



October 29th, 2019

Dear Stakeholder,

The Wilmington Rail Realignment Project has made remarkable strides forward these past few months. Having assumed the duties of Director of Rail Realignment for the City of Wilmington on June 24th, it is now my privilege to provide these periodic project updates.

Before we delve into an update, I'd like to take a moment to recognize and thank Ms. Laura Padgett for the time, energy and passion that she has selflessly volunteered to the project. Ms. Padgett is a shining example of everything a community leader should be – caring, conscientious and committed. In my experience the best results are the product of our best intentions, and Ms. Padgett's core intention of making our small corner of North Carolina a better place to live is the bedrock on which this project will continue to be built.

As was reported in the previous update, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced in June that the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project would be awarded up to \$2 million under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program. The project was approved under Track 2, with funding to be used toward preliminary engineering as well as environmental and historic reviews pursuant to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

Following the CRISI award announcement, Wilmington City Council passed a resolution requesting that NCDOT provide matching funds. I am pleased to report that during NCDOT's October board meeting, the board approved \$250,000 in matching funds for the current fiscal year. Additional matching funds are anticipated in the following fiscal year as well, and a sincere thanks is owed to NCDOT Rail Division and NCDOT leadership for their continued support of the project.

The City is presently preparing to solicit qualifications and interest from consulting firms with relevant expertise in NEPA processes and preliminary engineering for railroad projects. The solicitation will follow standard City protocols and guidelines, will adhere to all FRA and NCDOT requirements, and is currently expected to appear on the City's website early in the first quarter of next year. Further communications will follow to keep interested parties apprised to the expected date of the solicitations release.

Concurrently, the City remains hard at work engaging key stakeholders and developing the necessary partnerships required to make the project a success. City's continued collaboration with CSX, the State Port Authority, NCDOT Rail Division, NCDOT Highway Division 3, North Carolina Railroad Company, New Hanover County, Brunswick County, the Governor's office, the offices of our North Carolina Congressional leaders, NC General Assembly, FRA, Army Corp of Engineers, Surface Transportation Board, Coast Guard, State Office of Historic Preservation, along with many others, will remain a priority.

Community support and project momentum have never been stronger. I look forward to reporting out on additional progress made in 2020. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aubrey Parsley".

Aubrey Parsley, PE
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