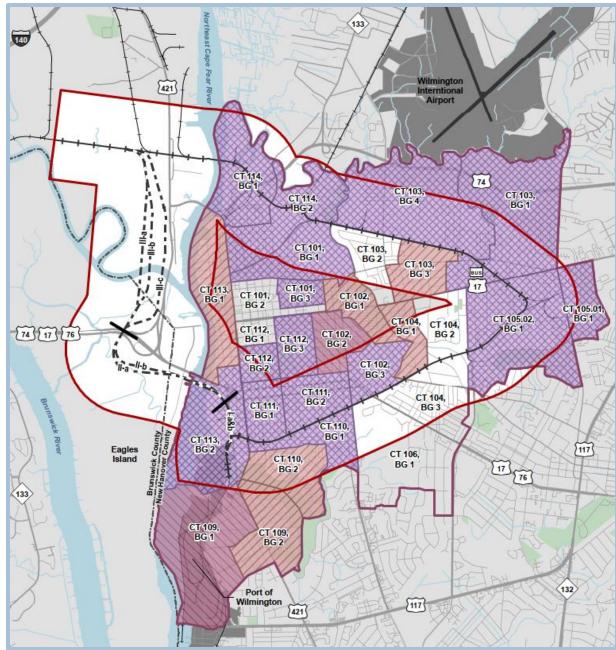
Boat Access

Resource



Minority and Low-Income Populations Exceeding County Threshold





Hazardous Materials

Legend

Study Area

County Boundary

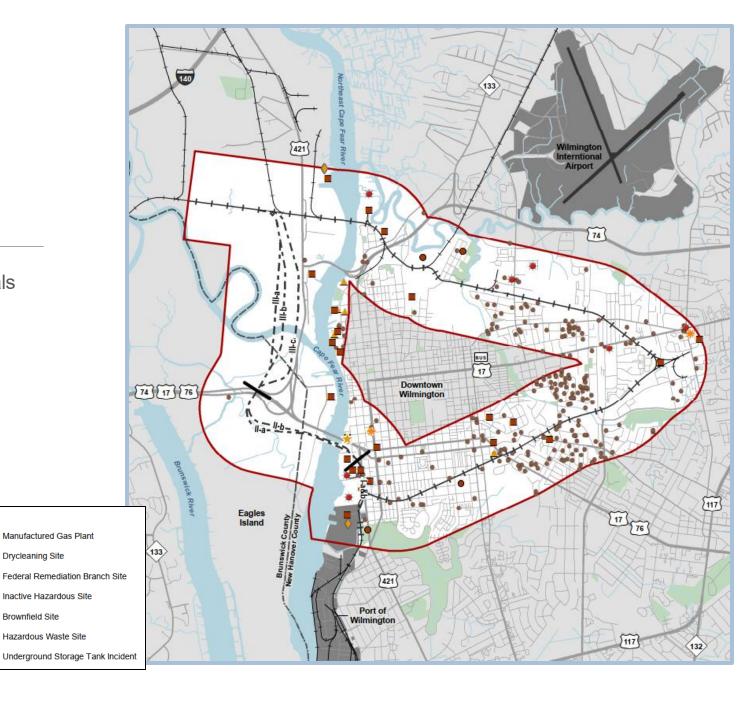
Upgrade Existing

Screening Study Options

Pre-Regulatory Landfill Site

Drycleaning Site

Brownfield Site



Historic Architectural Resources

Legend

County Boundary

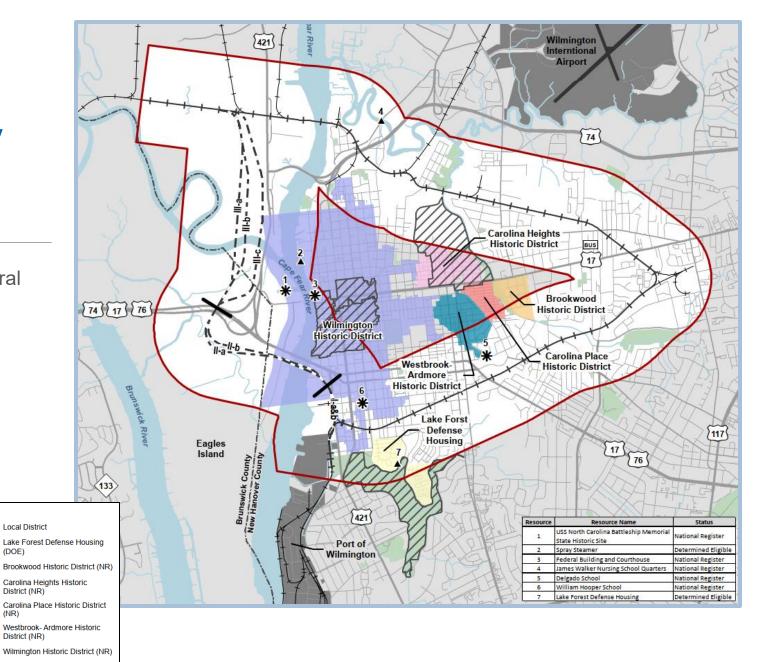
- Railroad

→ Upgrade Existing

Resource

Screening Study Options
 National Register (NR)

NR-Determined Eligible (DOE)



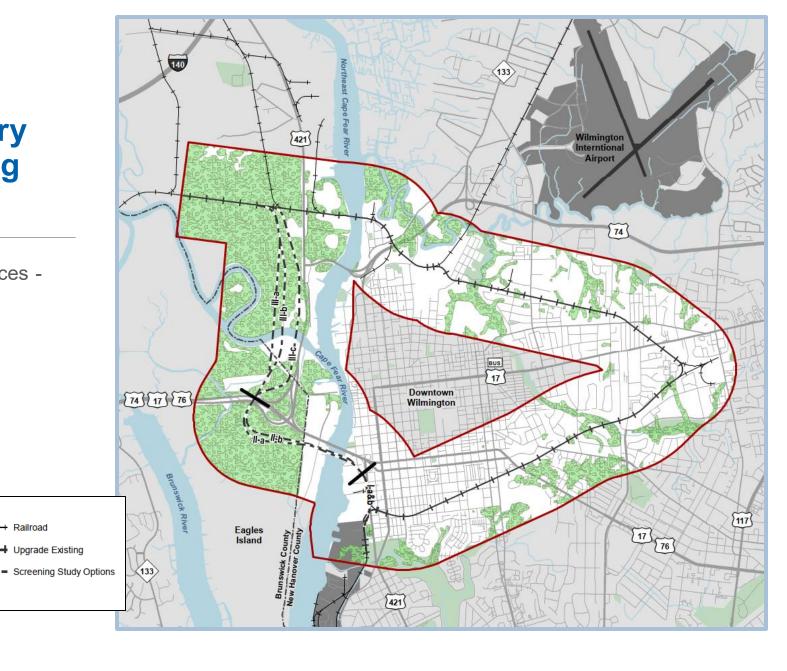
Natural Resources - Wetlands

Legend

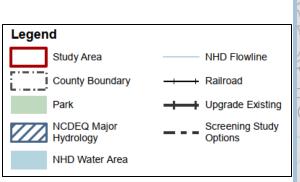
Study Area

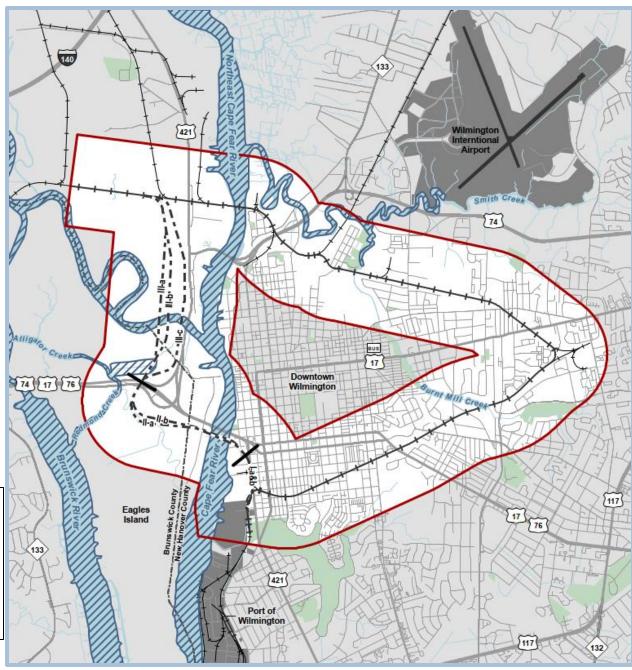
County Boundary

NCDEQ Wetlands

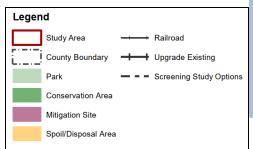


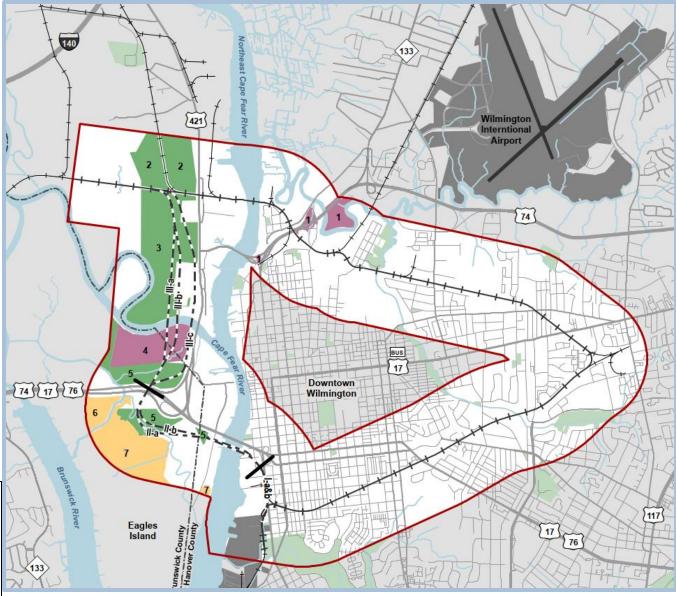
Natural Resources - Streams





Conservation Areas & Mitigation Sites





Floodplains & Floodways

Legend

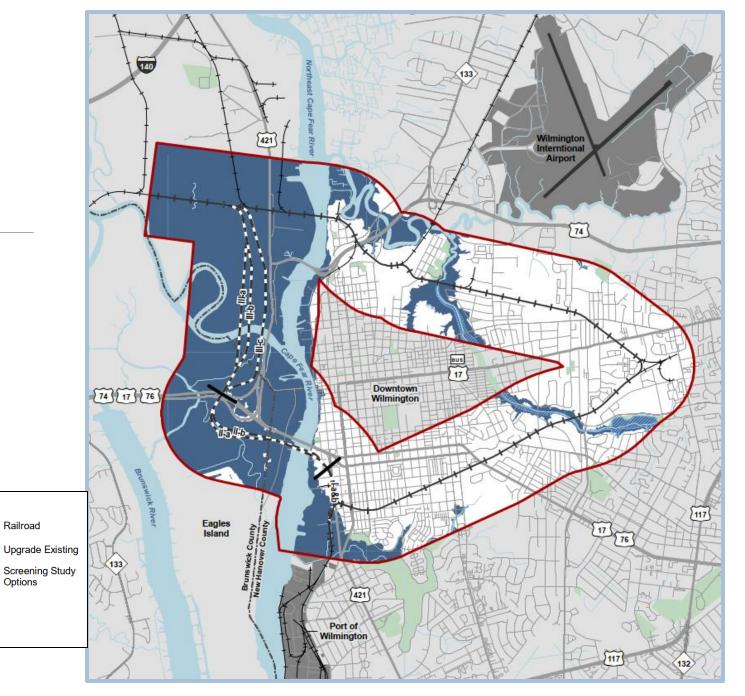
Study Area

Park

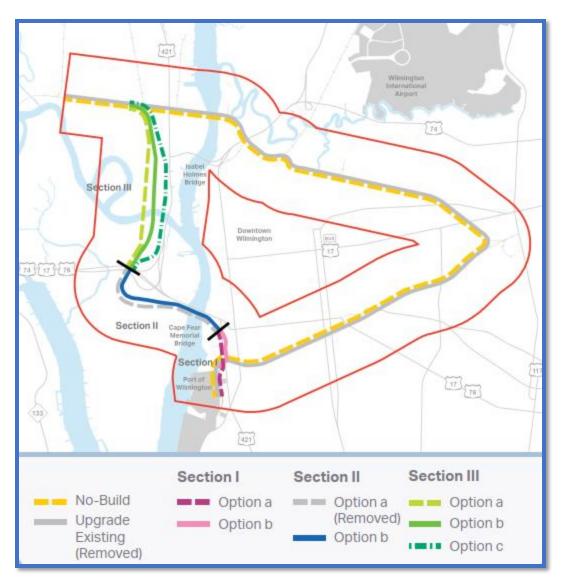
County Boundary

Regulatory Floodway

100-Year Floodplain (1% annual chance)



Findings



Retain for further study:

- Section I Options a and b
- Section II Option b
- Section III all options

Remove from further study:

- Upgrade Existing Corridor
- Section II Option a

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS APPROACH

End to end alternative combinations:

Section I

Section II

Section III

Refine Design

Corridor Impact Analysis Agency and Public Involvement

Locally Preferred
Alternative



NEXT STEPS

- Virtual Public Open House
 - November 16th December 15th
 - wrr.nepa.ai
- Alternatives Analysis
 - Refinement of Alternatives (Project Options)
 - Identification of Locally Preferred Alternative



Agency Coordination Meeting #1 Information Packet

Purpose of Meeting

The primary purpose of this meeting is to present project information and receive feedback from regulatory and other agencies on the draft Purpose and Need Statement, Project Study Area, preliminary Screening Report findings, and other information for the proposed Wilmington Rail Realignment Project.

Proposed Action

The City of Wilmington, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) (Project Team), is undertaking a study to evaluate realigning an existing CSXT freight rail line primarily within the city limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes a route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The result would create a new freight rail alignment that would improve freight rail operations, regional public mobility, and public safety, in the region.

