



To protect and preserve the irreplaceable historic resources
of Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear Region

Wilmington, North Carolina – July 1, 2021 On June 30, 2021, NCDOT presented an unsolicited proposal from the private sector to the Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO). The proposal is a public-private partnership to construct a replacement Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. The proposal is based on the NCDOT’s “Option 2” in the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Replacement Feasibility Study, which includes a fixed, 135’ span with a multi-use trail constructed south of the current Cape Fear Memorial Bridge. Rather than two lanes in each direction, the unsolicited proposal includes three lanes in each direction. A 50-year tolling schedule will be implemented, with the developer assuming customer service and invoicing services. The design lifespan for the proposed bridge will be 75–100 years.

Under [NCDOT Public Private Partnership Policy & Procedures](#), the developer assumes responsibility for study efforts pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA review process includes assessment on the project’s impacts to cultural and historic resources, and the process would be overseen by the NCDOT. HWF’s initial review of the NCDOT’s Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Replacement Feasibility Study suggested that “Option 2” had the largest impact on the Wilmington National Register Historic District.

In a statement on June 30, Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo acknowledged that the unsolicited proposal “was a matter of quality of life for those in our historic downtown whose roads would be clogged and damaged by cars and trucks in search of the only remaining free route across the Cape Fear River.” The WMPO passed a resolution to include the unsolicited proposal on the July 28th meeting agenda, and the New Hanover County Commissioners suggested the unsolicited proposal would be included in their agenda within the coming weeks. A resolution of support from WMPO is required for NCDOT to continue work with the developer on a preliminary design plan; however, the resolution of support would not bind the WMPO to the unsolicited proposal.

At this time, HWF will continue working with our partners at the State Historic Preservation Office’s Environmental Review Branch to address the NEPA process under a public-private partnership. HWF will continue to monitor the unsolicited proposal and address our concerns with our elected officials. As an organization dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable historic resources of the Lower Cape Fear, HWF will continue to advocate for a vehicular crossing of the Cape Fear River that minimizes direct and indirect impacts on the Wilmington National Register Historic District and cultural resources on Eagles Island.

To view all HWF advocacy, visit historicwilmington.org/current-issues.

The Historic Wilmington Foundation’s mission is to preserve and protect the irreplaceable historic resources of Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear region. The nonprofit’s initiatives include the Azalea Festival Home Tour, scholarships for high schoolers through the Impact of Preservation speech contest, Florence Fix-It grants, Legacy Architectural Salvage workshops, Tar Heels Go Walking tours, and the historic Plaque program.

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