



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

April 4, 2013

It seems to me I've heard that song before.

–Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne

A Plethora of Plans

Anthony Tata, the new Secretary of Transportation, is organizing for the Governor's new 25-year transportation plan. Ah, so. As a former transportation planning consultant, your faithful editor is pleased at the good fortune of his colleagues. They've had a good run in the last few years:

2004. *North Carolina's Long-Range Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.*

2008. *Statewide Logistics Plan.*

2011. *Seven Portals Study.*

2012. *Governor's Logistics Task Force Final Report.*

2012. *North Carolina Maritime Strategy Final Report.*

2012. *2040 Plan; North Carolina Statewide Transportation Plan.*

Most of these are attempts to rise above basic highway planning, the tried and true methods largely mandated by the Federal Highway Administration. The recent studies added airports, ports, and railroads, lumped into the term "logistics." And therein lie the problems. We cite these warnings about such studies from the *Statewide Logistics Plan*, prepared by NC State:

- Economic forecasts were almost always overly optimistic and did not identify and analyze alternatives.
- All studies had a political hidden agenda that tended to cloud real issues and the final results.
- "State legislatures cannot mandate prosperity," particularly regarding port projects.
- Today's supply chains have too much flexibility built into them that a "build it and they will come" mentality spells disaster.

We have seen enough—especially in the *Maritime Strategy Study*—to agree. And we add our own warnings:

- North Carolina is not an island; business logistical decisions ignore state borders.
- Ask not what the State can do for the ports. Ask only what the ports can do for the State.

Be careful, Mr. Secretary. Keep your hand on your wallet—and your eye on the public purse.