Project Overview

Project History

CSXT serves major population centers in 23 states east of the Mississippi River, the District of Columbia and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It has access to over 70 ocean, river and lake port terminals along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, the Mississippi River, the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The existing CSXT route to the Port of Wilmington, commonly referred to the "Beltline", was originally constructed outside the developed limits of Wilmington. However, over time the City has expanded, increasing the number of at-grade crossings.

In **November 2014,** the City of Wilmington passed a resolution encouraging WMPO, NCDOT and CSXT to complete a feasibility study to evaluate the relocation of the CSXT rail line to the west of the Cape Fear River to eliminate these conflicts and provide a more direct route to the between the CSXT Davis Yard in Navassa and the Port of Wilmington.

In **2017**, the City of Wilmington completed the *Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study* (Feasibility Study) that investigated the feasibility of realigning the existing Beltline that traverses in a "V" shape through the City. The study looked at three potential options for a new freight rail corridor west of the Cape Fear River and shifting of the freight traffic to this new corridor. Moving this line would also offer the potential of repurposing the existing CSXT railroad corridor for transit and/or bicycle/pedestrian use within the City of Wilmington.

Also in **2017**, the NCDOT Rail Division along with local government partners completed a traffic separation study of 26 existing at-grade roadway-railroad crossings along a 6-mile span of the CSXT rail line in downtown Wilmington. The *Wilmington Traffic Separation Study* evaluated short, medium, and long-term improvements to at-grade rail crossings.

A related study in **2017**, *Landside Rail Improvements Service the Port and Moving Trains Safely Through the Community* evaluated the Port's forecasted demand and existing rail infrastructure, including track capacity and condition of the CSXT beltline, as well as on Port property, and concluded that the existing rail infrastructure would not sustain anticipated traffic volumes. The report further notes substantial cost savings for shippers if freight is shifted from highway truck to intermodal rail for the Wilmington to Charlotte haul.

In **2018**, the City of Wilmington prepared a grant application for the FRA's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program to fund preliminary engineering and NEPA studies for the Wilmington Rail

1

Realignment Project. The application was awarded up to \$2M in federal funding. A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) prepared in support of the CRISI application evaluated the economic impacts of the following effects of realigning the existing CSXT rail line:

- Effects on system and service performance, including freight train operating cost savings
- Effects on safety, competitiveness, reliability, trip or transit time, and resilience
- Expected crash cost savings by avoiding conflicts with trains
- Value of passenger time saved as a result of avoiding train delay
- Vehicle operating cost savings as a result of avoiding train delay
- Emissions saved as a result of avoiding train delay
- Value of improved fire truck response time
- Value of improved EMS response time
- Reliability benefit
- Train emissions savings
- Residual value
- Efficiencies from improved integration with other modes and expected benefits of a transit system in the abandoned corridor

The BCA concluded that the economic net benefit of the project would be \$546.7M to \$1.562B (in 2017 dollars).

Project Study Area

The Project Study Area encompasses approximately a one-mile area centered on the existing CSXT rail line from east of Navassa to the Port of Wilmington through downtown Wilmington along the proposed new location corridors west of the Cape Fear River (Figure 1).

FRA NEPA Process

The environmental review phase of the Project will occur in two phases, Pre-NEPA and NEPA. Pre-NEPA planning phase will include the following:

- Define a Project Study Area
- Identify a planning horizon year
- Develop a draft Purpose and Need Statement
- Develop a preliminary range of reasonable alternatives
- Review the existing and future freight rail traffic volumes, and existing environmental conditions
- Engage the public and environmental and regulatory resource agencies in the Pre-NEPA planning activities

The Pre-NEPA phase will inform the initiation of the NEPA studies for the Project and include the following deliverables:

- Purpose and Need Report
- Public Involvement Plan
- Alternatives Screening Report
- Alternatives Analysis Report

The NEPA phase will begin with the identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative to be carried forward in the Environmental Assessment.

Proposed Agency Input Milestones

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been developed to serve as a guide under applicable federal and state regulations for conducting and documenting public and agency coordination efforts in support of the Project. The objective is to involve agencies as early and as often in the decision-making process as issues or situations occur that may affect them.

Project milestones and their accompanying agency participation objectives are noted below:

- **Preliminary Class of Action (COA):** One of the initial steps in coordinating with agency partners will be to coordinate with the Federal Rail Administration to determine the COA for the project. The preliminary COA is an Environmental Assessment. At this time, this will not be undertaken as a 404 Merger Process.
- **Project Initiation and Development of Purpose and Need Statement:** Solicit feedback and concerns from federal, state, and local agencies and other agency partners on the project study area, preliminary purpose and need, and feasibility of conceptual alignments, and issue a start of study email to all agency stakeholders identified. The Project Team has drafted a preliminary Purpose and Need for consideration.
- Identification of Range of Reasonable Alternatives and Screening Criteria: Solicit feedback from agency representatives on alternatives developed and the methodology for screening and refining alternative corridors. Solicit feedback from agencies on recommended screening criteria for evaluation/comparison of alternatives. The Project Team has identified corridors to evaluate through a screening process.
- **Refinement and Analysis of Alternatives:** Solicit agency feedback to refine conceptual ideas of the preliminary range of reasonable alternatives. After the Screening Report is complete, the Project Team will refine corridors to consider environmental effects and engineering considerations.
- **Identification of Locally Preferred Alternative:** Solicit agency and public feedback and evaluate preliminary alternative impacts to select a Locally Preferred Alternative. At the end of the Alternatives Analysis, the Project Team will select a Locally Preferred Alternative to be further evaluated in the NEPA phase.
- **Environmental Document:** Solicit comments on the consistency of the environmental document with the public participation record to date and determine issues that should be investigated. The Project Team is working with FRA in the Pre-NEPA planning process; the NEPA phase commences upon completion of the Alternatives Analysis phase (estimated to start in Spring of 2021).
- **Mitigation Development:** Develop measures to mitigate substantial adverse effects in a manner preferred by the affected public and accepted by the jurisdictional local, state, and federal agencies. As planning progresses for the Project, mitigation will be considered and developed to offset unavoidable impacts in coordination with agencies.

Purpose and Need Discussion

The primary purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to improve safety and regional transportation mobility, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

The Project is expected to result in the following direct benefits:

- **Improved operational fluidity**: The Project would create a shorter freight rail route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington resulting in travel time savings and increased throughput capacity.
- **Improved reliability**: Reliability of travel downtown would improve as conflicts and delays in downtown Wilmington are reduced. Also, compared to the existing freight rail route, newer infrastructure would require less downtime for maintenance and would result in considerably less at-grade crossings to maintain.
- **Improved resiliency**: The resiliency of the sole freight rail route serving the region would be improved by providing higher river crossings and infrastructure better designed to mitigate flood related damages.

- **Improved safety**: The Project would considerably reduce the number of crossing conflicts between vehicles and freight trains on the rail route between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington, and within the city of Wilmington in general. Eliminating crossing conflicts also eliminates the risk of fire and emergency response times being inhibited by passing trains, thereby enhancing the opportunity to save lives and property.
- **Improved regional transportation mobility**: The Project would significantly reduce the potential for freight rail operations to obstruct regional public mobility. Vehicular traffic as well as the length and frequency of freight trains are expected to grow rapidly in the region.

Alternatives Screening Report Discussion

Report Methodology/Approach

The Screening Report analyzes the corridor routes studied in the 2017 Feasibility Study as well as identifies new or modified corridors developed based on the draft Purpose and Need. The results will be a set of options carried forward for more detailed study in the Alternatives Analysis.

The screening for the Project was conducted in two phases, Step One: Initial Screening and Step Two: Secondary Screening. During Step One, the project team qualitatively reviewed the corridors recommended from the Feasibility Study against a set of criteria to determine which corridors should advance for more detailed evaluation as part of the Screening Process. It also identified possible modifications for those corridors that advance. Step Two provided an additional level of screening by dividing the remaining corridors into Sections and Options and identifying where corridors can be modified. Dividing corridors into Sections, with options for each section, will allow for a more detailed analysis and flexibility to refine the alignment and reduce impacts. The result of Step Two identified a set of options for each section to be carried forward for more detailed analysis as part of the Alternatives Analysis.

Step One: Initial Screening

The 2017 Feasibility Study recommended three corridors, as described below and shown in Figure 2:

- Corridor A The corridor furthest West.
- Corridor B Central corridor that uses most of the former railway embankment.
- Corridor C This corridor closely follows the US17/74 highway corridor.

Additionally, a No-Build corridor is recommended for consideration. The No-Build corridor does not include any improvements to the existing Wilmington Beltline as part of this project but will include all other fiscally constrained transportation projects within the Project Study Area.

The initial screening criteria include the following:

- Ability to Meet Purpose and Need of Project
- Consistency with Planned Transportation Projects
- Operational Considerations
- Historic Property Considerations

Step Two: Secondary Screening

The purpose of this step is to review the corridors that advanced from the Initial Screening in Step 1 (Corridors A and B and No-Build Corridor) and modify them where necessary. An Upgrade Existing Corridor was added for consideration.

The Upgrade Existing Corridor would follow the same alignment as the No-Build Corridor from Davis Yard to the Port of Wilmington. The difference is that the existing alignment and its features would be upgraded to the extent practicable to meet the stated Purpose and Need for the project by including the conversion of at-grade

crossings to grade separated crossings, which would address automobile traffic congestion and remove/reduce safety conflicts.

After the Initial Screening, the new location corridors were divided further into three Sections from south to north in order to better understand the range of possibilities for each corridor. Section I includes Options in Wilmington along Front Street that tie to the Port facilities. Section II includes Options that cross the Cape Fear River and traverse Eagles Island south of the existing US 17/74/421 interchange. Section III includes Options after crossing US 17/74/421 that continue north to the existing railyard. The corridors under consideration in Step Two are shown on Figure 3.

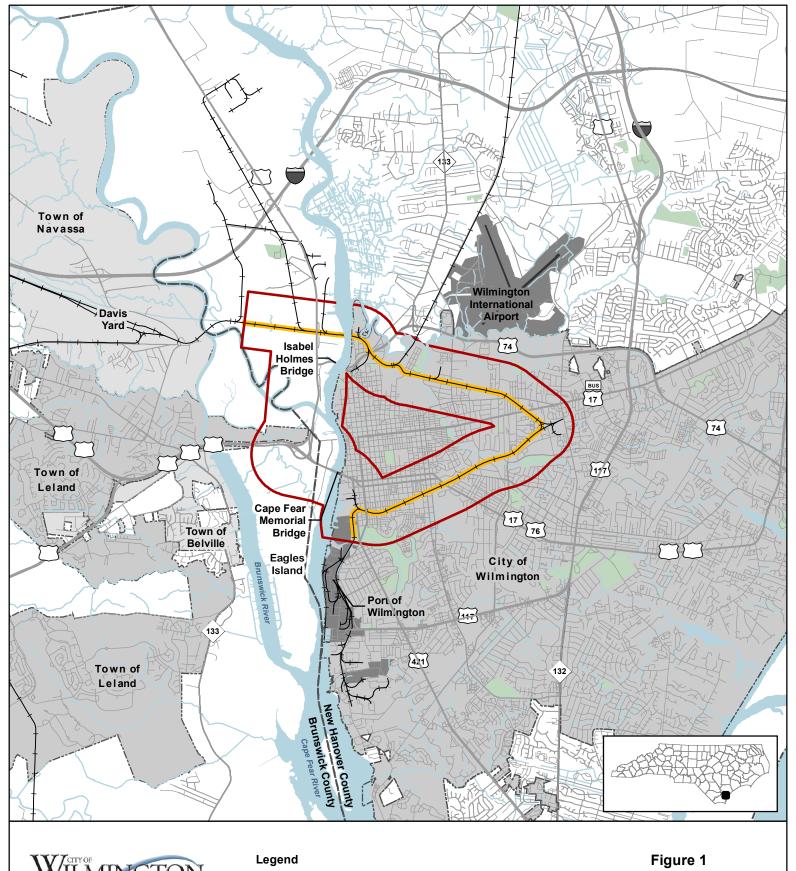
Secondary screening criteria include engineering considerations, various human, socioeconomic, cultural, physical, and natural environmental metrics. At this stage in the development of corridors, impacts are only to be used for comparison purposes. Impacts were calculated using a 200-foot centered buffer. Design refinements will be made during the Alternatives Analysis phase to further avoid and minimize impacts to resources.

Project Next Steps

The next phase of alternatives refinement and evaluation will be to prepare an Alternatives Analysis Report. Sections and Options identified in the Secondary Screening of this report will be used to form contiguous end-to-end corridors, within which preliminary designs will be developed. Preliminary designs will then be evaluated using refined criteria, input from the public, and input from regulatory and resource agencies. This evaluation will be an iterative process that will ultimately result in the identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative to be evaluated in detail in the NEPA document.

Public Meeting

A Virtual Public Meeting is scheduled to take place November 16th through December 15th 20th. The purpose of the meeting will be to present the project to the public and receive feedback on the Purpose and Need and project data used in the Screening Report. Comments will be accepted through the duration of the public meeting.





