

December 17th, 2021



2021 YEAR IN REVIEW FOR THE WILMINGTON RAIL REALIGNMENT PROJECT

6 Years and Counting

So much of the world around us has changed over the six years since the Mayor assembled a Task Force for the Wilmington Rail Realignment Project, but the original goals of the Project 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 exceptional growth in both population and demand on transportation infrastructure.

A Preferred Alternative Has Been Identified (Environmental Review Update)

Work began in April 2016 on identifying a route for the Project when the City, WMPO and NCDOT co-funded a feasibility study for the Project. More than five years later, on November 1, 2021, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) identified Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative for the Project, marking a significant milestone in the environmental review process. The investment of tens of thousands of hours spent gathering data, performing analysis and coordinating hundreds of stakeholder and agency meetings have brought us to this point, and will surely provide a durable foundation from which to continue advancing the Project. Should you wish to learn more about the identification of the route, please visit www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail and review the ‘Feasibility Study 2017’, ‘Screening Report’ and ‘Alternatives Analysis Report’ files all of which are available under the Technical Documents header.

15% Engineering Design Level Has Been Reached

On September 1, 2021 the FRA confirmed approval of all conceptual engineering (up to 15% design) activities. The purpose of the conceptual engineering was to develop preliminary alternatives to evaluate during the Screening Report and Alternatives Analysis phases of the environmental review process, which resulted in the identification of a Preferred Alternative. This work also included a Preliminary Hydraulics Analysis (see www.wilmingtonnc.gov/rail for a copy) and informed numerous other processes including Navigational Impact Reports for US Coast Guard Bridge Permit Applications.

What to Look for in 2022

- The completion of an Environmental Assessment document
- Public engagement events in January, February and July
- Substantial progress toward 30% engineering design level
- Preliminary Determination of Navigational Clearances for the two bridges over navigable waterways
- Potential for additional partnership opportunities with NCDOT, NCSPA and others
- Submittal of an application for additional federal funding
- Continued efforts to bolster local and state funding support for the Project

The Project remains on schedule and on budget with significant federal (~\$750,000), state (~\$440,000) and local (\$3.5 million) funds available to the Project in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

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

Aubrey Parsley, PE
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