



June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Stakeholder,

To begin, please let me draw your attention to a solicitation that was posted to the City's website today. The City of Wilmington is requesting letters of interest and qualifications from consulting firms with experience in performing economic analyses relevant to the freight railroad industry. This study in particular will investigate viable options available to the Rail Realignment project for funding, ownership, operation and maintenance of the line between Navassa and the Port of Wilmington. All pertinent information can be found at [www.wilmingtonnc.gov/bids](http://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/bids).

Much has changed in the months since I last reported on the status of the project. The landscape for transportation projects in North Carolina has changed dramatically, but thankfully the fallout from COVID-19 has not yet impacted the momentum behind Rail Realignment. So far in 2020, the City is proud to report the following developments:

- FRA CRISI grant agreement was reached and the \$2,000,000 grant has been awarded;
- NCDOT reimbursement agreement for \$500,000 has been fully executed;
- City Council approved AECOM as lead consultant for the \$2,500,000 contract to carry out National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes and preliminary engineering plans up to 30% design;
- Resolutions of Support for Rail Realignment were passed by Brunswick County, Pender County, the Town of Leland and the Town of Belville;
- NCDOT Division 3 released an express design summary for the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (CFMB) which included an alternative that incorporates Rail Realignment.

Alongside Wilmington's Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) and NCDOT, the City continues to evaluate how best to submit Rail Realignment for the NCDOT 2023-2032 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The deadline for submissions has been delayed until July 31<sup>st</sup> which fortunately provides the team additional time to incorporate findings from the recently released CFMB replacement express design summary.

The potential for synergies and collaboration between the CFMB replacement and Rail Realignment remain vast. By way of example, the CFMB replacement study estimated the cost of a rail crossing built in conjunction with a 65 foot vertical clearance movable span highway bridge to be approximately \$120 million. The rail crossing as considered by the study would be on an independent movable span, but would share a substructure with the highway bridge. On the other hand, the current estimate for a rail crossing over the same portion of the river on a separate substructure and movable span is approximately \$360 million. While both projects are still in the early phases of development, the City is invigorated by these findings and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Parsley, PE  
Director of Rail Realignment  
City of Wilmington  
(cell) 910-200-8382