Wilmington Rail Realignment Project

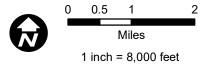
New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC

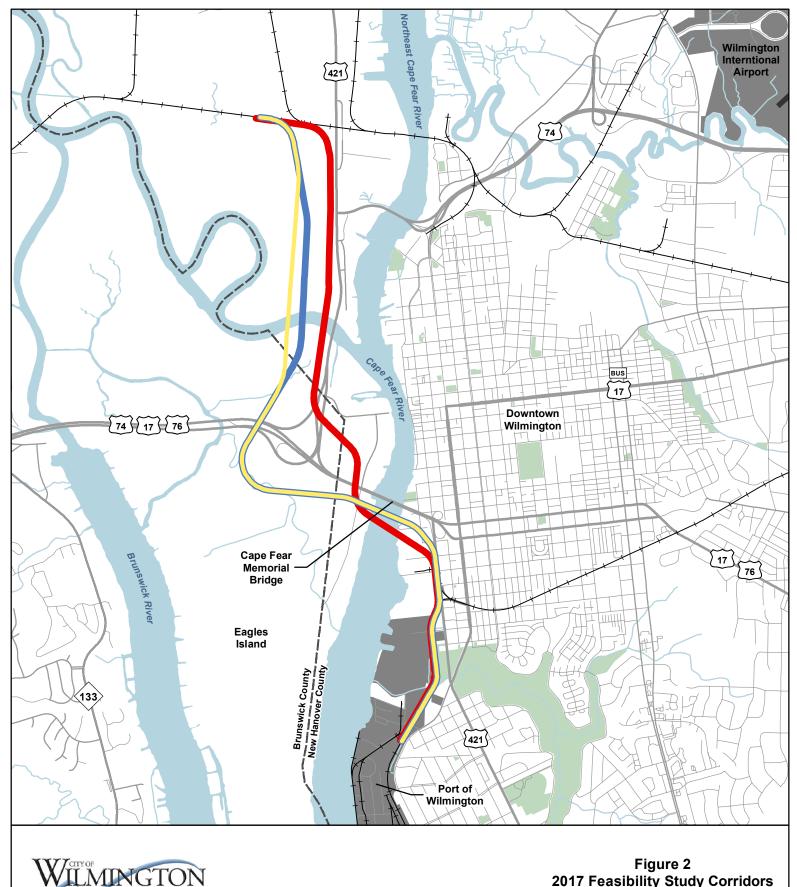
Study Area
County Boundary
Park
Beltline

Railroad

Project Study Area

Date: September 2020







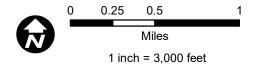
Wilmington Rail **Realignment Project**

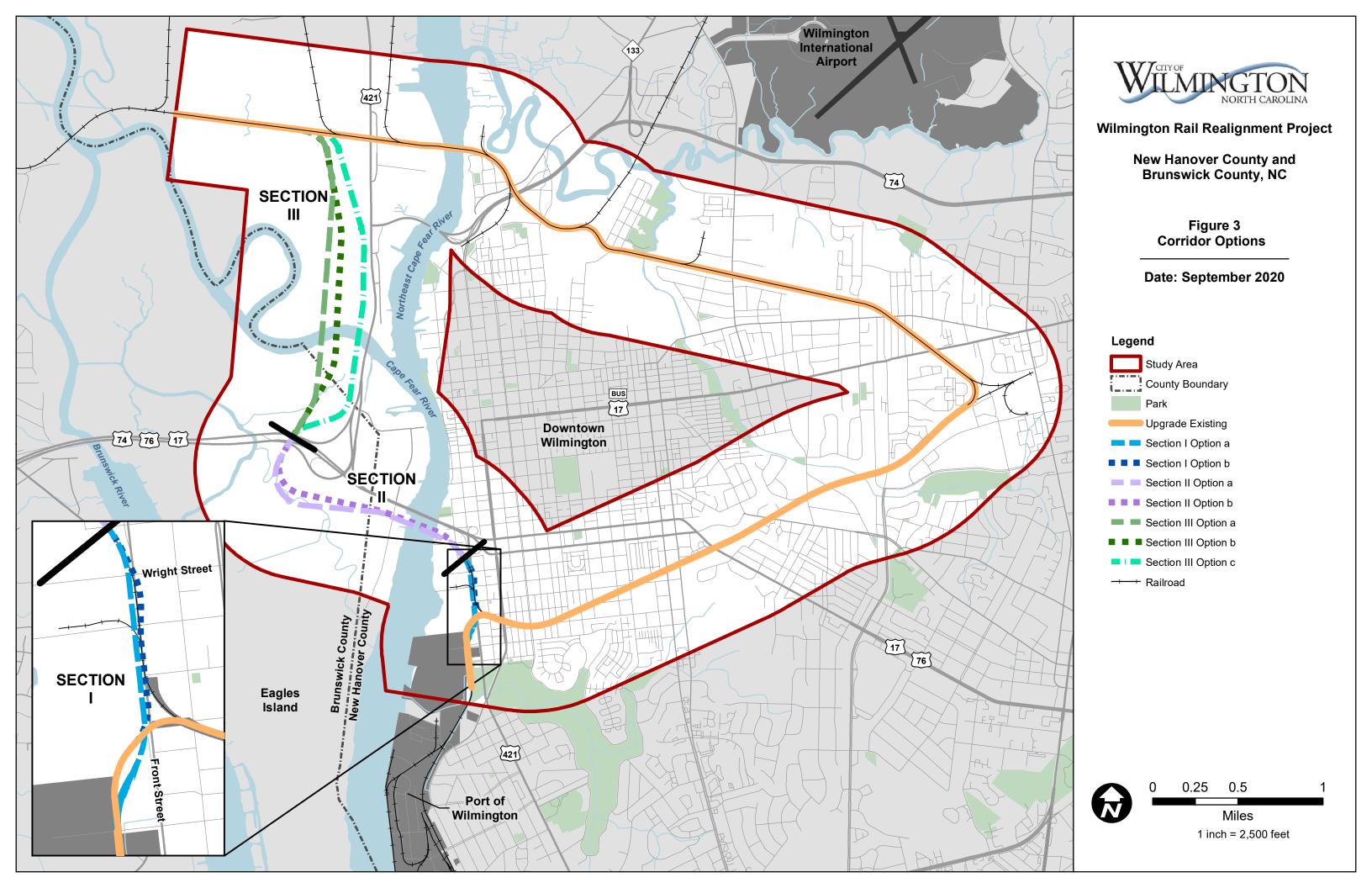
New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC



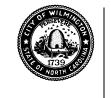
2017 Feasibility Study Corridors

Date: September 2020





MEMORANDUM



City Manager's Office 102 North Third Street PO Box 1810 Wilmington, NC 28402-1810

910 341-7810 910 341-5839 fax wilmingtonnc.gov Dial 711 TTY/Voice



Date: February 9, 2021

To: Mr. Hal R. Pitts

Chief, Bridge Branch Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street Portsmouth, VA 23704

Subject: Project Initiation Request – Wilmington, NC Rail Realignment

Dear Mr. Pitts:

In accordance with United States Coast Guard's (USCG) Bridge Permit Application Guide (COMDTPUB P16591.3D) the City of Wilmington (City) has contacted the USCG District Bridge Office to discuss bridge considerations regarding the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project). The City has confirmed with the District Bridge Office that two bridges contemplated under the Project cross a navigable waterway (the Cape Fear River) and are therefore not exempt from the USCG bridge permit process.

As such, the City herein submits the necessary information to serve as a Project Initiation Request. Please note that at present the Project is expected to be a non-EIS level project. However, the Project is sufficiently defined to provide the information needed for a Project Initiation Request and the City has dedicated the necessary staff, consultant services, financial resources and leadership attention to complete the requirements for the Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

1. A brief description of the proposed project, including information about constraints or flexibility with respect to the project;

The City, in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is presently conducting an environmental study pursuant to NEPA to evaluate realigning an existing CSX Transportation (CSXT) freight rail line primarily within the City limits. The study, referred to as the Wilmington Rail Realignment (Project), proposes creating a new route to bypass the existing freight rail route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington (Port). A map of the study area is attached hereto as Attachment 1 as well as a map displaying the recommended Project corridors resulting from the City's 2017 Feasibility Study as Attachment 2.

An initial draft of a Corridor Screening Report was completed in late 2020 as part of the aforementioned NEPA study. The Corridor Screening Report analyzes the corridor routes studied in the 2017 Wilmington Rail Realignment and Right of Way Use Alternatives Feasibility Study as well as identifies new or modified corridors developed based on the Project's purpose and need, which includes both engineering feasibility and environmental considerations. Information regarding the constraints and flexibility of the project were studied in the Corridor

Screening Report, which has been included with this letter as Attachment 3. At a high level, the project's flexibility with respect to alternative selection and geographic location are limited by the following constraints:

- Ability to meet Project Purpose and Need (see Section 2 below)
- Consistency and compatibility with future replacement of the existing Cape Fear Memorial Bridge
- Highway crossings, majority utility lines as well as other engineering and practical considerations
- Connectivity to CSX
- Cultural/Historic resources & National Historic Landmarks (USS North Carolina)
- Land use impacts
- Human environment and socioeconomic impacts
- Natural and physical environment impacts
- Navigational impacts

2. A brief description of the purpose and need of the bridge project;

The primary purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to improve safety, regional mobility and freight rail operations, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington. The challenges the City of Wilmington faces with rapid population growth and increasing traffic congestion combined with increases in freight movement through the Port of Wilmington are straining the existing transportation network. Of concern are the numerous atgrade crossings through the city that pose a risk to public safety, increased traffic delays and travel times, and increased auto emissions due to longer idling. To access the Port of Wilmington, freight trains must currently travel over 10 miles through Wilmington, crossing 32 atgrade crossings (30 public crossings and 2 private crossings) within the Project Study Area.

3. Proposed schedule (if known), including timeframe for filing necessary Federal and State applications, construction start date, and planned in-service date, if approved;

The proposed schedule regarding permit, construction and in-service timing has not yet been solidified. Currently, the Rail Realignment Project is fully funded to complete the requirements of NEPA and reach 30% engineering design. The requirements of NEPA are expected to be complete by mid-2022 and engineering design is expected to reach 30% design level by mid-2023.

4. A list of potentially affected Federal and non-Federal entities; and,

Federal

US Coast Guard

US Department of Transportation

- Federal Railroad Administration
- Surface Transportation Board

US Army Corp of Engineers

US Environmental Protection Agency

US Fish & Wildlife Services

National Marine Fisheries Service

State & Local

NC State Historic Preservation Office

NC Department of Environmental Quality

- Division of Coastal Management
- Division of Marine Fisheries
- Water Resources

NC Wildlife Resources Commission

NC Department of Transportation

NC State Port Authority

City of Wilmington

New Hanover County

Brunswick County

5. Based on existing, relevant and reasonably available information, a description of the known existing major project site conditions, potential changes to the waterway and/or any other areas of concern.

Major Site Conditions

The existing Wilmington Harbor federal navigation channel originates offshore and extends approximately 38 miles through the Atlantic Ocean and up the Cape Fear River up to the City of Wilmington, NC where it serves the Port of Wilmington and extends north beyond the Hilton RR Bridge. Presently the channel provides -44 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) through the ocean bar and entrance channel, then changes to -42 feet extending to just downstream of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and finally reaches -38 feet north of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge to the Hilton RR Bridge. The turning basin used by vessels serving the Port of Wilmington, is located south of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and north of the primary Port berths. The allowable air draft for vessels calling on the Port of Wilmington is presently 212 feet. The Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is a lift span bridge with navigational horizontal clearance of 408 feet and vertical clearance of 69 feet resting or 135 feet with the lift span raised.

Potential Changes to the Waterway and/or Any Other Areas of Concern

1. Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Wilmington Harbor Navigation Improvement Project Integrated Feasibility Study and Environmental Report, New Hanover and Brunswick Counties. NC

The purpose of the proposed project is to accommodate larger cargo vessels and improve the efficiency of cargo vessel operations at Wilmington Harbor and the Port of Wilmington. The proposed navigation improvements would enable the Port of Wilmington to continue as a port-of-call for shipping alliances with direct service to Asian markets. Structural and non-structural measures are being evaluated to meet planning objectives. Measures that contribute to meeting the planning objectives will be combined to develop alternative plans. Potential harbor improvements under consideration include deepening the existing federal navigational channel to the Port of Wilmington, extending the ocean entrance channel farther offshore, and widening channels in the Cape Fear River where needed. The range of depths being considered is from -

44 feet to -48 feet. Under the No Action alternative, no improvements would be made to the Wilmington Harbor project.

2. Express Design Summary for the Replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge

A North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) feasibility study has been prepared which outlines four potential options for replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (CFMB). The CFMB was built in 1969 and carries US 17, US 76 and US 421 across the Cape Fear River between Brunswick and New Hanover counties. The existing CFMB is a four-lane steel centerspan vertical-lift bridge. All four designs developed under the feasibility study consist of a six-lane median divided roadway with a separated multi-use path. The options differ by vertical clearance (65' or 135') and span type, i.e. fixed movable. Option 4 includes a separate bridge for single track rail extending on the south side of the vehicular bridge. A single substructure would accommodate both bridges. The bridges would have independent, movable center lifts. The project is needed to accommodate local population increases and freight traffic for the Port of Wilmington. The CFMB replacement project has not yet been received funding as part of NCDOT's State Transportation Infrastructure Program.

On behalf of the City of Wilmington, I would like to extend my thanks for the responsive and collaborative effort exhibited thus far by your team at the Bridge Branch of the Fifth Coast Guard District. Please be sure to let us know if there is any additional information required as part of this Project Initiation Request. We look forward to our continued efforts together in this endeavor.

