



NEW HANOVER COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

230 Government Center Drive, Suite 175, Wilmington, NC 28403

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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.

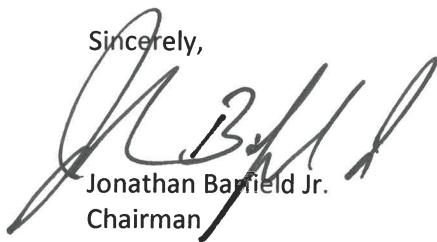
While that growth brings economic prosperity to the region, it necessarily requires us to plan for transportation needs into the future. Currently, rail service into and out of the port crosses more than 30 roads through the heart of the City of Wilmington. Many of these roads carry tens of thousands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

Sincerely,



Jonathan Barfield Jr.
Chairman

cc: Karen Collette, Division Engineer



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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