



December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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

### **VIRTUAL PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE**

Please accept this invitation to visit our virtual open house at [wrr.nepa.ai](http://wrr.nepa.ai). The website includes all the latest information available on the environmental review process and will be up until December 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be additional public meetings as progress continues, but we hope to hear your comments as early and as often as possible. Your input can help shape the way the project moves forward.

### **5 YEARS AND COUNTING**

The Rail Realignment Project has been moving forward for more than five years now and the original goals remain unchanged – foster a thriving economy, create a safe place, support efficient transportation systems and engage in civic partnerships. Each of these goals underpins the transformational opportunities available to the project and aligns with the focus areas highlighted in the City's strategic plan. The railroad that shaped our region's past can also shape our future as the region seeks to accommodate unprecedented growth in both population and commercial freight activity.

### **VALUE PROPOSITION AND PROCESS**

Investments made today are justified by the returns they create tomorrow. As is done in the private sector, the Rail Realignment Project will weigh the timing and magnitude of expected benefits against the timing and magnitude of costs. The case for economic benefits was made, in part, during the application for Federal Railroad Administration discretionary grant funding. That analysis clearly demonstrated that the safety and regional mobility benefits generated by the project substantiated the estimated costs required. These compelling results around public benefits made for a successful grant application and yet, they are just one part of the story. Other benefit streams (both private and public) remain unmeasured.

Back in October Strategic Rail Finance (a consulting firm) began work on an Economic Feasibility Study with an aim to identify and quantify all financeable benefits available to the project. Study efforts will be conducted in close coordination with CSXT, NCSPA, NCRR and NCDOT, among others. The analysis will inform future roles for ownership, operation, and maintenance of the new railroad route. Findings from the study will play a critical role in further developing the Rail Realignment Project.

The picture around costs will come into focus as environmental and engineering work progresses, which includes coordination with other projects such as the replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and the widening of S Front Street. Currently synergies with NCDOT's S Front Street Widening Project are being evaluated. Coordination between the projects has been underway for months and a more formal partnership between the City, NCDOT and NCSPA is being pursued. Such a partnership has the potential to produce meaningful value for the public.

I look forward to updating you again on these efforts in the coming months. Until then, stay safe and happy holidays!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aubrey Parsley".

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