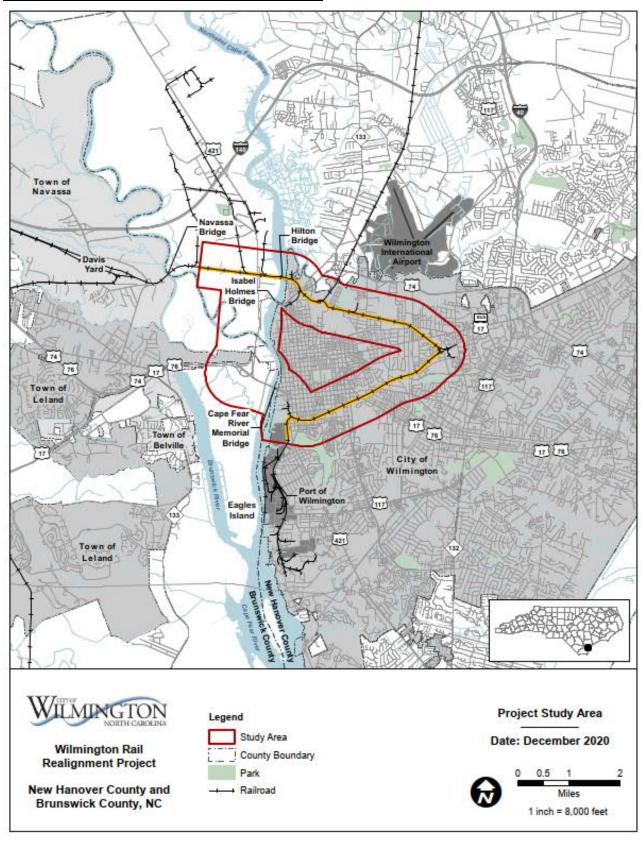
Respectfully Submitted,

Aubrey Parsley, PE

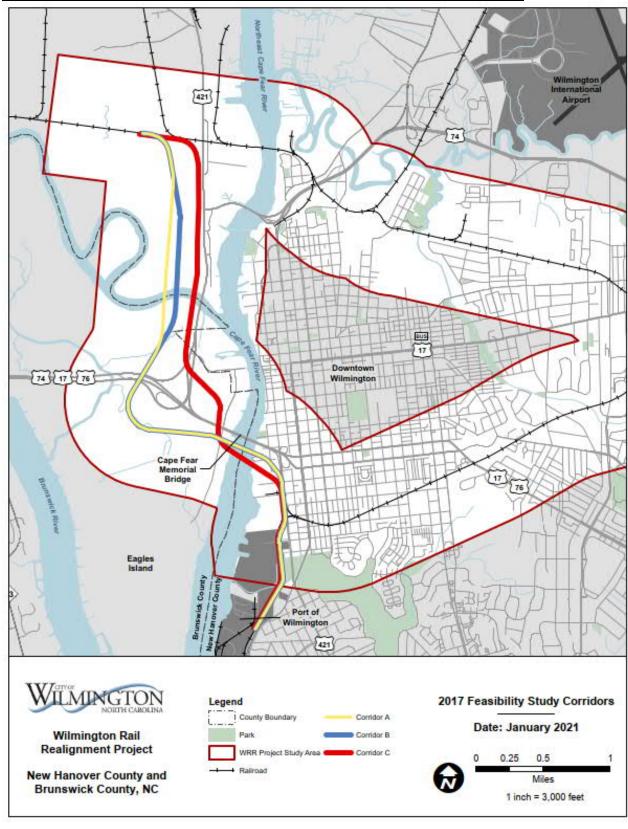
Director of Rail Realignment

City of Wilmington

Attachment 1 - Study Area Map



Attachment 2 - 2017 Feasibility Study Corridor Map





SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

March 1, 2021

Michael Johnsen Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist Federal Railroad Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

> RE: Wilmington Rail Realignment, Brunswick and New Hanover Counties,

North Carolina: Acceptance of cooperating agency invitation

Dear Mr. Johnsen,

Thank you for your February 22, 2021 letter inviting the Surface Transportation Board (Board) to participate as a cooperating agency in the environmental review for the proposed Wilmington Rail Realignment Project (Project). I understand that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), as the lead federal agency, in coordination with the City of Wilmington (City), is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposed new freight rail route to bypass the existing route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington. The Project involves realigning an existing CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) freight rail line that traverses through City limits as well as unincorporated areas of Brunswick and New Hanover counties. The primary purpose of the project is to improve safety, regional transportation mobility, and freight rail operations, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

Because the Board may have a licensing role in this proceeding, I am pleased to accept your invitation to cooperate with FRA in conducting the environmental review for the Project. Ken Blodgett of my staff is the environmental protection specialist assigned to this case. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact Ken at (202) 245-0305 or email at kenneth.blodgett@stb.gov. We look forward to working with you and your team on the environmental review for this Project.

Sincerely,

Danielle Gosselin **Acting Director**

Office of Environmental Analysis



Commander United States Coast Guard Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street
Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004
Staff Symbol: dpb
Phone: (757) 398-6422
Fax: (757) 398-6334
Email: Crystal.K.Tucker@uscg.mil or CGDFiveBridges@uscg.mil

16591 03 MAR 2021

Mr. Michael Johnsen Federal Ralroad Adminstration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Johnsen:

The Coast Guard has established a bridge permitting project for the proposed CSXT railroad realignment study project in New Hanover County and Brunswick County, NC.

The Coast Guard hereby accepts Cooperating Agency/Consulting Party status with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), as the Lead Federal Agency (LFA) for the above Federal undertaking as requested in your letter dated February 22, 2021. This designation applies to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (54 U.S.C. § 306108, et seq) (if applicable), and all other applicable environmental control laws.

If the NHPA has application in this project, the Coast Guard does not intend to serve as signatory to the MOA, unless assigned responsibilities to carry out functions within the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (beyond issuance of a Coast Guard Bridge Permit).

The Coast Guard Bridge Permit Application Guide (BPAG), Commandant Publication P16591.3D, and BPAG Applicant Template are enclosed to provide information concerning the environmental documentation requirements related to Coast Guard bridge permitting.

Please contact Ms. Crystal K. Tucker above telephone number or email address if you have any questions. Please maintain frequent and regular contact with the project officer to ensure efficient and effective project administration.

Sincerely,

HAL R. PITTS

Bridge Program Manager

By direction

Encl: Bridge Permit Application Guide, COMDTPUB P16195.3D and BPAG Applicant

Template located at (https://cglink.uscg.mil/dafae750)

Copy: CG Sector North Carolina, Waterways Management

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District

Federal Highways Administration, Raleigh, NC



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

March 8, 2021

Michael Johnsen Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

> Re: Invitation to Become a Cooperating Agency for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Johnsen:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4 received your letter dated February 22, 2021, providing this Agency an opportunity to participate as a cooperating agency for the subject document. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in coordination with the city of Wilmington, is initiating an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project.

On November 12, 2020, EPA participated in the FRA-led agency coordination meeting. Subsequently, on December 11, 2020, EPA provided comments on the Draft Alternatives Screening Report. As a member of the North Carolina Department of Transportation Merger process, we accept FRA's offer to serve as a cooperating agency for the proposed Wilmington Rail Realignment EA. Please note that our status as a cooperating agency has no effect on our review responsibilities under section 120(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, and being a cooperating agency does not imply that EPA will necessarily concur with all aspects of the EA.

Contingent upon agency resources, EPA agrees to provide preliminary agency feedback on areas in which we have a level of expertise. The FRA should ensure that information relevant for providing comments will be provided to EPA promptly, allowing sufficient time for review. Additionally, the information provided should be with levels of detail necessary for meaningful feedback. EPA also agrees to participate in milestone meetings.

We appreciate your coordination with us and look forward to reviewing the environmental documents for the proposed project. If you have any further questions or concerns, you may contact Ms. Amanetta Somerville of the NEPA Section at (404) 562-9025 or somerville.amanetta@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

MARK FITE Digitally signed by MARK FITE Date: 2021.03.08 17:56:56 -05'00'

Mark J. Fite Director Strategic Programs Office



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WILMINGTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS **69 DARLINGTON AVENUE**

WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28403-1343

March 10, 2021

Regulatory Division

SUBJECT: Action ID. SAW-2016-00594 (City of Wilmington Rail Realignment)

Mr. Michael Johnsen U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Johnsen:

Reference your letter dated February 22, 2021 in which you invited us to participate as a Cooperating Agency in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) initiation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Wilmington Rail Realignment to improve safety, regional transportation mobility, and freight rail operations in the New Hanover and Brunswick County area, as well as improving the sole rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality, (40 CFR 1501.6 Cooperating Agencies), we agree to participate as a Cooperating Agency in the development of FRA's EA. Our office has been involved from the early stages of the project with the City of Wilmington and your office and the Corps will continue to actively participate in the role stated in your letter, specifically as it relates to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, including our Public Interest Review.

Thank you for FRA's coordination with this project and our office looks forward to our role as a Cooperating Agency. Any questions or comments may be addressed to Mr. Brad Shaver, Project Manager at the Wilmington Regulatory Field Office by telephone (910) 251-4611 or brad.e.shaver@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by Mickey Mickey Sugg Date: 2021.03.10 14:27:49

Mickey Sugg, Chief Wilmington Regulatory Field Office

Copies Furnished via email: Mr. Kevin Wright, FRA Mr. Aubrey Parsley, City of Wilmington

Ms. Susan Anderson, AECOM

Ms. Joanna Rocco, AECOM

Ms. Suraiya Motsinger, AECOM Mr. Jeff Mann, AECOM

Meeting name

WRR Cooperating Agency Coordination Meeting #1

Meeting date

09/21/21

Location

Microsoft Teams

Project

Wilmington Rail Realignment

Attendees

Kevin Wright – FRA
Mickey Suggs – USACE
Brad Shaver – USACE
Amanetta Somerville – USEPA
Aubrey Parsley – City of Wilmington - Rail
Diana Wood – STB

Susan Anderson – AECOM Jeff Mann – AECOM Celia Miars – AECOM Joanna Rocco – AECOM Tom Harris – WSP Adam Karagosian – WSP

The Wilmington Rail Realignment Project team held a meeting with the Cooperating Agencies on September 21, 2021 via Microsoft Teams. The primary purpose of this meeting was to present project information and receive feedback from the Cooperating Agencies regarding the next steps of the Project as it moves into the NEPA phase.

Aubrey Parsley began the meeting and discussed the current Project status. Susan Anderson reviewed the remainder of the presentation (attached).

Discussion points from the meeting are below:

- Given the NEPA document for the Project will be an Environmental Assessment, a
 public hearing is not mandatory; however, the public has demonstrated an interest in
 the Project thus far so a public meeting will likely be held. The USACE noted a public
 hearing may be required to satisfy their permit requirements. The City of Wilmington
 noted there have been many levels of public outreach for the project already and that
 they would like to continue to build on that engagement.
- The USACE asked for additional clarification regarding the meeting attendees and why certain agencies were not included. The project team discussed Cooperating Agency invitations were sent out on February 22, 2021 to STB, USACE, USCG, and USEPA. All agencies accepted invitations to be a Cooperating Agency. Invitations to the US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service are forthcoming. State agencies are considered participating agencies and are included in other agency coordination meetings.
- Consulting Parties have officially been invited to participate in the Section 106 process. The project team will continue to coordinate with FRA (Amanda Murphy) and

- will hold a separate Section 106 Consulting Party coordination meeting to discuss the Section 106 process and the role of Consulting Parties.
- The USACE noted there will need to be coordination efforts for Section 408 and NMFS Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).
- Section 408 includes impacts to federal project boundaries. The proposal would be submitted to the USACE and they will distribute to the navigation branch, environmental branch, and project management branch to receive feedback on the type of impact that would occur within federal project boundaries. It was noted for another project, 65% design plans were required for the proposal. Participants discussed the helpfulness of early communication so as to allow for early preparation of future materials.
- Pace Wilbur out of Charleston is the contact for NMFS EFH.
- STB noted they will send the project team a list of items that would assist them in their reviews of the Project. STB provided the list after the meeting, see attached.
- USEPA noted they would like to continue to see any draft documents and be included in the planning process.

The meeting concluded at 11:00 am.

Attachments:

- Meeting Presentation
- STB Cooperating Party EA Requests and Items for Consideration (email)

Wilmington Rail Realignment City of Wilmington New Hanover and Brunswick County

Cooperating Agency Coordination Meeting September 21, 2021



1

AGENDA

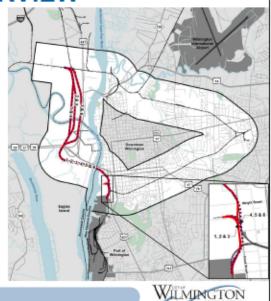
- · Project Overview
- · Project Status
- · Cooperating Agency "Asks"
- · Next Steps



2

PROJECT OVERVIEW

- · Proposed Action:
 - New route to bypass existing freight route between Navassa (Davis Yard) and the Port of Wilmington



3

PURPOSE AND NEED

Purpose:

The primary purpose of the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project is to improve safety and regional transportation mobility, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

Needs:



Enhanced Efficiency of Freight Movement



Improved Safety



Improved Regional Mobility and Reliability

Additional Benefits:



Improved Resiliency



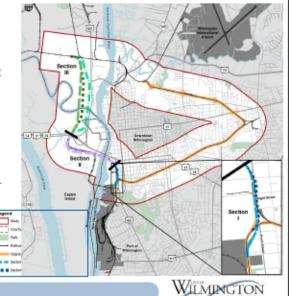
Improved Operational Fluidity



4

PROJECT STATUS

- Public Meeting held November 16th through December 15th, 2020
- Draft Purpose and Need Report completed in January 2021
- Corridor Screening Report completed in January 2021
- Draft Alternatives Analysis released June 2021
- Public Meeting held June 28th July 26th, 2021
- Final Alternatives Analysis submitted to FRA for review



5

Comments on Draft AA

- Agencies
 - SHPO indicated need for further archaeological investigations on Eagles Island/river crossings and architectural elements potentially associated with the Wilmington Historic District
 - New Hanover County Soil & Water Conservation District noted all alternatives cross property owned by them and result in general and direct impacts.
- NC Coastal Land Trust
 - Property owner for conservation easement
 - Concern over fragmentation of property
 - Recommended refinements to Alternative 3 to minimize effects on their property



6

Comments on Draft AA

- General Public
 - Recommendation to move Port of Wilmington further south instead of rail realignment
 - Concern over dredging and impacts to surge flooding in the City
 - Concern regarding wetland, habitat, vegetation, and natural drainage features
 - · Support for rail realignment
 - · Support for using current freight line for public transit

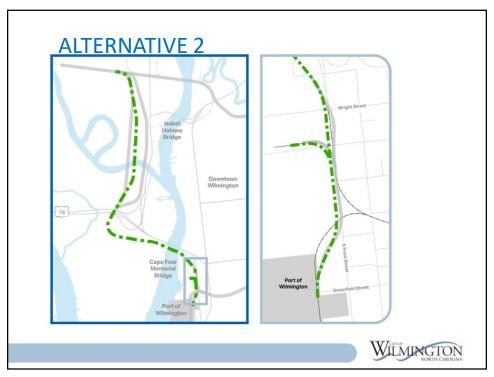


7

Recommended Preferred Alternative

- Alternative 2
 - Utilizes more of the out-of-service railbed, reducing impacts to high-quality and coastal wetlands
 - · Consistent with Isabel Holmes Bridge Flyovers Project





9

Advantages of Alternative 2

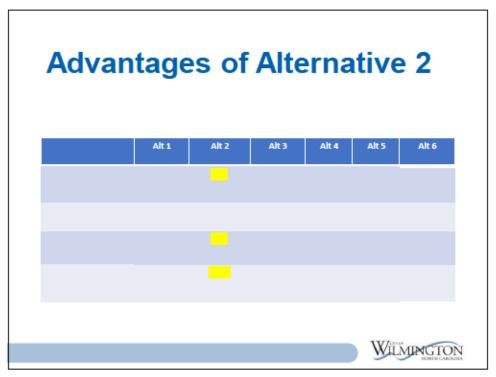


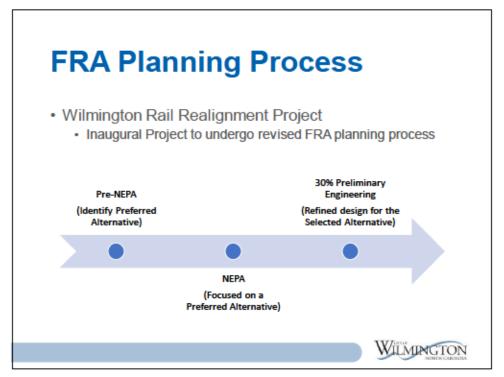


Isabel Holmes Flyovers

Out-of-service Railbed

10





Pre-NEPA

- · Preliminary Class of Action determination
- · Project Initiation
- Develop Purpose & Need
- · Initiate coordination/outreach
- · Identify Cooperating Agencies
- Conduct resource inventory
- Initiate regulatory compliance needs
- · Identify Range of Alternatives
- · Alternatives Analysis
- · Identify a Preferred Alternative



13

NEPA

- Evaluate Preferred Alternative
- · Refine design elements for Preferred Alternative
 - Avoid potential
 - · Minimize potential impacts
- Satisfy regulatory compliance needs to obtain environmental finding
 - Consultation
 - · Effects determinations
 - · Collaborate on mitigation strategies
- · Continue agency, stakeholder and public coordination
 - Hold public hearing (or willingness to hold one)
 - · Assess comments
 - · Resolve outstanding issues/concerns
- Environmental Finding



30% Design/PE

- Refine design to 30% plans
 - · Avoidance/minimization of impacts
- Continue Agency Coordination
 - Unavoidable impacts
 - · Permit requirements
 - Mitigation
 - · Construction methods
 - · Time of year restrictions



15

Cooperating Agency "Asks"

- · Provide feedback/guidance
 - · Process and regulatory compliance needs
 - · Potential refinements to Preferred Alternative
 - · Continue providing input at key milestones
 - · Purpose and Need
 - · Alternatives Development
 - · Development of the EA
 - · Methodology for impact assessment
 - · Permitting/Mitigation needs
- Help us set the stage for next steps
 - Not currently seeking permits (future funding to implement project has not been identified)
 - · What does your agency need from the project/NEPA document?
 - · Project readiness to advance into subsequent phases



NEXT STEPS

- · FRA approval to move into NEPA phase
 - · Completion of Alternatives Analysis/Preferred Alternative
- Agency Coordination
 - State Historic Preservation Office Identification of Resources (survey work needed)/Effects Assessments
 - · USFWS/NMFS Submit findings from species surveys
 - USCG Navigation Impact Report
 - USACE Preliminary JD completed; determine impacts and mitigation requirements for Preferred Alternative
- Section 106
 - · Coordinate with Consulting Parties



17

Miars, Celia

From: Rocco, Joanna

Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 2:51 PM

To: Miars, Celia

Subject: FW: Wilmington Realignment Cooperating Party EA Wish List

Categories: Wilmington Rail Realignment

Joanna H. Rocco, AICP

AECOM

Senior Environmental Planner/Project Manager

Transportation Office: 919-239-7179 Mobile: 919-607-7975

From: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov>

Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 3:09 PM

To: Diana.Wood@stb.gov

Cc: Mann, Jeff <jeff.mann@aecom.com>; Anderson, Susan <Susan.Anderson@aecom.com>; Rocco, Joanna

<joanna.rocco@aecom.com>; Wright, Kevin (FRA) <kevin.wright@dot.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Wilmington Realignment Cooperating Party EA Wish List

Diana,

Thank you very much for the detailed notes and for the STB's continued collaboration. We will address each of these items as we develop the EA and will keep you apprised with updates. I'll be in touch.

Have a great weekend,

Aubrey Parsley, PE

Director of Rail Realignment 305 Chestnut Street Post Office Box 1810 Wilmington, NC 28402 (o) 910-341-0188 (c) 910-200-8382



www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail

From: Wood, Diana [mailto:Diana.Wood@stb.gov]

Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 1:53 PM

To: Aubrey Parsley < Aubrey. Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov >

Cc: Wright, Kevin (FRA) < kevin.wright@dot.gov >; Gosselin, Danielle < Danielle.Gosselin@stb.gov >

Subject: Wilmington Realignment Cooperating Party EA Wish List

Good Afternoon,

As a follow-up from our cooperating agency meeting this past Tuesday (9/21), and as promised, I'm submitting a few questions/clarifications that will be helpful for the STB/OEA EA review.

Also, as requested, please include STB/OEA as a consulting party in the Section 106 review. And finally, to answer Aubrey's question on whether STB would require an additional comment period or a hearing following the issuance of the ROD, the answer is "no" because we are a cooperating agency and are involved in this review process, which includes responding to any STB-related comments made during the comment period.

Please include the following in the Environmental Assessment:

Please provide the NAAQS attainment status for criteria pollutants. If the area is in attainment, then the STB/Board's threshold for environmental review is eight (8) or more trains per day (including RT). In nonattainment areas, the threshold decreases to three (3) or more trains per day.

For the analysis of noise, the EA should be consistent with the Board's noise regulations at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.7 e (6), which require that noise increases of 3 dBAs or greater be identified (even if below 65 dBAs) AND that noise levels equal to or in excess of 65 dBA day-night average be identified for wayside and locomotive warning horn noise for both construction and operation of the line.

Please provide the total number of train trips per day including any round trips and any anticipated increases in traffic in the near-term of project completion, say within the first five years (if known).

Please clarify whether rail traffic would be a combination of overhead traffic and local traffic, or one of the two. If it's through traffic, then would this include port to yard/yard to port trips and beyond? For local travel, would it entail just port to yard/yard to port trips or is other local travel expected to occur beyond these two points? Identify current and anticipated common carriers on the line.

Specify whether the proposed realignment would result in any new rail traffic or open up new markets and/or territory.

Clarify if the out-of-service railbed is abandoned ROW. Or, if part of the interstate rail network, will it remain that way, become private track, or be abandoned and salvaged?

Thanks much,

Diana Wood

Diana F. Wood
Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington DC 20423
202-245-0302
Diana.Wood@stb.gov

E-mail correspondence to and from this address is subject to the North Carolina Public Records Law and may be disclosed to third parties.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office 263 13th Avenue South St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505 https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast

12/03/2021

F:SER/BR

Amit Bose, Deputy Administrator Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Communications U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

Attention: Michael Johnsen, Kevin Wright, Aubrey Parsley

Re: Wilmington Rail Realignment, Cooperating Agency Request

Dear Deputy Administrator Bose:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received your letter dated November 5, 2021, requesting our participation as a cooperating agency in the development of an Environmental Assessment for the Wilmington Rail Realignment. Given our special expertise and jurisdiction by law under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), NMFS agrees to serve as a cooperating agency for this project. Due to staffing constraints, our participation may be limited to attendance of teleconferences and reviewing National Environmental Policy Act documents.

We appreciate your invitation to serve as a cooperating agency for this project. For questions pertaining to the MSA or ESA, please direct correspondences to Mr. Fritz Rohde (fritz.rohde@noaa.gov) or Mr. Joseph Cavanaugh (joseph.cavanaugh@noaa.gov), respectively.

Sincerely,

FAY.VIRGINIA. Digitally signed by FAY.VIRGINIA.M.1365817320 Date: 2021.12.03 13:27:13 -05'00'

for Andrew J. Strelcheck Regional Administrator

cc: F, Chabot, Youngkin, F/SER, Strelcheck, Fay, Blough, Silverman, Barnette, Rosegger F/SER3, Bernhart, Shotts, Reece, Cavanaugh F/SER4, Wilber, Karazsia, Rohde





MEETING NOTES

PROJECT NAME	Wilmington Rail Realignment
PROJECT NUMBER	WSP #30900288.00
DATE	09 December 2021
TIME	9:30am – 1:00pm
VENUE	On-Site
SUBJECT	Coastal Wetlands Evaluation Site Visit
CLIENT	City of Wilmington
PRESENT	NC DCM: Stephen Lane WSP: Amanda Johnson, Caleb Sullivan

Meeting Minutes

1.0 INTRODUCTION

All attendees met at the Scotchman located at 1610 US-421, Wilmington, NC, 28401. Amanda stated the goals for the site visit and provided a brief description of the areas she planned to review with Stephen. For this site visit, WSP did not request an official determination from the NC Division of Coastal Management (DCM) for the Preferred Alternative coastal wetland boundaries but wanted to focus on a few areas to make refinements to the boundaries that will be shown in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

2.0 FIELD-REVIEWED AREAS

The attendees reviewed the coastal wetlands in and surrounding the power line corridor on the Bryden property, north of the New Hanover County sheriff's property (Figure 1, Sheet 1). Stephen agreed with the coastal wetland boundaries shown around the house on the property. The attendees walked southeast down the power line corridor to review the coastal wetland boundaries along the forested area. Due to deep water and mucky field conditions, the attendees did not walk the entire boundary. Stephen agreed the boundaries shown likely represent the approximate coastal wetland boundary. Vegetation observed through the coastal wetland included *Phragmites australis* (common reed) and *Typha* species (cattails). Amanda asked Stephen about how DCM would view monotypic common reed stands in areas surrounded by coastal wetland. Stephen explained that if these areas occurring within a contiguous coastal wetland are still functioning the same as coastal wetlands, they would still be considered coastal wetland.

The attendees then reviewed a coastal wetland boundary on the Bryden property southwest of the New Hanover County sheriff's property (Figure 1, Sheet 2). Amanda pointed out that *Spartina cynosuroides* (giant cordgrass) was present around the streams/ditches to the west. Stephen agreed with the coastal wetland boundary.

The attendees then reviewed the area mapped as coastal wetland around the power line corridor just north of the interchange and south of the open water (impoundment of Alligator Creek) (Figure 1, Sheet 4). Stephen pointed out there were freshwater plant species mixed with coastal wetland species. Given the amount of freshwater vegetation, distance from a direct connection with tidal water,

MEETING NOTES

and the slightly higher elevation, he did not consider this area a coastal wetland. Amanda noted she would remove the area from the mapped coastal wetlands. The coastal wetland shown adjacent to the Alligator Creek impoundment was not reviewed in the field but assumed to be coastal wetland based on its connection to the open water. Amanda noted that area is covered in common reed.

The last area the attendees reviewed were the mapped coastal wetland boundaries just south of the US 17/US 421 interchange, west of Battleship Road NE (Figure 1, Sheet 5). Stephen did not think the first area reviewed (Hufham property) was coastal wetland based on the amount of freshwater vegetation (*Carex* species dominated the herbaceous stratum) and that the area is at a slightly higher elevation and not likely regularly flooded by tides. He also pointed out he was not seeing the thick muck layer that is typical of coastal wetlands. Amanda said she would remove that area from the mapped coastal wetlands.

The attendees walked west to the next area mapped as coastal wetland. Stephen said he did not see evidence that the area was coastal wetland, so everyone walked approximately 300 feet west farther into the marsh. The attendees reviewed the aerial imagery of the remaining polygon shown as coastal wetland on the field map and compared it to visible field conditions. Stephen said the remaining area was not likely coastal wetland since there were no noticeable changes in elevation and vegetation throughout the area, and that the area was not likely regularly flooded by tides. Amanda said she would remove that area from the mapped coastal wetlands.

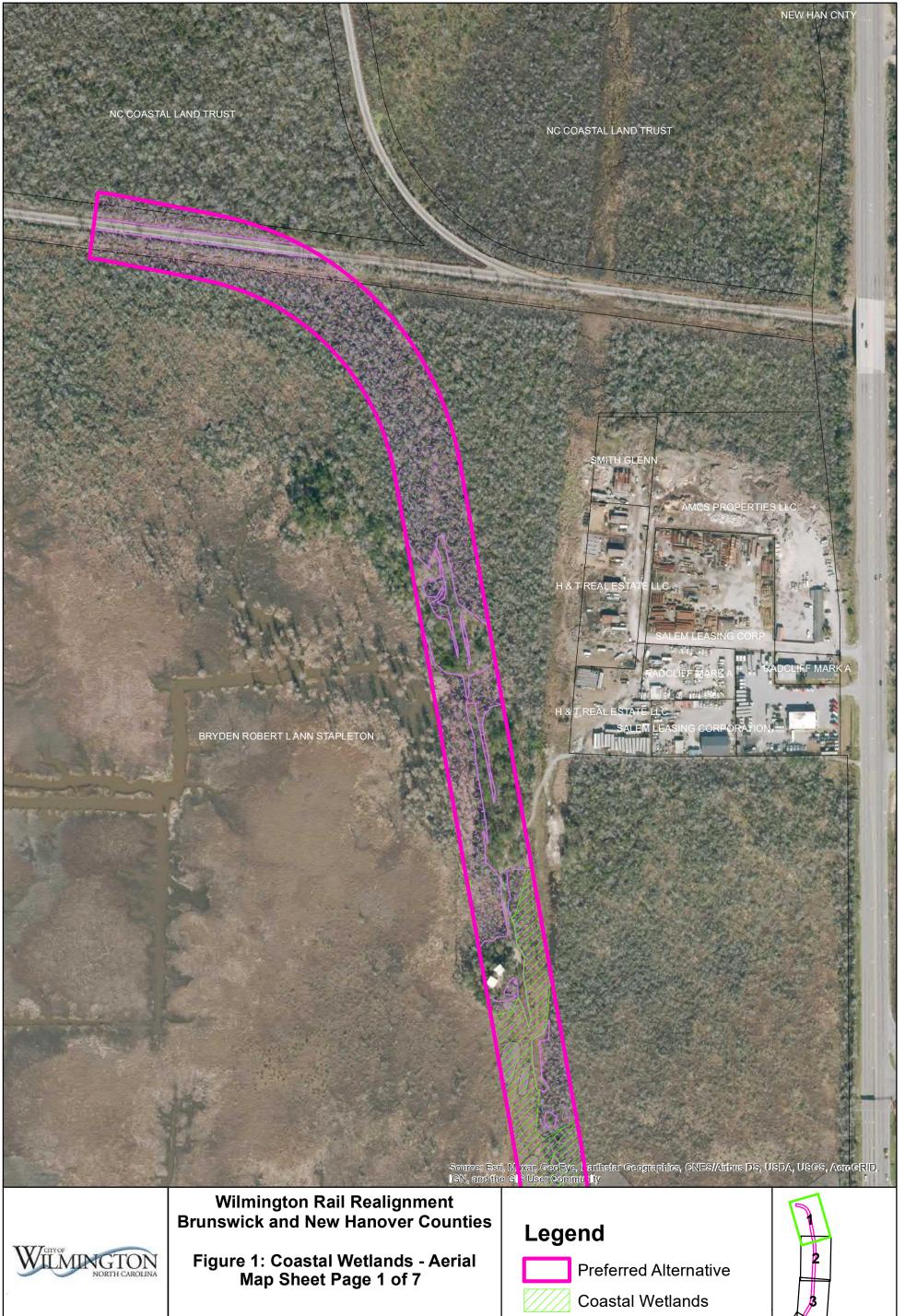
3.0 CLOSING DISCUSSION

After the attendees completed the field review, Amanda and Stephen discussed the few aspects of the project:

- Stephen noted that DCM would expect to see bridging over coastal wetlands. Amanda asked if there were specific height requirements. Stephen said that docks and piers must have a height of at least 3 feet, so DCM would expect no lower than that. Heights for bridges should be evaluated for avoidance/minimization but DCM understands practicability will be considered as well.
- Shading from a bridge is not considered a mitigatable impact. Stephen said he remembered a document from the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) that included research on shading impacts. If he is able to locate the document, he said he would send it to Amanda.
- Stephen pointed out there will be construction moratoria for Primary Nursery Area and sturgeon. He recommended to discuss the construction window with the agencies.
- Amanda asked about determining the normal high water line for the project, given the size of the study area. She said Katharine Elks recommended having a topographic survey of the project area and using tidal datum to determine the mean high and low water lines instead of delineating the normal high water line in the field. Stephen agreed with that approach.
- To close the site visit, Stephen requested that Amanda send revised figures reflecting the changes that were made during the site visit. She agreed and stated that she would send out meeting notes as well.

4.0 ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Responsible Party
Provide updated figures (attached) and site visit meeting notes to Stephen Lane	Amanda Johnson
Send a document from NCDOT that discusses shading impacts from bridges	Stephen Lane



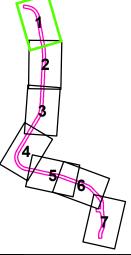


Map Date: December 2021

500 Feet 125 250

Wetlands





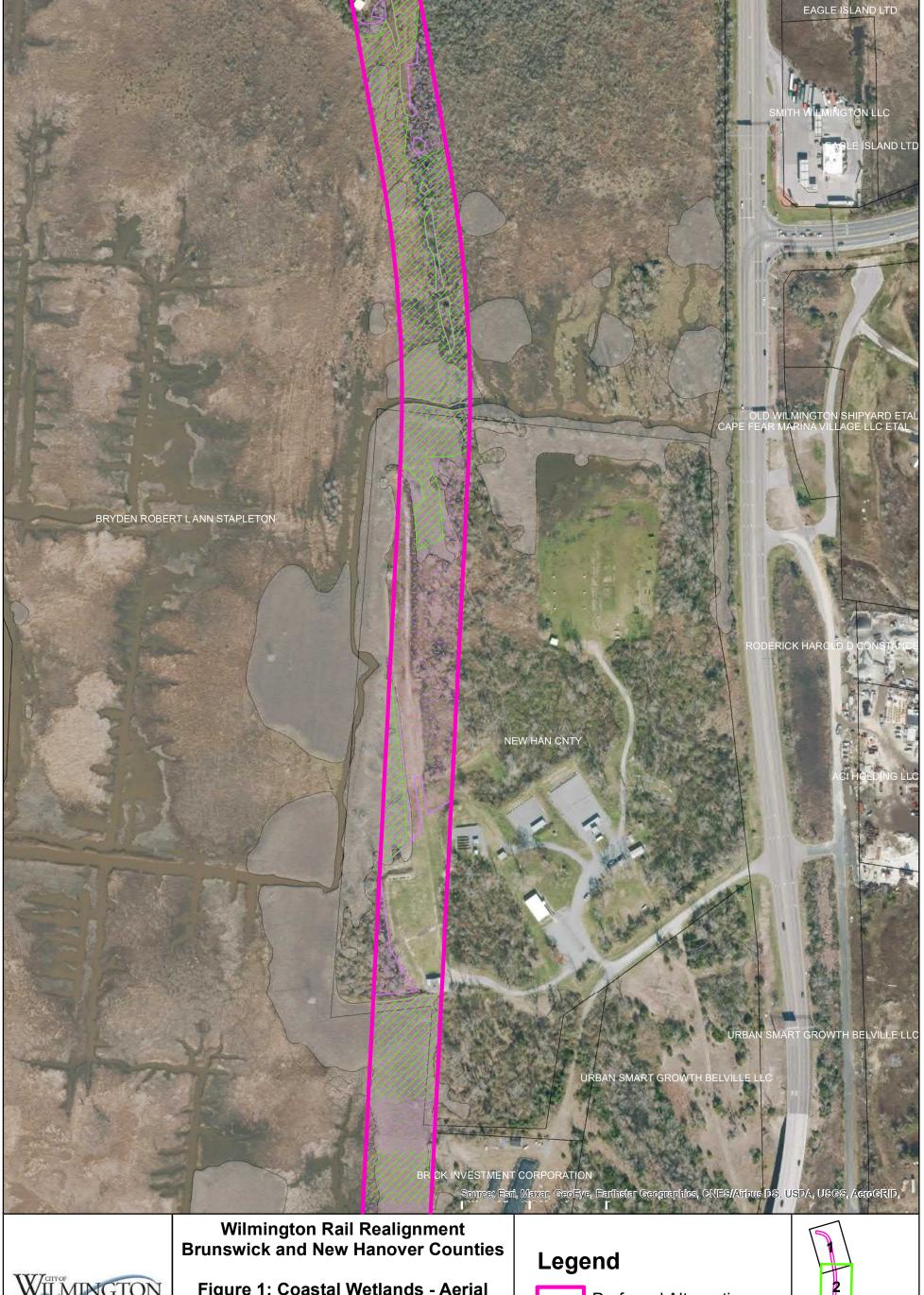






Figure 1: Coastal Wetlands - Aerial Map Sheet Page 2 of 7

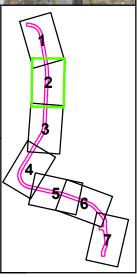
Map Date: December 2021

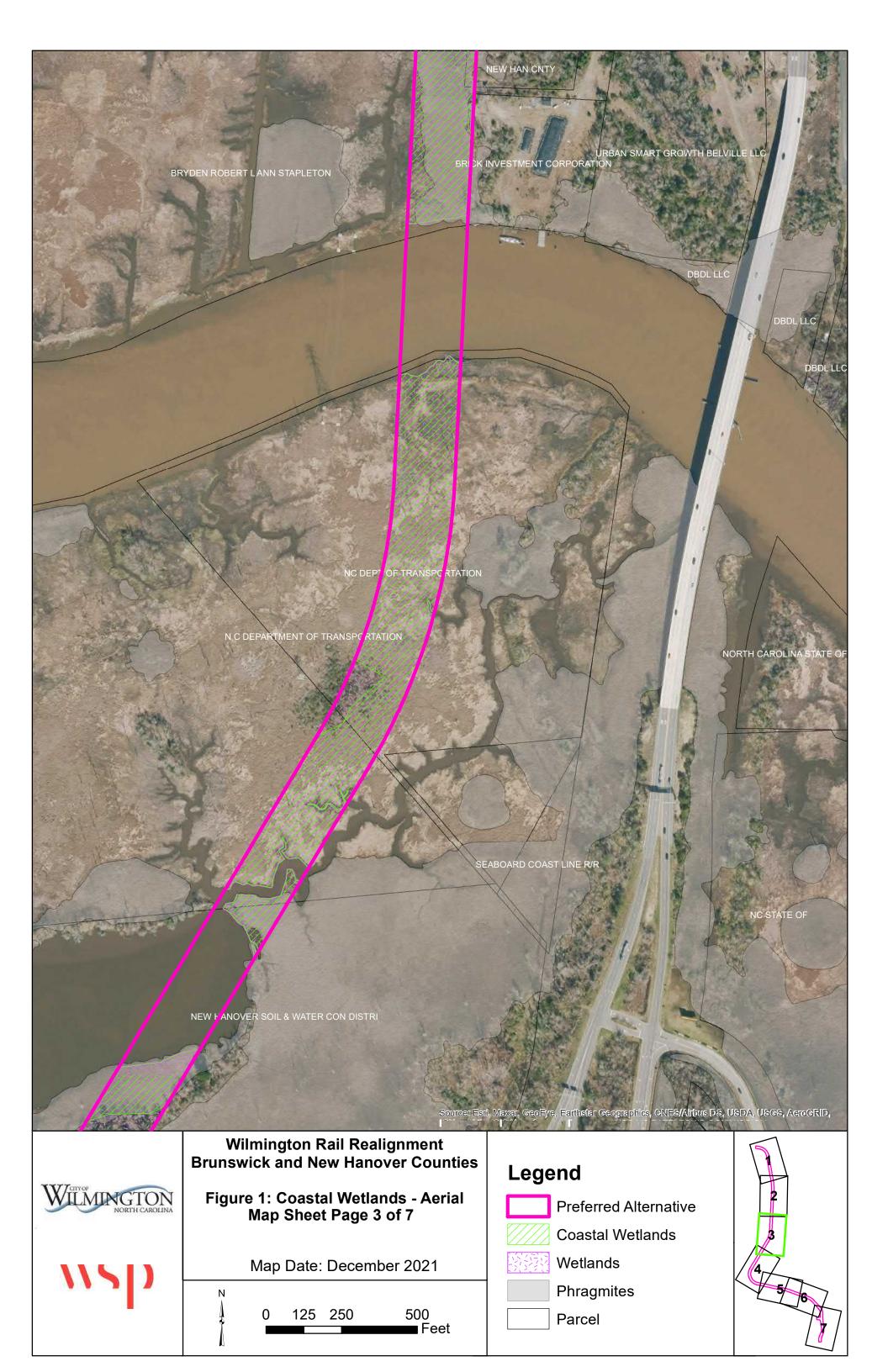
0 125 250 500 Feet



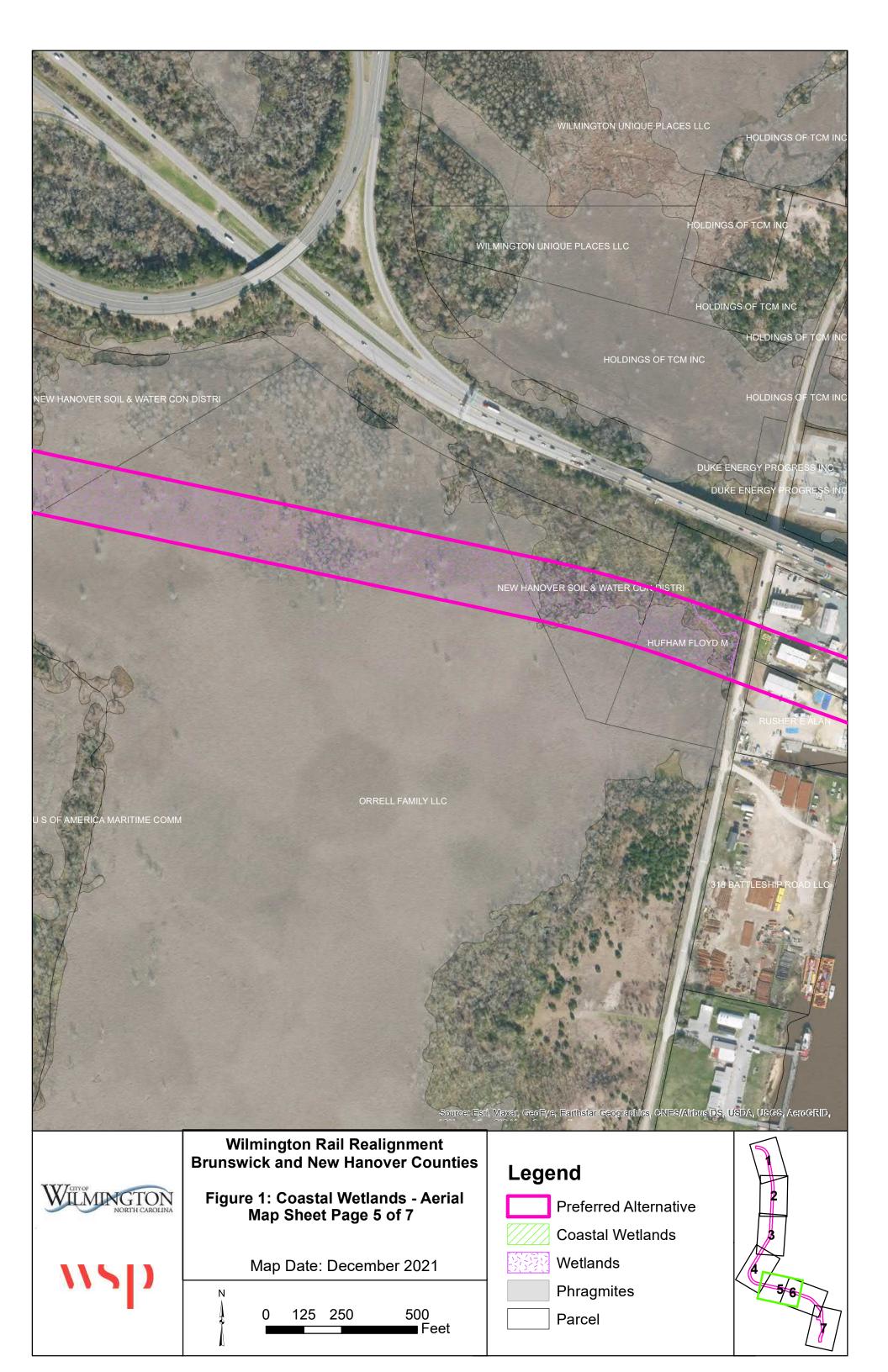


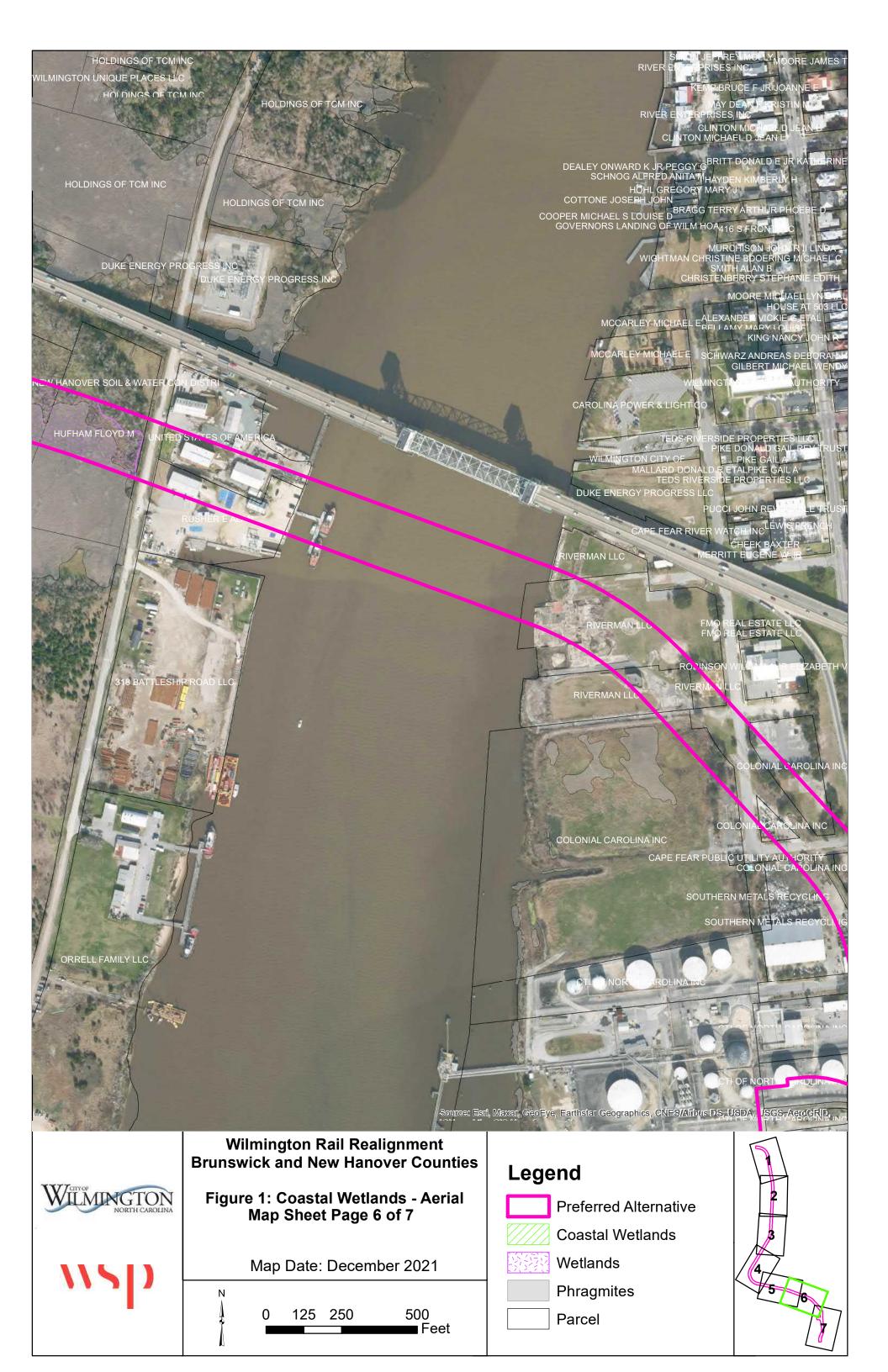












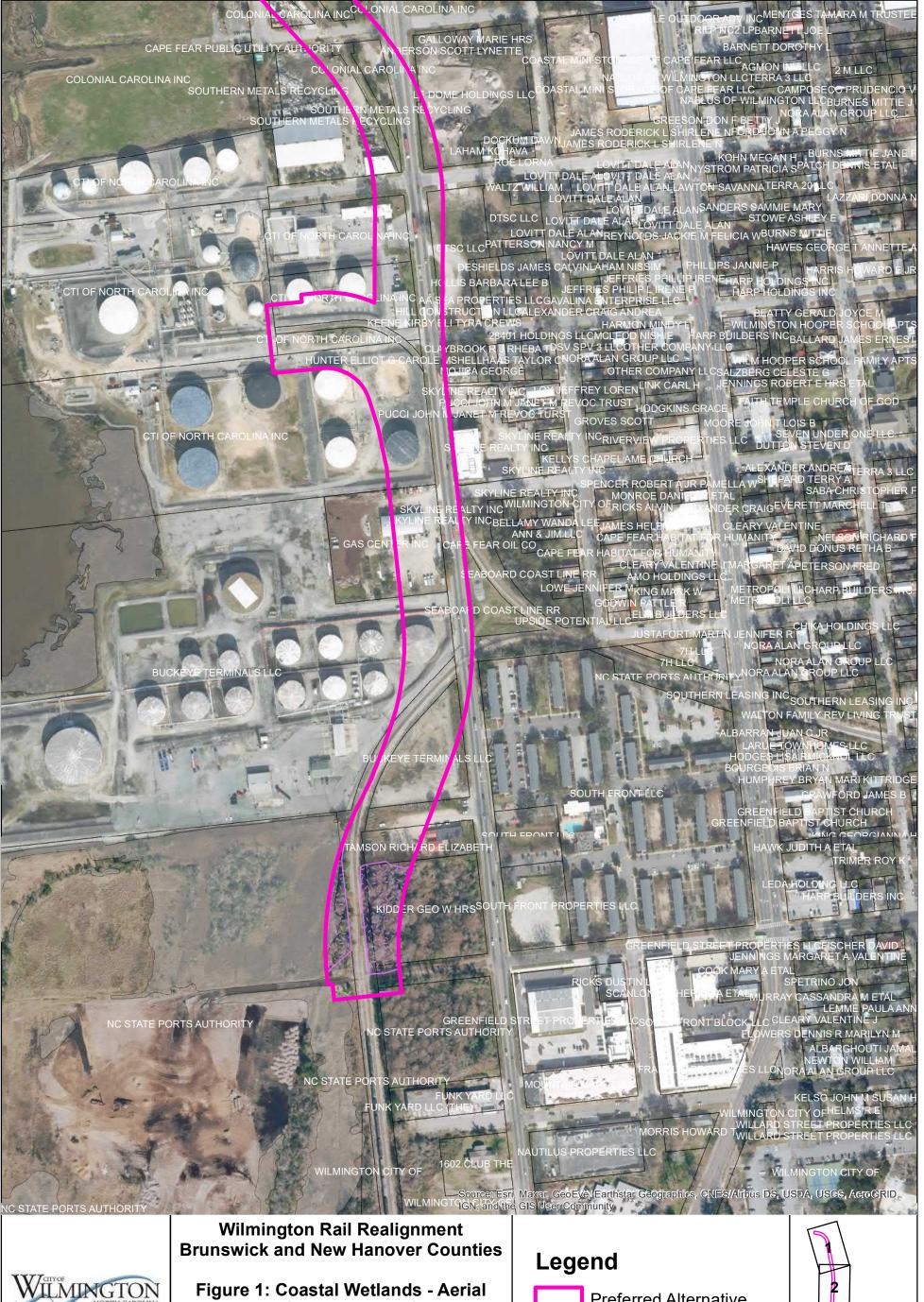


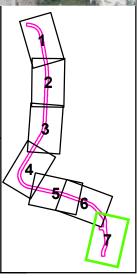


Figure 1: Coastal Wetlands - Aerial Map Sheet Page 7 of 7

Map Date: December 2021

500 125 250 Feet Preferred Alternative **Coastal Wetlands** Wetlands **Phragmites**







Commander Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street
Portsmouth, VA 23704
Staff Symbol: dpb
Phone: (757)398-6422
Fax: (757)391-8149
Email: Crystal.k.tucker@@uscg.mil
CGDFiveBridges@uscg.mil

16591 16 DEC 2021

Mr. Aubrey Parsley, PE Director of Rail Realignment 305 Chestnut Street Post Office Box 1810 Wilmington, NC 28402

Dear Parsley:

Coast Guard review of a Navigation Impact Report (NIR) dated September 24, 2021, received on September 24, 2021, is complete.

We have completed our review and assessment of the NIR and found it is sufficient for the purpose is issuing a preliminary public notice (PPN) to solicit comments concerning navigational information for two proposed railroad drawbridges across Cape Fear River, one immediately south of the US74/76 (Cape Fear Memorial Bridge), mile 26.8, and one between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3, at Wilmington, NC.

The Coast Guard will publish a preliminary public notice (PPN) to solicit comments concerning navigational information for the proposed bridge on January 5, 2022, that will be open for comment for until February 4, 2022. Any comments received will be considered by the Coast Guard in making a preliminary navigation clearance determination (PNCD) with the minimum navigational (horizontal and vertical) clearances required for the subject proposed bridge. If any comments are received that require further action before the Coast Guard can make a PNCD, the comments may be provided to you for your review and response, as needed. Please provide a timely review and response, if applicable. The Coast Guard anticipates making a PNCD within 30 days following closure of the PPN comment period.

The attached PPN or Availability of PPN (APPN) should be distributed to following by you or your consultant: (1) mariners (identified within the NIR or otherwise known to be using the waterway in the vicinity of the proposed bridges), (2) adjacent property owners, (3) marine related facilities within three miles of the proposed bridges, (4) at least one newspaper/publication with distribution within three miles of the proposed bridges, (5) at least one public library within three miles of the proposed bridges. You or your consultant should submit to this office a cover letter with documentation to reflect the distribution of the PPN or APPN. This submission may be made via .pdf email attachment.

Please contact Ms. Crystal K. Tucker, project officer, at the above telephone number or email address if you have any questions regarding our comments or requirements.

Sincerely,

HAL R. PITTS

Bridge Program Manager

By direction

Encl: (1) Preliminary Public Notice D05PPN-04-2021

(2) Availability of Preliminary Public Notice D05PPN-04-2021

(3) Local Notice to Mariners – D05PPN-04-2021

Copy: Mr. Randal Brown, Federal Railroad Administration, Washington, D.C.

Federal Highways Administration, Raleigh, NC CG Sector North Carolina, Waterways Management

Commander United States Coast Guard Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street
Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004
Staff Symbol: (dpb)
Phone: (757) 398-6422
Fax: (757) 398-6334
Email: Crystal.k.tucker@uscq.mil
or CGDFiveBridges@uscq.mil

16591 05 JAN 2022

PRELIMINARY PUBLIC NOTICE D05PPN-04-2021

All interested parties are notified that the Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District has received a proposal from the City of Wilmington with plans for construction of two new railroad drawbridges over a navigable waterway of the United States.

<u>WATERWAY AND LOCATION</u>: Cape Fear River, one immediately south of the US74/76 (Cape Fear Memorial Bridge), mile 26.8, and one between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3, at Wilmington, NC.

<u>CHARACTER OF WORK</u>: The proposed project is to construct two new railroad bridges to bypass the existing freight rail route between the railyard in Navassa, NC (Davis Yard) and the Port which will eliminate 32 at-grade crossings. The purpose of the project is to improve safety, regional mobility and freight rail operations, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

MINIMUM NAVIGATIONAL CLEARANCES:

Proposed Bridge 1	Proposed Bridge 2		
Vertical Clearance:	Vertical Clearance:		
Open – Unlimited	Open - 135 feet above mean high water		
Closed – 9 feet above mean high water	Closed - 20 feet above mean high water (for train crossings)		
	Partial Open - 40 feet above mean high water (when not open or closed)		
Horizontal Clearance: (normal to axis of the channel)	Horizontal Clearance:(normal to axis of the channel)		
102 feet between the bridge protective system	250 feet between the bridge protective system		

North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88)] (Existing and Proposed bridges)

SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS:

Mariners are requested to provide navigational information, such as the sizes and types of vessels presently owned and operated on the waterway and nature of navigation (including the extent of nighttime navigation) on the waterway. Mariners are requested to comment on the navigational clearances and need for bridge protective systems, clearance gauges, and navigational lighting on the proposed bridge. Please submit the attached response form.

Interest parties are requested to express their views, in writing, on the proposed bridge project, giving sufficient detail to establish a clear understanding of their reasons for support of, or opposition to, the proposed project. Comments will be received for the record at the office of Commander (dpb), Fifth Coast Guard District, 431 Crawford Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004 through **04 FEB 2022**.

HAL R. PITTS

Bridge Program Manager

By direction

Attachments: (1) Response Form

Wilmington Rail Realignment

Cape Fear River, immediately south of the US74/76 (Cape Fear Memorial Bridge), mile 26.8 at Wilmington, NC

Preliminary Public Notice D05PPN-04-2021

Response Form

It is requested that anyone having an interest in this proposed project, from the standpoint of navigation, submit vessel information, comments, and recommendations on this form to the office of Commander (dpb), Fifth Coast Guard District, 431 Crawford Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004 by **04 FEB 2022**.

Please provide all requested information:		

Wilmington Rail Realignment Cape Fear River between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3 at Wilmington, NC

Preliminary Public Notice D05PPN-04-2021 Response Form

It is requested that anyone having an interest in this proposed project, from the standpoint of navigation, submit vessel information, comments, and recommendations on this form to the office of Commander (dpb), Fifth Coast Guard District, 431 Crawford Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004 by **04 FEB 2022**.

Vessel Information	Please provide all requested information:
Vessel Type	
Use – Commercial and/or Recreational	
Vessel Height	
Draft	
Length	
Beam	
Tonnage	
Mooring Location	
Name (Optional):	
Address (Optional):	
Phone (Optional):	

Commander United States Coast Guard Fifth Coast Guard District 431 Crawford Street Portsmouth, VA 23704-5004 Staff Symbol: (dpb) Phone: (757) 398-6422 Fax: (757) 398-6334 Email: Crystal.k.tucker@uscg.mil CGDFiveBridges@uscg.mil

16591 05 JAN 2021

AVAILABILITY OF PRELIMINARY PUBLIC NOTICE D05PPN-04-2021

All interested parties are notified that the Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District has received a proposal from the City of Wilmington with plans for construction of two new railroad drawbridges over a navigable waterway of the United States.

<u>WATERWAY AND LOCATION</u>: Cape Fear River, one immediately south of the US74/76 (Cape Fear Memorial Bridge), mile 26.8, and one between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3, at Wilmington, NC.

CHARACTER OF WORK: The proposed project is to construct two new railroad bridges to bypass the existing freight rail route between the railyard in Navassa, NC (Davis Yard) and the Port which will eliminate 32 at-grade crossings. The purpose of the project is to improve safety, regional mobility and freight rail operations, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

The two new bridges will be drawbridges. The bridge at mile 26.8 will have a horizontal clearance of 250 feet and a vertical clearance above mean high water of 20 feet in the closed position, 135 feet in the open position, and 40 feet in the partial open position (when not open or closed). The bridge between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3 will have a horizontal clearance of 102 feet and a vertical clearance of 9 feet above mean high water in the closed position and unlimited vertical clearance in the open position.

A copy of **Preliminary Public Notice D05PPN-04-2021**, which describes the proposal in detail, can be obtained by calling (757) 398-6422 or by viewing at https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=pnBridges. Comments on this proposal should be forwarded to the address in the notice no later than <u>04 FEB 2022</u>.

HAL R. PITTS

Bridge Program Manager

By direction

Fifth District Notice to Mariners Request

Dates to Run Item: From: 12/29/2021 to 02/08/2022

<u>Title of Article</u> PROPOSED BRIDGE

<u>Category</u> (Mark One) <u>General Articles</u>

Text for Article

NORTH CAROLINA – CAPE FEAR RIVER

All interested parties are notified that the Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District has received a proposal from the City of Wilmington with plans for construction of two new railroad drawbridges over a navigable waterway of the United States.

<u>WATERWAY AND LOCATION</u>: Cape Fear River, one immediately south of the US74/76 (Cape Fear Memorial Bridge), mile 26.8, and one between mile 30.2 and mile 30.3, at Wilmington, NC.

CHARACTER OF WORK: The proposed project is to construct two new railroad bridges to bypass the existing freight rail route between the railyard in Navassa, NC (Davis Yard) and the Port which will eliminate 32 at-grade crossings. The purpose of the project is to improve safety, regional mobility and freight rail operations, while also improving the resiliency, reliability, and operational fluidity of the sole freight rail route connecting southeastern North Carolina with the Port of Wilmington.

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Chart: 11537		
Person Requesting Item: Crystal K. Tucker		Date: 12/14/2021
Received by LNM Staff: Initials	Date:	
Entered into Local Notice to Mariners #		Initials
Copies: Requestor, LNM Original File.		

Revision: August 8, 2018



North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper Secretary D. Reid Wilson Office of Archives and History Deputy Secretary, Darin J. Waters, Ph.D.

March 4, 2022

Amanda Murphy, Deputy FPO Federal Railroad Administration 1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast Washington, DC 20003 amanda.murphy2@dot.gov

RE: Wilmington Rail Realignment, Wilmington, New Hanover County, ER 19-2629

Dear Ms. Murphy:

This letter is to follow up on my comments during the February 23, 2022, meeting, concerning the above-referenced undertaking, and your request for them in writing. The comments were offered near the end of the meeting in response to a photograph used to suggest what visualizations might bring to the discussion of the project's effects. It showed the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge next to an image of a potential railroad bridge. Seeing the visualization, reminded me that there has been no evaluation of the bridge as a historic property and that the State Historic Preservation Office considers it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The following is to explain this oversight and offer reasons for our Determination of Eligibility.

The bridge is located within the Wilmington NRHP Historic District (NH0003), which was listed in 1974 and updated in 2003 with a period of significance up to 1971. The bridge, placed into service in 1969, is shown as a non-contributing resource in the nomination and update as it did not reach the fifty-year mark until 2019. The bridge's change in status would have come to light, had the extension of the Cape Fear Skyway from US 71 to US 421 (U-4738) not been placed on hold. Further, the North Carolina Department of Transportation is in the process of updating its inventory of historic bridges and will recommend that the bridge is eligible for the NRHP at the statewide level of significance as the only bridge of it type within North Carolina. Given these developments, we would anticipate its being included in the intensive architectural survey report and judged eligible.

Regarding the review of the intensive architectural survey, it was not our intention to short-circuit Mr. Brown's presentation of the results of his intensive evaluation efforts. We simply believed that a review of his report, submitted in accord with our Historic Structures Survey Report guidelines, and provided to the consulting parties would be adequate. However, we now understand that his intent was to provide the information and elicit any immediate reactions from the consulting parties. Thus, we look forward to receipt and review of the report and to the comments that will be offered by the other parties to the consultation.

We also wish to reiterate that while the remnants of dikes and other landforms in the open areas north of the USS North Carolina may not be considered significant archaeological features, there is value in evaluating whether they with other such features represent a historic landscape that may be eligible for NRHP listing.

As noted above, we look forward to receipt and review of the several reports prepared for the subject project as well as the comments of the consulting parties. Should there be any questions concerning the above, please contact me at 919-814-6579 or renee.gledhill-earley@ncdcr.gov.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Sincerely yours,

Ramona Bartos, Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer

Rener Bledhill-Earley

cc: Aubrey Parsley, City of Wilmington Kevin Wright, Federal Railroad Administration Travis Gilbert, Historic Wilmington Foundation

Terry Bragg, NCDCR – NC Battleship

Joanna Rocco, AECOM

Aubrey.Parsley@wilmingtonnc.gov kevin.wright@dot.gov gilbert@historicwilmington.org terry.bragg@ncdcr.gov joanna.rocco@aecom.com



Federal Railroad Administration

March 31, 2022

Renee Gledhill-Earley North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office 4617 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-4617

RE: Section 106 Consultation: Wilmington Rail Realignment Project
Terrestrial & Underwater Archaeological Surveys: Identification of Historic Properties
New Hanover and Brunswick Counties, North Carolina (ER 19-2629)

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Earley:

As part of on-going National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review for the Wilmington Rail Realignment (WRR) Project, additional archaeological survey work was completed for the Preferred Alternative. The City of Wilmington is the project sponsor, and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead federal agency for Section 106 consultation. The purpose of this letter is to seek concurrence on the identification of historic archaeological properties for the Project.

The surveys resulted in: (a) two (2) terrestrial archaeological sites being documented (31NH686, 31NH895) and (b) 24 magnetic anomalies and 25 side-scan sonar targets being identified. The two terrestrial archaeological resources were not found to retain integrity and further work at them would not provide significant data pertaining to the prehistoric or historic past. The underwater survey data was processed and analyzed and none of the magnetic anomalies or side-scan sonar targets represent archaeological resources. Further, no subbottom paleoforms were identified to suggest buried archaeological deposits. FRA determined there are no underwater resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within the APE.

In addition, the comments in your letter dated March 4, 2022 regarding the ca. 1950s dike related to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredging spoil documented at 31NH895 was considered for NRHP eligibility as a landscape feature associated with those mid-20th century activities. The site does not retain the integrity necessary to be considered eligible for the NRHP under any of its criteria of significance. From a broader perspective, including outside the Project's Area of Potential Effects, the overall remnants of dredging activity in that area have been negatively impacted by development of the New Hanover County Sherriff's training facility, and further subjected to impacts by recent hurricanes, particularly hurricane Matthew in 2016. These significant alterations to the overall dredging landscape elements have resulted in a loss of integrity. While the remains of the dredging activity still can portray their location, the resource lacks setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. FRA recommends that no further study is needed.

As part of our Consulting Party coordination, the Historic Wilmington Foundation submitted comments, in a letter dated March 9, 2022 from Mr. Travis Gilbert to the FRA, regarding additional investigations of archaeological site 31NH895. While the Historic Wilmington Foundation agreed that the site was not eligible for the NRHP and required no additional work; they suggested that the site be studied further by

Public Archaeology Corps. The FRA does not recommend further investigations since the Project is still in the early phases of development. Additionally, such work falls outside the scope of Section 106 and the purview of the FRA.

Please find enclosed copies of the archaeological report and site forms detailing the results of archaeological studies for the Project. In accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.4, FRA requests concurrence within 30 calendar days from the date on this letter with our determination that there are no known archaeological historic properties in the APE. Thank you for your continued cooperation on this important project.

Sincerely,

Amanda Murphy

Deputy Federal Preservation Officer Federal Railroad Administration

CC: Kevin Wright, Acting Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist, FRA Aubrey Parsley, Director of Rail Realignment, City of Wilmington

Attachments: Terrestrial and Underwater Archaeological Survey for Wilmington Rail Realignment, City of Wilmington, Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, North Carolina

Digital site forms



Federal Railroad Administration

March 31, 2022

Renee Gledhill-Earley North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office 4617 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-4617

RE: Section 106 Consultation: Wilmington Rail Realignment Project Intensive-Level Historic Architectural Survey: Identification of Historic Properties New Hanover and Brunswick Counties, North Carolina (ER 19-2629)

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Earley:

Thank you for your March 4, 2022 letter that followed up on your February 23, 2022 comments during the consulting parties meeting for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project (Project). We also appreciate receiving the information you forwarded from the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) – which addresses the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (Bridge) – in a March 10, 2022 email. The City of Wilmington is the Project sponsor, and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead federal agency for National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation. The purpose of this letter is to seek concurrence on the identification of historic architectural properties within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the Project.

Former Holy Church of Jesus Christ (NH3680)

The enclosed Intensive-level Historic Architecture Survey Report (Report) identifies the former Holy Church of Jesus Christ (Church) as a rare surviving example in the Wilmington area of the basic, traditional, rectangular form and frame construction of Protestant meetinghouses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It identifies the church's many intact features and high level of integrity and recommends that it is NRHP-eligible. The FRA has determined that the former Holy Church of Jesus Christ is NRHP-eligible under Criterion C, for embodying the distinctive characteristics of its type. The Church meets the requirement of Criterion Consideration A as a religious property that derives its significance from its architecture.

Wilmington Historic District—Potential Expansion (NH3681)

The Report considered architectural resources within the Project's APE adjacent to and near the southern boundaries of the NRHP-listed Wilmington Historic District (WHD) (NH0003). These resources were excluded from the 2003 expansion of the WHD (NH2548) due to an overall loss of integrity and the presence of modern residential and commercial buildings. The Report notes that in the 20 years since the expansion, loss of integrity has continued, additional modern buildings have been erected, and more lots stand vacant. FRA determined that the potential expansion area is not NRHP-eligible under any of the Criteria, as the resources within that area do not represent the intact components of the residential, industrial, institutional, and commercial developments important to the history of Wilmington's working class.

In its March 9, 2022 letter, the Historic Wilmington Foundation questioned whether five potentially contributing resources standing on the 100 block of Meares Street might represent an opportunity for a smaller potential expansion area for the WHD. FRA considered this comment and finds these resources are dispersed among noncontributing resources and vacant lots and are not contiguous with the WHD's boundaries. Further, the 100 block of Wright Street to their north, within the WHD, has been largely vacant since prior to the 2003 expansion. The FRA has therefore determined that the five Meares Street resources do not merit addition to the WHD under any of the NHRP Criteria.

Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (#640013)

According to the information provided by the NCDOT, the Bridge was perhaps the most notable movable bridge constructed in North Carolina from the early 1950s through the late 1970s. When erected between 1966 and 1969, it was North Carolina's first vertical lift span. The Bridge contains a through-truss moveable span between two metal towers, as well as approach spans. The movable span provides a 65-foot vertical clearance for marine traffic while in the closed position – the standard for fixed spans over Intracoastal Waterways at the time – and increases to a 135-foot clearance when raised. The Bridge's mid-rise design allows for shorter approach span lengths, with a movable span opening less frequently than a typical bascule, vertical lift, or swing span structure. It thereby causes fewer interruptions for vehicular traffic and smaller marine vessels. Due to its design, the FRA has determined that the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge is eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion C, for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type of construction.

Greenfield Lake and Gardens (NH1381)

The HWF's letter requested that Greenfield Lake Park and Gardens (Greenfield) be reevaluated for NRHP eligibility under Criteria A and C. In 2015 Greenfield was determined to not be eligible for NRHP listing due to a loss of integrity. This determination was made based on the 2015 "Historic Architecture Eligibility Evaluation Report: Cape Fear Crossing, New Hanover and Brunswick Counties" (CH 05-2935; Multi-County Report #702.1; TIP #U-4738). The FRA has determined that Greenfield Lake and Gardens continue to remain ineligible for NRHP listing under any of the NHRP's Criteria.

Identification of Architectural Historic Properties with APE

The following figure shows all the NRHP-listed, determined-eligible, and recommended-eligible historic properties within the APE. These include the NRHP-listed WHD; the USS North Carolina Battleship Memorial State Historic Site, which is within the WHD and a National Historic Landmark; the determined-eligible Seaboard Air Line Railway/Atlantic Coast Railroad District; the recommended-eligible Church; and the recommended-eligible Bridge. These resources will be addressed in future effects assessments and determinations. Given the correspondence and additional findings since the preparation of the Report, the figure below supersedes Figure 3 in the Report.